PROJECT DESSERTATION REPORT

Managing Gig Economy at the Human Resource Level

Submitted By

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Enrollment No. - 2K18/MBA/088

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CERTIFICATE FROM INSTITUTE

This is to certify that the Summer Internship Report on "**Managing Gig Economy at the Human Resource Level**" is a bonafide work carried out by "Mehul Agrawal" who is a student of MBA 2018-20 batch at Delhi School of Management, DTU, Delhi. The project is submitted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of Masters of Business Administration.

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Place: Delhi School of Management, DTU, Delhi   Seal of HOD (DSM, DTU)

 Date: 28th May, 2020

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Mehul Agrawal, student of MBA 2018-2020 batch of Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Bawana Road, Delhi - 110042, declare that the summer internship report on "**Managing Gig Economy at Human Resource Level**", submitted in partial fulfillment of Degree of Masters of Business Administration, is the original work conducted by me.

The information and data given in the report is authentic to the best of my knowledge. This internship report is not submitted to any other institute/university for award of any other degree, diploma and fellowship.

Date: 28th May, 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present research study was done at Delhi School of Management, DTU, Delhi. The research area was based on Human Resource Management and the focus was on strategy formulation that could prove beneficial in handling the upcoming trend of gig economy. In the entire study, three major objectives were successfully achieved. The study was exploratory in nature and the data was collected through secondary sources such as Management journals, magazines and others.

Extensive literature review was done in order to formulate the objectives of the study. As very less studies focused fully on the strategic HRM aspect in relation to gig economy, therefore, the present study was undertaken in order to delve deeper into the finer nuances of gig economy management at the Human Resource Level.

As a first step, it was found that the current HR professionals are facing certain challenges with respect to handling of freelance workers. The current HR personnel needed to adopt more agile processes for handling this new wave. There were challenges of talent acquisition and training of freelancers. Therefore the importance of novel HRM skills was highlighted. Thus, the organizations need to go for a more tailored approach. Based on this analysis the objectives were successfully achieved.

The first objective was to design the employee assessment and performance management strategies where it was suggested to formulate new employee evaluation criteria, use HR scorecard with big data and AI and also conducing psychometric assessments for gig workers. The second objective was to design recruitment and selection strategies where it was suggested to create employer brand for attracting freelancers, create alumni networks for gig workers for better collaboration and change the conventional job descriptions to skills based ones. The third objective was to design the training strategies for gig workers where it was formulated that companies should go for digital on-boarding, micro-learning and e-learning, gamification, preparation of gig worker training on the basis of tasks and preparing personalized content for freelancer workers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview - About Gig Economy

Gig economy can be referred to as work engagement with two parties, where one is a service seeker who is like a customer who wants a specific task to be done, and the other party is a service provider whom one calls as a gig worker. The service provider (gig worker) performs the task of service seeker. In a gig economy culture, technology based platforms are there to connect the both the parties together. Gig workers have self-employed people such as part-time workers, freelancers, and others. In a gig economy, the advantage is that overhead costs are cut, because the gig worker is paid on the basis of the tasks he performs. He does not receive a fixed salary. Thus, **gig economy is defined as a shift from 9-to-5 job to a demand based, system where freelance work is done [1].**

1.2 Trends in Gig Economy

In 2018, customers from around the world were responsible for a gross volume of ~$204 billion value from the gig economy in which 50% alone came from the transportation-oriented services. According to latest trends, gig economy is known to grow in size by **17% CAGR** and also create gross volume value of ~$455 billion by 2023. According to a online labor index, India is the 5th largest country after US, China, Brazil and Japan to have a gig workforce demand, with maximum opportunities for growth in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Employment creation in today's times can be easily done with the help of digital platforms which helps connects both job seekers and job providers directly with no middlemen. According to the McKinsey Global Institute if these platforms are used for labor, then US GDP could go up by 2.3% and employment could rise by 2.7% by 2025. Due to rapid technological advancement, the cost for outsourcing work of non-core activities is decreasing and therefore, the tasks for performing such work by gig workers has increased. It is because of this, that today the firms have

become small in size and more and more start-ups are there which are outsourcing work to freelancers. Gig economy was already well known by the blue-collar workers in India such as Uber/Ola drivers, but now the demand for white-collar workers is increasing in industries for works like logo/content design, project-consultants, web design etc. (**Tapchief** in India can be an example). Therefore, it can be said that the gig economy has expanded from less skilled works like domestic chores at **BookMyChotu** in India, to more skilled services like **Guru** in India, and **Upwork** in US. [1]

Need for skill: According to the National Skill Development Corporation, around 70 million can expectedly enter the country's labour force by 2023, including 59 million youth below 30 years. For large socio-economic segments in the country, it is more important to invest in polytechnics and in learning new skills. But for the millions already in the workforce, the State as well as private sector organisations need to drive upskilling and reskilling programmes to prepare them for the future of work [2].

Social security: As part of the new 'Code on Social Security' draft, the government has recently announced plans to bring India's gig economy workers under a social security scheme. Such schemes would likely be related to health and maternity benefits life and disability cover, old age protection, etc. This is a huge benefit for the millions of India's skilled labor and contract workers who have little job security and few benefits.

1.3 Evolving Workforce Culture

Latest technology, flexibility, skill levels, more income and human force are the driving factors for flexi work culture. Gig economy incorporates all and gives a sense of ownership, freedom and convenience. Ones preferences at work decide the type of projects to work on and what should be their number. It also decides the amount that can be earned. All of this leads to finally having a work-life balance. For instance there can be a case when one decides to work on 4 projects in a month, but only 2 projects in the next month. In gig culture, the worker has the freedom to give his services only when he believes in the foundational purpose of that project. This further gives him a flexibility which is not found in any traditional job. Gig workers

are able to offer more and more professional services these days with the help of tech-based platforms due to increased usage of smart phones and an exponentially increasing rate of digitized economy. Freelancers only take up tasks where they have high skill levels. For instance, one can offer interior decoration services on a freelance basis for a number of customers rather than go for a regular of an interior designer at any company. A large transaction cost for not outsourcing work and having a large segment of unemployable workforce have come as opportunities for people to enter into gig economy as it leads to additional income. Furthermore, the rising education level, literacy rate and technology knowledge, the gig economy culture is getting strengthened [1].

Employers these days are getting inclines towards gig economy due to lesser transaction costs and a more skilled workforce at the same time. It is because now the companies don't have to go for the traditional administrative cost and compliance cost associated with full time employees. It is therefore very affordable and also comfortable for the companies to hire skilled people for doing on-demand projects as per the business needs. This can be understood from the example that a company can go for a freelance PR consultant for designing a rebound strategy, rather than having a permanent PR team.

Thus, one can say that in a gig economy, both the parties involved, i.e. the service seeker and the service provider, enter into a symbiotic relationship where both can have the same opportunities to fulfill their specific requirements.

