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GIG Work Platforms and Workforce Inclusion through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study examines how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices affect gig workers' job satisfaction and retention intentions on online gig platforms. Given the growing importance of DEI in the workplace, the study examines how gig platforms might use inclusive practices to boost worker engagement and retention. DEI aspects including supporting a diverse workforce, equal opportunities, and eliminating discrimination are examined in a gig worker survey to determine their satisfaction and intention to continue using the platform. The data imply that gig workers value DEI techniques but do not affect retention decisions. Other considerations like compensation, flexibility, and job advancement may matter more. Gig platforms should include transparent DEI rules, specific interventions, and regular assessments to achieve inclusivity, according to the report. Its regional emphasis and use of self-reported data are limitations, however, the study suggests comparing regional studies and longitudinal analyses to determine DEI's long-term effects on gig employment outcomes. **Keywords:** Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, DEI. Gig Work Platforms, Workforce Inclusion

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) advocates for an inclusive, welcoming, and safe space for all. Diverse groups include a variety of ages, races, genders, and skills. By eliminating systemic inequities, equity fosters fairness and growth. Inclusion requires welcoming, appreciating, and including everyone. Nowadays, DEI—diversity, equality, and inclusion—has improved firms' ethics and finances (Bersin, & Enderes, 2021). DEI is especially significant for gig platform workers, who are often considered independent contractors rather than employees.. Gig platforms, like Lyft and Uber, and food delivery services, like Zomato and Swiggy, offer flexibility and income choices, but they also create challenges when it comes to properly executing DEI initiatives. Many people in today's labour marketplaces are part of the so-called "gig economy," where they work on an as-needed basis (Meijerink *et al.*, 2024). This shift is causing a more mobile workforce and is also affecting traditional organisational paradigms. Unlike regular employers, gig workers don't have the time or resources to devote to creating thorough DEI policies, which is one way in which gig work differs from typical employment. Working without direct supervision, having short-lived professional relationships, and relying too much on technology (like algorithms) that could unintentionally promote preconceptions are all instances of these issues.

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1.2 Research Problem

Workers are more vulnerable to abuses in areas such as equal opportunity, job stability, and access to benefits as the reliance on gig labour platforms grows. Despite claims to the contrary, diverse workforces are suffering due to the absence of consistent DEI laws across gig platforms (Woodcock, 2021). Whether DEI initiatives influence employee happiness and retention is unknown due to the lack of established norms and procedures. Few statistics exist about the traits of the gig economy's employees and the effects of these strategies on company success.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To measure gig workers' perceptions of DEI practices in their platforms.
2. To analyze the effect of DEI practices on job satisfaction among gig workers.
3. To examine the relationship between DEI policies and retention rates in gig platforms.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How do gig workers perceive DEI practices on their platforms?
2. What is the impact of DEI practices on gig workers' job satisfaction?
3. How do DEI policies influence worker retention on gig platforms?

1.5 Significance of the Study

If gig platforms want to raise the bar on diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI), this study has some useful implications for them. A more invested, loyal, and welcoming staff is one possible outcome of this strategy. Because diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) are so important, gig economy platforms should reconsider their policies. The results will shed light on the relationship between the gig economy and issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity, and they will also address a gap in the current literature. By adopting the regulations proposed by the research, governments may ensure that the gig economy is accessible to all individuals.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This research will mainly concentrate on the top gig platforms in India, including Zomato, Swiggy, and Uber. When combined, these platforms constitute a significant chunk of the local freelancing economy. The study has a few flaws, such as the fact that it is very focused on one region and not another and that it relies on self-reported data, which could lead to biases or incorrect impressions among employees. After addressing these caveats, the study intends to shed light on DEI in the gig economy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the Gig Economy

The majority of workers in the "gig economy" are independent contractors who accept jobs on an as-needed basis and work for shorter periods of time. Thanks to the proliferation of digital platforms and related technologies, the gig economy has expanded at a dizzying rate in the last decade. The rise of ridesharing and meal delivery apps like Zomato and Swiggy has given people more freedom, flexibility, and control over their schedules. The growth of the gig economy can be attributed to a number of factors, including changes in employee preferences, new technologies, and the demand for more flexible work hours (HBR, 2019). More individuals are working for themselves as independent contractors due to the rise of gig economy (PC, 2024). Independent income and job security are two benefits of gig work, but there are also some drawbacks. Gig workers may not have access to retirement plans and health insurance. Gig workers face a multitude of challenges that might affect their job satisfaction and

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stability. Factors to think about include unstable financial situations, a lack of social support, and a stagnated job path.

