



## Examining the Gender Dynamics in the Gig Economy: A Systematic Literature Review

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### Abstract

The changing employment scenario has given rise to new employment models like the Gig Economy. Though autonomy and flexibility are key factors that attract women to this employment, their representation is low. This is explored by identifying the state of gender representation and the challenges faced by women in different gig platforms through a systematic literature review. The review is conducted using the PRISMA flowchart. Using Scopus and Web of Science, a total of 23 papers were used for the preparation of the final review. The result of the review shows that, in the gig economy too, women are more represented in already gender-biased jobs, such as childcare, and tutoring, and the gender earnings gap is prevalent in all types of gig platforms. Algorithmic biases and security and safety concerns are also identified in the platform economy. This study advances the literature on gender inequality in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Autonomy, Gender, Gig Economy, Inequality, Skills

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Received:  
14 October 2024

Accepted revised version:  
29 May 2025

Published  
30 June 2025

Suggested citation: Bhagavathi, J. S. & Kumar, J. S. (2025). Examining the gender dynamics in the gig economy: A systematic literature review. *Colombo Business Journal*, 16(1), 51-72.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4038/cbj.v16i1.204>

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## **Introduction**

Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment that is experienced based on a person's gender. The United Nations (UN) High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment reported that fewer women than men are in paid employment, and the majority of those women tend to work in low-income, unhygienic, and low-career prospect jobs (Bertay et al., 2021). Understanding gender inequality in the workplace has multiple advantages, such as understanding the discrimination that is faced by certain genders in their workplace and what can be done to prevent the inequalities faced by them (Zhu, 2022).

Women have traditionally played a subordinate role in the working environment. Women tend to be underrepresented and also do not hold senior positions in their workplaces. Some other problems that have been listed by the United Nations Forum are workplace discrimination, lack of opportunities, violence, lack of clean energy and sanitation, and above all, the imbalance faced due to unpaid care work (UNWomen, 2023). Studies have also found that glass ceiling and sticky floor discrimination act as major hindrances for career growth among women employees, irrespective of whether the organisations are private or public (Bihagen & Ohls, 2006; Bishu & Alkadry, 2017). The gender pay gap between men and women is present in different types of organisations (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017). Geographically, it has been identified that American women face a wide range of disparities in their workplace, while Canadian women only earn 87% of the amount that men earn in the same jobs (Son Hing et al., 2023). The unexplained difference in pay between men and women is higher in rural areas compared to urban and metropolitan areas. Safety and security issues are also prevalent in workplaces. For instance, in the hospitality sector, while considerable attention is given to ensuring the safety and protection of overnight guests, the security concerns of female employees working late-night shifts remain largely unaddressed (Salama & Gangwani, 2021). These inequalities exist not because men and women have different capabilities, but because there is a vast difference in the legal rights enjoyed by them. These differences escalate with time, creating a long-term impact on gender differences in the workplace (Njuki & Gollub, 2024).

Flexibility and autonomy act as key advantages for women to work in any environment. Such jobs not only reduce the cost and time associated but also help women to take care of their routine jobs while taking care of their children (Kurnaz, 2024). The evolution of Industry 4.0 has contributed to the development of a new type of employment where employees can find opportunities to work in a flexible

environment (Pillai & Dev, 2022). The Gig economy, otherwise called the platform economy, is an online medium between labour suppliers and labour demanders (Beręsewicz et al., 2021). The impact of digitalisation and Covid 19 has further increased the number of remote workers all over the world, which has further enhanced the participation of workers in the Gig Economy (Vučeković et al., 2023). In India, particularly, the gig economy is said to have the potential to employ more than 90 million people, and it is said to generate nearly 1.24% of the GDP of India by 2024 (The Asia Foundation, 2022). The flexible characteristic of this form of employment has attracted employees to join them irrespective of age and gender. There are two forms of Gig Employment: the on-demand gig platforms and the crowdsourced gig platforms. On-demand platforms, as the name suggests, are platforms through which jobs are allocated as and when the demand arises through platforms. Crowdsourcing or micro work platforms are platforms through which the work is segregated into micro tasks and is allotted by the platforms (Butschek et al., 2022; Savelsbergh & Ulmer, 2022; Vallas & Schor, 2020).