1.4 Regional Differences in Gig Economy – U.S.A. v/s India

Higher digitization rate, more developed economy and high disposable income has led to USA becoming the only developed country to adopt gig economy at an early stage itself. Because of more freelancing work demand, there are more startups like **Uber, UpWork and Airbnb,** which are now being used at the global level. In India, there is a high sully of gig workers and low skilled labor in companies due to which there is a big opportunity to adopt gig economy. For this, India can study the trends in the gig economy in USA and replicate the same pattern. For instance**,** India has Ola and OYO rooms which are same as Uber and Airbnb in the USA**.**

People in USA love more independence at work and therefore, embracing gig economy, but in India, there are more people who want to be employed and be empowered and so are going for gig work. India has 7th rank in having talented science and engineering graduates. Also, in India, due to high unemployment, high cost of living, aspiring students and women, there is more need for extra income. This can be seen from the growth of tech based gig platforms such as **Internshala, Frapp and Awign**.

1.5 Total Addressable Market in India

As gig economy has a very big potential in India, it is imperative to estimate the market size for it in India at the first stage. The working age in India is around 15-65 years. The total population base is approximately 1,332 million. Out of this, the population of working age group is 66.8% or 890 million and the rate of participation of labour force is 51.8% or 461 million. Rate of participation of labour force is defined as the number of already employed workers or workers looking for employment, as a percentage of the total population of the working age group.

For finding the total addressable market of gig economy in India, generally the urban labor is only included and not the rural labor because the rural people have less knowledge of using digital platforms. India has an urban population of 138 million. Work in India is divided into manufacturing sector and service sector. If the service sector is also included in gig economy, then one needs to consider the numbers for urban labor in India which is 25% with total number of service sector workers in urban areas being 35 million. This further includes the contingent workforce which is approximately 20% or 6.9 million.

If one divides the contingent workforce into separate income groups such as low, middle and high, and considers the different wage levels per annum as well, then gross value of the gig market comes to be around 3.4 billion dollars. This gross value for finding the total addressable market of gig economy has been calculated based on the e-commerce readiness index (10%), which also considers the income levels and digital penetration. Thus, **the total addressable gig market is approx. $3.4 billion in India**.
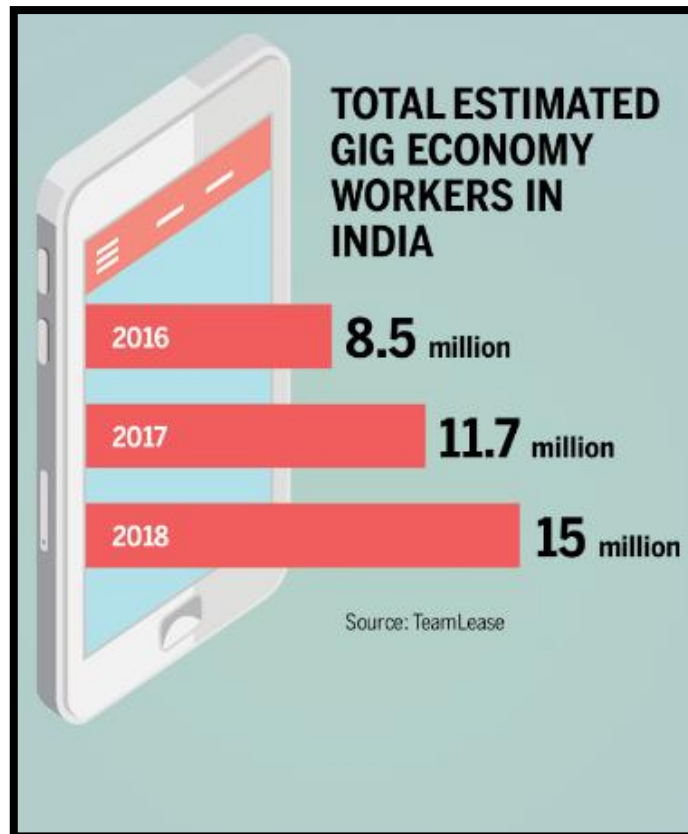
Figure 1.1 Total estimated gig economy workers in India [3]
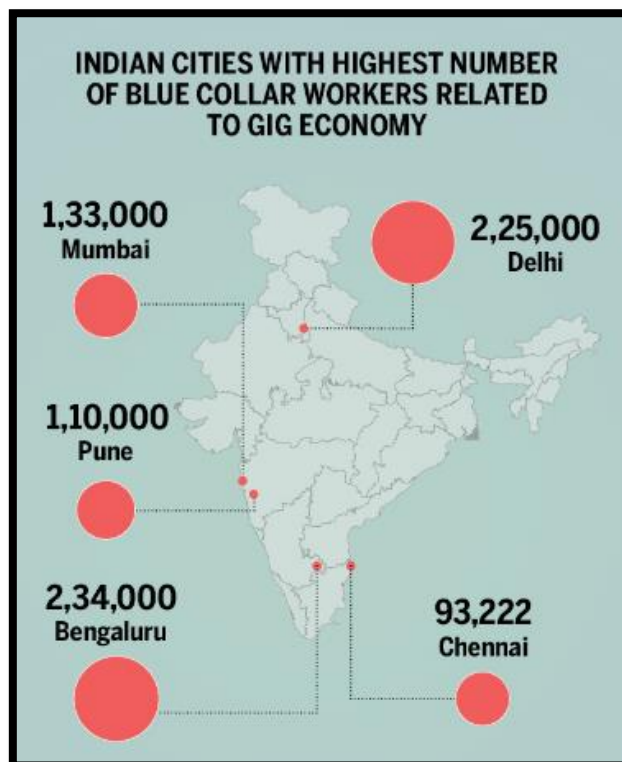

Figure 1.2 Indian cities with highest number of blue collar workers related to Gig Economy [3]

The iLabour project of Oxford University oublished the Online labor Index, wherein they gave the equivalent of conventional labour standards in terms of online gig economy. For this, they performed an analysis of the availability of online labor working in diverse fields in different countries [4]. According to the index, the two most targeted industries in gig economy in India were software industry and IT sector [5]. PayPal did a survey and also published the same insights on gig economy in India. According to their survey, the IT sector dominated the gig economy space online as 50% of the freelancers were found to be involved in this sector [6].

1.6 Emerging Business Models

The various segments/ models in which the gig economy is divided are [1] –

Digital Marketplaces – These are platforms where service providers are skilful and hey supply their skills to customers on a demand basis as per the contractual terms. These people have skills in niche areas like fitness, beauty, plumbing, electrical repairs, and others. Using this model, the freelancers can easily contact the customers through the app and give them their services in accordance with the customer's terms and conditions and they even provide customer support services through such apps. So, if a customer wants to hire a service provider, then he can do so by using the digital application, where he can get the required services as per his own specifications. The customers can also get other value added and augmented services such as after sales services, customer care, and service guarantee, but then too there is a risk of quality of services that one might get and also the retention of the freelance workers. The examples of such platforms include UrbanClap, HouseJoy, and Helpr.

