
EVOLVING FUTURE TRENDS OF GIG ECONOMY: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF HR IN DEFINING BRAND IDENTITY THROUGH CONTINGENT TALENT

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ABSTRACT

The brand is defined as a perception of customers, stakeholders, competitors, and industry experts that involves integrating cross-functional expertise aligned with an organization's core values and strategy. Brand identity is nurtured with proactive strategies and organizational agility in defining the core competency to sustain its competitive advantage. Organizational effectiveness is harnessed by the coordinated efforts of Human Capital which is driven with the help of organizational culture, learning and development initiatives, and adaptive leadership. Organizations are evolving and adopting new technology interfaces, AI-driven systems, and automating operations with the help of machine learning. Such a changing landscape is supported by new trends in Human Resource Management - work schedule flexibility, remote workforce, diversity exclusion inclusion, and integration of AI tools in regular operations across different departments. These trends have restructured the demand for digital literacy as a critical skills and adaptability as the competency for new-era AI-driven job roles across different sectors. The equations of demanding technology-infused job responsibilities is balanced by the competency and flexibility of Gig employees.

This paper focuses on analyzing the substantial role executed by HR in acclimatizing gig workers with the help of employee experience in the organizational culture and aligning their efforts in sustaining the brand identity. Further, the research analyzes the impact of contingent workforce management interventions and brand equity. It emphasizes the importance of digital tools, culture-building strategies, and innovative engagement models implemented by HR to unify the brand image.

Keywords— Brand-identity, agility, digital literacy, Contingent Workforce Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

Brand identity is a dynamic fusion of verbal, visual, and emotional touchpoints that reflect an organization's commitment to delivering superior product features, performance, and quality. It is shaped by the company's vision and reinforced through strategic alignment between mission, resources, and operational excellence. A strong brand identity is perceived positively by consumers when product offerings and services seamlessly integrate employee expertise, digital capabilities, and optimized processes. Trust in a brand is cultivated through consistent performance, continuous internal enhancements, and an engaged workforce, all of which contribute to long-term sustainability and competitive differentiation. With the rise of Industry 5.0, businesses are undergoing a fundamental shift, blending AI-driven automation with human ingenuity to redefine customer experiences. This evolution has heightened the demand for digital fluency and adaptive skills in the workforce. Organizations that embrace agile HR strategies, such as flexible work models, remote collaboration, and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives, are gaining a strategic edge by attracting and retaining digitally proficient talent. Modern workplace culture has transcended physical office spaces and is now built on trust, collaboration, and performance enablement, driven by AI-powered tools that seamlessly integrate distributed teams across geographies. This shift has catalysed the rise of gig workers, freelancers, and contract employees, redefined traditional employment structures and fuelling the Gig Economy. As a result, HR's role has transformed from a conventional people management function to that of a strategic workforce architect, balancing organizational performance with the seamless assimilation of gig talent into company culture. While competition and market dynamics continue to intensify, an organization's competitive advantage lies in its ability to adapt to workforce evolution, leveraging gig talent to drive innovation, creativity, and brand differentiation—all underpinned by a robust Human Resource Management framework. HR policies, recognition frameworks, and performance-driven rewards systems directly influence the commitment and motivation of gig workers. Today, contingent workers are not just an extension of the workforce; they are actively shaping brand identity—whether through last-mile delivery, AI-powered solutions, or cutting-edge innovations across industries. This necessitates contingent workforce management strategies that incorporate inclusive engagement models and agile learning and development (L&D) frameworks. This study aims to explore the intricate relationship between HR strategies and contingent talent, emphasizing how they define brand perception among customers, stakeholders, and industry peers.

It will highlight the evolving People function, its embrace of technological advancements, workforce agility, and brand positioning through strategic HR practices, ultimately reshaping the future of work.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. Indranil Debgupta and Somoshree Bhattacharya (2024), in their study *"Talent Acquisition and Retention in the Gig Economy: Exploring Innovative HRM Practices for the Modern Workforce,"* highlight the necessity of transitioning from conventional human resource management (HRM) practices to more flexible and adaptive strategies to effectively integrate the gig workforce into organizational culture. The authors underscore emerging HR trends such as project-based evaluation, client feedback mechanisms, skill development initiatives, and the establishment of robust communication channels as critical components of modern HR practices across various industries.