2.2 Understanding DEI in Workplaces

A diverse and inclusive workforce is becoming more important to progressive companies. Workers who are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation are an asset to any company. Equity should govern the allocation of resources, the provision of care, and the establishment of access. Conversely, the essence of inclusion is creating a welcoming environment for all employees. Pompper, and Ertem-Eray, (2024), found that DEI strategies increase workplace enjoyment, productivity, and creativity. The benefits of a diverse, inclusive, and egalitarian work environment include a more engaged staff, better problem solvers, and a more varied workforce overall. Teams with a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives are more likely to succeed. Gig platforms face specific challenges when trying to apply DEI policies. On gig platforms, authority over workers is decentralised because they are generally considered independent contractors. Platforms cannot create policies that encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion since they are not governed by the same laws as traditional enterprises (PM, 2024). Algorithms used by gig sites to assign tasks may promote economic and racial inequality without meaning to. Advocate for a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive world in which technology plays an ever-increasing role.

2.3 Perceptions of DEI Practices

Perceptions of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace can be shaped by factors such as organisational culture, leadership's level of support, and personal experiences. Workplace inclusivity affects feelings of belonging and job satisfaction (HBR, 2019). Companies that have traditionally valued diversity, equity, and inclusion in their hiring practices have excellent job possibilities. Contrarily, gig workers may not place a high value on DEI. Gig workers may feel excluded and unsupported due to the lack of formal frameworks, poor management communication, and brief meetings. Researchers rarely look at diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in the gig economy. Cooperation and friendliness are traits shared by employees of more conventional companies that prioritise diversity and inclusion, claim Croitoru *et al.*, (2022). Gig workers may discover that diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) regulations do not provide sufficient protection due to the unique aspects of their work connections and the difficulties associated with platform-based employment. According to earlier studies, traditional employers have a different view of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) than freelancers. One study found that gig workers were less happy with their platforms' diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) standards than traditional employees. Employees are most frustrated by their managers' inconsistent assistance (PM, 2024).

2.4 Impact of DEI on Job Satisfaction

When companies make an effort to include all employees, workers feel more fulfilled in their work. According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), three factors contribute to job satisfaction: work ties, acknowledgement, and success (TSW, 2021). Workers are dissatisfied with the company's practices and compensation. Workplace satisfaction may rise as a result of DEI regulations' effects on intrinsic motivation and personal hygiene. Workplace morale is known to improve when initiatives are implemented that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. According to Kiradoo (2022), businesses that prioritise diversity and inclusion see higher levels of worker satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. A strong feeling of community is more crucial than ever because employers provide gig workers less resources when it comes to support. Here, programs that aim to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion stand out. There may be a correlation between the uneven application of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) platforms and the level of job satisfaction among gig workers.

2.5 DEI Policies and Retention Rates

Both traditional and freelancing economies struggle with labour retention. Due to gig work's unpredictability, these platforms have considerable employee turnover. Gershon (2024) found that

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appreciated employees are less likely to leave. DEI restrictions may help gig economy workers feel less alone and retain them. Making employees feel valued and supported can enhance retention, according to Kurdi, & Alshurideh (2020). Strong DEI programs reduce employee turnover, explaining why. Diversity, equity, and inclusion regulations may help gig platforms recruit and retain great personnel.

2.6 Gaps in Existing Literature

Gig platforms have neglected to research the effectiveness and application of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI), despite its growing importance in modern organisations. Gig economy diversity, equity, and inclusion research is scarce. This is because most study has disregarded or analysed mainly traditional or huge multinational corporations. Stevanato et al. (2020) say current models don't consider DEI methods for content or long-term independent contractors. Something's wrong. Further research should reveal how gig platforms may boost employee happiness and retention through diversity, equity, and inclusion.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Using both descriptive and analytical techniques, this study looks at how gig workers feel about DEI practices. Employee engagement, diversity and inclusion policies, and retention rates will also be studied. Organised surveys are the backbone of the study's quantitative approach. Gig platform policies can be improved by objectively measuring workers' DEI experiences and looking for patterns.

3.2 Population and Sample

Zomato, Uber, and Swiggy drivers, as well as those who deliver other goods, are the focus of this study. The gig economy couldn't function without this diverse group of individuals, which spans generations, genders, countries, and skill sets. A wide demographic is reflected in them. The diversity of gig workers can be accurately depicted using a stratified random sample. To stratify the population for random selection, demographic factors such as platform type and gender are utilised (Newcastle University, 2020). This ensures that the sample covers a wide range of subcategories within the gig economy. It should have enough information to make some conclusions and have a good representation of different viewpoints if it get 100 people to fill out the survey. With this number of participants, it can be said with certainty that the findings regarding the gig economy are based on real data.

