





How flexibility in gig work affects work-life balance: A case study of online service platform industry

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ABSTRACT

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The study explored the various challenges faced by gig workers that inhibit their ability to maintain a work-life balance. Although the concept of gig work has been studied earlier by scholars, there was a lack of research on how the work flexibility of gig workers results in poor management of work-life balance. It is important to note that the study was conducted on 150 gig workers who contributed to the research findings. The study revealed that factors such as unsocial working hours, job insecurity, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress significantly impact the work-life balance of gig workers across various platforms in the online service industry. Furthermore, job insecurity was the most significant factor affecting work-life balance. This can be attributed to the fact that job insecurity leads to emotional imbalances among gig workers, which can have serious repercussions. Overall, the research highlights the importance of designing worker-friendly employment practices in the gig economy. This study is of immense significance to the gig economy's managers for devising employee-friendly management practices.

Contribution/Originality: This study analyzed the work flexibility of gig workers, resulting in poor management of work-life balance. The pros and cons of gig work were indeed discussed before; however, there was a lack of research focusing on how gig work led to poor work-life balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern workplace practices increasingly offer worker flexibility so that they can control their employment and balance it with their personal lives. Today's contemporary organizations have witnessed a shift from traditional employment opportunities to temporary job opportunities like gig work. The British gig economy tripled during the period from 2017 to 2021, with Uber recording 5.4 million 'earners' or food delivery workers and drivers, along with DoorDash recording two million active users (Delouya, 2023). This indicates the enormous growth potential of gig workers. Furthermore, the shortcomings of service work have also had a significant impact on the proliferation of gig work. Gig workers can work during their convenient hours, which is an employment opportunity not typically available to workers in traditional service industry jobs. In 2020, 26% of the workforce in Malaysia were gig workers due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the demand for low-entry-level and flexible working arrangements (DNA, 2024). This indicates the fact that one of the primary reasons why gig workers proliferated can be attributed to the changed manpower demands and availability due to the advent of the pandemic. However, the pattern of gig work signifies irregular working hours since this kind of employment is different from traditional work.

The non-standard employment form of employment or gig work raises several questions about labour time and the utilization of workers' free time, which highlights modern world industrial capitalism (Schein, 2021). Usually, gig work offers greater autonomy and flexibility; however, it is implemented without safety nets, which are usually more common in formal employment, leading to work intensification, unpredictability, poor work-life balance, and financial hardships (Warren, 2021). The unique nature of gig work not only challenges financial security but also questions work-life balance. The time strain, long working hours, work-time autonomy, and other factors challenge the loss of balance between professional and personal life, which can be disturbing in the long run. Therefore, it is crucial to study how gig work and the flexibility it offers affect the work-life balance of gig workers, considering the online service platform industry.

1.1. Background of the Study

Gig workers have the flexibility to work at their own convenience, which often results in irregular working hours, challenging the work-life balance. The flexible economy involves fixed-term contracts such as freelance, contract, and flexible work, primarily focused on connecting workers with customers. However, it can lead to work-family conflicts that cause increased job dissatisfaction (Rasheed, Sati, & Bano, 2022). This indicates that gig workers experience work-family conflicts attributable to irregular income and long working hours, which further impair work-life balance. Gig workers, such as freelancers, suffer from poor work-life balance because various dimensions of work-life such as partnership, finances, career, social life, health and fitness, and personal growth are affected (Rasheed et al., 2022). For example, due to the flexible nature of gig work, workers often find little time to maintain their psychological and physical health, which can lead to anxiety and stress, thereby hampering their work-life balance. In other words, gig workers may have limited time for self-care activities because of the flexibility of their work, which ultimately affects their personal and professional lives. Additionally, gig workers tend to overextend themselves by working on multiple projects simultaneously, and the financial benefits they receive can lead to exhaustion and insufficient time spent with their families (Shahzadi, Rafiq, & Ali, 2022). This indicates that the structure of gig workers' work prevents them from spending quality time with their families, leading to poor work-life balance. Furthermore, gig workers operate in flexible work arrangements that can also create stressful work environments, which hampers their work and family life (Shahzadi et al., 2022). This indicates that the flexible nature of gig work, due to irregular work hours and stressful situations, gives rise to tensions between family and professional life. Moreover, the work pattern of gig workers is quite different from that of the traditional service industry, which is a major contributing factor to poor work-life balance. Overall, flexible work settings in gig work lead to stress, causing workers to be unable to strike a balance between workplace and personal life.