The impact of industrialisation and digitalisation provides an opportunity for women to work in this type of environment. An important concern in the working environment is that women traditionally have difficulty in their working environment due to simultaneously carrying out their dual responsibility of unpaid work along with their paid work (Gerber, 2022). Men are motivated to join the gig economy for higher income, while women prefer the flexibility of working digitally, which motivates them to join the Gig Economy. This increase in digital work has motivated more women to join the gig workforce (Kasliwal, 2020). Though at the outset, women and men enjoy the same benefits and face the same challenges, women, to a larger extent, require more flexibility and income but face hindrance in leveraging them. Women are slotted at entry, have a slow scaling working pace, and face a scarcity of financial tools (Cook et al., 2021; Singh & Murthy, 2023). Studies have also pointed out that the lack of access to gadgets and ICT skills, geographical barriers, and financial burdens have created an unfavourable situation for women to enter the Gig Economy (Babo & Odame, 2023).

The previous literature has examined various challenges faced by women workers in the gig economy, often focusing on specific types of gig platforms such as ride-sharing, food delivery, and freelance marketplaces. Such studies have indicated certain serious issues, including lower pay, health, safety and security concerns, and reduced visibility for women workers. However, it remains unclear whether these challenges affect the status of representation of women across

different gig platforms, and to what extent these gender-based disparities persist across the broader gig economy. In order to address these gaps in the literature, this paper poses two research questions.

RQ1: What is the current state of gender representation in the gig economy?

RQ2: What is the extent of gender-based disparities faced by women workers across different types of gig platforms?

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using PRISMA is employed to answer these research questions. Web of Science and Scopus Databases are used to collect the data. Rigorous scanning and scrutiny of the research articles is carried out to specifically answer the questions.

## **Materials and Methods**

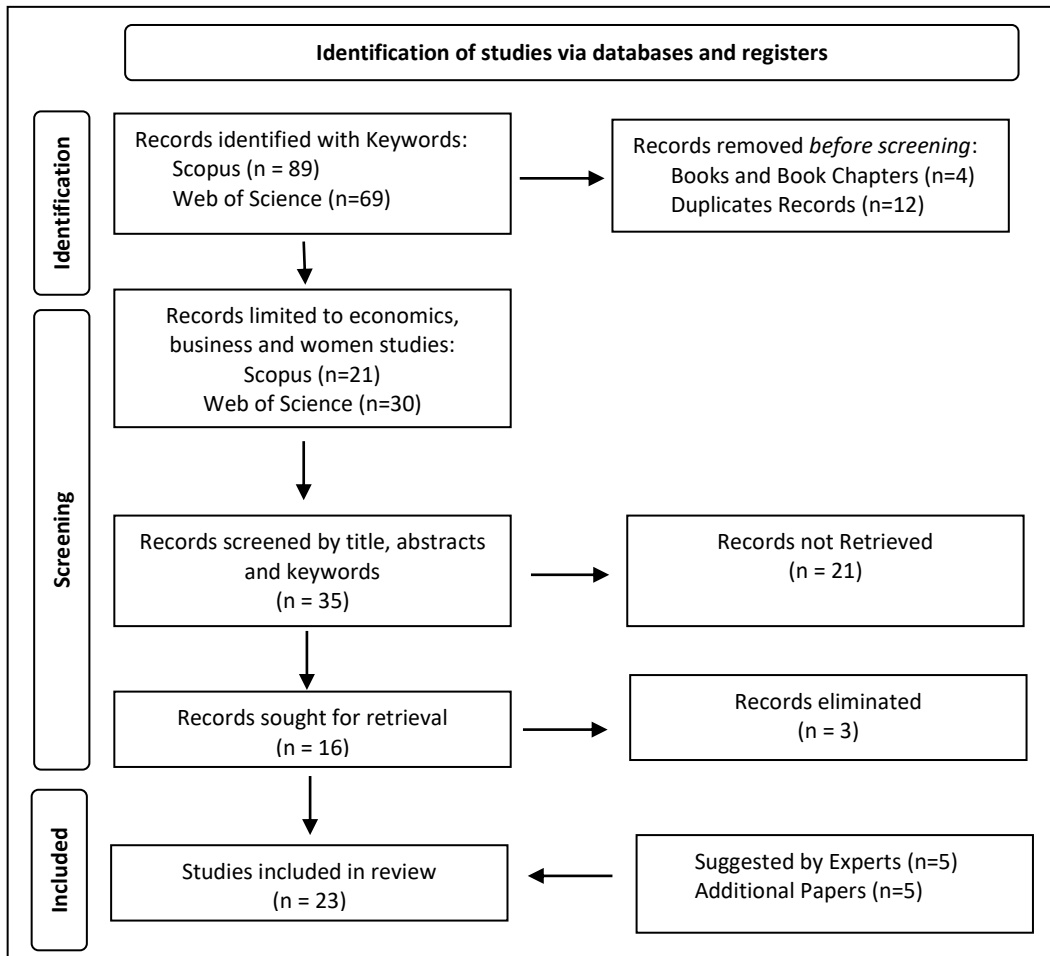
SLR proves to be a source of base for academic exploration (Xiao & Watson, 2019), which also provides transparency and objectivity (Kraus et al., 2020). As the literature on the Gig Economy is low but is still growing, drafting a systematic literature review will be helpful for further theory and practice. In this study, the authors undertake a literature review of gender in the Gig Economy. Through this, there will be a better understanding of the representation of women and the challenges faced by women in the Gig Economy. PRISMA guidelines are followed by the researchers in order to avoid any biases while doing the SLR. The method will also ensure accuracy and reliability (Liberati et al., 2009). Following is the procedure followed by the researchers.

