



A Study on the Key Determinants of Gig Workers' Satisfaction in Platform Work

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the key determinants of gig workers' satisfaction in platform-based work environments in Bangalore, India. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), data were collected from 112 gig workers engaged in ride-hailing, food delivery, logistics, and digital freelancing. Four determinants- autonomy, flexibility, platform support, and customer rating systems were examined for their influence on overall job satisfaction using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. The regression model achieved $R^2 = .718$, explaining 71.8% of variance in satisfaction. Flexibility emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .480$, $p < .001$), followed by platform support ($\beta = .364$, $p < .001$) and customer rating ($\beta = .124$, $p = .038$). Autonomy was not a significant independent predictor ($\beta = .002$, $p = .973$), consistent with the concept of algorithmically constrained autonomy. Significant demographic differences were found across gender, age group, and platform type. The findings offer theoretical contributions to SDT and SET in non-traditional employment contexts and practical implications for platform organizations seeking to improve worker well-being and retention.

Keywords: *gig economy; job satisfaction; platform work; autonomy; flexibility; platform support; customer ratings; Bangalore; India*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

The nature of employment has undergone a profound transformation in recent years, driven by technological advancements, digital connectivity, and evolving workforce expectations. One of the most significant developments in this transformation is the emergence of the gig economy a labour market characterized by short-term, task-based, and platform-mediated work arrangements. Digital platforms have enabled workers to connect directly with customers, perform services on demand, and receive compensation on a per-task basis. Companies such as Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Urban Company have revolutionized employment structures by enabling flexible earning opportunities outside traditional organizational settings. Globally, the gig economy has expanded rapidly due to widespread smartphone usage, app-based service delivery models, and the growing demand for convenience-driven services. In India, this growth has been particularly significant due to urbanization, youth unemployment, and increasing digital adoption. Metropolitan cities have emerged as major hubs for platform-based



employment, with Bangalore leading as a technology-driven urban economy. As of 2026, Karnataka is home to an estimated 400,000 gig workers, with a significant proportion engaged in platform-based services within Bangalore itself. This includes workers in ride-hailing, delivery, logistics, and other app-mediated work arrangements. Unlike traditional employment relationships, gig work is based on independent contracting rather than employer-employee arrangements. Workers are not salaried employees but earn income through completed tasks or service deliveries. This structure provides workers with autonomy over their schedules, the flexibility to choose when and how much they work, and the opportunity to engage with multiple platforms simultaneously. For many individuals, gig work serves as a primary income source, while for others it functions as a supplementary earning opportunity. Despite its advantages, gig work presents several challenges that differentiate it from conventional employment. Gig workers often face income instability due to fluctuating demand, surge pricing variations, and algorithm-based task allocation systems. They typically lack employment benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement benefits. Performance evaluation is heavily dependent on customer ratings and platform algorithms, which may create stress and uncertainty. The absence of formal grievance redressal systems and limited interaction with platform management can further affect workers' perceptions of fairness and support.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the growing dependence on gig work, the nature of platform-based employment differs significantly from traditional jobs. Gig workers operate as independent contractors rather than salaried employees, and their earnings are directly tied to the number of tasks completed, demand fluctuations, and algorithm-driven allocation systems. While this structure offers flexibility and autonomy, it also introduces challenges such as income unpredictability, absence of social security benefits, limited job stability, and performance pressures driven by customer ratings and platform algorithms. Existing studies on the gig economy often emphasize the benefits of flexibility and independence but provide limited empirical insight into the broader determinants influencing worker satisfaction. Factors such as income stability, platform transparency, skill development opportunities, and support systems remain underexplored, particularly in the Indian context. Moreover, algorithmic management practices introduce new dimensions of control and evaluation that may affect workers' perceptions of fairness and autonomy. In Bangalore, where the gig workforce is rapidly expanding, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining the multiple determinants influencing gig workers' satisfaction within a single empirical framework. The central research problem of this study is, therefore, the lack of empirical evidence on the key determinants influencing gig workers' satisfaction in platform-based work, particularly in Bangalore. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how autonomy, flexibility, platform support, and customer rating systems influence the overall satisfaction of gig workers.