1.2. Problem Statement

Flexibility in gig work presents several challenges regarding balancing personal and professional life. Gig workers are expected to work from home, which leads to reduced social interaction and intense work schedules characterized by erratic and unsocial hours (Veluchamy, Reddy, Pillai, & Singh, 2021). This indicates that long, strenuous working hours cause gig workers to allocate insufficient time for their families, affecting their personal lives. In other words, although flexible work arrangements are beneficial for many workers, the long and erratic working hours create problems in balancing professional and personal lives. The current economic situation is forcing household members to adjust their family structures to meet their dynamic work needs, such as gig work; however, this process generates social conflicts that challenge their work-life balance, especially for women (Rincón & Martínez, 2020). This is primarily attributed to increased work pressure and long working hours, which make it challenging for women workers of childbearing age. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic created uncertainty in traditional employment, which further triggered an increase in gig workers, helping to scale up business operations (Mahato, Kumar, & Jena, 2021). This indicates the level of differences that exist between traditional service industries

and gig workers, which form a major source of conflicting work-life balance. One in five workers is a gig worker, which shows its growing popularity; however, it is different from standard employment since they are hired for the short term only and do not earn a fixed income (Watson, Kistler, Graham, & Sinclair, 2021). This indicates that precarious employment, such as gig work, is unique compared to traditional employment due to the employment contract and compensation type, which create stress and uncertainty in work-life balance for gig workers. This further contributes to poor work-life balance. Therefore, it is crucial to study the online service platform industry.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Definition of Key Terms

2.1.1. Gig Work

Gig work is typically characterized by short-term and contract-based employment options. It is defined as a temporary employment category performed through a technology platform that aligns supply and demand and does not include employment benefits (Watson et al., 2021). This highlights the fact that gig work is short-term employment, often synonymous with goods-on-demand, and it does not provide typical security and safety employment benefits as characterized in traditional employment. Unlike standard employment, gig workers do not receive a salary or wage, including contracted, part-time, and temporary employees. A majority of definitions of gig work describe this form of employment as short-term, with loose boundaries regarding work timings and requiring workers to complete finite assignments (Watson et al., 2021). This indicates that gig workers are characterized by project-based compensation, which means they are paid based on specific projects. For example, Amazon's Mechanical Turk workers receive compensation only after completing tasks, while Airbnb hosts' earnings depend on the number of days their properties are booked. The challenges faced by gig workers are unique compared to those in traditional organizations, including organizational challenges, viability, emotional issues, relational and identity concerns, and most importantly, the uncertainty regarding their career paths (Caza, Reid, Ashford, & Granger, 2022). In summary, it can be concluded that the work patterns of gig workers differ from those of traditional service organizations, leading to various organizational and personal challenges.

2.1.2. Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance focuses on the allocation of nearly equal time to professional roles as well as family life. Work-life balance is achieved when there are sufficient personal resources to meet the varying demands of family and work roles, which leads to work satisfaction (Brough, Timms, Chan, Hawkes, & Rasmussen, 2022). This indicates that the definition of work-life balance focuses on both the cognitive component and the success assessment component, as well as affective or contentment components, indicating overall satisfying individual experiences in every life domain. Furthermore, Khateeb (2021) defines balance between personal and workplace life, which involves achieving fulfilling life experiences across multiple aspects, including work and family. This requires various parameters such as commitment, action, and valuable time. Work-life balance pertains to fine-tuning the attributes of professional and personal life, including religious, social, and leisure roles, and is not limited to family life. Overall, the implications of work-life balance are significant, primarily focusing on balancing professional and personal interests.

