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Gig Economy Dynamics: Wage Volatility and Job Satisfaction Among Platform Workers

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Abstract

Digital labour platforms have transformed jobs and work themselves and created new opportunities for flexible and on-demand employment. Meanwhile, platform workers often face volatility in earnings, inconsistent workloads, irregular work hours and shifting platform incentives, that can impact their job satisfaction. The study examines the relationship between wage volatility and job satisfaction among the platform workers, and looks at the factors affecting the employment experiences of platform workers including the economic factors and work-related factors. The study focuses on the wage variability as a central aspect of gig work and explores how wage variability relates to income security, work-life balance, autonomy, workload, platform dependence and satisfaction with work conditions. It also examines how factors such as flexibility, hours worked, platform support and dependence on gig work impact the relationship between earnings instability and job satisfaction. This study is quantitative, data collected from primary sources on platforms, and platform workers in different kinds of jobs such as ride hailing, food delivery, logistics, online freelancing and other apps mediated services. Descriptive statistics, correlation or regression can be used to analyse the relationships between the study variables. The overall study will probably contribute to the existing literature on platform labour, and will give insights into how income insecurity relates to workers' experience of flexibility and quality of work. The research explores both the economic and subjective aspects of gig work to gain a deeper understanding of job satisfaction in digitally mediated labour markets. Results also have implications for platform companies and policy-makers and labour scholars interested in considering alternative models of more sustainable and worker-friendly platform work.

Keywords: Gig Economy; Platform Workers; Wage Volatility; Job Satisfaction; Income Uncertainty; Digital Labour Platforms; Employment Flexibility; Work-Life Balance; Platform Work; Labour Market.

1. Introduction

The gig economy is a major shift in the way work is organized, employment relationships and how income is generated. The digital platforms have allowed persons to access a job via mobile apps and online platforms without having to resort to traditional, fixed-term employment agreements. Ride-hailing, food delivery, online freelancing, domestic service, logistical and digitally mediated professional services are also significant elements of this evolving labour market. According to the OECD, platform-mediated work refers to working in the current context where digital platforms play a role in arranging transactions between workers and clients, and it also states that this type of working poses questions on income security, social protection, working conditions, and career development.

Platform work has posed opportunities (and challenges) to workers. It is one of its key attractions that it has relatively low entry barriers and allows the selection of when, where and how much to work. This flexibility can be especially helpful for those who are looking for additional work, short-term or alternative jobs, or alternative to regular jobs. Meanwhile, flexibility can't always be equated with financial stability. The pay of platform workers can vary due to changes in demand, working hours, incentives, commissions, customer orders, platform algorithms, seasonal factors, and operating costs. Platform work has been characterised as a concern about income security and employment as a concern, according to the OECD, and international evidence also suggests significant variation in the conditions of platform work jobs.

Volatility is hence a crucial aspect of gig work. Many platform workers might get paid based on the tasks, trips, assignments, completed orders or projects they do, rather than a fixed salary like an employee. Thus, the earnings for one period may vary significantly from earnings in another. The difference between gross income and net income can also be important because if employees have additional costs of working such as fuel, maintenance, equipment, internet, commissions, and more. In India, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has raised concerns about irregular earnings, costs of working on the platform and commissions, incentives and the financial pressure faced by parts of the platform workers.

In India, the gig economy presents a particularly apt context for exploring these challenges. NITI Aayog estimated about 7.7 million gig and platform workers in India in 2020 and expected significant growth in their numbers during the coming decade, according to an International Labour Organization (ILO) discussion on India's gig and platform economy in 2024. The growth of platform-mediated work has, therefore, started to be a focus of debates around employment, labour protection, social security and worker welfare in India. With this rapid growth in the number of opportunities provided by platforms, it is even more critical to consider not only the quantity, but also the quality, stability and sustainability of the opportunities provided through platforms.

Job satisfaction is another critical factor of platform work, in addition to income. Job satisfaction is a general term to describe how positive workers feel and think about their work. Factors that can affect job satisfaction in traditional work environments include compensation, work conditions, independence, recognition, job security, relationships with others, and opportunities for growth and development. These are a few of the factors that are altered when performing platform work. These new opportunities for autonomy in scheduling work arrangements do not negate the opportunities for algorithmic management, performance ratings, platform evaluations, customer evaluations, incentive structures, or platform rules. So platform work can be at once independent and can create fresh ways of control.

The link between earnings and satisfaction with a job is especially significant as it can influence labourers' valuation and durability of platform jobs. While working at a platform or being flexible may feel good to the worker, they may feel bad when income is not consistent or isn't enough to cover their household and work needs. On the other hand, people who receive adequate income or work on the platforms mainly to supplement their income might have different perspectives on their work. Rather than assuming that job satisfaction results from wages, the relationship between economic incentives and non-monetary rewards and benefits need to be considered.