Firstly, the research questions were formulated. Then the keywords, titles, and abstracts of the papers were scrutinised. The papers were then sought for retrieval. Full articles were thoroughly reviewed for meeting eligibility, and those studies that met the eligibility criteria were then included in the study, as shown in Figure 1. Literature review studies have previously used either Scopus or Web of Science or both, and therefore, this SLR used the same databases. The finalisation of the keywords was done after pilot searching. The keywords “Gig AND Economy AND Gender” were used for the literature search. “Abstract title, Title and Keyword” searches were used in Scopus and “Topic” was used in the Web of Science Database for the collection of literature. The authors eliminated keywords such as “Platform Economy” as it is a sub-segment of the Gig Economy. The Publication Year was from 2020 to 2024. Only studies from the Social Sciences, Economics, Business, and Women's Studies were considered, and only studies published in English were included in the review. Research articles that answered at least one of the two research questions were selected for review.

### ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

Using the search strategy, a total of 89 studies were retrieved from Scopus, and 69 documents were retrieved from the Web of Science database (see Figure 1). Applying filtering criteria to meet the research questions, firstly, the discipline of the study was limited to economics, business, and women's studies. These disciplines were chosen because the Gig Economy comes under the category of economics and business, while gender studies come under the discipline of women's studies. This reduced the total number of records to 21 Scopus papers and 30 Web of Science Papers. Twelve duplicate records, four books and book chapters were removed. The next step was to filter the papers after reading the title and abstract. A total of 35 papers were finalised after screening through the title and abstract. Twenty-one articles were not related to the research questions. Twenty-one articles were not related to the research questions.

**Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart**



Studies that were outside the scope of the research questions were again excluded after closer scrutiny, and the number of papers was finalised to 13 studies. Experts recommended 5 papers, which made a total of 18 papers. Along with the 18 papers, the authors also included five other papers that were later found to answer the research questions. This made it a total of 23 papers for review.

Table 1 shows the list of articles that were selected for the literature review.