2.2. Significance of Work-Life Balance in the Gig Economy

Maintaining work-life balance is of crucial importance for ensuring job satisfaction and overall happiness of individuals. As per Khateeb (2021), compensation theory states that workers seem to compensate for the specific life aspects deficits with some other aspects. In this case, workers who have a deficiency in one aspect of life, such as work-life balance, seem to compensate by working more than expected in their professional life, which ultimately creates a balance between work and family life. As per Gragnano, Simbula, and Miglioretti (2020) work-life balance is crucial for maintaining wellness in the family and health domains, and 25% of the employees in a study agree with this fact,

which indicates that fulfilling a balance between office and personal life is crucial for ensuring the overall health and well-being of employees. Furthermore, work-life balance enhances job satisfaction among workers, which further leads to increased work participation (Gragnano et al., 2020). This indicates that having a proper balance between workplace and personal life is essential for ensuring workers' motivation and satisfaction at work, which further contributes to their overall well-being and enhanced organizational productivity. Overall, it can be concluded that work-life balance is essential for maintaining overall worker well-being, enhancing job satisfaction, and ensuring worker happiness.

Work-life balance is crucial for organizations as well, and it is not only relevant for gig workers. Additionally, Pasamar (2020) pointed out that maintaining a work-life balance is of paramount importance for organizations to create clear and strong messages regarding appropriate employee behaviors, which leads to greater organizational outcomes such as employee performance, job satisfaction, and commitment. This indicates that, apart from enhancing overall employee well-being and job satisfaction, focusing on work-life balance also improves organizational outcomes. Work-life balance fosters the connection between job attitudes and psychological capital, which has a significant impact on job attitudes (Parray, Shah, & Islam, 2022). This means that when employees feel secure in the organization and can share their opinions without fear, they foster a positive job attitude, which leads to greater job satisfaction and an improved ability to balance professional and personal life. In other words, job attitudes are also influenced by enhancing psychological capital and the overall work-life balance of employees. Overall, improving work-life balance is important for enhancing organizational outcomes and fostering positive job attitudes among workers.

2.3. Flexibility Challenges in Gig Work

Flexibility in employment offers several benefits over traditional employment; however, it also presents several challenges for gig workers. The opinions of Anwar and Graham (2021) reveal that gig workers can work flexible hours. However, this also fosters a culture of hiring and firing and is influenced by cultural-cognitive constraints such as procrastination, workers' work dependence, and structural work availability. This indicates that in gig work, the structural work pattern, the need for worker availability, and the work dependence of gig workers promote a culture of hire and fire, which seriously threatens their job security and ultimately challenges the balance between workplace and personal life. Additionally, flexibility in gig work leads to unsocial working hours and increased work intensity, which affects workers' mental and physiological health (Anwar & Graham, 2021). This indicates that gig work flexibility leads to long and unjustified working hours that challenge the physical and mental well-being of workers. Overall, it can be concluded that gig work presents flexibility challenges that affect workers' overall well-being.

As discussed previously, gig work provides flexibility to workers; however, health and psychological well-being are major concerns. According to the findings of Tay and Mohamad (2022), gig workers are not exposed to workplace health and safety programs and lack health insurance benefits. This indicates that despite the flexible nature of gig work, workers are deprived of adequate health and well-being benefits typically offered by traditional organizations, which ultimately affects their overall well-being. Furthermore, the flexible nature of gig work leads to autonomous jobs with long working hours, unpredictable earnings, and minimal income (Tay & Mohamad, 2022). This indicates that despite working long hours, gig workers are entitled to unpredictable compensation, which can be low according to industry standards. This highlights that gig work can be regarded as a form of workplace exploitation through the manipulation of freedom and flexibility. Furthermore, gig work's instability and unpredictability give rise to prolonged stress, which further impacts their physical health as well as mental health issues such as low job satisfaction, substance abuse, sleep problems, anxiety, and others (Hafeez, Gupta, & Sprajcer, 2022). This indicates that the poor mental health of gig workers can be attributed to work flexibility, low wages, poor job stability, and excessive worker surveillance. In other words, the structural pattern of gig work is responsible for these issues. Overall, it can be concluded that gig workers face mental and physical health problems due to the nature of gig work.