Furthermore, the paper explores the growing prevalence of the gig workforce across multiple sectors, attributing its expansion to an abundant talent supply and cost-efficiency advantages. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning this evolving workforce segment with legal compliance frameworks to ensure seamless integration into organizations. The authors assert that HR's transformational role will be instrumental in shaping the future of human resources in the country, underscoring its significance in navigating the dynamic employment landscape.

The evolving landscape of human resource management (HRM) in the context of the gig economy and digital transformation has been explored extensively in recent academic research. **Tripathi et al. (2022), in their study "Gig Economy: A Paradigm Shift Towards Digital HRM Practices,"** emphasize the disruptive impact of the gig economy on traditional HRM frameworks. The study highlights how digital HRM practices are reshaping workforce management, necessitating a fundamental restructuring of HR strategies to accommodate the gig workforce. The authors argue that platform-based digital workspaces challenge existing HRM norms, requiring organizations to adopt innovative approaches such as datafication and gamification. Furthermore, while algorithmic workforce management and automation are becoming increasingly prevalent, the study raises concerns regarding their ability to eliminate human bias and ensure a sustainable and employee-centric work environment.

Further, **Sharma et al. (2022), in their study "HR Practices and Employee Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Employer Branding,"** examine the impact of HR practices on employee satisfaction, with a particular focus on employer branding as a mediating factor. Using survey data collected from 150 respondents across various organizations in India, the study identifies four key HR practices—recruitment and selection, employee involvement, training and development, and employer branding. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between these HR practices and employee satisfaction, underscoring the critical role of employer branding in enhancing workplace engagement and organizational commitment.

Similarly, **Alshuaibi et al. (2017), in their research "The Role of Human Resource Management Practices in Enhancing Internal Branding,"** investigate the significance of HRM practices in fostering internal branding within organizations. The study suggests that HR functions—including recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and internal communication—play a crucial role in embedding brand values among employees. By actively participating in the branding strategy execution, HRM enables employees to internalize and reflect organizational brand values in their attitudes and behaviours, thereby strengthening the organization's external brand perception.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the role of HR in integrating gig workers into organizational culture and enhancing employee experience.
- To understand the effect of contingent workforce management on sustaining brand identity.
- To examine the impact of innovative engagement models in unifying the brand image across a diverse workforce.

4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H₀₁: HR interventions have no significant influence on the integration of gig workers into the organizational culture and do not enhance their employee experience.

H₁: HR interventions positively influence the integration of gig workers into the organizational culture and enhance their employee experience.

H₀₂: Contingent workforce management strategies do not significantly contribute to sustaining brand identity or improving brand equity.

H₂: Effective contingent workforce management strategies contribute to sustaining brand identity and improving brand equity.

H₀₃: Innovative engagement models implemented by HR do not have a significant impact on the unification of brand image across a diverse workforce.

H₃: Innovative engagement models implemented by HR positively impact the unification of brand image across a diverse workforce.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a **qualitative research approach** supported by an Interview and **survey-based method** to examine the strategic role of HR in defining brand identity through contingent talent.

5.1. Research Design

This research has implemented a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative insights from interviews and quantitative data from surveys, supported by a comprehensive literature review. The objective is to examine the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in accommodating gig workers, sustaining brand identity, and enhancing contingent workforce management.

5.2. Data Collection Methods

a. Literature Review

A systematic literature review was conducted to define a theoretical base for the study. The research papers and scholarly articles were sourced from Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and HR-focused publications and, were examined to understand the evolving HR practices for effectively managing the gig workforce, digital transformation, and organizational culture.

b. Qualitative Data – Expert Interviews

To gain in-depth insights, two structured interviews were conducted with Industry Experts who have worked as part of the gig workforce in the Education Industry. These interviews focused on:

- The role of HR in integrating gig workers into organizational culture.
- Challenges and best practices in aligning gig workers with brand identity.
- Strategies for contingent workforce management and its effect on brand equity.

c. Quantitative Data – Survey

A survey was conducted with **20 gig workers** across different industries to gather empirical data on their experiences and perspectives. The questionnaire comprised:

- 10 multiple-choice questions focusing on digital literacy, HR support, and engagement.
- 9 Likert-scale statements to assess gig workers' perceptions of brand identity alignment, organizational culture, and job satisfaction.
- 2 Yes/No questions to evaluate HR effectiveness in workforce integration.
- 2 open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights on challenges and expectations from HR.