1.3 Research Objectives



The primary objective of this study is to examine the key determinants influencing gig workers' satisfaction in platform-based work environments in Bangalore. The specific objectives are:

- To analyze the impact of autonomy on gig workers' satisfaction.
- To examine the relationship between flexibility and gig workers' satisfaction.
- To evaluate the role of platform support in determining gig workers' satisfaction.
- To analyze the influence of customer rating systems on gig workers' satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

The present study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan) and Social Exchange Theory (SET; Blau). SDT emphasizes that human motivation is driven by the fulfilment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In gig contexts, autonomy is reflected in flexible scheduling and the freedom to accept or reject tasks. When these needs are satisfied, intrinsic motivation increases, leading to higher job satisfaction. However, excessive algorithmic control or rating pressure may restrict autonomy and reduce perceived competence, negatively influencing satisfaction. Social Exchange Theory explains satisfaction through reciprocal relationships between individuals and organizations. When gig workers perceive fairness in compensation, transparency in platform policies, and supportive communication, they develop trust and positive attitudes toward the platform. Conversely, a lack of transparency or unfair practices weakens this exchange relationship. Together, SDT and SET provide a comprehensive framework for examining gig workers' satisfaction by integrating psychological motivation with relational dynamics in platform-based employment.

2.2 Determinants of Gig Worker Satisfaction

2.2.1 Autonomy

Autonomy is widely regarded as one of the core attractions of gig work and is theoretically grounded in SDT. Kim et al. (2018) demonstrated that higher platform usability enhances perceived autonomy, which in turn increases job satisfaction. Yang and Panyagometh (2023) found that autonomy significantly predicts satisfaction and organizational commitment in digital knowledge platforms. However, Wood et al. (2019) introduced the concept of 'constrained autonomy,' arguing that while workers appear independent, algorithmic task allocation restricts meaningful choice. In the Indian context, Vishwanathan et al. (2025) found that ride-hailing drivers report higher satisfaction when they perceive control over working hours but dissatisfaction when incentive structures indirectly pressure them to extend working time.

H₁: Autonomy has a significant positive influence on gig workers' satisfaction.

2.2.2 Flexibility



Flexibility refers to temporal and structural adaptability in work arrangements. Salmah et al. (2023) identified flexibility as a consistent determinant of satisfaction across global gig economy studies. Kim et al. (2023) reported that flexible scheduling positively influences psychological well-being and work-life balance. Nevertheless, De Stefano (2016) argued that flexibility can become economically coercive, compelling workers to align schedules with peak-demand hours to maximize earnings. Jin et al. (2024) confirmed that excessive working hours negatively impact satisfaction and mental health.

H₂: Flexibility has a significant positive influence on gig workers' satisfaction.

2.2.3 Platform Support

Platform support encompasses usability, communication systems, feedback mechanisms, and operational reliability. Kim et al. (2018) found that platform quality enhances satisfaction by increasing efficiency and autonomy perception. Alauddin (2025) demonstrated that timely payments and effective feedback systems strengthen worker trust. Hsieh et al. (2023) reported that dispute resolution systems improve perceived organizational support. Social Exchange Theory posits that when platforms provide adequate support, workers reciprocate with higher satisfaction and engagement.

H₃: Platform support has a significant positive influence on gig workers' satisfaction.

2.2.4 Customer Rating Systems

Customer rating systems function as performance evaluation mechanisms. Rosenblat and Stark (2016) highlighted that ratings generate psychological pressure due to deactivation risks. Shekhawat and Saxena (2025) found that Indian gig workers experience stress related to rating-based penalties. Jin et al. (2024) observed that low ratings reduce income opportunities. Conversely, Singh et al. (2024) noted that positive ratings enhance recognition and intrinsic motivation. Thus, ratings act simultaneously as motivators and stressors, influencing satisfaction through performance evaluation dynamics.

H₄: Customer rating systems significantly influence gig workers' satisfaction.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Sample

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design consistent with the deductive research tradition, grounded in both descriptive and analytical approaches. The target population comprised gig workers employed in Bangalore across four platform-mediated sectors: ride-hailing, food delivery, logistics, and digital freelancing. Respondents were required to be currently engaged in platform-based work and to have at least six months of gig work experience. Data were collected through a structured Google Forms questionnaire distributed via professional networks, online gig communities, and peer referrals. The final sample consisted of 112 valid responses. The sample was predominantly male (83.9%), with most respondents belonging to younger age groups - 58.0% were between 18–25 years and



26.8% were between 26–30 years. A majority (58.9%) were engaged in ride-hailing, followed by food delivery (16.1%), logistics (13.4%), and freelancing (11.6%). Critically, 75.9% of respondents reported that gig work was their primary source of income, underscoring the economic centrality of platform work for this population.