2.4. Online Service Platforms' Impact on Work-Life Balance

The increase in online service platforms has impacted the overall well-being of gig workers, posing challenges in maintaining work-life balance. The tremendous growth of online service platforms has created significant opportunities for gig work, as they offer enhanced accessibility and increased convenience for workers. Traditional employment has shifted towards advanced technological arrangements, such as online service delivery platforms (for example, Swiggy and Zomato). However, this shift has also led to longer login hours, increased competition, and late-night deliveries by workers (Behl, Rajagopal, Sheorey, & Mahendra, 2022). This indicates that gig work has created many career opportunities compared to traditional employment; however, it has increased stress due to longer working hours, stiff competition, and irregular hours of operation, which have contributed to uncertainty and stress. For example, gig workers employed in food delivery platforms have to bear expenses such as vehicle maintenance costs, fuel, and internet costs, which pose barriers to gig work. Furthermore, Alvarez de la Vega et al. (2023) argued that online service delivery platforms offer flexible work opportunities to gig workers; however, they create issues with work autonomy, work availability expectations, freelancer expectations, and work detachment, which jeopardize gig workers' work-life balance. Overall, it can be concluded that the online service delivery platform's unique and demanding work model challenges the personal and professional lives of employees.

2.5. Impact of Gig Work on Work-Life Balance

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has witnessed a tremendous proliferation in the gig economy since many families and individuals lost their traditional employment and hence had to adapt to alternative forms of employment like gig work. According to the findings of Zulkefli and Omar (2023), the work-life balance for gig workers is affected due to the increased stress for gig workers, which ultimately leads to absenteeism, low job satisfaction, and employee turnover. This indicates that gig work hampers the emotional, physical, and social well-being of workers, which ultimately affects their ability to balance work and home life. Unlike traditional working environments, gig work causes an increase in job demands and erratic work schedules, which ultimately affect workers' ability to maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional life (Zulkefli & Omar, 2023). This means that although gig work is known for offering work flexibility, however, the erratic professional life due to the nature of the work take a toll on the worker's personal life, which ultimately impacts the employee's well-being. However, Kim, Chung, and Woo (2023) argue that the overall life quality of life, including the proper balance between professional and personal life, has a positive association with psychological well-being. The overall quality of life depends on various factors beyond work-life balance. It can be concluded that gig work induces stress among gig workers, which not only results in poor job satisfaction but also ultimately affects work-life balance.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

It is crucial to understand the theoretical foundation behind the topics of gig work, work flexibility, and the balance between life and job responsibilities. According to Yusof, Ismail, Rashid, Khan, and Yusof (2024), the theory of JD-R demands considers psychological, physical, and organizational aspects of work, which require continuous effort and incur psychological and physiological costs (Yusof et al., 2024). In other words, the resources refer to various organizational resources, including social, psychological, physical, and organizational job aspects that help employees reduce job demands, achieve various work goals, and enhance personal learning and well-being. In the backdrop of the gig economy and job demands-resources theory, task management involves an individual's ability of workload and take note of their control over working hours, which can be witnessed as job demand, and if handled misappropriately, it can cause employee burnout and stress. Additionally, Hill (2021) agrees that the algorithmic management of gig workers gives rise to non-standard working hours, poor health among gig workers, job insecurity, and unpredictability of gig earnings, significantly affecting workers' well-being. Furthermore, these issues are caused

by the work flexibility attributed to gig economy working patterns, which ultimately takes a toll on workers' lives. Overall, it can be concluded that the job demands-resources theory is a crucial foundation for this study.