3.3 Data Collection

The primary data will be gathered using online surveys and in-person interviews to provide the highest possible response rates and accessibility. People who work in areas that are often busy with transport or food delivery will be surveyed in person. Many channels, including email, will be used to disseminate the online survey.

The questionnaire will consist of four sections:

- Section A: Collecting age, gender, experience, and platform-specific demographic data is Section A's primary goal.
- Section B: "Perceptions of DEI practices," gauges how workers feel about equality, diversity, and inclusion on the job.
- Section C: This takes into account both broad feelings of contentment and more nuanced factors including pay, scheduling freedom, and overall work environment.
- Section D; "Retention Intentions," takes a look at the platform's enduring appeal to employees.

3.4 Statistical Tools

- Objective 1: Investigating the impact of age and gender on DEI views is one objective. The Chi-Square Independence Test will be used for this purpose.

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- Objective 2: Examining the relationship between DEI policies and gig worker satisfaction, this study used correlational analysis.
- Objective 3: the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies on employee retention using multiple linear regression. Think about the kind of platform and the experience of the workers.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This inquiry places a premium on ethical considerations. A participant's rights and the study's aims will be outlined in an informed consent form that they will be asked to sign before taking part. No participant's identity or confidentiality will ever be compromised in this study. Only research will make use of the data, and it will be kept secure. Also, we'll make sure that anyone can drop out of the study whenever they choose, no questions asked.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Crosstabs Analysis
The objective of the Test

The objective of this Chi-Square test is to analyze whether there is a significant association between gender and the perception of diversity being highly valued by the gig work platform. This helps in understanding if perceptions of diversity differ across gender groups.

Hypotheses

- Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant association between gender and the perception that a diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant association between gender and the perception that a diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform.

Chi-Square Equation

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Results

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.384[a]	10	.864
Likelihood Ratio	6.107	10	.806
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 8 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .12.

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Figure 1: Output of Crosstabs Analysis
(Source: Created by the learner)

Crosstabulation	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total
Female	5	11	9	8	13	46
Male	7	8	8	12	11	46
Other	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total	12	20	17	21	24	100

Chi-Square Test Results

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.384	10	0.864
Likelihood Ratio	6.107	10	0.806
N of Valid Cases	100		

Interpretation

The Pearson Chi-Square score is 5.384, with 10 df and 0.864 p-value. The p-value (0.864) above the significance level (0.05), hence it cannot reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that gender does not significantly affect the platform's assessment of diversity value.

4.2 Correlation Analysis
The objective of the Test

The objective of this test is to examine whether there is a significant relationship between the perception that a diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform and the overall opinion of the platform's treatment of gig workers. This relationship can help determine if valuing diversity is linked to overall positive perceptions of gig platforms.

Hypotheses

- Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between the perception of diversity being valued and the overall opinion of the platform's treatment of gig workers.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant correlation between the perception of diversity being valued and the overall opinion of the platform's treatment of gig workers.

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Correlation Equation

$$r = \frac{\sum (X - \bar{X})(Y - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum (X - \bar{X})^2 \cdot \sum (Y - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

Results

Correlations

		6. A diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform.	11. What is your overall opinion on the platform's treatment of gig workers?
6. A diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform.	Pearson Correlation	1	-.060
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.556
	N	100	100
11. What is your overall opinion on the platform's treatment of gig workers?	Pearson Correlation	-.060	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.556	
	N	100	100

Figure 2: Output of Correlation Analysis
(Source: Created by the learner)

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
6. A diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform	3.43	1.492	100
11. Overall opinion on the platform's treatment of gig workers	2.00	Not provided	100

Correlations	6. A diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform	11. Overall opinion on the platform's treatment of gig workers
Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.060
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.556

N	100	100

Interpretation

The correlation coefficient (r=-0.060r = -0.060r=-0.060) shows a weak negative link between diversity value perception and overall view on gig worker treatment on the platform. The p-value is 0.556, much greater than 0.05. This means the null hypothesis cannot be rejected and the variables are not statistically related. Diversity values do not influence gig worker treatment opinions, according to the modest negative correlation.

4.3 Regression Analysis

The objective of the Test

The objective of this test is to evaluate the impact of key Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) factors, such as valuing diversity, promoting inclusivity, ensuring equal opportunity, addressing bias, and open communication, on gig workers' intention to continue using the platform for the next 12 months.

