



GIG ECONOMY: A BLEND OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The gig economy has emerged as a transformative force in India's labour market, reshaping traditional employment structures across various sectors. Characterized by short-term, flexible work arrangements, the gig economy has expanded rapidly, driven by digital platforms, technological advancements, and evolving workforce preferences. While the phenomenon has been extensively analyzed in sectors such as transportation and e-commerce, its implications for the education sector remain relatively underexplored. Even though it has been continuously growing as a job platform but at the same time it is subject to job insecurity. This paper examines the growing prevalence of gig-based employment in education sector with special emphasis on teachers working on contractual basis.

KEYWORDS: Gig Economy, Education Sector, Digital Platforms, Flexible Employment, Labour Market, Policy Implications

INTRODUCTION

The structure of employment in the modern global economy is undergoing a transformative change, driven by technological innovations, economic liberalization, and the demand for flexibility in labor markets. One of the most significant outcomes of this transformation is the rise of the *gig economy*—a labor market characterized by short-term, flexible, and freelance work engagements as opposed to traditional, long-term employment contracts. The term “gig” originally gained popularity in the music industry, denoting temporary performances, but today it broadly encompasses a wide range of occupations across sectors such as IT, logistics, design, consultancy, and education.

In India, the gig economy has emerged as a significant force, propelled by digital platforms, urbanization, and changing employer-employee dynamics. According to a report by NITI Aayog (2022), India had around 7.7 million gig workers in 2020-21, and this number is projected to rise to 23.5 million by 2029-30. In India, where the demand for education is high but public spending on education remains relatively constrained, the gig economy framework in teaching is becoming increasingly normalized. This shift necessitates a deeper understanding of how contractual employment is reshaping the academic landscape—not only in terms of employment policies but also in terms of educational quality, teacher motivation, and student outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Mr. Chenna Upendra Maddur, Ms. Gergi Neerajana Sai Niveditha and Dr. M. Venkateswarlu conducted a study on the topic and concluded that India is reportedly planning to join eight other nations – including Brazil, China, Bangladesh, Egypt, Mexico, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Indonesia – in a push to hasten digital learning and gain from the global digital education programme. Together, the nations are anticipated to accelerate the move from a traditional educational approach to a digital one and expand chances in the global digital education market.

2 The NITI Aayog's report titled India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy was published in June 2022. The report estimates that India's gig workforce will grow from 7.7 million in 2020-21 to 23.5 million by 2029-30.

3 Dr. Kaberi Bezbarua (2020) conducted study titled *Sustainability of Higher Education in GIG Economy: Evaluating the correlation of different fundamentals with special reference to Assam* and concluded that In Assam also, the gig economy has grown steadily, with increasing number of people subscribing for application based platform for services such as booking a car or getting food delivered at the doorstep, etc. Thousands of people are employed as delivery men, cab drivers, etc which implies that the GIG economy contributes to the job market.



4 Mahon, Kathleen (2018) in her study found that Universities serve several important functions in the society, but not least helping people to leave meaningfully in society and to create a world worth living. This paper explores this concern by explicating the notion of critical educational praxis and examining enablers and constraints for critical educational praxis drawing on an empirical study conducted in one university setting and their impact on the society.

5 Roy and Shrivastava, (2020) The supply of gig work often comes from developing nations like India, the Philippines, Pakistan, and others, while demand typically comes from developed nations like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. But when it comes to employment, affluent nations rely on their own citizens, whereas underdeveloped nations receive 90% of their gig work from other nations.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed study tends to rely on secondary data comprising of previous publications, magazines, government reports and studies published by other important institutions from time to time.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To study about socio economic condition of gig workers
- ❖ To study the problems faced by gig workers.
- ❖ To give recommendations addressing their problems.

The trend of gig work is not only witnessed in India but also prevalent around the world in every country. It provides online opportunities for millions of youths through different platforms where they work and earn. Not just that, there is a growing trend of gig work where workers/skilled persons are hired purely on a contractual basis for a specific period.

There are numerous universities, colleges, and even higher secondary schools in India where teachers are engaged purely on a contractual basis in specific subjects. No doubt gig work can be thought of as an opportunity where an educated person delivers and at least earns to lessen financial burden even though for a shorter period of time. But at the same time such gig platforms whether online or offline become a challenge instead of an opportunity because of their temporary nature. Some of the pros and cons of the gig economy are as follows:

Opportunities

Gives short term financial relief.

It provides an intellectual environment to educated people.

It is cost effective for hiring agencies/authorities because employees are available to work at a nominal amount/wage.

Challenges

These platforms provide short term opportunities for a specific period.

Not all but only highly skilled people get an opportunity.

Low Salary

Salary against the work is very low especially in the education department. In Jammu and Kashmir CRCs (cluster resource coordinators) are engaged in higher secondary schools for specific subjects at Rs. 25000/month and contractual lecturers at college level are engaged for Rs.28000/month which is not according to UGC norms of Rs. 57,500.