2.7. Gaps in Literature

Previous research has extensively discussed the advantages of the gig economy along with some of its negative consequences. However, most of these studies focus on the attributes of gig work and pay little attention to the impact of flexibility induced by the structure of work on gig workers, particularly regarding maintaining a balance between workplace and personal situations. For example, the study of [Saragih and Pratami \(2024\)](#) highlights the adoption of the gig economy and its connection with flexible recruitment policies and how it relates to employee performance. However, it does not elucidate the outcomes of gig work's flexibility on employees in balancing their professional and personal lives. Moreover, there are limited studies that explore the specific experiences of gig workers on various online service platforms, since most studies focus on the amalgamation of different industries such as delivery services, freelancing, and others. Therefore, it can be concluded that this current study aims to fill this gap by examining how gig work's flexibility impacts the work-life balance of workers across various online service delivery platforms.

3. RESEARCH GAP

3.1. Research Objectives

The objectives of this investigation are crucial to exploring the details about gig employment.

- To analyze the level of flexibility in gig work offered by various online service platforms.
- To identify the challenges faced by gig workers in balancing their professional and personal lives due to work flexibility.
- To find out the impact of work flexibility on the work-life balance of gig workers in the online service platform industry.

3.2. Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

- What is the level of flexibility in gig work offered by various online service platforms?
- What are the challenges experienced by gig workers in striking a balance between leisure and work equilibrium due to work flexibility?
- What is the impact of work flexibility on the work-life balance of gig workers in the online service platform industry?

3.3. Research Hypothesis

H₁: Unsocial working hours create a negative impact on leisure-work equilibrium for gig workers

H₂: Job insecurity creates a negative impact on work-life balance for gig workers

H₃: Unpredictable earnings create a negative effect on leisure-work equilibrium for gig workers

H₄: Prolonged stress creates a negative impact on leisure-work equilibrium for gig workers

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Description of Methodology

The study aims to examine how the flexibility of the gig economy impacts the leisure-work balance by considering the online service delivery platform industry. A quantitative research methodology was employed to understand the gig economy's flexibility in balancing work and family life responsibilities. Quantitative research involves quantifying opinions, behaviors, attitudes, and other factors to generalize findings from a large sample using statistical analysis ([Mohajan, 2020](#)). This investigation employed a quantitative research method to examine the

association between the challenges of gig work and leisure-work balance, with work flexibility serving as a moderating factor.

Additionally, the current study utilized a structured closed survey questionnaire to obtain accurate and rapid responses, which helped minimize participant bias and improve response quality. Survey-based empirical research involves problem identification, determining associated factors, and establishing interconnections to achieve the research objectives (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). A structured survey-based questionnaire was used to collect responses from gig workers working on various online service delivery platforms. The questionnaire was deployed for this research to gather responses from gig workers to fulfill the research objectives.

4.2. Details of Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was divided into seven sections. Each section contained three questions based on the theoretical structure. The first part of the questionnaire addresses demographic information about the participants to understand their personal backgrounds, which provides a solid foundation for the study. The subsequent sections focus on questions related to the level of flexibility, unsocial working hours, job insecurity, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress.

All these factors contribute to understanding the various workplace flexibility challenges faced by gig workers. The final section of the questionnaire examines the impact of work flexibility on leisure-work balance, which helps explore how gig work flexibility influences work-life balance, particularly through online service delivery platforms.

4.3. Questionnaire Distribution Method

The questionnaire was distributed using two primary methods: Facebook and gig work platforms. On Facebook, specific groups related to the gig economy were targeted, where most gig workers shared their experiences. Additionally, gig work platforms such as Fiverr and Upwork were utilized, facilitating communication with gig workers to understand their work experiences. Some food delivery and ride-hailing platforms were also included. A total of 150 responses were collected.

The data was analyzed using SPSS software through statistical tests such as descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and correlation analysis. The purpose of the regression and correlation analyses was to examine the relationship between independent variables—namely unsocial working hours, job insecurity, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress—and the dependent variable, leisure-work equilibrium, with workplace flexibility as a moderating variable.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Data Analysis

The data analysis chapter aims to explore the impact of various job-related factors on the work-life balance of gig workers. The samples were selected through a structured survey targeting as many gig workers as possible from contrasting sectors, including social media, freelancing, ride-requesting, and food conveyance. A total of 150 samples were collected for this purpose.

