

The Aspects of Job Quality and Work Precarity of On-Demand Gig Workers: A Systematic Literature Review

Zaimy Johana Johan¹, Razieman Mohd Yusoff^{2,*}, Azimah Daud¹, Suhana Sulaiman²

¹ Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

² Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review paper focuses on the contextual understanding for on-demand gig workers from the perspective of job quality and work precarity. While on-demand gig work being perceived as ways to solve unemployment and contribute towards economic development, there are growing debates over precarity and vulnerability of this line of work as well as the life of the workers. The methodology applied was based on past systemic literature review flow and Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), which includes identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion phases. The review comprises all type of research field with relevant criteria of research published in the past five years from the two reliable electronic databases which are Web of Science and Scopus to maintain relevancy and precision. At the end of filtering procedure, fifteen scientific articles were selected and the common themes for on-demand gig workers were identified: the provision job quality from the job provider, and work precarity among gig workers.

Keywords: Job quality; work precarity; on-demand delivery; gig economy; gig workers

1. Introduction

The gig economy refers to a market system in which companies or individuals request hire workers to perform short assignments. These transactions are mediated through online labour platforms, either outsourcing work to a geographically dispersed crowd or allocating work to individuals in a specific area [1]. In other words, gig economy is also known as the sharing economy [2]. The sharing economy thematic network consists of the following keywords: platform economy, self-employment, employment contract, labour market, and Uber [3].

In the gig economy, gig workers represent an alternative work arrangements of jobs are received in pieces or more generally a short-term contract, and agreed upon through digital platforms for several services, such as food delivery or transportation [4].

Gig economy offers workers high level of flexibility, autonomy, task variety and complexity and at the same time, it also has negative repercussion such as low pay, social isolation, working unsocial and irregular hours, overwork, sleep deprivation and exhaustion [5]. The workers usually left with little security and no social security as well as perks such as paid leave, sick leave or related compensation [6]. It was found the sharing economy literature mainly focuses on three main aspects: the connotation of the sharing economy, the business model and the impact [7]. However,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: razieman@um.edu.my

the effort of comprehending this current trend of economic opportunities is still at lacking, especially in Malaysia. Gig economy always been seen as not important as the nine to five jobs and often associated with part-time jobs.

This literature review paper is presented in response to the emerging growth of on-demand delivery industry following the pandemic. While on-demand gig work is looked out as route to solve unemployment and contribute towards economic development, there are growing debates over precarity and vulnerability of this line of work into the life of the workers. Subsequently, the challenge for the Malaysian government is not merely to generate jobs but good quality jobs. Thus, the objective of this paper is to evaluate thematic findings from previous studies about the perceived job quality of work in the gig economy scenes. Such work consists of the service provision of food, courier and transport delivery empowered by digital oriented platform are being considered and included in the systematic literature review process.

2. Methodology

In the procedure of systematic literature review, this paper replicated the method presented in Shaffril, Krauss [8] where PRISMA acted as the guidance. Based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) statements, the rigorous process includes systematic review, eligibility and exclusion criteria, steps of the reviewing process and data abstraction and finally, analysis. This section explains three main sub sections, PRISMA, resources, and systematic review process. These sub sections outline the process taken to extract literature from database and ways of handling data into a complete body of work.

2.1 PRISMA

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses (PRISMA) is a published standard to conduct a systemic review. In general, standards of publication are required to guide authors with related and necessary information that enable them to evaluate and examine the quality and rigor of a review [8]. This method was applied throughout this study to ensure extensive database of scientific literature in a given time can be carried out based on the context of this review, which are job on-demand gig workers and the aspects of job quality and work precarity.

2.2 Resources

Scopus and Web of Science were selected for the robustness and wide coverage of research fields in their databases. Furthermore, both databases are known for their validity and reliability [8]. The generated results from Scopus and Web of Science amounted 33,548 papers for a period of five years (from 2018 until 2022).

2.3 Systematic Review Process

The systematic review process in selecting a number of relevant articles for the present study includes three main stages. First stage is the identification of keywords, followed by the process of searching for related and similar terms based on the thesaurus, dictionaries, encyclopaedia, and past research. Then, search strings of the said similar terms on Scopus and Web of Science were developed after every relevant keyword managed to be decided. As a result, this procedure has captured a total of 33,548 records from both databases.