Service Listing Platforms – On such platforms, the list of services that are demanded are matched with the services that the platform can offer. So, it is a demand and supply based platform for services existing in a gig economy. The system has its own terms and conditions, but then too it has no provision for supplying after sales services, customer support or other value added services. There are no intermediaries involved and a wide range of daily and niche services can be directly provided to customers. But this leads to lack of obligation and strict

verification and therefore, there are quality issues. For instance – **Truelancer, Guru, Elance, 99 designs and Awign**.

Asset/ Service Sharing – Here gig workers offer special services like accommodation, transportation, and delivery in an asset sharing business model. Sp, in a way, it is a shared economy for services and assets. Here assets are sold at a low cost rather than owned. This makes the platform more affordable and thus improves the standard of living. But the drawback associated with it is that the freelancers and the users can become disloyal. This can be understood from the example where an Uber driver can become dissatisfied if he does not get enough rewards and income and therefore can switch to Ola. Also, as a lot of users need to be served, there can be quality assurance issues which is another drawback.

1.7 Leveraging the Competencies of the potential laid-off workforce through Gig Economy

The hiring in industries has become slow and there are increased layoffs due to use of exponential technologies to address industry inefficiencies and build business models that are more competitive. Therefore, organizations can mentor, counsel and re-skill such laid off employees to develop them as gig workforce or entrepreneurs. This way their competencies can be leveraged for providing on-demand services. They could be re-skilled through company training modules and these newly acquired skills can be used to support the companies' resource capacity [11].

Considerable awareness initiatives are also necessary to sensitize the laid-off workforce to utilize the online economy approach for leveraging their competencies. The onus lies on the enterprises to capitalize on the opportunity to reorganize and realign their workforce so as to elevate scalability, agility, and flexibility. Digital platforms match worker with the employer, skills with demand, capital with the innovator, and consumer with the supplier. This facilitates the entrepreneurial community to explore the influence and scale ahead of their size.

1.8 Problem Statement

The wave of the gig economy concept has brought about a transformable change at the companies. The companies need to understand how they can best bring about a change in their conventional work practices so as to accept this new trending change. They need to see how to strategize so as to deal with the freelancer employees as this has started to take on a common form at workplaces now. But not all strategies are beneficial. The company HR must decide what strategies to offer the company heads during the various stages of an employee work lifecycle at the organization. In this study, an attempt is made to investigate and form novel HR strategies, as opposed to what has been traditionally used, for the above mentioned purpose.

1.9 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the project are as follows –

   i)   To predict the performance management strategies for gig employees.

   ii) To identify the recruitment and selection strategies for freelance workers.

   iii) To study training needs and strategies for gig workers.

1.10 Significance of Study

HR's role includes developing a plan of HR initiatives to achieve and promote the behaviors, culture and competencies needed to achieve organizational goals. The proposed study will provide numerous HRM strategies to deal with the current trends of increasing gig economy workforce. Here are some significant and beneficial achievements that the proposed study is expected to provide -

- ➢ Correctly designing the recruitment, selection and on-boarding strategies for gig workers.
- ➢ Developing and maintaining competitive pay and benefits.
- ➢ Managing performance and designing a rewards system that keeps gig employees motivated.
- ➢ Providing proper training which reinforces corporate values

Thus, the study is expected to enhance the already existing HRM initiatives and make them more effective and organized.

1.11 Scope of the Study

This study will focus on developing Human Resource Management strategies for different scenarios at a workplace in case of gig economy employees. This system of strategic HRM will let the HR professionals to freely deal with the freelancer workers in a much better manner. In addition, the results of the study will also provide with certain other benefits such as overcoming competitors, setting competitive compensation packages, having a more committed and ethical gig workforce and others.

1.12 Organization of Project Report

There are 5 chapters in this report which are summarized as below -

- ➢ **Chapter 1**. This chapter gives the introduction of Gig Economy, market trends, research area, objectives, and significance and scope of the study.
- ➢ **Chapter 2**. This chapter lists down the literature review for the entire study
- ➢ **Chapter 3**. This chapter gives the complete and detailed research methodology and research design.
- ➢ **Chapter 4.** This chapter gives the details of the three objectives where the role of HR and HR strategies required in a gig economy, are studied.
- ➢ **Chapter 5.** This chapter gives the conclusion and future work for this project work.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a huge impact of changing technology on work and it has become an interesting field of study over 20 years. There are studies that have stated the change in the kind of skills required in jobs (Frey and Osborne 2017 [12]; Di Pietro, 2002 [13]; Rumberger and Levin, 1985 [14]) and how jobs are being created as well as destroyed (Howland, 1993 [15]). Therefore, it is very important that one should understand what impact technology has on jobs. ICT Technology these days has increased the remote working, technically called as 'teleworking' (Pratt, 1984 [16]), and has led to contract based project work and flexible working spaces (Aubert-Tarby et al., 2018 [17]). These changing dynamics have greatly impacted the normal permanent employment.

The rising gig economy is an example of these trends only. Here, gig workers work remotely for various employers and do a number of project based jobs, rather than working under just one employer. This working style is getting common in most countries and therefore has policy implications that need to be studied.

Gig work as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is "any job in which an individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term employment" (Szabó & Négyesi, 2005 [18]). Connelly and Gallagher (2004) [19] stated four types of freelance work, which are independent contractors, temporary staffing agencies, seasonal employees and direct hires. Contingent work is a term that has may meanings in different kinds of job arrangements and so it has a number of other synonymous terms associated with it. For instance, the term used by Broschak et al. (2008) [20] to differentiate between workers hired as regular employees and workers hired contractually for a short time, was nonstandard employee. As contingent workers bring with them certain HRM challenges in the company that they are hired for a short term, therefore, Burgess and Connell (2006) [21] called them as temporary. But all these different terms show one thing in common and that is that if

companies differentiate in treatment given to the two category of employees then it might lead to detachment of employees from the organization. As per Burgess and Connell (2006) [21] this detachment comes from lack of training and development, proper career development and organizational identification, because these are the main factors that lead to such distinguishes in workers.

In current times, gig workforce and freelance economy is becoming a commonly used feature (Harvey, Rhodes, Vachhani, & Williams, 2017 [22]; Bonet, Cappelli, & Hamori, 2013 [23]). Gig economy gives a new type of contingent labor where the gig workers are service providers and they provide services to customers on a demand basis (Harris, 2017 [24]). This new gig economy is having a number of challenges and raised a question that should such workers be called as employees also or not. The gig economy saves a lot of costs for the organization and has different set of responsibilities than those for regular workers. (Fabo, Karanovic, & Dukova, 2017 [25]; Collier, Dubal, & Carter, 2017 [26]).

Discussion on freelance work has been both positive and negative. The positives are the flexibility and autonomy that is involved in doing project based work. The negatives includes the fact that companies go for employing gig workers because they feel that this would save costs, and would change employment laws, rules and regulations (Stewart & Stanford, 2017 [27]; Friedman, 2014 [28]).