5.3. Sampling Technique

- Purposive sampling was employed for selecting Industry experts professionals based on their experience as gig workforce.
- Convenience sampling was used for the gig worker survey, as per the accessibility to respondents working in various industries.

5.4. Data Analysis Methods

- Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis was used to interview transcripts for identifying the key themes and patterns related to HR interventions, digital transformation, and brand alignment.
- Quantitative Analysis: Survey data was analyzed using pie charts and bar diagrams to measure trends in employee experience, engagement, and adaptability.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

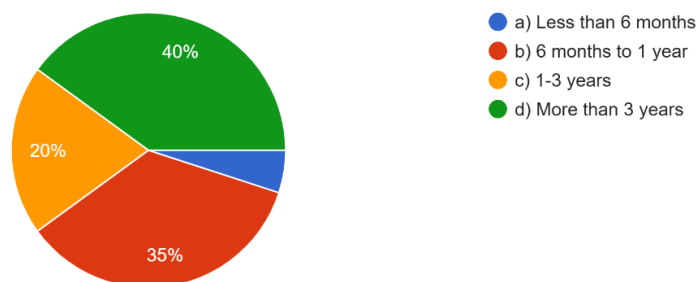
6.1. **Thematic Analysis:** Based on the interview response recorded; the comparison of responses are tabulated as follows:

Themes	Respondent 1	Respondent 2
Perceived Role and Brand Identity	Brand matters but flexibility is more important.	Focuses on knowledge sharing rather than brand identity.
Sense of Value and Recognition	Feels valued only when assigned repetitive work.	Feels valued within the organization.
Challenges in Organizational Inclusion	Lack of training and orientation reduces belongingness.	No major challenges, except cultural differences.
Inclusion in Organizational Culture	Included in some institutes invited for events.	Included in advisory boards, case study simulations, and live projects
Impact of HR Policies on Engagement	No relevance except for timely payment and contract renewal.	No impact; no training or induction provided.
Use of Technology for Gig Workforce	No access to digital tools or the organization’s intranet.	Some access—temporary ID and resource management at some institute
Digital Communication and Worker Voice	No digital communication tools were implemented.	Feedback is shared informally.
Recommendation of Organization	Would recommend only for brand name and timely payment.	Would recommend based on flexibility.
Training and Upskilling Opportunities	No training provided; feels the role is transactional.	No training provided.
Investment in Professional Growth	No investment in long-term professional growth.	No investment in professional growth.
Career Development and Long-Term Association	Recognition only through workload repetition, no career development.	No career development programs available.
Suggested HR Policy Improvements	Training programs, resource access, transparent communication.	Performance appraisal as a possible improvement.

6.2. Survey-based Data analysis:

1. How long have you been working in the gig workforce?

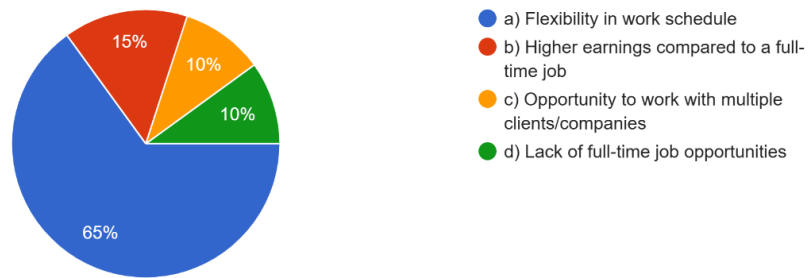
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents have been working in a gig arrangement for more than 3 years and also few have been experiencing gig work arrangement between 6 months to 1 year.