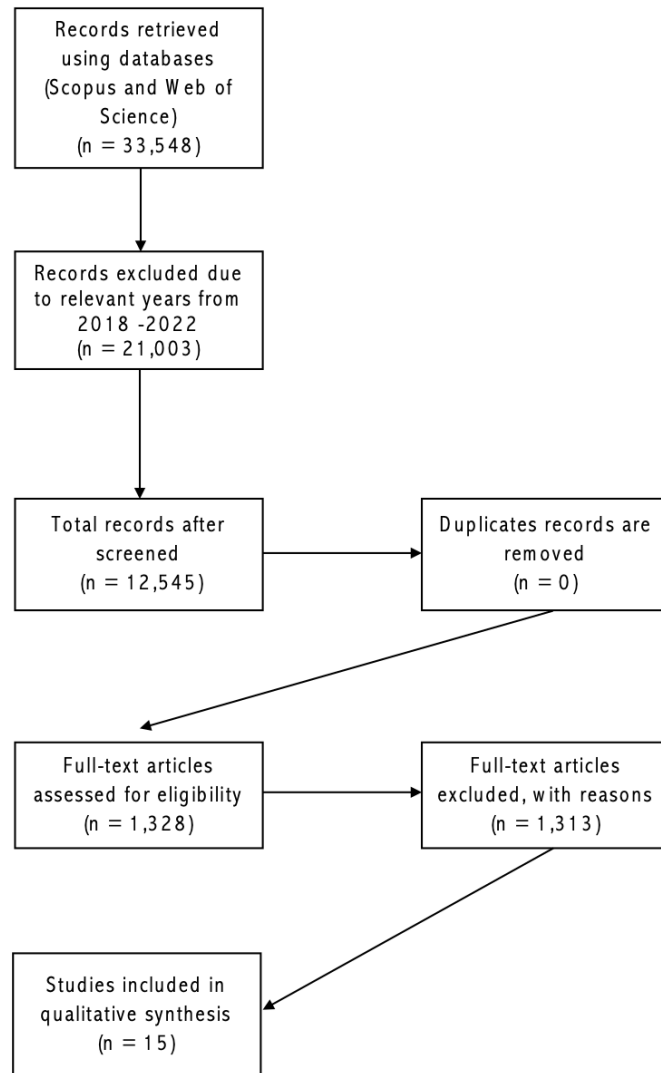


Fig. 1. The flow diagram for systematic literature review procedures [8]

3. Findings

Precarious employment is a result of poor-quality jobs which is caused by the negative impacts of worker wellbeing [9]. The same study also warns about precarious work contains spill over effects and indirectly causing societal impact. To minimize these impacts, Warhurst and Knox [9] came out with new recommendation of Quality of Working Life (QWL), which is able to withstand political and economic pressures.

The recent spiked interest in the quality of work was due to the aspect of work flexibility compared to the traditional approach of workplaces [10]. Mobile working jobs offer greater spatial and temporal flexibility and job satisfaction, however, exhibit lower quality characteristics evident of trade-offs and divisions between forms of mobile work. Since the inception of gig economy, the nature and quality aspects of gig work is still not well understood despite the growing interest with the concept [11]. Likewise, Gig work is well received now and can normalise the perceived poor working conditions from the past. it can be referred as the rise of digital platforms that enables new forms of work activity and transformed workers to easily find new opportunities [12]. Gig work offers advantages such as flexibility, autonomy, task variety and complexity and disadvantages such as low

wages, social isolation, unsocial and irregular hours, overwork, sleep deprivation and exhaustion [13]. In other words, gig work can be associated with algorithmic management techniques [5].

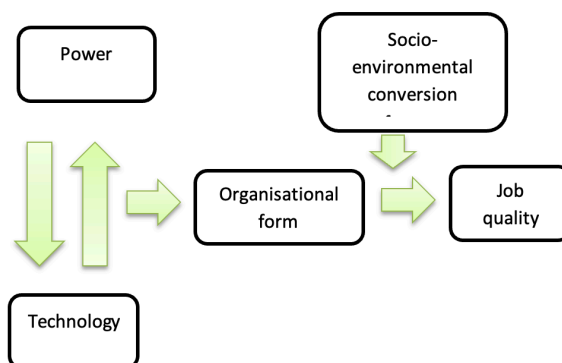


Fig. 2. Job quality determinants model [5]

Income, labour protections, voice and client behaviour are the most significant factors in determining the quality of work based on interviews done with gig economy workers [14]. One of the main challenges is to understand the relevant factors to determine the quality of gig work relationship.

Philip and Davis [15] adopted variables from the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) to examine the role of income and volition towards gig workers and postulated that high volition workers have higher job satisfaction, higher life satisfaction, and lower stress than those who have low volition.

On the contrary of, gig economy usually works with minimum supervision or monitoring. However, it was found that employers still needs to make sound decision to adopt monitoring to ensure top-notch delivery of work performance. Liang, Peng [16] found three common dimensions of monitoring that impacted workers' decision to accept monitored jobs which are intensity (how much information is collected), transparency (whether the monitoring policy is disclosed to workers), and control (whether workers can remove sensitive information). Highlights from their study was as the monitoring intensity increases, workers become less willing to accept monitoring because of elevated privacy concerns. Transparent disclosure does not reduce privacy concerns over high-intensity monitoring. Interestingly, providing control over high-intensity monitoring does not significantly reduce workers' privacy concerns either, rendering this well-intentioned policy ineffective.