The gig economy is different from the normal nature of jobs that exist in companies. This economy works on demand basis and operates through digital platforms. The subordinate workers are becoming more disposable (Todolí-Signes, 2017 [29]). Due to the gig work coming in, the long term jobs have decreased because companies hire workers for short term on contractual terms to work in a flexible environment. In this scenario, the gig workers have low commitment towards the organizations (Harvey et al., 2017 [30]; Friedman, 2014 [28]). Although study is going on gig economy, the number of such workers employed by companies for work is smaller (Todolí-Signes, 2017 [29]). For example, in Uber, a ride service business, there are currently four million drivers across 700+ cities globally (Madrigal, 2019 [31]), but it employs only 22,000 workers legally in total (Uber, 2019 [32]). Lyft, also a ride service business, operates in 600+ locations across Canada and USA and has around two million drivers, but it employs only 5,000 workers or even less than that legally (McNeill,

2019 [33]). Deliveroo, a food-delivery business, has more than 35,000 "riders" in 200 cities, but it employs around 2,000 workers only on a direct basis (Hurley, 2018 [34]).

Given to the differences in how organizations treat full time employees and gig employees, it has been studied by Van Dyne and Ang (1998) [35] that gig workers do not show examples of high organizational citizenship behavior and do only certain projects or tasks that are assigned to them and no other work. This could as a result lead to high tensions in the company, which is examined by Burgess and Connell (2006) [21]. They came to this conclusion after performing empirical studies through both separation and integration strategies that are used to employ gig workers. They stated that both the strategies were risky for the organizations to practice. They also said that integration strategies lessen flexibility, but also lead to increased work quality by freelance employees. It was finally suggested in their research that this increase in work quality is a desirable thing and therefore companies should shift towards adopting integration and also have equality in HRM practices. Pfeffer (1994) [36] stated that "the biggest disadvantage of contingent employment arrangements is the difficulty in obtaining loyalty, dedication, or willingness to expend extra effort on behalf of the organization". Generally its thought that there is no requirement of training and development for gig workers and this assumption further leads to lack of skills in such employees and thus, leaves them poorly trained for the company.

Way et al. (2010) [37] mentions that if gig workers are incorporated more and more for saving labor costs then it would lead to a higher turnover rate and more absenteeism of permanent employees and so company HR managers should always very clearly tell its employees that they are going for freelancers in place of regular workers for reducing the problems of job security. HR Managers should look for a better collaboration and connection between the permanent as well as the freelance workers. But this kind of integration is quite challenging for them.

As the current economic environment poses several challenges, the organizations are considering their knowledge management activities as core and distinctive competency from their competitors (Nonaka, 1994 [38]; Huber, 1991 [39]; Stinchcombe, 1990 [40]). Companies should create new knowledge from both inside

and outside through M&As, gig employment, strategic alliances and partnerships (Matusik & Hill, 1998 [41]). Firms can spread knowledge through training and development activities. Such activities also increase commitment towards the organization. But Chambel & Sobral, (2011) [42] stated that these activities are for permanent employees only. Chambel & Sobral (2011) [42] also mentioned that if gig workers are also given proper training then they inculcate thoughts of higher organizational support and loyalty. According to both Matusik (1998) [41] and Chambel & Sobral (2011) [42], gig workers are source of fresh knowledge and this new knowledge can be learned through training. Matusik & Hill (1998) [41] stated that the public skills of freelancers are more than regular workers because freelancers have the experience of working in several organizations.

If companies are willing to employ gig workers then there is an urgent requirement that HR departments shift their HRM practices and do not differentiate between the permanent and freelance workers. As per Morrow (1993) [43], many companies now-a-days consider gig workers as valuable as the full time workers. Therefore, it should be a focus point to mould the HR strategies to pay, onboard and develop the freelancers same as that of the regular employees. HR strategies should try to increase their knowledge in an effective and efficient manner.

Ericksen and Dyer [44] applied behavioural approach to study strategic human resource management (SHRM) on high reliability organizations (HROs). They took reliability as an organizational performance indicator, and gave a set of eight reliable employee behaviours that could lead to high organizational reliability. The identification of such behaviours helps SHRM managers to formulate human resource strategies that would give increased performance.

Kramar [45] studied about strategic human resource management (SHRM) and gave the meaning of SHRM and sustainability and also linked sustainability to SHRM. In his research, he mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of SHRM on its stakeholders. He also gave certain processes for implementing SHRM policies and procedures at workplace. He said that these are competing organizational requirements and therefore, the differences among them should be addressed. Such practises could produce desirable results in both long and short run.

There are various frameworks to study sustainable Human Resource Management.

According to Marler [46] and strategic HRM and e-HRM are directly as well as inversely proportional. They are not mutually exclusive. The paper also discusses about what effects SHRM could bring in future and what would some major strategies should be.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Purpose

To win talent wars in India, employers will have to pioneer workforce's value alignment with the overall vision, mission, and culture of the organization. Also, minimizing instances of gig worker burnout and instilling autonomy in such a manner that it makes the gig workers feel seamlessly connected to the core teams will stand vital. Therefore, the role of HR has to be studied in detail so as to form feasible models that could be used for training and re-skilling of the gig workforce.

This study is an Exploratory Research study in order to study transformation process for strategic Human Resource for gig economy management. The research is based on secondary data, collected through various research papers and HR journals and magazines. The reports from the business news portals have also been studied as a part of this study.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach is inductive because the in the present study, theory is developed based on the literature available from various secondary data sources. As a result, the undertaken study focuses on phenomenology.

The method of study is qualitative in nature. It provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon within context. The study focuses on applying qualitative approach so as to manage gig economy at the Human Resource level, which can further be investigated through quantitative research.

The current study, considers many issues related to strategic development of HR for the new gig workforce and flexibility of research design. Hence the study was also descriptive in nature so that many different facets of problem have been considered.

a) What are the factors that have to be considered for Human Resource Management at the gig workforce level?
b) What are the talent acquisition and assessment strategies for the gig workers?
c) How the HR can train the gig workers?

3.3 Research Strategy

This study is on contemporary events and without any control on the employee behaviors. So, grounded theory strategy is appropriate for this study. This method was employed to find the gig employee's recruitment, selection, on-boarding and training strategies in organizational setup.

In this study, the grounded theory approach has been used as it was the most appropriate strategy for the research questions and chosen objectives. The archival information has been analyzed and the research questions have been answered and hence the objectives have been achieved.

3.4 Research Design

The research design of the present study is based on the understanding that because of the paucity of research on this particular topic it is an exploratory study utilizing qualitative techniques to achieve the research objectives. This type of research design can aid in strategic HR practices for freelancers that further contributes to the organizational effectiveness.