Hypotheses

- Null Hypothesis (H0): The selected DEI factors have no significant influence on the gig workers' intention to continue using the platform.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): The selected DEI factors significantly influence the gig workers' intention to continue using the platform.

Regression Equation

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon$$

Results

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.625	5	1.325	.792	.558[b]
	Residual	157.215	94	1.673		
	Total	163.840	99			

a. Dependent Variable: 15. I intend to keep utilising this platform for the upcoming twelve months.

b. Predictors: (Constant), 10. The platform is actively working to combat bias and discrimination., 6. A diverse workforce is highly valued by the platform., 8. An inclusive work atmosphere is promoted via the platform., 7. The platform guarantees that all employees have equal opportunity to succeed., 9. I have no problem communicating my thoughts and suggestions to the platform's administration.

Figure 3: Output of Regression Analysis
(Source: Created by the learner)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.201	0.040	-0.011	1.293

ANOVA Table

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Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.625	5	1.325	0.792	0.558
Residual	157.215	94	1.673		
Total	163.840	99			

Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.456	0.755		3.253	0.002
6. A diverse workforce is highly valued	0.128	0.091	0.148	1.402	0.164
7. Equal opportunity for employees	0.094	0.113	0.087	0.832	0.408
8. An inclusive work atmosphere is promoted	-0.030	0.105	-0.029	-0.281	0.779
9. Open communication with the administration	0.043	0.118	0.039	0.368	0.714
10. Combatting bias and discrimination	-0.084	0.102	-0.084	-0.821	0.414

Interpretation

DEI predictors explain just 4% of the variance in the dependent variable (intention to use the platform) (R-Square = 0.040). All p-values are greater than 0.05, hence no predictor shows a significant association with the dependent variable. The regression model is not statistically significant according to the ANOVA test (p = 0.558).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

Purportedly, this research set out to better understand how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices on gig labour platforms affect workers' happiness and loyalty on the job. Poll results show gig workers value workplace diversity, fair opportunity, and zero tolerance for discrimination. The statistical analysis found no correlation between DEI characteristics and gig workers' platform retention goals (Zhang, 2024). Despite their support for inclusive policies and diversity, the study found that employees were happy at work and planned to stay. DEI features weren't enough to explain why workers stayed on the platform, the regression model indicated. Diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) policies are lauded, but other factors may affect gig work job satisfaction and retention more.

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5.2 Practical Implications

The study suggests gig platforms employ DEI policies to build more equal and inclusive workplaces. No significant results have been published about DEI's direct impact on retention, hence a more complex technique is needed. Diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) policies should be prioritised by platforms among the many aspects that improve work experiences (Gutterman, 2023). Demographically focused interventions are needed to customise DEI programs. Learning about employee types' needs can help platforms strengthen DEI projects. Supporting under-represented groups or gender parity may be more successful if they recognise their particular challenges.

5.3 Recommendations

Develop Transparent and Inclusive DEI Policies: Gig platforms can demonstrate diversity and inclusion by creating clear DEI policies. These policies should be communicated to all platform levels to accommodate gig workers' unique challenges (BII, 2022). The greatest method to keep employees happy is to build trust and then execute policies.

Provide DEI Training and Resources for Platform Managers: Platform managers are expected to frequently participate in DEI training to ensure the efficient implementation of DEI procedures (EMP, 2023). By doing so, students will enhance their capacity to see bias, grasp the importance of inclusive policies, and cultivate a space devoid of discrimination. Managers should also be equipped to deal with DEI issues that arise in the course of their regular work.

Regularly Assess and Update DEI Initiatives Based on Worker Feedback: It is essential that DEI methods be adaptable enough to be changed when needed. Platforms should routinely ask employees for feedback in order to measure the success of DEI programs and tweak them as needed (Ag, 2022). With the help of this feedback loop, it can make sure the platform is suitable for all of the employees' needs and find ways to make it better.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Note that this study is not without its limitations. The main issue is that the study only covered a small area, so the results don't apply to anything outside of that specific field. Due to differences in DEI policies, the findings may not be generalisable to gig workers across the country or even to certain areas. Participants might have been swayed by social desirability or provided inaccurate information about their actual perceptions because the study relied on self-reported data, which can lead to response bias.

5.5 Future Research Directions

The effects of DEI on gig employment can be better understood if future studies examine data from various platforms and geographical areas. Accordingly, researchers would have a way to determine if cultural or regional factors impact the relationship between DEI practices and job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. To better understand how DEI initiatives affect gig workers' happiness and loyalty over the long run, longitudinal studies are needed (Soprano *et al.*, 2024). Workers' attitudes and behaviours towards DEI procedures may be better understood if researchers follow them for a long time.

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