



## Gig Economy and Part-Time Jobs: A Boon or Burden for Students

K. Madhumitha<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Jeppiaar university

\*Corresponding author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63680/ijstate0326121.097>

### Abstract

The gig economy has rapidly transformed the nature of work across the globe, offering flexible, short-term employment opportunities driven by digital platforms. For college students, gig work and part-time jobs have become increasingly popular as a means to earn income, gain experience, and develop employability skills while continuing their education. However, the growing reliance on such work also raises critical concerns regarding academic stress, job insecurity, mental health, and exploitation. This article critically examines whether the gig economy and part-time employment serve as a boon or a burden for students. By analysing economic, social, psychological, and educational perspectives, the study explores the advantages, challenges, and long-term implications of student participation in the gig economy, with special reference to the Indian context.

**Keywords:** Gig economy, part-time jobs, students, higher education, employment, work-life balance

### Introduction

In recent years, the concept of employment has undergone a significant shift. Traditional full-time jobs with fixed hours and long-term contracts are increasingly being replaced or supplemented by flexible, short-term work arrangements known as the gig economy. This change has been accelerated by technological advancements, digital platforms, and changing lifestyle preferences. For college students, the gig economy presents new opportunities to earn money alongside their studies.

Students today face rising education costs, increased competition in the job market, and growing pressure to become financially independent at an early age. As a result, many students engage in part-time jobs such as food delivery, online tutoring, content writing, data entry, social media management, ride-sharing, and freelance design. While these opportunities appear attractive due to their flexibility and ease of entry, they also raise important questions about their impact on academic performance, mental well-being, and future career prospects.

This article seeks to explore whether gig economy and part-time jobs are truly beneficial for students or whether they impose hidden burdens that may outweigh their advantages.

## Understanding the Gig Economy

The gig economy refers to a labour market characterized by short-term contracts, freelance work, or on-demand tasks rather than permanent employment. Workers are typically paid per task, project, or hour and are often classified as independent contractors rather than employees.

- ❖ Features of the Gig Economy
- ❖ Flexibility in working hours
- ❖ Absence of long-term job security
- ❖ Payment based on output or task completion
- ❖ Platform-based employment mediated through apps and websites
- ❖ Limited or no employment benefits
- ❖ Digital platforms have made gig work accessible to students by eliminating traditional hiring barriers. With a smartphone and internet access, students can find work opportunities almost instantly.
- ❖ Types of Part-Time and Gig Jobs for Students
- ❖ Students engage in a wide variety of gig and part-time roles, which can be broadly categorized as follows:
- ❖ Online Gig Work
- ❖ Freelance writing and editing
- ❖ Graphic designing and video editing
- ❖ Online tutoring and academic assistance
- ❖ Social media management
- ❖ Data entry and virtual assistance
- ❖ Platform-Based Offline Jobs
- ❖ Food and grocery delivery
- ❖ Ride-sharing and bike taxi services
- ❖ Event staffing
- ❖ Retail and hospitality work
- ❖ Campus-Based Part-Time Jobs
- ❖ Library assistants
- ❖ Research assistants
- ❖ Administrative support
- ❖ Peer tutors
- ❖ Each type of work differs in terms of skill requirements, income stability, and impact on student life.
- ❖ The Gig Economy as a Boon for Students

## Financial Independence

One of the most significant benefits of gig and part-time jobs is financial support. Many students come from middle- or lower-income families and rely on part-time work to cover tuition fees, accommodation, transportation, and daily expenses. Gig work reduces dependence on parents and promotes financial independence.

## Flexible Work Schedule

Unlike traditional jobs, gig work allows students to choose their working hours. This flexibility enables them to balance academics and work more effectively. Students can work during weekends, evenings, or semester breaks without interfering with classes.

### **Skill Development**

Gig jobs help students acquire practical skills that are often not taught in classrooms. These include communication skills, time management, problem-solving, digital literacy, customer handling, and entrepreneurial thinking. Freelancing and online work also enhance technical and creative skills.

### **Work Experience and Resume Building**

Early exposure to the workforce helps students understand professional environments and expectations. Employers often value practical experience alongside academic qualifications. Gig work can strengthen resumes and improve employability after graduation.

### **Career Exploration**

Part-time jobs allow students to explore different fields before committing to a long-term career. For example, a student interested in marketing may try social media management gigs, while another interested in teaching may engage in online tutoring.

### **The Gig Economy as a Burden for Students**

❖ Despite its advantages, gig work also presents several challenges that may negatively affect students.