The chapter employs statistical techniques such as reliability analysis, validity assessment, correlation analysis, and simple linear regression (SLR) models to evaluate the relationships between variables and their relevance to work-life balance. The results provide detailed insights into the dynamics that influence gig workers' professional and personal lives.

Table 1. Demographic descriptive.

Category		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	83	55.3
	Male	60	40
	Prefer not to say	7	4.7
Age	18-24	23	15.3
	25-34	106	70.7
	35-44	14	9.3
	55 and above	7	4.7
Marital status	Divorced	22	14.7
	Married	107	71.3
	Single	14	9.3
	Widowed	7	4.7
Type of gig work	Food delivery	28	18.7
	Freelancing	48	32
	Other	8	5.3
	Ride-hailing	66	44
Work experience in gig work	1-3 years	38	25.3
	4-6 years	75	50
	7-10 years	23	15.3
	More than 10 years	14	9.3

5.2. Demographic Analysis

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the survey respondents is very diverse in terms of gender, age, marital status, type of gig work, and experience at work. The sample consisted of 55.3% females, 40% males, and 4.7% do not want to tell the gender. A vast majority, 70.7%, was between 25-34, while 15.3% are 18-24, 9.3% are 35-44, and 4.7% are 55 years old and above. Of the given marital statuses, 71.3% were married, 14.7% were divorced, 9.3% were single, and 4.7% were widowed. The main types of gig work, 44% were engaged in Ride-Hailing, 32% in freelancing, 18.7% in food delivery, and 5.3% in others. Mainly, 50% of the respondents have been engaged in gig work for 4-6 years, 25.3% for 1-3 years, 15.3% for 7-10 years, along with 9.3% that exceeds 10 years. This data is helpful in understanding the diverse backgrounds and experiences of gig workers in the study.

Table 2. Reliability.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	No of items
Unsocial working hour	0.95	3
Job insecurity	0.947	3
Unpredictable earnings	0.976	3
Prolonged stress	0.933	3
Work-life balance	0.967	3

5.3. Reliability and Validity

Table 2 presents Cronbach's alpha, a measure of reliability, which shows strong internal consistency for each construct. Excellent reliability is shown by values above 0.9 for every construct. Work-life balance (0.967), job insecurity (0.947), unpredictable earnings (0.976), prolonged stress (0.933), and unsocial working hours (0.95) are among the constructs.

Table 3. Validity.

Construct	AVE	CR
Unsocial working hours	0.765	0.907
Job insecurity	0.65	0.847
Unpredictable earnings	0.822	0.933
Prolonged stress	0.496	0.745
Work-life balance	0.832	0.937

Table 3 shows that the majority of constructions have substantial support when it comes to validity, as determined by AVE and CR. All but Prolonged Stress had AVE values greater than 0.5 (0.496). Acceptable reliability is confirmed by CR values that are all above 0.7. Strong convergent validity is shown by constructs with exceptionally high AVE and CR, such as work-life balance and unpredictable earnings.

Table 4. Correlation with work like balance.

Construct	Work-life balance
Unsocial working hour	-0.329**
Job insecurity	-0.522**
Unpredictable earnings	-0.429**
Prolonged stress	-0.339**

Note: **, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.4. Correlation Analysis

Table 4 presents the relationship between work-life balance and other constructs is displayed in the above table. Higher job insecurity considerably lowers work-life balance, as evidenced by the highest negative association (-0.522). Work-life balance is also negatively affected by unpredictable earnings (-0.429) and prolonged stress (-0.339). There is a moderately negative connection (-0.329) between unsocial working hours. At the 0.01 level, all correlations are significant, indicating that these characteristics have a considerable impact on work-life balance.

Table 5. SLR model summaries.

Construct	Independent variable	Beta	R ²	Sig.
Model 1	Unsocial working hours	-0.411	0.108	0.000
Model 2	Job insecurity	-0.617	0.273	0.000
Model 3	Unpredictable earnings	-0.443	0.184	0.000
Model 4	Prolonged stress	-0.428	0.115	0.000

Note: Sig: <0.001.
Dependent variable: Work-life balance.