3.2 Measures

Autonomy was measured using five items from the Autonomy Subscale of the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Platform support was operationalized through seven items adapted from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Flexibility was assessed using four items operationalized from the work schedule flexibility literature (Allen et al., 2013). Customer rating systems were measured using seven items drawn from procedural justice and algorithmic monitoring literature (Greenberg, 1990; Kellogg et al., 2020). Gig workers' job satisfaction was measured using eight items from the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1977). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

3.3 Reliability

Internal consistency for all scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All scales achieved good to excellent reliability, exceeding the acceptable threshold of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). Detailed reliability statistics are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics for All Measurement Scales (N = 112)

Scale	Items	Cronbach's α	Reliability Level
Autonomy (JDS)	5	.838	Good
Platform Support (SPOS)	7	.845	Good
Flexibility (FWA)	4	.804	Good
Customer Rating	7	.800	Good
Job Satisfaction (MSQ)	8	.873	Good

3.4 Analytic Strategy

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analytic sequence was: (1) frequency analysis for demographic profiling; (2) descriptive statistics for construct summaries; (3) Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis; (4) independent samples t-tests for gender and income source comparisons; (5) one-way ANOVA with post hoc Tukey HSD for platform type and age group comparisons; (6) Pearson bivariate correlation analysis; and (7) multiple linear regression to test H₁–H₄. All tests used $\alpha = .05$ as the significance threshold.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Sample Profile



The demographic profile of the 112 valid respondents revealed a predominantly male (83.9%), young (58.0% aged 18–25) workforce. Ride-hailing was the dominant platform type (58.9%). Most respondents (74.1%) earned between INR 10,000–20,000 per month and reported less than two years of gig work experience (74.1%). The predominance of younger, male, and less-experienced workers aligns with the typical profile of Bangalore's urban gig workforce and is relevant for interpreting differences in satisfaction levels across demographic groups.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

All five primary constructs recorded composite means above 3.97 on the five-point scale (Table 2). Customer Rating had the highest mean ($M = 4.41$, $SD = .48$), indicating strong agreement that ratings play an important role in platform work. Job Satisfaction followed ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .61$), suggesting generally positive satisfaction levels across the sample. Flexibility ($M = 4.24$) and Platform Support ($M = 4.22$) also recorded high means, while Autonomy had the lowest mean ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .76$), reflecting greater variability in workers' perceived independence.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Study Constructs (N = 112)

Construct	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Autonomy	111	1.40	5.00	3.97	0.76
Platform Support	112	2.57	5.00	4.22	0.59
Flexibility	112	2.00	5.00	4.24	0.72
Customer Rating	112	2.71	5.00	4.41	0.48
Job Satisfaction	112	2.13	5.00	4.32	0.61

Note. All variables measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

4.3 Group Differences: T-Tests and ANOVA

Independent samples t-tests revealed statistically significant gender differences across all five constructs. Male respondents reported higher satisfaction ($t = 3.480$, $p < .001$), greater autonomy ($t = 2.268$, $p = .025$), higher platform support ($t = 3.402$, $p < .001$), greater flexibility ($t = 2.102$, $p = .038$), and higher customer ratings ($t = 4.713$, $p < .001$) compared to female respondents. These findings suggest that gender plays a significant role in shaping gig work experiences, potentially reflecting differences in safety, access to opportunities, and platform engagement patterns. One-way ANOVA results indicated significant variation in job satisfaction across platform types ($F(3, 108) = 9.494$, $p < .001$). Food delivery workers reported the highest mean satisfaction ($M = 4.545$), followed by logistics workers ($M = 4.167$), freelancers ($M = 3.917$), and ride-hailing workers ($M = 3.894$). Age group also produced a significant effect ($F(4, 107) = 2.748$, $p = .032$), with workers aged 25–30 reporting the highest satisfaction ($M = 4.317$) and those aged 31–35 reporting the lowest ($M = 3.722$).

4.4 Correlation Analysis



Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation matrix. All relationships among the five constructs were statistically significant at $p < .001$. The strongest relationship with job satisfaction was observed for flexibility ($r = .793$), followed by platform support ($r = .763$). Autonomy showed a moderate positive relationship ($r = .583$), while customer rating had the weakest but still significant relationship ($r = .495$). The independent variables also showed significant inter-correlations, with flexibility and platform support strongly correlated ($r = .710$), suggesting that these dimensions of gig work are structurally linked.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 112)

	Autonomy	Platform Support	Flexibility	Cust. Rating	Satisfaction
Autonomy	1.000	.585***	.675***	.357***	.583***
Platform Support	.585***	1.000	.710***	.459***	.763***
Flexibility	.675***	.710***	1.000	.424***	.793***
Customer Rating	.357***	.459***	.424***	1.000	.495***
Satisfaction	.583***	.763***	.793***	.495***	1.000

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). Correlations based on mean composite scores.