**Table 1: Sources of Systematic Literature Review**

Author(s) & Year	Title	Journal
Webster and Zhang (2020)	Careers Delivered from the Kitchen? Immigrant Women Small-scale Entrepreneurs Working in the Growing Nordic Platform Economy	NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research
Cook et al. (2021)	The gender earnings gap in the gig economy: Evidence from over a million rideshare drivers	Review of Economic Studies
Vyas (2021)	‘Gender inequality– now available on digital platform’: an interplay between gender equality and the gig economy in the European Union	European Labour Law Journal
Warren (2021)	Work–life balance and gig work: ‘Where are we now’ and ‘where to next’ with the work–life balance agenda?	Journal of Industrial Relations
Nguyen–Phuoc et al. (2022)	Factors influencing road safety compliance among food delivery riders: An extension of the job demands–resources (JD–R) model	Transportation Research Part A
Gerber (2022)	Gender and precarity in platform work: Old inequalities in the new world of work	New Technology, Work and Employment
Greenwood et al. (2022)	How Unbecoming of You: Online Experiments Uncovering Gender Biases in Perceptions of Ridesharing Performance	Journal of Business Ethics
Hamal and Huijsmans (2022)	Making markets gendered: Kathmandu's ride–sharing platforms through a gender lens	Gender, Place & Culture
Anwar (2022)	Platforms of inequality: gender dynamics of digital labour in Africa	Gender & Development

<b>Author(s) &amp; Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Journal</b>
Dokuka et al. (2022)	Women in gig economy work less in the evenings	Scientific Report
Wiesböck et al. (2023)	Domestic Cleaners in the Informal Labour Market: New Working Realities Shaped by the Gig Economy?	Social Inclusion
Min and Bansal (2023)	The gender productivity gap in the ride-hailing market	Travel Behaviour and Society
Cox et al. (2024)	Examining gender differences in gig worker safety	Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing and
Kalembe et al. (2024)	Performativity and affective atmospheres in digitally mediated care labour	Journal of Cultural Economy
James (2024)	Platform work-lives in the gig economy: Recentering work-family research	Gender, Work and Organization
Bedford (2024)	Taking development for a ride: the World Bank's research with ride-hailing companies	Review of International Political Economy
Churchill (2024)	The gender pay platform gap during the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of platform gender segregation in Australia	New Technology, Work and Employment
Zhao (2024)	Ready worker two”: Gendered labor regime of platform-based game work in China	New Media & Society
Ert et al. (2024)	Gender earning gap on digital platforms: The Airbnb case	Tourism Economics
Zhen et al. (2023)	Factors driving teacher selection on online language tutoring platforms: an experiment-based approach	Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development
Liu and Huang (2025)	Emotional Labor as a Situated Social Practice: Investigating the Performance of Emotional Labor by Women Migrant Workers in China’s Platform-based Gig Economy	Gender & Society

Author(s) & Year	Title	Journal
Bolotnyy and Emanuel (2022)	Why Do Women Earn Less Than Men? Evidence from Bus and Train Operators	Journal of Labour Economics
Han et al. (2024)	The widening gender wage gap in the gig economy in China: the impact of digitalisation	Humanities and Social Sciences Communication

## Discussion

The Gig Economy is an employment model which engages contract workers who are hired for a short term or a particular task (Schmidt & Ritter, 2022). It offers the employees the freedom of autonomy and flexibility (Hanna, 2025). The Gig Economy is an all-pervasive workplace arrangement which does not impose any restrictions or working conditions on any age group. It not only allows students to earn a side income but also gives an opportunity to the elderly and pensioned workforce to explore this work opportunity (Cox et al., 2024). Gig work and the Gig economy are largely shaped by gender perspectives (Webster & Zhang, 2020). Gender-based challenges are prevalent in all types of work. With the increase in flexibility and algorithm usage, it is the need of the hour to study a gender based perspective of the Gig Economy (Vyas, 2021; James, 2024).

### ***RQ1: The Current State of Gender Representation in the Gig Economy***

Women are more likely to undertake data entry and clerical jobs, whereas men predominantly engage in driving, delivery, and trading gigs (Churchill, 2019). Women are sometimes pressured to work in precarious jobs due to their unpaid care work and family obligations (Drahokoupil & Piasna, 2017; Vyas, 2021).

There exists widespread bias among interviewers during the hiring of gig workers. Though work-life balance and flexibility are the major factors which motivate workers to enter into gig economy, this does not hold for women (Vyas, 2021). Balancing domestic responsibilities and entrepreneurial pursuits in the gig economy remains a significant challenge for women (Webster & Zhang, 2020).