In the work precarity framework, social and economic marginalization and economic conditions and policies influence who has precarious work, which subsequently leads to three psychological states of work precarity: precarity of work (i.e., uncertainty related to the continuity of one's work), precarity at work (i.e., unpredictability in work due to discrimination, harassment, and unsafe working conditions), and precarity from work (i.e., uncertainty from holding a job that does not meet one's basic needs) [17]. Precarious work was found to have association with job insecurity and linked with potential of depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. Generally, it related with low satisfaction with life as well [18]. Often associated with flexible labor and flexibility, precarious work deemed as a challenge to existing capitalism systems [19].

4. Conclusions

The highlights of this systematic literature review display several uncertainties for the gig worker. The themes from fifteen papers for on-demand gig workers are job quality and work

precarity deduce some concerns such as quality of work, digital adoption to working environment, worker-customer behavioural, and workers satisfaction. Moreover, some concerns on the job quality for the gig worker requires monitoring or supervision to ensure the deliverable task can be performed as the expected outcome or key performance indicator.

Even though the position as gig workers is not considered as career, a clear guideline for company hiring them should be in place to ensure their safety and job security. Furthermore, studies on their psychological states of work precarity associated with job insecurity and linked with potential of depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion should be examined to ensure that flexible labour and flexibility, precarious work can be some solutions to sharing economy for some low-income society. Based on the limitations mentioned, this study suggests future research in the same context should focuses about exploring the relationship between job quality and gig economy from the perspective of Malaysia. A local contextual study should be directed into understanding the demand of gig workers is important as much as sustaining the income for them. A comprehensive policy should be discussed to ensure these types of workers are protected as much as the conventional workers received protection in terms of job security.

References

- [1] Bérastégui, Pierre. "Exposure to psychosocial risk factors in the gig economy: a systematic review." *ETUI Research Paper-Report* (2021).
- [2] Hossain, Mokter. "Sharing economy: A comprehensive literature review." *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 87 (2020): 102470.
- [3] Malik, Radosław, Anna Visvizi, and Małgorzata Skrzek-Lubasińska. "The gig economy: Current issues, the debate, and the new avenues of research." *Sustainability* 13, no. 9 (2021): 5023.
- [4] Freni-Sterrantino, Anna, and Vincenzo Salerno. "A plea for the need to investigate the health effects of Gig-Economy." *Frontiers in Public Health* 9 (2021): 638767.
- [5] Wood, Alex J., Mark Graham, Vili Lehdonvirta, and Isis Hjorth. "Good gig, bad gig: autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy." *Work, Employment and Society* 33, no. 1 (2019): 56-75.
- [6] Wessels, J. J., and M. Bornman. "THE GIG ECONOMY: CHALLENGES FOR TAX SYSTEMS."
- [7] Zhu, Xiaoxi, and Kai Liu. "A systematic review and future directions of the sharing economy: business models, operational insights and environment-based utilities." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 290 (2021): 125209.
- [8] Shaffril, Hayrol Azril Mohamed, Steven Eric Krauss, and Samsul Farid Samsuddin. "A systematic review on Asian's farmers' adaptation practices towards climate change." *Science of the total Environment* 644 (2018): 683-695.
- [9] Warhurst, Chris, and Angela Knox. "Manifesto for a new Quality of Working Life." *human relations* 75, no. 2 (2022): 304-321.
- [10] Wheatley, Daniel. "Workplace location and the quality of work: The case of urban-based workers in the UK." *Urban Studies* 58, no. 11 (2021): 2233-2257.
- [11] Myhill, Katie, James Richards, and Kate Sang. "Job quality, fair work and gig work: The lived experience of gig workers." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 32, no. 19 (2021): 4110-4135.
- [12] Dunn, Michael. "Making gigs work: digital platforms, job quality and worker motivations." *New Technology, Work and Employment* 35, no. 2 (2020): 232-249.
- [13] Kaine, Sarah, and Emmanuel Josserand. "The organisation and experience of work in the gig economy." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 61, no. 4 (2019): 479-501.
- [14] Wei, Wei, and Ian Thomas MacDonald. "Modeling the job quality of 'work relationships' in China's gig economy." *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 60, no. 4 (2022): 855-879.
- [15] Philip, Jestine, and Mark A. Davis. "Presenting Amazon's Mechanical Turk as more than just a data sample—A study of MTurker experiences." *The Irish Journal of Management* 39, no. 2 (2020): 85-98.
- [16] Liang, Chen, Jing Peng, Yili Hong, and Bin Gu. "The hidden costs and benefits of monitoring in the gig economy." *Information Systems Research* (2022).
- [17] Allan, Blake A., Kelsey L. Autin, and Kerrie G. Wilkins-Yel. "Precarious work in the 21st century: A psychological perspective." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 126 (2021): 103491.
- [18] Llosa, Jose A., Sara Menéndez-Espina, Esteban Agulló-Tomás, and Julio Rodríguez-Suárez. "Job insecurity and mental health: a meta-analytical review of the consequences of precarious work in clinical disorders." *Anales de psicología* (2018).

- [19] Betti, E., 2018. Historicizing precarious work: Forty years of research in the social sciences and humanities. *International Review of Social History*, 63(2), pp.273-319.