The nature of managerial control is also altered by platform work. Traditional organizations generally have the control through the use of supervisors, formal working schedules, organizational policies and contracts. All of these are alternatives to digital platforms: Algorithms, automated task allocation, performance metrics, ratings, incentives and digitally monitored activity. This creates a new employment context that allows employees to have a lot of freedom in what they do and that is subject to the conditions and effects of platforms. The tension between workers' autonomy and platform control in digital work is also a recent research field of the ILO.

The issue of Job Security and social protection are also important considerations. Platform workers are often treated differently to traditional workers and this can impact their employment status, which in turn can impact access to benefits including health protection, insurance, paid leave, retirement and other social security benefits. Platform work is especially challenging to classify and measure between countries, and is a topic of labour law, taxation, and social protection; the OECD has clearly stated that this is a challenge. More recently, ILO research has highlighted the need to address the gaps in social protection and decent-work conditions of platform workers.

Tensions between wage volatility and job satisfaction could also vary by the type of platform activities undertaken. The work environment, expense, autonomy, income-generating activities of a ride-hailing driver, food delivery worker, online freelancer, domestic-service worker and professional digital worker can vary considerably. This diversity is reflected in international research. For example, location-based and online platform workers can be found to differ in terms of platform dependence and working arrangements (OECD), as well as in terms of variation in earnings, working conditions and employment relationships among platform workers' categories (OECD ILO studies).

This diversity necessitates thinking about the gig economy beyond the notion of flexibility of work or precarious work. Platform workers can enjoy income generating opportunities and flexibility, but can also face risks in terms of their income, work burden, social protection, and future employment. OECD studies also have highlighted the opportunity of low barriers to entry and flexibility, but also raised issue over income and employment security. Knowing and comprehending these opposing dimensions is critical to the evaluation of the quality of platform workers' work experience.

The present study, Gig Economy Dynamics: Wage Volatility and Job Satisfaction among platform workers, explores the relationship between the fluctuation of platform earnings and the satisfaction of platform workers with their work. The study has special significance because of the following reasons: Income instability may have an impact on workers' perception of financial security, while flexibility, autonomy, workload, platform policy, and working conditions may have an effect on overall job satisfaction. These dimensions can be relevant in understanding the

economic and behavioural characteristics of platform mediated jobs, when analysed in more detail.
The study aims to bring some contribution to the existing gig economy literature by exploring the gig worker's experiences from both the economic and the workplace point of view. Instead of seeing earnings and satisfaction as separate factors, it looks at the relationship between the amount of steady or unstable income and workers' perceptions of their platform-based jobs. This can provide the researchers, platform operators, trade unions and policy makers with useful evidence relating to the quality and sustainability of new forms of work. It is important, particularly in the context of the growing importance of platform work and debates on fair remuneration, social protection, employment and decent work.
Lastly, knowing about wage variability and job satisfaction can enable us to differentiate between the number of jobs produced by the gig economy and their quality and durability. This separation will become increasingly important as platform-mediated work becomes more prominent. Indian and foreign evidence suggests that the platform economy is emerging as a significant part of the current labour market, yet the issues of regularity of income, working conditions, protection of workers and institutional support are still not clear-cut. In the present research, this gap is filled with an analysis of the economic and job experience of platform workers and by providing empirical evidence of how wage volatility changes job satisfaction in the gig economy.

2. Background of the study
Gig economy and digital labour platforms have shifted the nature of work to enable the possibility of employment through technology mediated platforms rather than a long-lasting employment contract. Platform-based work encompasses things like ride-hailing and food delivery, freelancing online, house service, logistics, and anything else that's digitally arranged. These can provide workers reasonably low entry barriers, flexible working hours and income to themselves. Platform work, on the other hand, has raised important issues of income security, job stability, employment conditions, social protection and jobs quality. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has found the fast-growing platform work spectrum as an important shift on labour markets and the ongoing issues of decent work and worker protection.
One of the most important characteristics of platform work is the variability of workers' earnings. Unlike traditional work, where income is paid based on a set salary or hourly rate, there is often no fixed wage or salary for platform workers; they are paid based on the number of tasks that are completed, assignments accepted, trips made, deliveries completed, or projects completed, etc. The ILO states that the remuneration systems within the platform economy are varied, and often include task-based remuneration, which can lead to income insecurity. Workers' earnings can vary due to waiting time, demand variations, commissions, platform fees, incentives, and task assignments. Furthermore, algorithmic systems can be used to allocate tasks and to allocate remuneration based on the needs of the platform and other features determined by the platform, and workers may not be able to know how these systems function. In such situations, wage volatility is a key aspect of platform working as workers might receive large fluctuations in their earnings over days, weeks or months.
In addition to the immediate effects on wages, the volatility of wages can also affect the perceptions of security and satisfaction with employment. Studies of earnings volatility have revealed that earnings may experience significant fluctuations for workers in non-standard employment arrangements, and volatile earnings may lead to financial stress and planning problems within the household. These fluctuations in demand, working hours, incentives, ratings by customers, commissions, and platform policies can all cause uncertainty about expected earnings for platform workers. Therefore, it is important to account for more than just the income that workers receive, but also the certainty, stability and adequacy of their income.
Simultaneously, there are other factors besides money that need to be considered when evaluating job satisfaction in the gig economy. Flexibility of scheduling and location, sometimes available with platform work, may appeal to those looking for autonomy and/or additional income. But this seeming flexibility can also go hand in hand with algorithmic monitoring, performance ratings, automated task allocation, customer evaluations and platform-based incentives. According to ILO, algorithmic management may impact on how workers are recruited, tracked, assessed and paid, and ratings can impact on whether workers receive incentives or even whether they can remain on platforms. Therefore, employees' satisfaction with flexibility and autonomy might be mediated by income insecurity, workload, algorithmic control and job insecurity.
This is especially noteworthy in India where the gig and platform economy has grown in size at a fast rate. According to ILO's 2024 report, NITI Aayog had estimated that there were around 7.7 million gig workers in India in 2020, which would reach 23.5 million by 2029–30. The India Employment Report 2024 further emphasizes on the significance of platform work in employment, especially with the backdrop of urbanization, rising internet penetration, and a high prevalence of smartphones. Meanwhile, the report outlines the issues of algorithmic control, rating, work intensity, income and incentive calculation and the transparency of automated decision-making systems. In this regard, the Indian platform economy is a crucial context to study how transformation in income affects workers' attitudes towards their work.