### ***Low Female Representation in Specific Gig Sectors***

The prevalence of sex-typed roles in organisations affects both the promotion and evaluation of work. The ridesharing and food delivery platforms, for instance,



are already designed in a Gender Heteromation structure (Hamal & Huijsmans, 2022). Ridesharing platforms are predominantly dominated by male drivers. For example, in Kathmandu, female drivers constitute only about 4% of rideshare platform workers (Hamal & Huijsmans, 2022). Gig Work can either be crowd work or on-demand. Men are likely to work more on crowd-based platforms while women choose the on-demand workforce. There is also an increase in the precarity of work among women gig workers, especially in crowd work platforms (Gerber, 2022).

The education level of women also plays an important role in the lack of gender representation in the ride-hailing market as most of them lack IT skills (Anwar, 2022). The gender digital divide significantly restricts women's access to gig economy opportunities. Gaming platforms are a gig platform which is very common in countries like China. However, these are highly skilled jobs and entry to these platforms requires high software and technical knowledge. One study (Zhao, 2024) has identified that women have become invisible, informal and more vulnerable. Despite the flexibility these platforms offer, women often face heightened vulnerability and marginalisation. Although lack of education is a key factor, studies also show that even well-educated women remain underrepresented and are often relegated to low-skilled, poorly paid work (Churchill, 2024).

It is also noteworthy that women are not provided with extra benefits or advantages if they perform well in certain gig work, such as the ridesharing platforms, but are disproportionately penalised for not performing well or when negatively reviewed by the customers (Greenwood et al., 2022).

#### *Gig Sectors with High Women's Participation*

Women tend to participate more in traditionally feminised sectors within the gig economy. Childcare labour is one such platform where more women get into work than men (Kalemba et al., 2024; Wiesböck et al., 2023). Though it has been seen that women workers face challenges in childcare and domestic cleaning work, due to low skills and low advantages and proficiency, their representation in these platforms are higher than that of men. This is supported by findings where only women workers were accessible for research within these sectors.

Women have also used the platform economy as a career option, as they have entered into careers straight from the kitchen. Online kitchen platforms that have used the cooking skills of women by using them to start their own businesses have

widely helped women overcome their vulnerabilities (Webster & Zhang, 2020). The networking opportunities provided by these platforms have helped women to increase their knowledge of business development and further motivated more women to engage in such platforms. These platforms have enabled women to utilise both their entrepreneurial and culinary skills productively. This further increases the representation of women in such gig cum entrepreneurship platforms.

Teaching has always been a gender-stereotyped job irrespective of whether it is online or offline (Zhen et al., 2023). A study on one of the largest online English education platforms has seen that more women have been employed in online tutoring platforms than men (Dokuka et al., 2022). It is also evident that students prefer women teachers to male teachers for various reasons. It can be said that female students prefer female teachers due to safety reasons, and male students prefer female teachers due to perceived approachability or gendered assumptions around emotional labour and communication style (Zhen et al., 2023). These preferences, though unknown to the teachers at the initial stage, have motivated more women to represent the online tutoring platforms.

It can be found that since the flexibility and ease of earning through the platforms act as motivators to join the gig economy, women prefer and are represented higher in those platforms which are gender stereotyped and also those jobs which align with their daily domestic work (Dokuka et al., 2022). On the other hand, women's representation is low in gig jobs where there is a need for continuous skilling and also where safety and security reasons are in question.

Table 2 shows the gender representation of women across different sectors.

**Table 2: Sector-wise Gender Representation of Women in the Gig Economy**

Higher Representation of Women	Lower Representation of Women
Data and Clerical Jobs	Delivery Platforms
On-demand Workforce	Ride-hailing platforms
Childcare Labour	Crowd-based Platforms
Domestic Cleaning	Gaming Platforms
Online Tutoring	