#### **Academic Pressure and Time Constraints**

❖ Balancing academics with work can be exhausting. Students who work long hours may struggle to attend classes, complete assignments, and prepare for examinations. This can lead to poor academic performance and increased stress.

#### **Mental and Physical Health Issues**

❖ Irregular work hours, night shifts, and physically demanding jobs can affect students' health. Prolonged screen time, lack of sleep, and constant pressure to meet deadlines can result in anxiety, burnout, and fatigue.

#### **Job Insecurity and Unstable Income**

❖ Gig work does not guarantee a stable income. Earnings depend on availability of tasks, platform algorithms, and customer demand. Students may face financial uncertainty, delayed payments, or sudden loss of work opportunities.

#### **Lack of Legal Protection and Benefits**

❖ Most gig workers are not entitled to benefits such as minimum wages, health insurance, paid leave, or job security. Students working in the gig economy may be vulnerable to exploitation, unfair ratings, and sudden account deactivation.

#### **Distraction from Long-Term Goals**

❖ Easy access to short-term income may discourage students from focusing on long-term academic and career planning. Some students may prioritize immediate earnings over skill development or higher studies.

#### **Social and Psychological Impact on Students**

- ❖ The gig economy significantly influences students' social lives and psychological well-being.

### **Social Isolation**

- ❖ Students working long or irregular hours may have limited time for social interactions, extracurricular activities, and campus engagement. This can lead to feelings of isolation and reduced sense of belonging.

### **Stress and Performance Anxiety**

- ❖ Performance-based pay and customer ratings create constant pressure to perform well. Fear of negative reviews or low ratings can increase anxiety and reduce job satisfaction.

### **Shift in Student Identity**

- ❖ Traditionally, students were primarily learners. Today, many students identify themselves as workers alongside being students. While this can foster responsibility, it may also increase pressure to "grow up" too quickly.

### **Gig Economy and Students in the Indian Context**

- ❖ In India, the gig economy has grown rapidly due to urbanization, smartphone penetration, and high youth population. Rising unemployment and competitive job markets have pushed students toward part-time and gig work.

### **Economic Necessity**

- ❖ For many Indian students, part-time work is not a choice but a necessity. Rising education costs and limited scholarships make gig work a crucial source of income.

### **Cultural Attitudes**

- ❖ Traditional attitudes often view student employment as a distraction from studies. However, perceptions are gradually changing as families recognize the value of work experience and financial contribution.

### **Digital Divide**

- ❖ While urban students benefit from online gig opportunities, rural students may face challenges due to limited internet access and digital skills, leading to unequal access to gig work.

### **Role of Educational Institutions**

- ❖ Colleges and universities play a crucial role in helping students manage work and academics.

### **Flexible Academic Policies**

- ❖ Institutions can introduce flexible attendance policies, online learning options, and part-time study modes to support working students.

### **Career Guidance and Counselling**

- ❖ Career cells should guide students in choosing jobs aligned with their academic goals and interests, rather than purely income-driven work.

### **Awareness Programs**

- ❖ Educational institutions can conduct workshops on time management, financial literacy, mental health,

and workers' rights to help students make informed decisions.

### **Balancing Work and Education: The Way Forward**

To ensure that gig work remains a boon rather than a burden, the following measures are essential:

- ❖ Students should limit working hours during academic terms
- ❖ Preference should be given to skill-based and career-relevant jobs
- ❖ Government policies should extend basic social security to gig workers
- ❖ Platforms must ensure fair wages and transparent policies
- ❖ Parents and educators should provide guidance and emotional support
- ❖ A balanced approach can help students benefit from gig work without compromising their education and well-being.

### **Conclusion**

The gig economy and part-time jobs present both opportunities and challenges for students. On one hand, they offer financial independence, flexibility, skill development, and early work experience. On the other hand, they introduce academic pressure, mental stress, job insecurity, and potential exploitation. Whether gig work becomes a boon or a burden largely depends on the nature of the job, the number of working hours, institutional support, and individual coping abilities.

For students, the key lies in striking a healthy balance between work and education. When managed wisely, gig economy participation can complement academic learning and prepare students for the future workforce. However, without proper regulation and guidance, it risks turning education into a secondary priority. Therefore, a collaborative effort from students, educational institutions, policymakers, and gig platforms is essential to ensure sustainable and student-friendly employment opportunities.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

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

### **Funding**

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and publication of this article.