5.5. Regression Analysis

Table 5 presents the model summaries of the SLR model, indicating that all the independent variables have a significant negative impact on work-life balance for gig workers, thus justifying hypotheses H1-H4.

- Model 1 indicates that unsocial working hours have a significant negative effect on work-life balance (Beta = -0.411, $R^2 = 0.108$), with 10.8% of the variance explained by unsocial hours.
- For Model 2, it indicates that job insecurity has the largest negative impact (Beta = -0.617, $R^2 = 0.273$), accounting for 27.3% of the variance, which is the most influential determinant.
- For Model 3, unpredictable earnings also strongly reduce the balance in work life (Beta = -0.443, $R^2 = 0.184$) and account for 18.4% of the variance.
- Model 4: Long-term stress has a negative impact on work-life balance (Beta = -0.428, $R^2 = 0.115$), explaining 11.5% of the variance.

All the models were significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating that all of these impact the work-life balance of gig workers negatively.

5.6. Summary

Analysis of data shows that numerous job-related stressors have a significant impact on career-family balance among gig workers. The reliability was found to be high for all constructs, while validity was supported by the AVE and CR values. In correlation analysis, negative relationships were identified between work-life balance and factors such as job insecurity, working unsocial hours, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress. SLR models further confirmed these impacts, with the strongest effect observed for job insecurity ($R^2 = 0.273$). The findings indicate that

these factors significantly contribute to reduced work-life balance for gig workers, highlighting the challenges they face.

Table 6 presents the hypothesis summary showing the acceptance of all four hypotheses.

Table 6. Hypothesis summary.

Hypotheses	Decision
H1: Unsocial working hours create a negative impact on leisure-work balance for gig workers.	Accept
H2: Job insecurity creates a negative impact on work-life balance for gig workers	Accept
H3: Unpredictable earnings create a negative impact on work-life balance for gig workers	Accept
H4: Prolonged stress negatively impacts work-life balance for gig workers.	Accept

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study highlight that a majority of gig workers were females, and a significant proportion of gig workers were between the ages of 25 and 34 years. The data analysis revealed that various job-related stressors have significant consequences on the work-life balance of gig workers. All four hypotheses were accepted, indicating that unsocial working hours, job insecurity, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress have significant negative impacts on gig workers' work-life balance. This suggests that factors such as unsocial working hours, job insecurity, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress significantly contribute to decreased work-life balance among gig workers. This aligns with the research findings of [Weston and McMunn \(2023\)](#), who pointed out that precarious work, characterized by the absence of a traditional employment relationship, is associated with work-related psychological issues, including mental health problems, insufficient sleep, and stress. These issues challenge the psychological and subjective well-being of gig workers. This pattern of precarious work, such as gig work and temporary employment, imposes physical and mental tolls on workers, which diminishes leisure-work balance. Furthermore, investigation reveals that job insecurity has negative implications on leisure-work equilibrium, which is also shared by [Abdul Jalil et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that in unpredictable precarious work, job instability has a negative association with psychological well-being and balance between professional and personal life. This indicates that precarious employment has serious implications for job insecurity, which concerns the act of losing one's employment for various reasons. The findings also revealed that the dissenting relations between work-life balance and job insecurity were the strongest. Additionally, precarious employment or gig work is known to foster unfavorable health outcomes among workers, which stimulate negative psychological well-being. This also indicates that due to increasing job insecurity, gig workers are coerced to work extended hours to safeguard their employment, which further makes it difficult to balance between salaried and individualized lives. Lastly, precarious employees such as gig workers are associated with lower earnings, which challenge housing demands, bargaining power, health and social insurance, and other aspects ([Abdul Jalil et al., 2023](#)). This also aligns with current research findings. Overall, it can be concluded that unsocial working hours, job insecurity, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress are some of the factors triggered by the work flexibility of gig workers that make it problematic for gig workers to engage in leisure-work equilibrium.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study is of significant importance to gig economy managers for developing employee-friendly management practices. Policymakers in the gig economy should understand the challenges faced by workers, which make it difficult for them to balance professional and personal duties. Firstly, by engaging with the study findings, managers involved in the gig economy can implement flexible scheduling mechanisms, such as user-friendly interfaces and options to select shift times, to prevent worker burnout. Managers should also monitor and enforce strict regulations regarding daily working hours and consider implementing mandatory rest periods. This will ensure that workers are not overworked and do not suffer from psychological issues like stress. Additionally, gig economy managers should