2. What is your primary reason for choosing gig work?

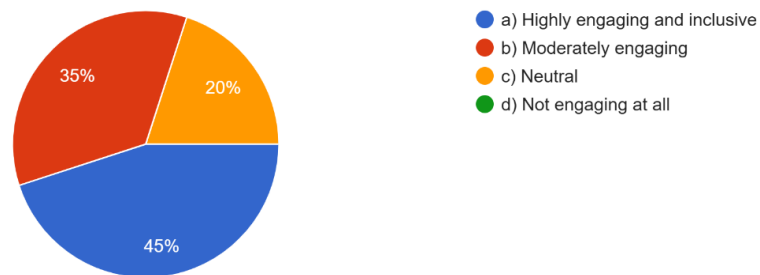
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents have opted gig workforce arrangement because of flexibility in work schedule.

3. How would you describe the organizational culture of your primary gig employer?

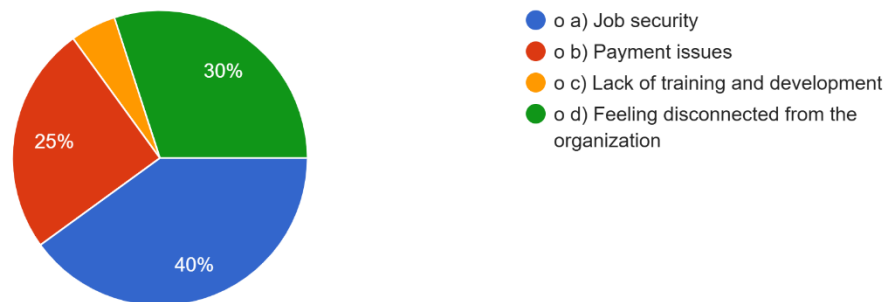
20 responses



Interpretation: Most of the respondents feel that their organization is highly engaging and inclusive.

4. Which of the following challenges do you face most frequently in your gig work?

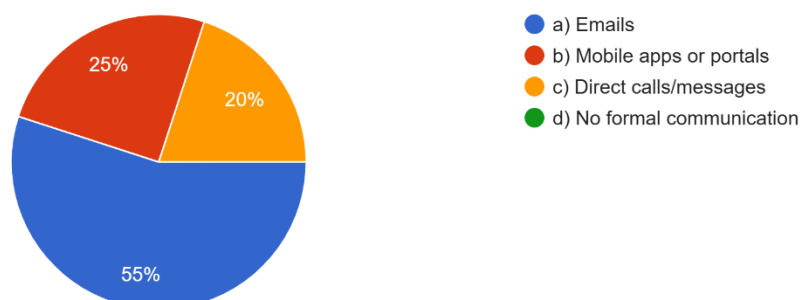
20 responses



Interpretation: The Majority of the gig workers feel job security is a major challenge.

5. How does your gig employer communicate work-related updates to you?

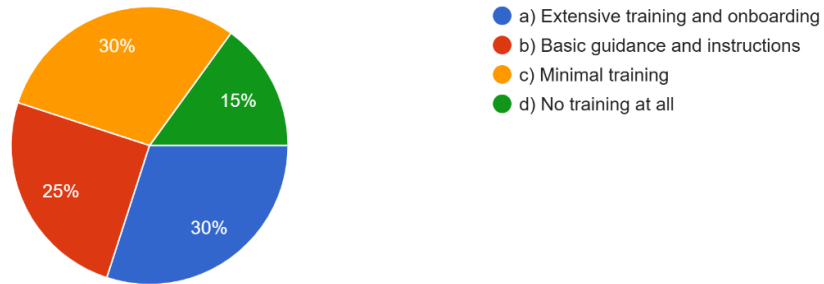
20 responses



Interpretation: Emails are the most preferred mode of communication opted by the organization to allocate tasks among the gig workforce.

