

Identifying Factors Affecting the Rise of the Gig Economy with The Meta-Synthesis Approach

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Abstract

The main goal of the current research is to identify the factors affecting the emergence of the gig economy with a hybrid approach. This research is developmental in terms of purpose; qualitative in terms of the nature and style of component analysis; and documentary based on data collection. It is analytical-descriptive from the research method viewpoint; and the components of the research were collected and analyzed using Sandelovski and Barroso's seven-stage meta-composite qualitative method. In order to identify the factors affecting the emergence of the gig economy, the researchers systematically searched for researches related to these factors in 4 scientific databases: Science Direct, Emerald, Wiley, and Sage, as well as the Scopus reference database between 2010 and 2023, with the aim of determining valid documents related to the research question, and with the selected keywords. In the initial investigations, 162 sources were found; and after screening and validation and using the CASP tool, 20 articles were finally analyzed, and the factors affecting the emergence of the gig economy were identified by using the coding method, and was drawn by using MaxQuda software. The kappa coefficient was used in SPSS software to check the quality or reliability of the indicators, which in the present study is equal to 0.80; indicates the appropriate reliability of the indicators of this research. In total, the 4 main factors of the emergence of the gig economy include social, economic, political and technological factors; and 21 sub-factors have been identified.

Keywords:

Gig workforce,
Gig economy,
Platform,
Work changes,
Hybrid approach.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

After the global financial crisis in 2008 and the resulting rise in unemployment, many professionals and skilled workers started taking short-term jobs to make ends meet. This phenomenon is described as "gig economy" (Banik & Padalkar, 2021). The expansion of work was initially carried out by skilled IT professionals who started using online digital platforms to search for such opportunities (Collins et al., 2019).

The rise of the gig economy sector is partly a reflection of rising unemployment rates and limitations of traditional labor markets, which have led to bottom-up demand and supply in the online market (Uchiyama et al., 2022). Due to the gig economy, more people have the opportunity to be in the labor market, and as a result, the unemployment rate has decreased (Vyas, 2021). In advanced economies, due to the deprivation of the formal sector, the workforce resorts to the gig economy (Mehta, 2023). The emergence of the entrepreneurial generation increases the interest in jobs with flexible conditions and without any formal employment contract (Friedman, 2014). The introduction of leading digital outsourcing platforms in the gig economy has encouraged many skilled professionals from an emerging economy to join the gig workforce (Roy & Shrivastava, 2020).

Recent studies show that the gig economy is booming across countries. In the United States, the number of freelancers has increased from 3.7 million in 2014 to 62.2 million in 2019. In the United States, 57.3 million people currently work gigs. By 2027, the gig workforce will make up half of the workforce. There are 15 million gig workforces in India; the gig economy in the UK has doubled in the past three years; and by 2023, the global gig economy will be worth \$455 billion (Noronha et al., 2022). In Iran, we have also witnessed the significant growth of the gig economy in the last few years, which is mainly related to transport platforms such as Snap and Tapsi (Almaspour et al., 2021). According to the statistics of Snap company, currently, nearly seven hundred thousand people are working in the passenger transportation sector as drivers, workers, and active users; and providing passenger transportation services for this virtual activity platform (Hassani, 2021).

The gig economy has attracted the attention of the public and policymakers, and is growing as an area of academic research; raising debates about the future of work, labor regulations, the impact of technology, and the quality of employment (Behl et al., 2022). Considering that it is necessary to identify the factors affecting the emergence of this expanding phenomenon in order to improve the planning and policies of managers and industrial owners in order to use this potential workforce; also considering that until now, a comprehensive research regarding the identification of the factors affecting the emergence of the gig economy, specially by a hybrid method, has not been done, this research has tried to identify these factors by examining the researches done in this field.

Theoretical Framework

Gig work

The origin of the word "gig" dates back to 1915, when jazz musicians first used it. Also, musicians used it to refer to live musical performances and recordings. The modern use of "gig" has become popular in the last decade (2010-2020) (Moore, 2019). As stated in the Cambridge Dictionary (2020), the nature of work in the gig economy shows that it is "a way of working based on people holding temporary jobs or doing separate tasks, each of which is paid independently, rather than working for an employer." (Aloisi, 2015).