The plan devised to guide the research process from choosing the topic, conceptualizing, studying and absorbing similar studies, then assembling, organizing and integrating information and finally reaching the end result, is explained through the complete **flowchart below** –
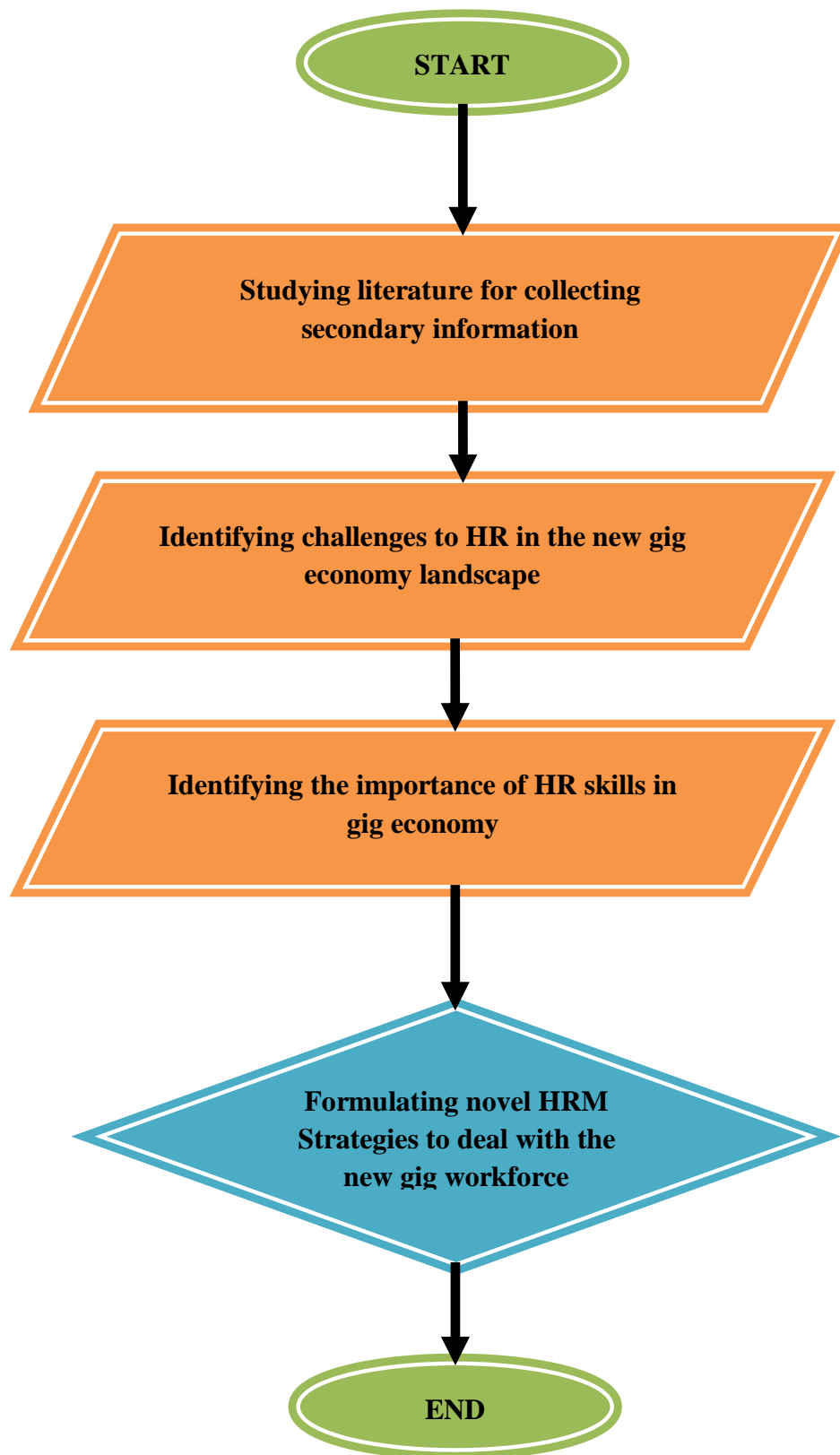
Figure 3.1 Flowchart showcasing the complete research design employed

Step 1 - Studying literature for collecting secondary information –

The first step required the selection of topic for the research work. The broader area that was needed to be explored was gig economy. But what further dimension has to be studied under this broader term was to be chosen.

Therefore, extensive literature review was done as a starting step. As a result of this similar works by different researchers were studied and assembled together for collection of secondary information.

The collected information and data was then organized and integrated so as to reach the final goal of formulating HR strategies for freelance workers.

Step 2 - Identifying challenges to HR in the new gig economy landscape –

For the purpose of reaching the end result of predicting strategies, the challenges faced by the HR departments currently in order to handle the gig workers were studied.

It was a necessary step because without having knowledge of the current HR problems, further improvements could not be suggested.

Step 3 - Identifying the importance of HR skills in gig economy –

After knowing about the challenges that the HR is facing in dealing with the freelancers, it was required to study that why it is important that the HR personnel have certain skills that are especially tailored for the gig workers.

This step was necessary because if one does not know about the reason of why a certain goal is required to be reached, then it would not be possible to reach the end in the correct manner.

Step 4 - Formulating novel HRM Strategies to deal with the new gig workforce

As a final step, the formulation of novel HR strategies was done in **3 areas which are as follows** –

   a) Employee Assessment and Performance Management
   b) Recruitment and Selection
   c) Employee Training needs and strategies

Prediction of the above would lead to the achievement of the objectives initially formed.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

Detailed review of literature and information from secondary sources provided the base for identifying the domain, selection, and design of the entire study.

The various sources of secondary data used in the present study include -

- ➢ Management books and magazines,
- ➢ National and International journals,
- ➢ Information on internet,
- ➢ E- Journals and different research papers.

CHAPTER 4

STRATEGIC HRM FOR GIG ECONOMY

4.1 HR skills required at different levels of gig economy

The success of the gig economy is dependent on how policymakers and industries develop an enabling framework and labor laws that allow it to thrive and sustain. Companies will have to re-evaluate their current practices to accommodate gig workers. Gig Economy contains Open Talent and it can only be tapped when employers go for hiring such people and not just full time workers. In Accenture Technology Vision 2016, it is stated that companies can attain competitive advantage by going for the liquid employees in workforce strategy [60]. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to study the role of HR at in the changing workforce of companies and also several HR skills and strategies have been suggested that could prove beneficial to firms.

4.2 Levels of Gig Economy in India

In India Gig economy exists at 3 levels [61] –

a) **Level-1** – It is the bottom most level where daily wage earners (both in the urban and in the rural sectors) are present, who are also freelancers because they sell their labor. This level of gig economy has been existing in India since past many decades.

b) **Level-2** – It has freelancers who are rapidly shifting from the unorganised sector to the organised sector. Platform based technology companies are disrupting this space at an overly increased rate.

  ➢ **Ola and Uber** together employs more than 1.3 million freelancing drivers all across India.