6. What level of training or onboarding support did you receive when starting gig work?

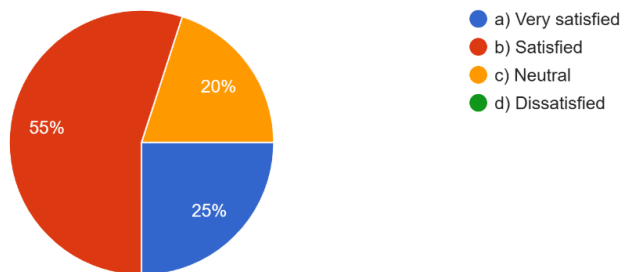
20 responses



Interpretation: There is mix response as many of respondents have received extensive training and many have received very minimal training, so it differs from organization to organization.

7. How satisfied are you with the digital tools provided by your gig employer for managing work?

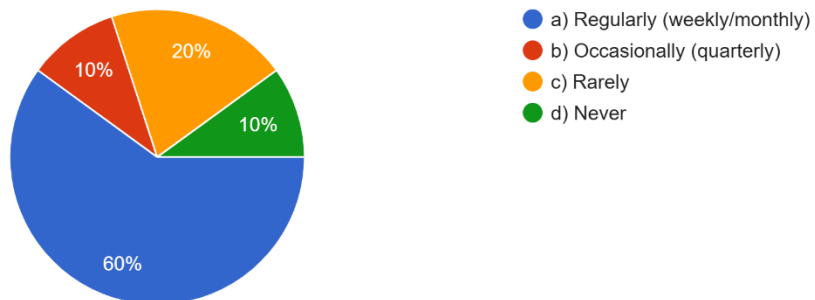
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents are satisfied with the digital tools access provided by their respective employer.

8. How often do you receive performance feedback from your gig employer?

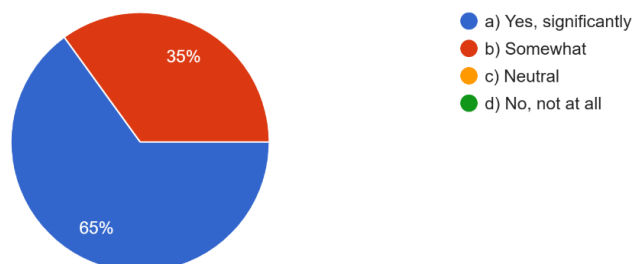
20 responses



Interpretation: Many organization provides formal performance feedback to their gig workforce.

9. Do you believe your work as a gig employee contributes to the overall brand identity of the organization?

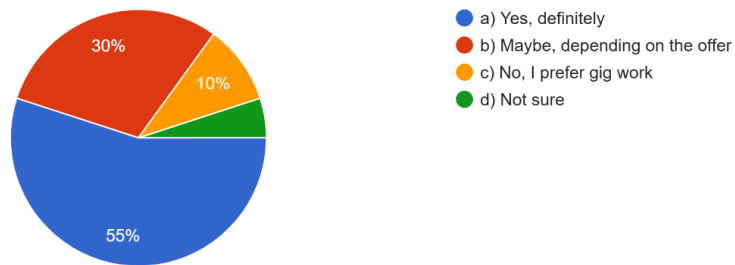
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents believed in their contribution towards the overall brand identity of their organization.

10. Would you consider switching to full-time employment if given the opportunity?

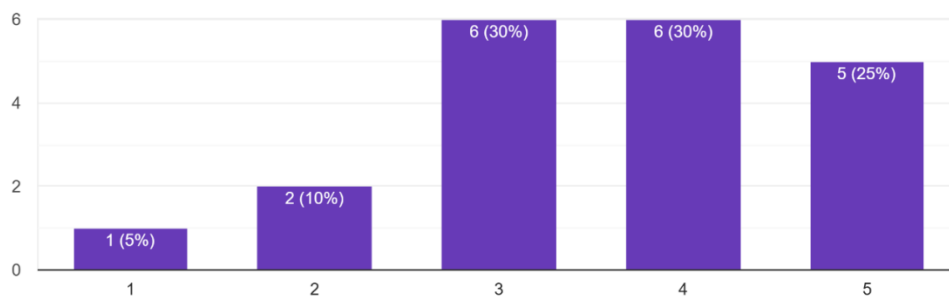
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents want to shift to permanent employment.