They have to remain unemployed for the period of three to four months and after that there is no guarantee they will fall in merit for next session which is primarily because of change in seat matrix of different subjects.

Likewise there is no proper policy for college lecturers. They are supposed to do a lot of official work apart from the academic curriculum at low salary. They have been continuously demanding hike in their salary as per UGC norms but unfortunately there demands are not fulfilled yet. It de motivates young aspiring minds to work in prestigious institutes like college.

Further, at all India level contractual teaching staff in India face challenges like job insecurity, lower pay and benefits compared to regular teachers, and limited opportunities for professional development, while also having opportunities to contribute to the education system and gain experience.

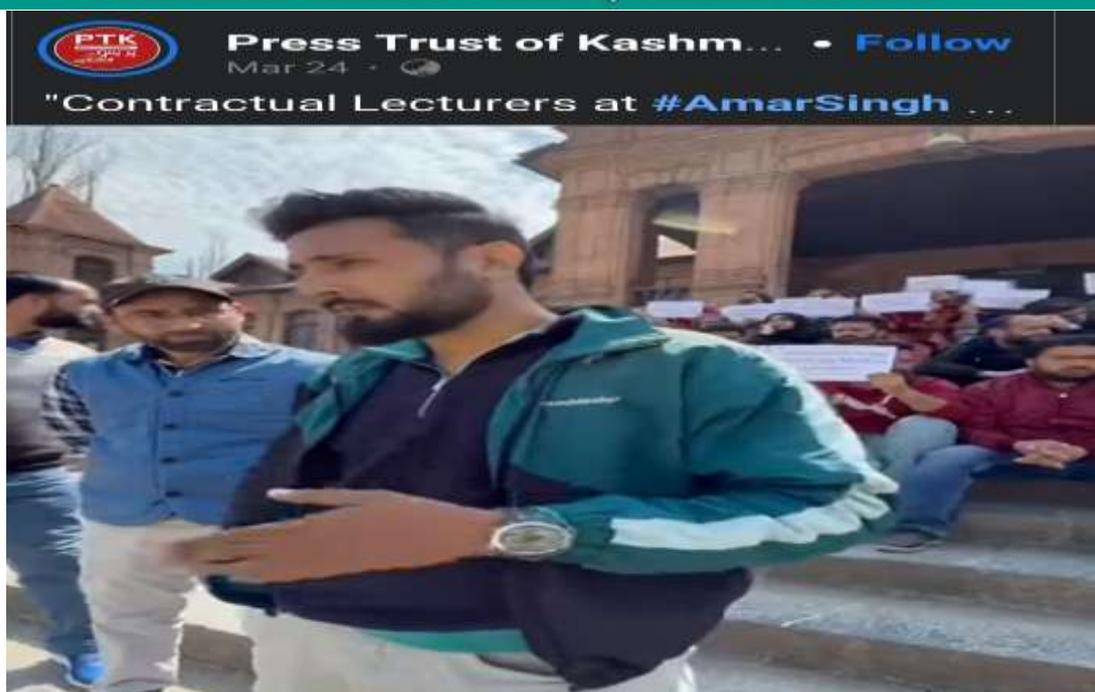
J&K HECTA
J&K Higher Education Contractual Teachers Association

Call for 
Peaceful Pen-down Strike
from **07 April 2025**
Across all Govt. Degree Colleges of J&K
3 Days (First Phase)
Followed by Indefinite Pen-down strike
until our Genuine Demands are fulfilled

Our Genuine Demands:

1. Engagement Terms Should Mirror to those of Academic Arrangements in Health and Medical Education, as specified in SO 364.
2. Salary and Nomenclature must Align with UGC Norms
 - ✓ Adjustment of Salary as per UGC Guidelines
 - ✓ Change in Nomenclature from "Need Based Academic Arrangement Lecturers" to Assistant Professors (Contractual).

Issued By: J&K Higher Education Contractual Teachers Association
Contact: 94193 75665, 91499 18138



Jammu- Kashmir college contractual lecturers demanding salary hike as per UGC norms.



CONCLUSION

To sum up, it cannot be ruled out at all that that gig the culture of gig work has emerged as a hope not just for free lancers but for certain offline works especially education. Talking from the prospective of education field, they educated youth take this opportunity as a source of their income till they get permanently settled somewhere. In that sense it can be thought of as an opportunity. But its peculiar aspect is again its temporary nature. Because there is no job security. Yes, one must admit that government cannot provide permanent job to every educated person because india is the most populated country of the world and 70% of Indian population is youth providing job is a big challenge in itself. What government can do is to make a proper policy for educated youth. Government should continue these people at a nominal salary corresponding to the current rate of inflation instead of disengaging as it really discourages them. Finally, if proper strategy is prepared for gig workers , it will not only address the financial problem of educated youth but also lessens the burden of unemployment on government.

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