### ***RQ2: Gender Disparities in the Gig Economy***

The platform economy is often viewed as a means of employment through which more women will be included in the job market. However, studies have

found that platforms tend to exacerbate existing gender inequalities (Anwar, 2022). One of the most prevalent inequalities that exists in the Gig Economy, similar to other types of employment, is the difference in earnings between men and women (Anwar & Graham, 2021; Centeno Maya et al., 2022; Nguyen–Phuoc et al., 2022; Sarker et al., 2024). This difference has been largely attributed to the fact that women have to take care of unpaid and domestic labour at home, and therefore, they cannot work overtime (Min & Bansal, 2023). The hourly rate of gender-based differences in earnings either because they accept lower-paying jobs to increase their chances of being hired or because the platforms just do not pay for women as much as for men (Renan Barzilay & Ben–David, 2018). There is also a difference between women and men in algorithm-based work environments. Though the platforms do not pose any discrimination in the selection of drivers based on gender, there are significant pay differences between them (Cook et al., 2021). Another challenge women face, just as in the case of other work environments, is the concern of safety and security. Violence against women, having to be sexually appealing and having to satisfy customers sexually online further add to the vulnerability of women in the gig economy. This section presents a detailed explanation of different types of gender disparities in the Gig Economy.

### *Gender Pay Gap*

Gender equality and access to paid work are key aspects of women's empowerment. While some optimists believe that gig work, enabled by digital technologies, has the potential to narrow the gender pay gap, empirical studies suggest otherwise. For example, Han et al. (2024) indicate that gender-based disparities persist and may even be worsening, particularly in digital labour platforms due to structural inequalities embedded in digitalisation.

The Glass Escalator phenomenon, which is traditionally observed in female-dominated occupations where men earn more, finds new expression in the gig economy (Brandford & Brandford-Stevenson, 2021). Though gig work theoretically neutralises workplace hierarchies (i.e., glass escalator), platform-based pay gaps persist. Male-dominated gig sectors such as delivery and driving often offer higher pay than female-dominated sectors like care work (Churchill, 2024). The flexibility of gig work arrangements has also disproportionately benefited men (Dokuka et al., 2022), who typically receive higher pay in crowd work platforms. In the same sector, women, on average, earn just 82% of what men earn for equivalent tasks (Gerber, 2022). Men are dominant in the labour market, while women have lower working hours. Women in the age group of 30–35 faced more gender disparity due

to their limited capacity to work due to their involvement in caring duties, which provides further evidence for the glass escalator effect (Dokuka et al., 2022).

In countries like China, for instance, the hourly wages of women are significantly lower than those of men, even after controlling for factors like education, experience, and feedback scores (Min & Bansal, 2023). Women tend to do more unpaid tasks, aligned with their gender-stereotyped work, which makes them more vulnerable (Anwar, 2022; Churchill, 2024; Cook et al., 2021; Dokuka et al., 2022; Gerber, 2022). Though researchers argue that the growth of the Gig Economy can probably reduce the gender earnings gap (Cook et al., 2021), the gender earnings gap among rideshare drivers is evident in the United States, where there is roughly a 7% gender earnings gap (Greenwood et al., 2022). In the case of transit platforms, men work for a longer time than women, and they are also provided with higher wages; women on such platforms tend to schedule their work along with managing their unpaid domestic tasks (Bolotnyy & Emanuel, 2022). Despite women who tend to do highly flexible microtasks, there is a gender pay gap in care, delivery and driving, microwork, and the marketplace. This was particularly evident during the pandemic period when the immunity of women was low, and subsequently, women were paid less than men in most of the ride-hailing, crowd work, and micro-task platforms in Australia (Churchill, 2024). Therefore, the gender pay gaps were intensified during the pandemic. The highly represented online teaching platforms have also witnessed lower wages for women. This can be attributed to the difference in working time, where women usually do not work in the late evenings (Anwar & Graham, 2021; Bolotnyy & Emanuel, 2022; Dokuka et al., 2022). Working women who take advantage of flexibility in the working environment earn much lower incomes than men (Gerber, 2022).

One of the many reasons why women earn less than men can be associated with the lower bargaining power of women, which limits their ability to negotiate fair pay (Vyas, 2021). In addition to all these disadvantages in the earning gap of women, there are instances where, if women are to earn better in their gig work, they have to sexually satisfy their customers (Wiesböck et al., 2023; Zhao, 2024). Moreover, studies have highlighted instances of exploitation, particularly in gendered segments of the gig economy. For example, in the digital gaming sector, women are often employed as ‘entertainment gamers’ and in such tasks, women are expected to engage in sexualized chats or meet additional emotional demands from male clients. Refusal to comply often results in lower earnings, penalisation, or loss of visibility on the platform (Wiesböck et al., 2023; Zhao, 2024). This will lead to lower payments for women. To withstand these challenges that lead to lower payment, women have to spend additional time upskilling themselves (Zhao, 2024).