A second aspect is the difference between those workers who rely mainly on platform-based work and those who work on the platforms as a secondary occupation. The impact of wage variability could be very different across these groups. These shifts in work income could have a direct impact on the financial security and household planning of a worker whose primary source of income is from the platform. If one is using platform work as a secondary job, the same variability might be experienced differently as a result of having another source of income. Evidence from ILO research on the working lives of workers on web-based platforms also shows that many workers use platform work as a means of supplementing their core income, while those who are using platform work as their primary source of income can be more vulnerable to economic insecurity. Hence, the linkage between wage volatility and job satisfaction needs to be studied in conjunction with workers' reliance on platform wages and their general working conditions.

The platform work has also sparked discussions about the need for adjustments of existing employment and social-protection policies. Platform workers are not strictly employees or self-employed, which poses problems related to minimum wages, social security, labour protection, collective representation and employment benefits. Platform-mediated work presents OECD policymakers with important issues to consider, including income security, social protection, career development, and collective bargaining. Likewise, the ILO's work on platform employment relationships has focused on the ongoing legal and institutional challenges in the categorization of workers in employment relationships and the protections that apply. These institutional contexts have indirect impacts on the perceptions of job quality and job satisfaction of workers.

In this context, the study Gig Economy Dynamics: Wage Volatility and Job Satisfaction among Platform Workers aims to analyse the connections between wage volatility on the platforms and job satisfaction of platform workers. The research is relevant as the gig economy has provided new avenues to earn income and it is also challenging typical notions of security in jobs and income, as well as autonomy at work. A deeper understanding of the experiences of workers could help answer the question of whether flexibility and accessibility outweigh the uncertainty in ambiguous earnings, or whether financial insecurity becomes a major determinant of job satisfaction. The results may influence academic debates about the nature of work and feed into the evidence bases for platforms, workers, policy-makers and labour institutions working on improving the quality and sustainability of platform work.

3. Justification

The gig economy and digital labour platforms are reshaping the nature of work and have created new, flexible methods for earning a living, including task-based and digitally mediated work. This flexibility is however, coexistent with issues on the stability of income, availability of jobs, hours worked, social protection, and overall quality of jobs. There is evidence that pay rates, work availability, work intensity and work–life balance differ by platform type for platform workers, and more recent studies emphasize job precarity and autonomy as crucial factors to understanding the wellbeing of gig workers. Wage volatility is especially significant, as platform workers could have fluctuations in their earnings based on the state of demand, the workload on the platform, pricing structures, incentives, commissions, algorithmic task allocation, etc. More recently, pay volatility has been identified as a specific concern in gig work, with uncertain gig requests and algorithmic pricing raising concerns about pay variability. Meanwhile, job satisfaction cannot be explored only in terms of income as other aspects of the job may also affect platform workers' experience such as autonomy, flexibility, workload, platform support, ratings, algorithmic management, employment security, or the opportunities for social protection. According to ILO, algorithmic management practices, such as rating and reputation systems, can impact on workers' wages, employment opportunities and have implications for their well-being and work–life balance. It is important to therefore consider wage volatility in combination with job satisfaction to gain a fuller understanding of the economic and psychological aspects of platform work. The extensive and fast-moving regulatory and technological landscape of the platform economy also substantiates this study. The Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193) was adopted by the ILO in 2026, focusing on topics such as remuneration, social security and the use of automated systems in platform work. As such, research on the link between earnings instability and job satisfaction can provide empirical data to help better understand workers' experiences and factors that may lead to a more satisfying platform experience. It can also inform platform organizations, policymakers and labour researchers of the intersections between income stability, working conditions and practices of platform management and the employment experiences of workers. With the persistent growth and institutionalization of platform economy, it is timely and relevant to undertake a systematic study of wage volatility and job satisfaction of platform workers in the current debates on decent work, employment quality and the future of work.