4.5 Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression was conducted with job satisfaction as the dependent variable and the four determinants as predictors. The model was statistically significant ($F(4, 106) = 67.308$, $p < .001$) and explained 71.8% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .718$, Adjusted $R^2 = .707$). All VIF values were below 3, confirming the absence of multicollinearity. Detailed regression results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Results: Predictors of Gig Worker Satisfaction (N = 111)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	.311	.310		1.001	.319	
Flexibility	.408	.070	.480	5.822	< .001	2.552
Platform Support	.376	.079	.364	4.748	< .001	2.200
Customer Rating	.157	.075	.124	2.105	.038	1.292
Autonomy	.002	.057	.002	.033	.973	1.925

Note. Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction. $R^2 = .718$, Adjusted $R^2 = .707$, $F(4,106) = 67.308$, $p < .001$.

Flexibility was the strongest positive predictor of satisfaction ($\beta = .480$, $p < .001$), confirming H₂. Platform support was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = .364$, $p < .001$), confirming H₃. Customer rating had a positive but relatively smaller effect ($\beta = .124$, $p = .038$), providing partial support for H₄. Autonomy did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = .002$, $p = .973$), leading to the non-support of H₁. A summary of hypothesis outcomes is presented in Table 5.



Table 5. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Hypothesis	β	p-value	Outcome
H ₁	Autonomy → Job Satisfaction	.002	.973	Not Supported
H ₂	Flexibility → Job Satisfaction	.480	< .001	Supported
H ₃	Platform Support → Job Satisfaction	.364	< .001	Supported
H ₄	Customer Ratings → Job Satisfaction	.124	.038	Supported

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Flexibility as the Dominant Determinant

The identification of flexibility as the strongest predictor of gig worker satisfaction ($\beta = .480$, R^2 contribution the highest among the four predictors) aligns with SDT's core proposition that autonomy over one's time and process enhances intrinsic motivation. For gig workers in Bangalore, the ability to choose working hours and manage schedules is the most valued feature of platform work. This finding is consistent with Salmah et al. (2023) and Kim et al. (2023), who identified flexibility as a central motivational resource in gig employment. However, the benefit of flexibility is contingent on its genuineness: De Stefano's (2016) warning about economically coercive flexibility remains relevant, as demand-peak incentives may subtly constrain workers' scheduling choices.

5.2 Platform Support and the Social Exchange Dynamic

The strong positive effect of platform support ($\beta = .364$, $p < .001$) confirms SET's prediction that workers reciprocate perceived organizational investment with higher satisfaction. Despite the absence of formal employment relationships in gig work, workers still expect fairness, communication, and responsiveness from platforms. This finding extends SET to non-traditional employment contexts, demonstrating that organizational support remains a powerful determinant of satisfaction even under algorithmically mediated work arrangements. The correlation matrix further reinforces this: platform support and flexibility are strongly inter-correlated ($r = .710$), suggesting that platforms which invest in support also tend to offer more genuine flexibility, creating compounding positive effects on satisfaction.

5.3 The Constrained Autonomy Paradox

Autonomy's non-significant independent effect ($\beta = .002$, $p = .973$) in the regression model despite its moderate bivariate correlation with satisfaction ($r = .583$) represents one of the study's most theoretically important findings. When controlling for flexibility, platform support, and customer ratings, autonomy loses its explanatory power entirely. This supports Wood et al.'s (2019) 'constrained autonomy' thesis: gig workers perceive independence in when and how they work, but algorithmic task allocation, surge pricing structures, and rating-based incentives systematically narrow meaningful choice. The high bivariate correlation likely reflects shared variance with flexibility workers who experience greater flexibility also



perceive higher autonomy but when flexibility is included in the model, the independent contribution of autonomy disappears.