ensure that compensation is fair, equitable, and justified, aligning with industry standards. This approach would reduce tensions related to unpredictable earnings, helping workers maintain a healthy work-life balance. Moreover, loyal gig workers with demonstrated skills and high expertise could be offered long-term contracts to address job insecurity. Furthermore, managers should conduct regular stress management programs to help workers cope with work-related stress, thereby increasing productivity and enabling better management of personal lives. All these initiatives would assist gig workers in managing their flexible employment arrangements and achieving work-life balance.

8. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to ascertain how the process of gig work flexibility impacts work-life balance in the online service platform industry. The independent variables, such as unsocial working hours, job insecurity, unpredictable earnings, and prolonged stress, are significantly responsible for reduced work-life balance among gig workers on various platforms. The study found a negative relationship between work-life balance and these factors, with the strongest negative correlation observed for job insecurity, indicating that many gig workers are unable to manage work-life balance due to increased job insecurity. This study will assist policymakers and managers in developing employee-friendly gig work practices, such as the introduction of stress management programs, mandatory rest periods, fixed work hours, fair compensation, and long-term contracts for loyal workers, which could enhance job satisfaction and promote better work-life balance.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The limitations of this research include that it is based solely on quantitative research, and no qualitative perspective of the participants was recorded. Qualitative research could have revealed several insights into the gig workers' opinions, life experiences, and viewpoints regarding their management of work-life balance. However, this current study provides a solid foundation for future research on analyzing the various nuances of work-life balance triggered by the flexible nature of gig work. Furthermore, the interrelationship between gig work and other forms of employment could also be established. Future studies could also focus on remodeling gig work patterns to enable workers to enjoy enhanced job satisfaction, increased motivation, and better balance between professional and personal responsibilities.

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Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Data Availability Statement: The corresponding author can provide the supporting data of this study upon a reasonable request.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your marital status?
4. What type of gig work are you engaged in? [Freelancing/Ride-Hailing, Food Delivery/Other]
5. How many years of work experience do you have in gig work?

Section B: Level of Flexibility

1. How often do you think you can control your work timings in gig work?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

2. How often can you select the number of work hours per day?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

3. How often is your gig work platform considerate of your personal emergencies?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

Section C: Work-life balance challenges- Unsocial working hours

4. How often do you think irregular work hours hampers your commitments?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

5. How far do you think that you get time for planning personal activities while engaging in gig work?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

6. How frequently do you think the nature of gig work prevents you from participating in recreational activities?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

Section D: Work-life balance challenges- Job insecurity

7. How often do you feel that gig work's job insecurity makes it difficult for you to maintain a proper work-life balance?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

8. How often do you think that the uncertainty in gig work makes you tense about not getting future gig opportunities?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

9. How often do you feel that gig work provides you with an unstable life-challenging work-life balance?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

Section E: Work-life balance challenges- Unpredictable earnings

10. How far do you think that uncertain earnings make it difficult to accept a family's financial responsibilities that hamper personal life?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

11. How often do you think that unpredictable earnings affect your long-term family goals?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

12. How often do you think that the earnings fluctuations in gig work cause stress?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

Section F: Work-life Balance Challenges- Prolonged Stress

13. How often do you think that stress from gig work affects your personal life?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

14. How often do you believe that job insecurity in gig work causes stress that hampers your commitments, thereby leading to poor work-life balance?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

15. How often do you think that payment uncertainties in gig work cause stress that negatively impacts work-life balance?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

Section G: Work Flexibility's Impact on Work-life Balance

16. How often are you satisfied with the balance between your personal and professional life?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

17. How often do you think that a lack of standard work timing causes work-life conflicts?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

18. How often do you think you receive adequate support from the gig work platform in balancing your personal and professional life?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Always

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