### *Safety and Security*

The growing gig economy has created a new position in domestic employment by acting as an intermediary between the service inquirer and the service provider (Tandon & Rathi, 2022). In mediated care labour jobs, the caregivers attractively present themselves via the platforms to be recruited for jobs. Since care labour is an offline gig work, the safety and the need to be fit play an important role in the working conditions of the gig workers in this sector. The women in these platforms must be physically appealing and attractive to gain employment through these platforms, which further adds to their vulnerabilities in such employment (Kalemba et al., 2024). This also holds for other online-mediated gig jobs, such as online gaming, which invites more women, and they tend to choose such jobs due to social pressure. Apart from the daily gaming job, these women also have to sexually satisfy their customers, and not adhering to the demands is often penalised (Zhao, 2024). While women tend to receive messages about their physical appearance, men are likely to receive messages about their game content (He, 2025).

Women are attracted to the ride-hailing market due to the twin benefits of autonomy and flexible schedules. Gender-based violence at work is very common on ride-sharing platforms (Hamal & Huijsmans, 2022). This is again supported by the Gender Heteromation structure, where there is a vast difference in the accountability of men and women. Though safety compliance among ridesharing drivers was evident (Quy Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2022), injuries and accidents were common among male drivers and cyclists. Women tend to be safer than male drivers in ride-hailing, and that, unfortunately, harms their productivity because they complete their trips slowly. The gender productivity differences in riding platforms can be attributed to the speed at which male and female drivers drive. Studies show that the speed of female drivers is lower than that of male drivers (Cook et al., 2021; Min & Bansal, 2023). The rates at which men meet accidents are also higher than those of women (Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2022). The rate at which men complete trips is higher than that of women, which leads to slower experience creation by women (Cook et al., 2021). Higher crime rates are recorded in regions where there are more female riders than male riders in Chicago. Thus, in ridesharing platforms, men are more vulnerable in terms of accidents caused due to overspeed, and women are the key victims of gender-based violence.

### *Algorithmic Management*

Algorithmic management in the gig economy tends to silently increase the invisibility and competition among the gig workers (Gerber, 2022). For example, gender bias in customer reviews on platforms like Uber results in female drivers often receiving lower ratings than their male counterparts (Cook et al., 2021).

These biased reviews, in turn, later feed into algorithmic systems that rank workers, making women less visible and reducing their access to job opportunities (James, 2024). The same can also be witnessed in online gaming platforms where rating systems determine rating scales to rate the companions. Those with a higher rating are more visible and get more opportunities to work. Women have to regularly accept orders, remain active, and get good ratings from customers (He, 2025).

In most scenarios, the client feedback negatively impacts the women in the Gig Economy (Gerber, 2022). For instance, one of the reasons why there is roughly a 7% hourly earnings gap is that the gender-blind algorithms do not consider the cancellation of trips by riders who do not prefer female drivers (Cook et al., 2021). On the other hand, the algorithm management of certain ridesharing platforms lets the customers and the drivers choose the gender of each other, which can lead to uncertainty and safety issues (Hamal & Huijsmans, 2022).

Thus, algorithmic practices contribute to gender disparities by amplifying the effects of biased ratings, reducing visibility, and limiting job access for women in both ride-hailing and gaming platforms. The system reinforces a cycle in which women must work harder to remain visible while simultaneously being more vulnerable to lower ratings, cancellations, and exclusion from job opportunities.

### *Maintaining Visibility*

Visibility in the gig work refers to the algorithm of the platform that promotes the profile of the particular worker, such as how easily and frequently a gig worker appears to potential customers on the platform, such as in search results, recommendations, or match lists. Complementing algorithm management and making oneself visible is also very important in the platform economy to earn more customers and to generate more income. This visibility can be attained only if the platform workers are active, receive many orders, and also get good ratings (He, 2025). Only the top gaming companions can keep themselves visible, which allows them to generate a good fan base and generate a good income. Others who technically become invisible will have to leave the job (He, 2025). This is also witnessed in crowd-working platforms; for women, having to stay visible in this way, along with managing their daily chores, is a challenge (James, 2024).