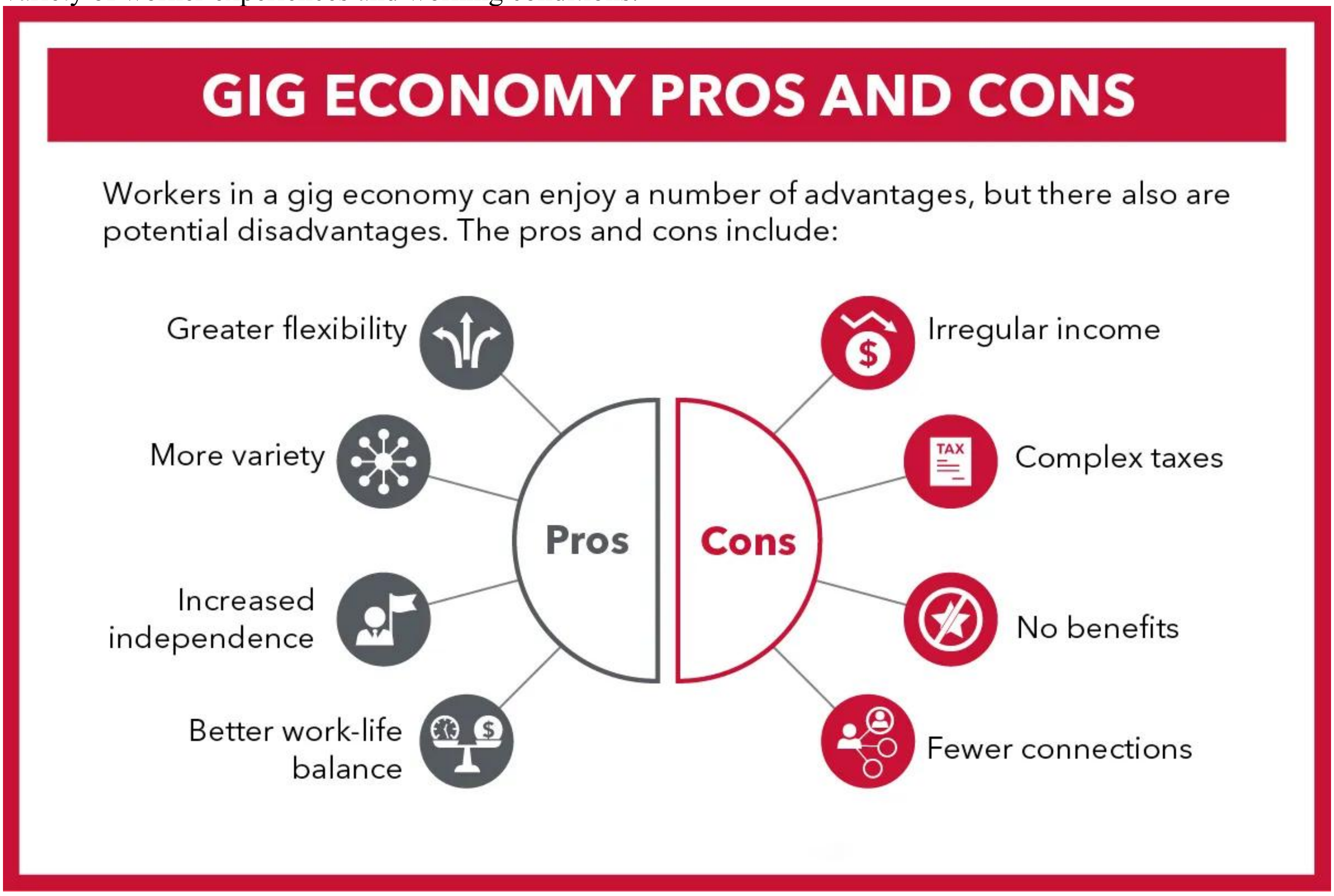
4. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore wage volatility among platform workers from various types of gig economy activities.
2. The satisfaction of platform workers was measured based on their working conditions, earnings, flexibility, autonomy, and experience of employment.

3. To understand the key drivers of wage volatility of platform workers, such as demand fluctuations, working hours, platform incentives, commissions, and seasonal fluctuations.
4. To investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and wage volatility of platform workers.
5. To study the effect of job satisfaction of the platform workers on the bases of working condition, flexibility, workload and working autonomy.