  ➢ **Swiggy and Zomato** together employs more than 1 lakh freelancing delivery boys all across India.

c) **Level-3** – It has the employees who are quitting their usual full time permanent jobs to become freelancers. Employees from some of the most high profile professions such as Data Science, Software Development, Investment Banking and others are opting for this option because it gives them more flexibility, autonomy and convenience.

4.3 Analysis - Role/Challenges for HR

HR needs to address 7 challenges in a gig economy –

a) **Challenge of Business Agility** - Gig economy has made it very easy for businesses to scale-up and down at a very high rate. HR needs to ensure that all its people practices are equally agile and can be scaled-up and down at the same rate.

b) **Challenge of Collaboration** – It deals with ensuring that all the freelancers collaborate with each other and with the organisation to deliver on the common goal. It also deals with ensuring concurrent availability of the freelancers to solve a particular business problem.

c) **Challenge of Commitment** – It is about making sure that the freelancers carry the values and the culture of the organisation on the same level as its full time permanent employees. It is because in many organisations such as Ola, Uber, Urbanclap, Swiggy and others the freelancers are the only human point-of-contact for the customers and therefore they represent the entire company in a way and thus shape the image of the entire corporation.

Dr. Rena Rasch, IBM Center for Applied Insights stated that gig workers are more innovative, satisfied and have more engagement in their work than that of full time workers. But she also found that gig employees were less committed to the job in the long term, hesitant to share information in a free manner, less likely to work in a team, make a decision by consensus and healthily resolve conflicts [63].
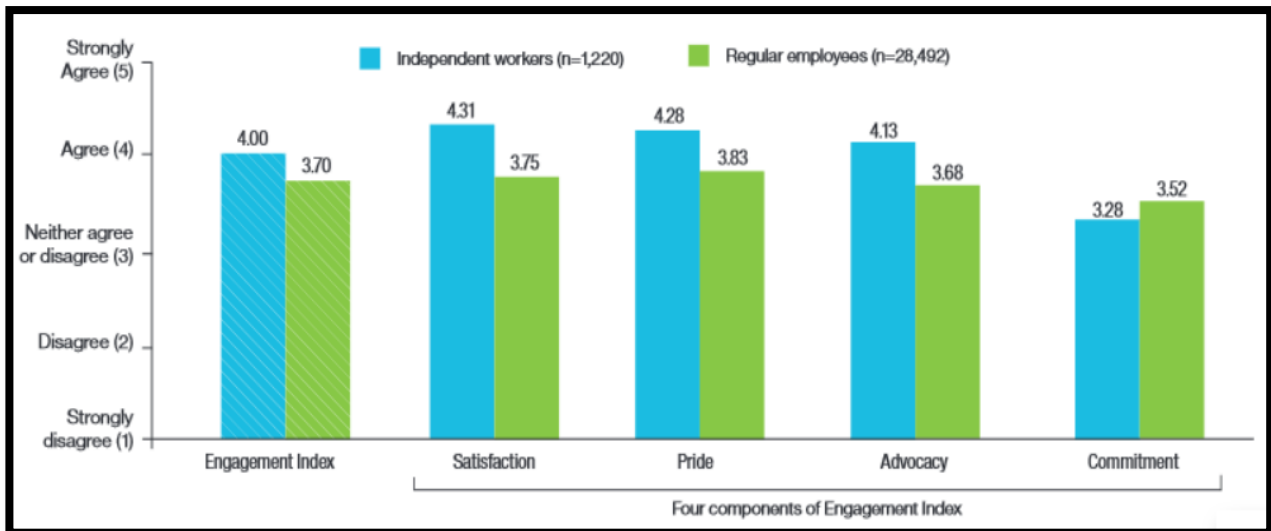
Figure 4.1 – Employee attitude study showing lower commitment for gig workers in last column [63]

d) **Managing the gig workers talent pool**

e) **Integration of terms and conditions of contract** into a cohesive and simple manner including all the benefits and rewards so as to become an employer of choice for "gig workers".

f) **Maintaining a right technology for** automating the process of joining and leaving and also making sure that such processes are user friendly and smooth thus, lowering the burden on the HR.

g) **Working out the code of laws** and governance rules for gig employees.

4.4 Analysis - Importance of HR strategies in Gig Economy

If proper workforce strategies are formed then it would increase the company flexibility by **providing it the following leverage** –

➢ HR department will have the liberty to let go off employees when their services are no longer needed.

➢ It will avoid lay-offs, which are accompanied by complex legal processes.

➢ It will save labour costs, as their services will only be used during peak hours, days, or seasons.

In a work environment of continuous change, conventional human resource models of recruitment, training and management will slowly decline in their usage [64].

The HR manager needs to develop an "agile model" for handling any unpredictable events. The competencies required by HR professionals too would need to be altered. They will need to exhibit a strong analytics acumen and change-management capabilities. The HR manager needs to clearly understand the organisation's workforce practices and policies and statutory restrictions, and proactively identify and retain the best talent, while incorporating the future demand for leadership.

Tailored HR processes – Apart from the operational responsibilities, the HR also needs to be a strategic business partner. For this, they could start by auditing all the operational processes related to managing, acquiring, and engaging with employees. After this work is done, managers need to have a broad thinking so as to adopt a holistic approach for dealing with employees.

4.5 Findings and Recommendations - Major HR strategies required in a Gig Economy

The major HR strategies needed to cope with the disruptive change caused by the upcoming trend of Gig Economy could be as follows -

4.5.1 Employee Assessment and Performance Management Strategies

Formulating new policies and employee evaluation criteria – Companies should analyze and evaluate their internal policies and assessment processes with respect to full time employees. The talent acquisition team should mould its approach in order to engage with freelancers, set up their assessment processes, and design job requirements, and staff benefit policies. This approach could be followed for dealing with both on-site and off-site gig workers. For getting a regular and quality work from gig workers, a better assessment policy should be designed. In this, assessment procedures could be customized in collaboration with the corresponding line manager.

Role of HR Scorecard in Gig Economy - HR Scorecard could be used for optimizing the operations and managing the gig workers in a better way. Companies that run on gig economy could measure the productivity of their employees and compare it with the costs incurred on them. This way, they could increase their Return on Investment (ROI).

This can be understood from a practical example, where say Uber spends 1000 dollars as recruitment and training costs of the freelance employees. Now, for recovering these costs along with profits, the HR Scorecard can be helpful as it would align the returns on these costs against the company's objectives. HR scorecard can also help determine that whether firms that consider gig workers as their primary asset ought to function further or not i.e. should they continue their business or not.

The HR Scorecard can help in optimizing the processes in firms based on gig economy by measuring the efficiency of the operations and seeing if it is in line with the strategic objectives of the company.

The business model of the Gig Economy firms is shaped by freelancers and the HR Scorecard could help such firms to form an HR with a more efficient management in tandem with the organizational objectives.

Also, the **Gig Economy based firms can use the HR Scorecard for anticipating future challenges and risks**.