## **Conclusion**

Through a systematic literature review adopting the PRISMA model on the gender-based challenges in the gig economy, the study provides insights into the

extent of women's representation and the multifaceted challenges they encounter across different sectors of Gig Work. The findings reveal that women remain underrepresented in most gig sectors. Though flexibility and autonomy offered by Gig Work serve as strong incentives for women to participate, the dual job of unpaid and paid work has a delimiting effect on their participation.

In response to the first research question, findings reveal that although women are drawn to gig work for its flexibility and autonomy, they tend to engage in roles that align with traditional gender expectations and allow them to balance domestic responsibilities. As a result, women are underrepresented in male-dominated segments of the platform economy, such as delivery, ride-hailing, and crowd work. Conversely, they are more concentrated in feminised gig roles, including caregiving, online tutoring, and domestic cleaning, where their participation is notably higher. Thus, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining the extent of representation of women in the Gig Economy. Though online mediated gig jobs, such as online gaming, invite more women, they are also requested to do other services, like sexual and psychological support during their course of work. Women tend to choose such jobs due to social pressure. In high-opportunity sectors of Gig Work, the lack of digital skills, limited training, and higher financial costs play an integral part in posing challenges for women.

With regard to the second research question, the study highlights the key challenges faced by women in the gig economy. It reveals the gender-based pay gaps: women are paid less than men, mainly because they cannot work in the evenings. In most of the studies, it can be witnessed that women represent a majority of the low-paid workers in the Gig Economy. The safety and security of women gig workers also pose a great challenge for female gig workers. The Gender Heteromation structure of ride-hailing platforms, which pays differently to men and women, also acts as a challenge in the Gig Economy. The study also identified that high penalisation, safety, gender digital divide, and algorithm pressure pose challenges to women. The study also advances the existing literature by showing instances of glass escalator effects, which are silently prevalent in gig platforms regardless of sector, even within feminised areas of gig work.

Different measures can be taken to overcome the limitations faced by women in the gig economy. The importance of providing equality lies in the fact that when equal payment is made between men and women, it holistically develops the workplace as a whole (Son Hing et al., 2023). Some suggestions which can be used

from the previous studies are to audit the gender representation in the gig economy, identifying the representation of women in the sectors, how much their decisions are being valued, the success rate of the women applicants, etc. (Ryan, 2023).

The necessity for increasing the safety of women, especially in sectors such as ride-hailing, is another implication that arises from this study. This includes actions such as restricting female riders from making rides in the high crime rate areas, therefore making geographical locations a consideration for ride-hailing by women (Cook et al., 2021). Though male and female riders show negative attitudes towards female riders, if the ride-hailing companies recruit more female drivers, they can explore the opportunity of providing female drivers on request to those clients who only require female riders for safety concerns (Greenwood et al., 2022; Min & Bansal, 2023). Providing insurance and other amenities will increase their safety and also attract more female drivers into ride-hailing (Bedford, 2024).

In gig platforms, such as tutoring, hiring platforms must ensure that women workers are given ample training opportunities to excel in their careers and overcome the limitations of training opportunities. Since one of the major reasons why women workers choose gig work is the flexibility in the work, the platforms must make sure that the women employees are given flexible time, as they also have to manage the unpaid care work. The ride-hailing platforms, for example, can give women flexible timing to work, and if the women choose to take up night shifts, premium pay should be paid to them.

This study specifically focuses on the gender-specific roles of women in the Gig Economy and highlights the major challenges uniquely faced by them across different sectors. The literature used in the study is mostly studies from countries like Australia, China, Africa and the European Union. However, there remains significant scope for future research in underrepresented regions such as South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, where cultural norms and informal labour markets may uniquely shape women's gig work experiences. Comparative studies across countries could also be done to identify the geographical sensitivity of gender-based challenges in gig work.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.



## Acknowledgement

The authors thank the University of Calicut for the facilities provided.

## Funding

The first author received a Junior Research Fellowship from the University Grants Commission of India.

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