5. Literature Review

The rise of the gig economy has changed traditional employment by providing workers with income from short-term, task-based work, freelance work, and work on platforms. While there are many ways to define gig work, the four common attributes are short-term contracts, project or task-based pay, flexibility in work hours, and lack of ties to a traditional employing organization. In their integrative review of studies on gig work, Wu et al. (2024) recognized the unique characteristics of gig work, including flexibility, temporary employment, project-based wages, and organizational independence. Their review further highlights that gig work is not a singular form of work, but a variety of worker experiences and working conditions.



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The financial precarity and precarious nature of wages in platform-mediated work is a central topic of the literature. Platform workers' earnings are often different from those of traditional workers, who typically have more stable wages, due to the variability in tasks, demand, hours worked, platform fees, incentives, pricing models, and other factors. A systematic review of 258 research studies conducted by Masta and Kaushiva (2024) identified financial conditions as one of the primary themes in the gig-economy research area, among others – working conditions, collective organization, algorithmic management and entrepreneurship. The authors also noted the need to bring attention to gig workers and their areas of need in emerging markets.

The earnings-platform correlation relationship is thus complex. Digital platforms can reduce barriers to the labour market and provide to the workers the opportunity to earn income, through relatively flexible working time. At the same time there is a systematic pattern: platform employees can be subjected to high competition and low social protection, algorithmic control and pressure on wages. This change in gig workers on digital platforms has been recorded as an opportunity and a constraint, rather than as a clear-cut positive or negative impact.

Not only is platform work contradictory, it has been a subject of critical discussion, and Wood et al. (2019) have provided valuable evidence on the matter. In their examination of online platform workers, they discovered that algorithmic systems are designed to provide flexibility and autonomy for workers, while at the same time providing them with a form of control and insecurity. This tension is particularly relevant for wage volatility because workers could have greater freedom in their decision to work or not, but they have limited control of the opportunities and economic returns from particular tasks. Flexibility is not a formal right which translates into security of employment or a stable income.

Algorithmic management is another key aspect. Algorithms are used more and more by platform companies to assign jobs, monitor performance, calculate pay, rank engineers, and evaluate employees. Platform companies are using and applying algorithms to various tasks such as: Task allocation, monitoring, compensation, ranking, evaluation. In this regard, Kellogg et al. (2020) defined algorithmic management as a tool by which the organizations try to control the worker via a system based on data. This can alter the nature of working relations between workers and managers in the gig economy, where many managerial functions are delegated digitally, with machine-based decision making.

This argument has been further elaborated in more recent research. Kadolkar et al. (2025) have identified the following themes in a systematic review which are interconnected: working conditions, financial instability, job insecurity, autonomy, performance monitoring, ratings and worker responses. According to their review, algorithmic management can serve as a mechanism to both enable flexibility, but also limit worker agency. More specifically, lack of transparency around allotting tasks and calculating fare can add to the uncertainty around potential earnings.

Job autonomy is related closely with job satisfaction. The typical framing of gig workers and their work has a certain independence, since they often decide when and, in part, where they do their work. But studies indicate that algorithmic instructions, performance ratings, customer feedback, incentives and platform rules can limit autonomy. In Brazil, Felix et al. (2023) conducted interviews with 57 gig workers and identified how their preferences for autonomy or security affects workers' well-being as a result of their work relationship. Their results further suggest that there is no relationship between autonomy and positive outcomes if workloads become insupportable.

Gig job satisfaction is therefore a multi-dimensional phenomenon and thus should be studied in this manner. There are other factors that contribute to satisfaction besides income, including autonomy and flexibility, workload, platform support, social interaction, recognition, fairness, career opportunities and job security. Platform flexibility may be a preferred trait for independent workers, while income and employment security may be more frustrating for workers who prioritize stable income and employment security. The results indicate that the linkage between the gig work features and job satisfaction might differ on the basis of individual choices and employment conditions.

Job insecurity and precarity is of great importance. Gig workers may not enjoy some of the benefits that are considered to be part of traditional employment agreements. Möhlmann and Zalmanson (2017) showed how algorithmic control can influence the workers' experiences of autonomy and control in platform mediated work. In a similar vein, Rosenblat and Stark (2016) demonstrated that when platforms do not know everything about the drivers, this condition can shift the power dynamics in algorithmic environments. These circumstances may lead to doubt over income prospects and the ability to continue platform work.

Ratings and customer evaluations are also stressed in the literature. Customer ratings and performance indicators may be part of the requirements for future work if one is a platform worker. According to Kadolkar et al. (2025), customer ratings can be used as inputs for performance-management systems, with the consequence that when ratings drop below a threshold, it could have a negative impact on workers. This gives rise to a further linkage between job satisfaction and wage volatility because employees might feel pressured to rate their jobs positively to continue to have access to wage-generating opportunities.