Using the HR Scorecard with Big Data and AI - HR Scorecard when used along with technology can be highly beneficial for Gig Economy firms. For example, future risks and challenges can be anticipated using Big Data and AI in such firms. This could help in determining whether the firms are prepared for the future or do they need extra measures.

The HR Scorecard could also be used by such gig economy based firms getting insights about the future challenges by analyzing past and present data. Therefore, it can be said that if HR scorecard is used along with Big Data and AI then it can help

in giving a strategic direction to such firms which would be very fruitful for them in the long run.

Conducting psychometric assessments for accessing Gig workers - Assessing employee's cognitive ability gives a firm confidence that the employee would be able to grasp new information more quickly and effectively solve problems.

Such robust techniques lead to a talented recruitment pool which is important for companies that want to work with more and more employees, but with a shorter recruitment process.

Employee Management – It can be a challenge for gig workers to integrate or work in collaboration with full time employees as gig workers have the flexibility to work from their place of choice, but regular employees do not have such flexibility as they have to work in set locations. To deal with this challenge, companies could ask their HR to draft freelancer agreements such that they include the requirements of location and other working conditions. Also, the companies could think of giving more flexibility in working conditions to regular workers and allow them to work remotely as well.

HR should regularly review the gig networks so as to guarantee that there are enough availability of skillful gig workers. This would help further in upholding succession and progression in any business.

Shift in Performance management and training and development practices – Usually such practices work for annual timelines, but now as gig employees come for shorter period of contracts also, so such annual timeline based practices would not be useful. So, companies should focus upon outcome-based objectives in conjugation with certain tasks and projects, which would then lead to increased conversation between a freelancer and his manager about project and even individual objectives and performance.

4.5.2 Recruitment and Selection Strategies

Creating an employer brand for attracting freelancers – In a gig economy, trust is the foundation and therefore it is very important that companies come across as an authentic brand for the process of talent acquisition.

The brand should be communicated as one that is true and personally related to its full time, part time and also contract based employees. This way companies can maintain their company culture and manage its workers which will bring a positive experience to all the employees, hired or potential ones.

Companies should give a vibe of relatedness by personifying the brands and also avoid any disconnection with its people. This method is already been practised by organizations on tech based platforms, mobile based user oriented sites and apps and assessment tools, video content like video blogs by employees. These things shape the employer as a brand and also communicate company brand culture.

Make gig workers a part of Talent Acquisition strategy – As per PwC research, only a very small part of talent acquisition deals with gig economy. This is around 8 billion dollars or 2% of the market.

Figure 4.2 Industry value projection and %age of millennial gig workforce by 2020 [65]

This can grow up to 8 times by 2020 and reach to 63billion dollar market. This growth can mostly be attributed to the increasingly working millenials. Therefore, in times to come, companies should incorporate more focus on gig economy in their talent acquisition process.

Create an alumni network – Companies should build an 'alumni' network of such temporary workers where the freelancers can connect with one another and enhance their skills. This way the gig economy can also help in bringing the organizational value back in many new ways. The new ways could be employee referrals, introduction to any business partner, or future projects.

Changing conventional job descriptions into skills-based ones – In current times, the companies that mostly use gig economy to scale their business, are small and medium enterprises. In big organizations, it is still being analyzed that how they can accommodate the gig workers within their already existing organizational structure by using their compliance practises and recruitment strategies. They also have to see that how the gig employees can fit into their work style and company culture.

As the use of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is rising, more and more analytics could be used and daily projects could be automated. This will help achieve higher accuracy and efficiency and will allow employees to go for skills oriented tasks. So, companies should divide the work creatively on the basis of skills instead of the traditional job descriptions. This would make the process of management and briefings simpler.

Use HR tech and automation – The tools that can be used by HR and Talent Acquisition professionals to harness the gig economy are -

- ✓ Applicant tracking system (ATS) and other automated systems could be used for better interviews and selection of talented freelancers.
- ✓ Big companies should recruit gig workers from Freelance Management Systems (FMS), such as Guru, UpWork, and others. These are good as they are project-oriented systems and not position-oriented.
- ✓ Employee referrals could be very valuable for finding talented people in gig economy.

HR can leverage confluence of SMAC (Social, Mobile Analytics, Cloud) technologies to provide best in class experience to the freelancers. Interestingly this

experience will cut across people practices such as hiring, on-boarding, learning and contract management.

- ✓ Yammer, Slack and Infeedo are some of the examples of collaboration related tools
- ✓ Amber is an example of employee engagement related tool
- ✓ Udemy, Udacity and Lynda are examples of learning related tools.

4.5.3 Training needs for gig workers

In order to fulfill this objective, the first task to be done was to identify the needs and challenges that are faced while training the gig employees. It is often thought that whether gig workers should be even trained or not, because they have been selected based on the specialized skill set that already possess. Companies therefore, think that training such employees would incur extra costs which could be avoided. But it's not the case always. There are jobs where training is needed in both technical as well as soft skills.

According to an EY study [66], 52 percent of freelancers are not trained by their employers. For Lori Williams, co-CEO of Gigster, as soft skills are highly important so apart from selecting gig workers on the basis of skills, they should also be trained in soft skills more. Syed Irfan Ajmal, who is the growth marketing manager at Ridester (ride-sharing platform), believe that freelancers, who work in technology sector should be taught communication skills [67].

Gig workers who come in direct contact with the customers, like Ola and Uber drivers, give the view of the way that company treats its customers. In such cases, if gig workers are not trained properly then they can tarnish the image of the company. This further has a significant financial impact to the bottom line.

Gig workers work remotely most of the times and require quick availability of information anytime anywhere. The training should be more interesting and capturing due to this remote nature of work. It is because freelancers work off-site and they need flexible and remote learning methods.

4.5.4 Training Strategies for Gig Workers

A major drawback of the gig economy is its high turnover rate and therefore, companies need to focus on more individualized training and development programs. The skill gap in the gig workers needs to be identified and mapped for such customized training programs as these programs would make the gig workers more empowered. The next step after the training of employees is their performance management in a much effective and individualized manner. The impact of each training program should be tested regularly so as to calculate the ROI from that training program.

In any training program, the leaders should communicate the vision, mission, values and culture of the organization. The companies should go for gamification techniques for boosting the learning ability of the freelancers.

There are still some things that should be considered for designing such training and development programs. First is that the training should be of small duration and should take place more frequently. Secondly, companies should weigh the strengths and benefits of remote online training to gig workers so that their learning experience could be enhanced that too in a very short time-span and reasonable costs.

Digital Onboarding – It is not always possible to arrange an in-person orientation program and on-boarding of gig employees, but still gig workers should have an orientation and on-boarding as permanent employees. Digital on-boarding should incorporate company and leadership orientation, joining formalities, process and functional trainings, organizational culture and values orientation and others. This would help in making the part time employee more productive and connected with the company from the first day only.