Gig economy

The term gig economy was first coined by Tina Brown in 2009 in the midst of the global financial crisis. In common parlance, flexible work, generally mediated by online platforms,

is called the “gig economy” (Koutsimpogiorgos et al., 2020). The gig economy includes two work models: It offers “crowdworking or online freelance work known as the digital gig economy”, and “on-demand work through a program called the physical gig economy” (De Stefano, 2016).

Platform

The client, platform technology, and gig workforce are involved in the gig economy. The platform technology acts as an online intermediary between the customer and the gig workforce. A customer, also known as a service seeker, provides a description of the desired work or service on the platform. The gig workforce can access this job or service demand on the platform. The work can be delivered to the client through a technology platform or offline (Duggan et al., 2020).

Research methodology

This research is developmental in terms of purpose; qualitative in terms of the nature and style of component analysis; and documentary based on data collection. It is analytical-descriptive from the research method viewpoint; and the data of the research has been collected and analyzed using the meta-composite qualitative method. Among the implementation models of the metacomposite method, in this research, the seven-step model of Sandelowski and Barroso has been used, which is the most used in metacomposite research, and includes the following steps: 1. Setting research questions, 2. Conducting systematic literature, 3. Searching and selecting appropriate articles, 4. extracting information from articles, 5. analyzing and combining qualitative findings, 6. controlling the quality of extracted codes, and 7. presenting findings.

Research findings

In order to identify the factors affecting the emergence of the gig economy, the researchers conducted a systematic search of researches related to these factors in 4 scientific databases: Science Direct, Emerald, Wiley, Sage, as well as Scopus reference database between 2010 and 2023. In the initial investigations based on the selected keywords, 162 sources were found, and after screening and validation and using the CASP tool, 20 articles were finally selected for full review and content analysis. By analyzing the articles, there are 4 main factors for the emergence of the gig economy including; social, economic, political, and technological factors; and 21 sub-factors have been identified. Social factors include; flexibility, work autonomy, participation of women, access to skilled workforce, social media, flexibility of working hours, lack of physical presence, consumer attitudes and preferences and low barriers to entry; economic factors including; unemployment, economic recession, and job opportunity; political factors including; government regulations, globalization, and outsourcing; and technology factors include; the platform infrastructure, cheap technology, easy access to the internet, the platform, the growth and expansion of technology and digitalization.

Conclusion

One of the most important factors in the emergence of the gig economy is the social factor, which refers to the human aspect of this phenomenon and the influence of people in the creation and expansion of this economy, which itself has various dimensions that are caused by the change in the attitude of people in choosing a job with unique characteristics of this economy.

Another influential factor in the emergence and expansion of the gig economy is the economic factor. According to the research conducted in this regard, the gig economy has re-

emerged as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, and has created a new form of labor. Economic recession, unemployment and lack of job opportunities have pushed the workforce to the gig economy.

The third factor in the emergence and expansion of the gig economy is the political factor, which in turn has different dimensions including; globalization, outsourcing, and government regulations.

Another factor that has undoubtedly been one of the most influential factors in the development and expansion of the gig economy in recent years is technology and its increasing growth in the world. According to the research; easy access to the internet in all places, the growth and expansion of technology and its cheapness, as well as the development of platforms and the provision of the necessary infrastructure to create platforms around the world are the key aspects of this influential factor in the growth and emergence of the gig economy.

According to the results of the research, the following suggestions have been made:

The social factor is related to the taste and tendencies of the workforce, such as job flexibility and working hours, work independence, lack of physical presence, etc., which managers, by recognizing and paying attention to these factors, have increased the desire of employees to work in this industry, and creating as much as possible of these benefits for employees will increase the productivity of the workforce.

Due to the growth of the gig economy, more people have the opportunity to be in the labor market, and as a result, the unemployment rate decreases. In this regard, policies should be provided to promote platform work, which requires the training of superior skills and improving the capabilities of the workforce, which will benefit from the potential of employment in platform work.

Globalization and outsourcing are two of the important dimensions in the emergence and expansion of this economy. In today's world, borders will not be an obstacle to the growth and expansion of an organization, and managers can rely on this valuable aspect of the gig economy to have the best talent at the lowest cost, and on the other hand, they can easily provide their services to customers all around the world

Considering that one of the important and influential factors in the emergence, growth and development of the gig economy is the expansion of technology and the creation of the necessary infrastructure in the field of technology; managers should provide the necessary infrastructure in order to benefit as much as possible from this potential workforce and the vast market.