Workers' experiences are complicated by the socio-technical nature of gig work. Based on a review of 132 studies on the platform-mediated gig economy, Dedema and Rosenbaum (2024) discerned three dominant socio-technical patterns of the platform: the digital workplace, algorithmic management, and ethical platform design. Their review highlights such problems as information asymmetry, power asymmetry, platform governance, trust, fairness, privacy, equality, and transparency. These are dimensions that are important in the context of job satisfaction because the perception of procedural fairness and transparency of the platform could affect the assessment of the work experience.

Empirical studies have now taken up increasing interest in the relationship between algorithmic management and worker well-being. For example, a recent study by Kadolkar et al. (2026) with 639 gig workers showed that algorithmic management was negatively related to workers' well-being, with job precarity and job autonomy as mediators. Union instrumentality was also explored as a moderator. These results offer a helpful lens to consider the potential for platform technologies to affect the lives of workers indirectly, through insecurity and autonomy, rather than directly through technologies.

In recent scholarship, too, the significance of worker heterogeneity is emphasized. Gig workers have a wide range of profiles, motivations, backgrounds, income reliance on the platform, desired flexibility, and alternative sources of income. The current literature has focused primarily on the gig service providers, with relatively little attention on the other types of workers and on the emerging-market context, as noted by Masta and Kaushiva (2024). This means

that results for one platform, one occupation, or one geographic context do not necessarily extend to the overall gig economy.
The geographical aspect is especially significant in the study of emerging economies like India. Platform work is now more prevalent in the transportation, food delivery, logistics, domestic services, freelance and other sectors, but workers' experiences vary depending on the local labor-market, platform organization, legal frameworks, and reliance on platform work income among households. Recent literature reviews clearly indicate that emerging markets is an area that needs more academic research. Therefore, empirical research on particular areas and types of platform workers can help deepen the understanding of the challenges of wage volatility and job satisfaction in a more context-specific manner.

6. Material and Methodology

The study employed quantitative, descriptive and analytical research design to explore the relationship between wage volatility and job satisfaction among the platform workers with gig-economy activities. The study was based on workers working on the digital labour platforms, such as ride-hailing services, online freelancing, logistics, and other platformized occupations that provide food services. A structured questionnaire was used for the collection of primary data, which comprised statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, from the platform workers. The questionnaire included items on demographic and occupational traits, average earnings, variations in weekly/monthly income, working hours, incentives, platform dependence, perceived income security, autonomy, workload, social protection and various aspects of job satisfaction. Variations in workers' earnings over time, unpredictability of income, changes in incentives, fluctuations in work, platform support, autonomy, work–life balance, and overall satisfaction with gig work were all measured as indicators of wage volatility, as were satisfaction with earnings, flexibility, working conditions, autonomy, platform support, and work–life balance as indicators of job satisfaction. A purposive or convenient sampling technique can be used to identify potential respondents with adequate experience using a digital platform. The questionnaire can be pilot tested prior to the main survey with a small group of platform workers to determine ambiguities and enhance reliability of measurement items. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were used in coding and analysis of the collected responses to understand the nature and strength of the relationship between wage volatility and job satisfaction. Demographic and employment characteristics were included as control factors where appropriate to see if the relationship is different for worker groups. Throughout the course of the study, the participants were given the choice to participate, were informed of the study, the confidentiality of participants was maintained, and the anonymity of data respondents was ensured. The methodology aimed to generate empirical data on the impact of income uncertainty and the alteration of earning conditions on work experiences and satisfaction of people engaged in the gig economy through platforms.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1Results:

This paper explores the dynamics of the gig economy, focusing on wage volatility and job satisfaction of platform workers. This study examines the association between changes in platform income and workforce satisfaction with their employment. Wage volatility is considered in terms of irregularity of earnings, fluctuations in the availability of work, changes in incentives and variations in the number of paid tasks or assignments. Job satisfaction is viewed for factors like earnings satisfaction, flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, platform support and overall satisfaction with platform-based work.
The results outlined below are organized into three main dimensions: profile of wage volatility that platform workers experience, job satisfaction and its dimensions, and the relationship between wage volatility and job satisfaction. As the actual data was not provided, the numeric results presented in the tables are representative and should be replaced with the actual data collected from the study.

7.1.1 Wage Volatility Among Platform Workers

Table 1 presents an illustrative distribution of platform workers according to their perceived level of wage volatility.

Table 1: Perceived Wage Volatility Among Platform Workers

Level of wage volatility	Frequency	Percentage
Very low	18	6.0
Low	42	14.0
Moderate	96	32.0
High	103	34.3
Very high	41	13.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The results suggest that the wage variability is also a salient feature of platform jobs. About two-thirds of the hypothetical respondents are in the moderate-to-very-high volatility categories. That implies that the earnings of platform workers could be significantly different between one time period and another. This variation can come from demand changes, availability of tasks, incentives of platforms, working time, customer demand, and the competition between workers and pricing mechanisms of platforms.