Microlearning – As the gig workers have flexibility if time, their training program should have a very carefully curated content. The content should be divided into small portions so that it could be consumed easily and used at the "moment of need". Such programs would help the freelancers to get the training willingly as per their schedule and work nature.

E-learning – When dealing with gig economy, then a company should have a flexible and dynamic learning management system (LMS). As gig workers mostly use their own systems for work purposes, such management systems should be compatible with various devices and softwares.

Mobile-learning – The training program for the gig workers should be designed in such a manner that it could be consumed at any time anywhere due to the remote working style of such employees. Mobile-learning training content could be accessed at any place that too on one click.

Video-learning and gamification – These earning techniques are very interesting to engage the gig employees and could accurately transfer important actionable knowledge. Gamified learning could be used for remotely working gig workers where they can be communicated about the organization's vision, mission, goals, values and culture which would increase cultural integration.

AI-based learning needs – Gig employees are known to have specialized skills from beforehand. AI and ML algorithms could be used for suggesting the correct training programs for these employees. This way, the freelancers can take responsibility to learn on their own and contribute in a better manner.

Training Needs Identification – Data analytics and advanced psychometrics could be used to find out the skill gaps in gig workers and then specific training modules could be curated for the company.

Identification of similar skills – The HR should focus on providing training in those skills that it can easily provide using the resources it has. This would help in achieving peak levels of efficiency and eliminate redundancy in the gig workforce.

Training Effectiveness – The training programs should be evaluated on a regular basis using scientific and validated techniques.

Prepare gig worker training on the basis of tasks - In the gig economy, companies hire individuals to work on complex data processing services to project-based tasks. The challenge is how to provide learning to the individual who needs to perform a specific piece of work, such as customer insights or the culture of an organization. It will be necessary to offer training in line with the task, rather than the large-scale on-boarding and development programs which are given mostly to full-time employees. HR Managers need to create different learning playlists for on-boarding, as well as task or project instructions so that the training can be scaled and delivered to any number of gig or contract workers.

Personalize the learning content for freelance worker - The challenge of how to manage self-driven learners becomes even more complex when it is considered that the gig economy will facilitate a more autonomous and flexible workforce dispersed. Employees mostly want to learn as per their will. The 2018 Workplace Learning Report by LinkedIn mentions that 48% of the employees prefer to learn when the need arises and rest 58% prefer to learn at their own speed [68].

Personalization holds the key to engaging self-directed learners, as well as boosting employee performance. Personalized learning is already practiced at 62% of high-performing organizations, while 35% of organizations make it a priority, according to a recent study by Brandon Hall Group on the link between learning and performance [68].

Efforts to personalize and localize learning for gig workers should therefore considered for embracing different cultures around data privacy, learning culture, and even attitudes to deference that exist in these increasingly dispersed learner populations.

Boost learning flexibility to increase learner satisfaction - Two of the reported benefits of flexible working, according to a study of working families conducted by Cranfield University School of Management in the UK, are higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Using this logic, companies that create a truly flexible learning approach (where learners can access learning from anywhere, anytime, using multiple devices) may experience higher levels of employee commitment.

Organizations need to help employees figure out how to get the most out of online and on-demand learning activities.

Prepare managers to be flexible with gig workers - Managers are one of the key enablers when it comes to successfully implementing flexible working within their organization. Yet, crucially, it's those managers with limited experience of flexible working who can play a pivotal role in flexible working adoption rates, including whether it gets implemented within their organizations at all. Managers can come up with training on how to manage flexible working, focusing on performance outcomes rather than hours.

One excellent way to do this is to ensure that managers hold regular 1:1 meetings to build strong manager-employee relationships and to ensure employee engagement.

All the above strategies in different HR departments could be used in combination to one another for better handling of the gig economy workforce at organizations.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

The study could have been more done more specifically for each of the three levels of gig economy. The HR processes at different levels might be different and therefore, the set of strategies required by different companies would also differ. Therefore, the study could have been narrowed down to focus on strategic HRM on each of the different gig economy levels.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

5.1 Conclusion

As a first step, the literature was reviewed and secondary data sources were referred. There were a lot of studies showing the attitude of employees towards gig economy, collective bargaining in case of gig economy workers, employee transformation in gig economy and more. But very few papers talked about the management of gig economy at the Human Resource level. There were certain studies, but they only mentioned the need for strategic HRM for gig economy management, but there was no study that actually focused on strategic HRM. Hence the topic of managing gig economy at the HR level was found to be novel and therefore taken up in the present study.

According to different studies, it was found that there will be a considerable growth of gig workers in the future. It was mentioned that currently there was 2% millennial gig workforce present, but it will become 70% by 2020 which would be around 8 times increase in the current percentage.

Therefore, it was evident that the upcoming Human Resource practices have to be changed and molded according to this freelance workforce.

The different levels of gig economy were identified at the initial stage, where three levels were explained. The first level consisted of people from the rural sector where daily wage earners come who work as independent workers on a daily basis to earn their expenses. The second level consisted of freelancers from the organized sector where examples of Uber, Ola, Swiggy and other such services and good delivery businesses come. Finally, the third level consisted of people from the more skilled and educated sector who apply in organizations for different kinds of job roles such

as IT, marketing, strategy making, operations and others. The workers in this category work alongside the employees who are selected through the general official route and are the permanent employees.

The challenges faced by the HR departments in the current times were elucidated. It was found out that the HR faces several challenges with respect to business agility, collaboration and commitment of freelance workers. It was mentioned that the in such fast paced and competitive times, organizations need to be highly agile. Also, they need to have collaboration among its gig workers so that these workers are not poached by other employers in future. There are certain businesses where the gig employees become the first point of company's contact with the customer. Here the examples of Ola, Uber, Swiggy and others were identified. So, it becomes a challenge for the companies to generate a sense of commitment among such employees. It was also pointed out that there is challenge of recruitment and further proper selection procedures and terms and conditions have to be laid out in selection of such workers.

The importance of HR skills needed to handle gig economy workforce was seen and it was found out that the HR needs to adopt a more agile model and also have to alter certain competencies required by the HR professionals in order to handle unpredictable events. Strong analytical and change management skills are required. Apart from these, such skills should always be in accordance with the company's policies and practices.

Based on all the above analysis, several Human Resource Management strategies were designed in order to deal with the gig economy at workplaces. These strategies were divided into three different zones of - employee assessment and performance management strategies, recruitment and selection strategies (talent acquisition) and training needs and strategies for gig workers.

A number of strategies are mentioned in all the three sectors. These strategies are not standalone in nature. These can be used in a combination with each other also. It is because different organizations require different strategies based on their company values and business models.

5.2 Future Work

The study has a lot of future scope as certain quantitative models could also be applied after gaining primary data from several organization an talking to the HR executives of different companies. His would help bring out their attitude towards how employees get transformed in a gig economy setup.

This could further lead to statistical analysis and after proper reliability and validity of results, conclusive end results could be drawn in relation to strategic HRM for management of gig economy.

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