5.4 Customer Ratings as Dual-Role Mechanisms

Customer rating systems had a significant but modest effect on satisfaction ($\beta = .124, p = .038$). This dual role serving simultaneously as motivational feedback and as a source of control-related anxiety is consistent with emerging algorithmic management literature (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Shekhawat & Saxena, 2025). High ratings signal competence and increase task access, fulfilling SDT's competence need. However, the constant threat of rating-induced deactivation creates a chronic evaluation pressure that moderates the motivational benefit. The lower mean satisfaction among ride-hailing workers ($M = 3.894$) compared to food delivery workers ($M = 4.545$) may partly reflect differential rating stakes across platform types.

5.5 Demographic Patterns and Practical Implications

The significant gender differences across all study variables are an important finding with direct managerial implications. Female gig workers reported lower satisfaction, lower perceived autonomy, and lower platform support than their male counterparts. These gaps likely reflect safety concerns, social pressures around late-night work, and differential access to platform incentive schemes rather than fundamental differences in satisfaction preferences. Platform managers should design gender-sensitive policies, including safety features, flexible location preferences, and targeted communication to address these disparities.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study makes three key theoretical contributions. First, it extends Self-Determination Theory into the gig economy by demonstrating that flexibility a proxy for temporal autonomy is a stronger predictor of satisfaction than autonomy as formally measured. This reconceptualizes gig work autonomy as 'temporal autonomy' rather than 'task autonomy,' suggesting that future SDT applications in platform contexts should distinguish between these dimensions. Second, it extends Social Exchange Theory to platform-mediated employment by confirming that perceived organizational support remains a critical satisfaction driver even in the absence of formal employment relationships. Third, the finding of constrained autonomy where perceived autonomy fails to independently predict satisfaction once controlling for flexibility and platform support contributes to the algorithmic management literature by providing quantitative evidence for what has previously been described primarily in qualitative research.

6.2 Practical Implications for Platform Managers and HR

Three practical recommendations follow from the findings. First, platforms should treat flexibility as a core product feature rather than a recruitment pitch. Ensuring that workers genuinely control their schedules through absence of hidden penalties for offline periods,



transparent surge incentive structures, and clear task rejection policies is the single most impactful lever for improving satisfaction. Second, investment in platform support infrastructure, including efficient grievance redressal, responsive in-app communication, and transparent policy announcements, produces significant satisfaction returns as predicted by SET. Worker trust, once established through fair exchanges, tends to be self-reinforcing. Third, rating systems should be redesigned to reduce anxiety-inducing elements while retaining motivational value. Options include averaging ratings over longer periods, providing contextual dispute mechanisms, and supplementing customer ratings with platform-side performance metrics.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has four main limitations. First, the sample size of 112, while statistically adequate, may limit generalizability across the full diversity of Bangalore's gig workforce. Future research should target larger, stratified samples to improve representativeness. Second, all constructs were measured through self-report, introducing the possibility of common method bias. Future work should incorporate behavioral data from platform logs or supervisor assessments. Third, the geographical confinement to Bangalore restricts the applicability of findings to cities with different socio-economic profiles. Comparative studies across Indian metropolises would be valuable. Fourth, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference. Longitudinal studies could track how satisfaction evolves as workers gain experience or as platforms modify their policies. Future research should also incorporate additional determinants not examined here income stability, mental health, skill development, and social protection access to develop a more comprehensive model of gig worker satisfaction. Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation would complement the quantitative findings by capturing the lived experiences of algorithmically managed workers. Given the rapid diffusion of AI-driven task allocation and generative AI tools in platform environments, future studies should examine how emerging technologies reconfigure the autonomy-satisfaction relationship.

8. CONCLUSION

This study examined the key determinants of gig workers' satisfaction in platform-based work environments among 112 workers in Bangalore. All five constructs registered high means above 3.97 on the five-point scale. The multiple regression model explained 71.8% of variance in satisfaction, with flexibility ($\beta = .480$) and platform support ($\beta = .364$) emerging as the two dominant predictors. Customer rating had a significant but modest effect ($\beta = .124$), while autonomy was not an independent predictor ($\beta = .002$, $p = .973$). These results carry a clear message for platform organizations and policymakers: gig worker satisfaction is structurally determined. Flexibility is not merely an inherent feature of gig work it requires deliberate platform design to be genuinely experienced by workers. Platform support is not a passive by-product of a good app experience it requires active investment in communication, fairness, and dispute resolution. Rating systems motivate when they empower, but demotivate when they



threaten. And autonomy, widely marketed as gig work's defining advantage, is often more constrained than acknowledged. As the gig economy continues to grow and shape the futures of millions of urban workers in India, addressing these structural determinants will be essential for creating platform ecosystems that are not only economically productive but also equitable and satisfying for those who power them.

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