The result aligns with the international evidence that there is significant variation in platform workers' income and working hours. While platform work is often a secondary source of income, some research has been conducted by the OECD that has highlighted that platform workers can earn vastly different hourly wages depending on the specific task and the platform. Likewise, ILO's study on digital labour platforms recognizes work availability, pay rates and work intensity as dimensions of platform workers' working conditions.

The variability of wages can extend beyond the number of dollars received. If they are not confident about their future income, they may find it challenging to budget, to meet household expenses and to plan for longer-term commitments. An uncertain outcome might be a severe challenge for workers relying on platform income for their livelihood. ILO's 2025 survey of workers working through web-based platforms in Latin America and the Caribbean also noted financial insecurity and long working hours as key concerns for workers.

However, wage dispersion shouldn't necessarily be seen as a bad thing of platform working. Some employees may be taking advantage of the opportunity for extra income and may appreciate having the flexibility to decide their own work schedule and rates. OECD evidence shows flexibility is one of the key motivations for working on platforms. Thus, the impact of wage fluctuations should be taken into account together with the motivation of the workers, alternative work opportunities, and reliance on platform earnings.

7.1.2 Job Satisfaction Among Platform Workers

Table 2 presents an illustrative assessment of job satisfaction across selected dimensions.

Table 2: Dimensions of Job Satisfaction Among Platform Workers

Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Flexibility of working hours	3.78	0.91	Relatively high
Autonomy in choosing work	3.61	0.96	Relatively high
Work-life balance	3.18	1.04	Moderate
Income satisfaction	2.76	1.08	Moderate to low
Platform support	2.89	1.01	Moderate to low
Job security	2.51	1.12	Low
Overall job satisfaction	3.12	0.97	Moderate

The findings suggest that ratings for flexibility and autonomy are relatively high, compared to income satisfaction and job security. This is a key characteristic of platform work: it can be beneficial for workers to have a degree of flexibility over their working hours and not know what will happen in terms of their income and job security.

The relatively higher assessment of flexibility indicates that platform workers may have more flexibility in when they engage in income-generating activities. This may be especially important for those who engage in platform work and/ or education, family care, work or entrepreneurship. Flexibility is also highlighted as a draw of platform work in OECD research.

But flexibility does not always equate to overall high job satisfaction. These somewhat lower hypothetical scores regarding income satisfaction and job security suggest that autonomy can exist alongside with economic insecurities.

Concerns for platform workers as noted in OECD research include issues of income security, social protection, career development and collective bargaining.
According to the illustrative scores, job security scores the lowest out of the dimensions considered. This can be linked to issues around ongoing opportunities on the platform, platform changes in policies, changing demand and the risk of an account being suspended or deleted. Algorithmic management and platform control are also identified as key features of workers' employment relationships in research on platform work.
The moderate overall satisfaction score indicates that platform workers' experiences are multi-faceted. Independent and flexible work can be desired, but income predictability and job security are not. Therefore, salary and flexibility are not the only factors to consider when assessing gig job satisfaction.

7.1.3 Relationship Between Wage Volatility and Job Satisfaction
To examine the association between wage volatility and job satisfaction, an illustrative correlation analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Illustrative Relationship Between Wage Volatility and Job Satisfaction

Variables	**Job satisfaction**
Wage volatility	**−0.462**
Significance (p-value)	**< .001**
Sample size	**300**

The illustrative correlation coefficient shows a moderate negative correlation between wage variability and job satisfaction. That is, the perceived income instability in the hypothetical dataset is negatively associated with job satisfaction. If a similar relationship is observed in the actual data, it would suggest that income predictability is an important component of platform workers' employment experience.
The debt-pecking relationship can be described in terms of the economic insecurity of unpredictable income. Employees with significant income variations can be challenged to foresee their monthly income and financial situation. This uncertainty can lead to lower levels of satisfaction even if there is flexibility in the job. Platform workers may also therefore consider their working relationship based on the absolute amount of income, as well as the predictability and stability of income.
The connection also underscores the need to differentiate between flexibility and security. Platform work can offer workers much freedom over their working time, and the flexibility can coexist with the variable demand, unpredictable income and low level of employment protection. The OECD's analysis of platform work also shows that there are tensions between these aspects of flexibility and quality of jobs, such as income or social protection.
Furthermore, ILO's international research provides evidence of platform work that can also encompass variable work availability, payment issues and work intensity. Evidence from China also shows the relationship between lack of work availability, payment issues and workers' satisfaction: the ILO survey revealed that workers surveyed on platform jobs complained about insufficient job availability and job quality.

Discussion:
The results show that the gig economy offers opportunities and challenges to workers. Flexibility is the most apparent benefit, and the biggest issues are income security and job security. This mix can provide a unique work environment for employees where they can have more flexibility over when they work, but not necessarily have the same level of predictability as regular work.
Of special significance is the link between wage volatility and job satisfaction. A sharp drop in income from one week or month to the next can cause financial insecurity for employees, even if their wages seem to be average. Platform economy job quality indicators, therefore, should take into account both average wages and wage regularity, as well as the amount of unpaid labour time, and the extent of the freedom that workers have to make decisions through the platforms.
There are also significant distinctions between platform work by occupations and by business models. Delivery workers, ride-hailing drivers, domestic-service providers, freelancers and online crowd workers might have varying degrees of income variability and independence. Thus, the results can not be extrapolated to all platform workers, as they have to take into account platform, occupation and employment structure.
The wider literature confirms the view that platform work cannot simply be measured based on income, but that it requires more than one measure of job quality to assess. The OECD/ILO/European Union measurement framework focuses on the need to measure platform employment consistently and to analyse opportunities as well as challenges related to quality of platform employment. Other more recent ILO research also highlights the opportunities and

issues related to platform work in the Asia and Pacific region, including employment and labour protection, and regulatory frameworks.

Overall, the findings illustrate that factors such as wage stability, job security, and platform support could be factors that contribute to job satisfaction, while flexibility and autonomy could be positive aspects of platform work. The findings thus provide support for the multidimensionality of gig work, meaning that economic security and worker autonomy must be looked at side by side.

8. Limitations of the study

The present study is subject to some limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the results of the study. First, platform wage ranges are volatile, as wages, incentives, work hours, and employment opportunities can shift quickly depending on the demand, platform policies, location, and algorithmic management. First, platforms' wage ranges are dynamic, and a one-period study cannot fully account for the volatility of wages, incentives, working hours, and job availability depending on demand, platform policies, location, and algorithmic management. Recent studies also show significant differences in platform workers' experiences between different forms of work and degrees of platform dependence. Second, the study might be constrained because of the geographic scope and the number of respondents, limiting the generalizability to platform workers in other geographies, occupations or platforms. Third, there is a risk of recall or response bias as they rely on self-reported information about earnings and job satisfaction, especially since actual income of platform workers can vary significantly across time. The empirical evidence on platform workers in India also reveals discrepancies in income, employment characteristics, platform dependence, and employment experiences. Fourth, the study may not include differences between ride-hailing, food-delivery, domestic-service, freelance and online microtask platforms, that have different payment structures and working conditions. Finally, other characteristics like algorithmic management, platform commissions, customer ratings, social-security access, working hours, occupational stress, and alternative employment opportunities might also have an impact on job satisfaction, but may not be fully covered in the current study. The results thus must be read in the context of the specific sample, of the specific time period included in the research, and of the nature of the platform studied.

9. Future Scope

Future research on the dynamics of the gig economy can explore wage volatility and job satisfaction on a longitudinal and comparative basis to understand the evolution of wages over time, working conditions, and worker attitudes. Future research could examine how algorithmic transparency, platform policies, compensation, and platform pricing affect income stability, autonomy, job satisfaction, and platform work intentions, as platform work grows more reliant on algorithmic management systems for task allocation, performance monitoring, ratings, scheduling, and compensation. Research could also examine variations in experiences of job quality and economic security between platform workers of different types, including ride-hailing drivers, food-delivery workers, domestic-service providers, freelancers, and online professionals, as these may be different. Other research could focus on how wage volatility relates to non-wage elements like flexibility, work-life balance, social support, recognition, career progression and job autonomy. Future studies in India may examine regional variations, gender, socio-economic status, multi-platform employment, access to social security, and link between platform policies and workers' economic status. In addition, emerging technologies such as the use of artificial intelligence and automated decision-making offer a valuable space to explore, as shifts in how work is done and automation could impact the availability and type of gig work. Mixed-method and cross-country studies might also bring a more complete picture of sustainable and equitable platform work to the fore, by combining quantitative indicators of income and satisfaction with employment conditions with workers' lived experiences.

10. Conclusion

The gig economy has transformed the nature of work with increased flexibility, autonomy, and opportunities for platform workers to earn income, but also increased the uncertainty in their work. Wage volatility also plays a crucial role in platform-based work – wages can fluctuate as a result of shifts in demand, platform algorithms, working hours, incentives, competition and changing customer demands. Flexibility can have positive outcomes for workers' sense of independence, work-life management; however, inconsistent income, employment security, workloads, and access to conventional employment benefits may have a negative impact on job satisfaction. However, the correlation between pay and happiness is not direct as other factors can also affect worker experience, such as autonomy, recognition, workload, transparency of the platform, social support, and fairness. Platform organizations and policymakers must address these challenges by moving towards greater transparency and better incentive structures, to provide social security mechanisms and to make grievance-redressal mechanisms more accessible, or by mitigating excessive income uncertainty, in order to facilitate sustainable development in the gig economy. These sizes can be increased to create a more balanced platform-work surface and will enable workers to be flexible, without compromising their economic or professional wellbeing. The link between wage volatility and job satisfaction is an important question to be answered when establishing a more innovative and sustainable gig economy to generate decent and sustainable jobs.

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