11. I feel valued and included in the organization as a gig worker.

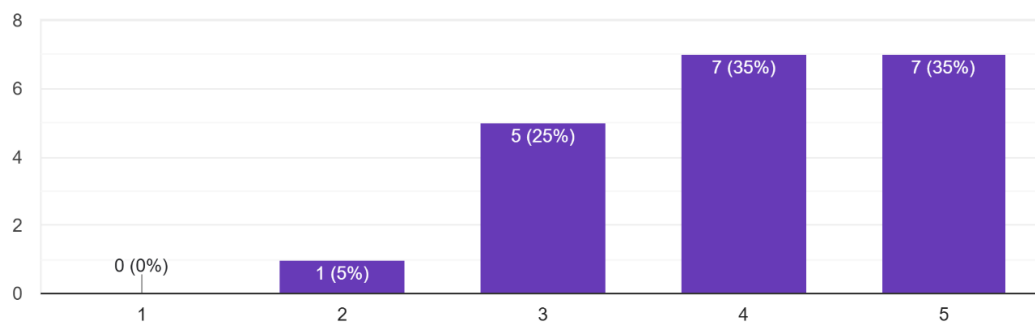
20 responses



Interpretation: Most of the respondents have mixed responses ranging from neutral to agree for being recognized as integral part of the organization.

12. My employer provides sufficient flexibility in work schedules.

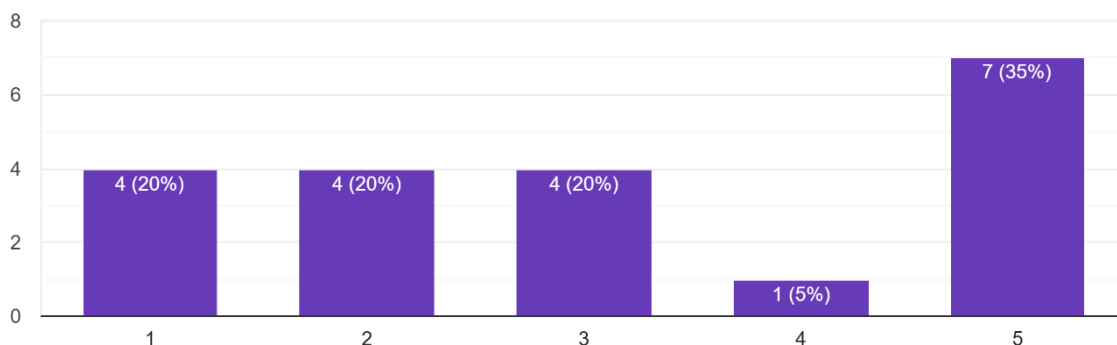
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondent agreed that the flexibility is extended by their employer.

13. I have access to adequate training and learning opportunities.

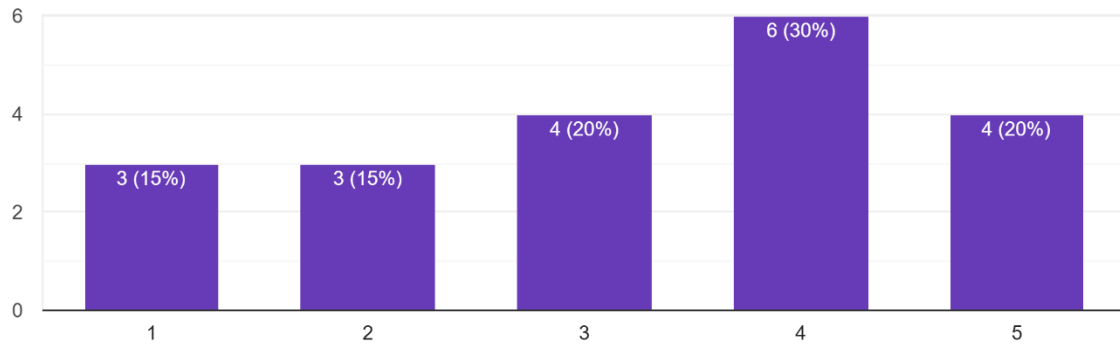
20 responses



Interpretation: Many respondents disagree with receiving adequate training, while quite a few agree with receiving extensive training.

14. I believe gig work offers career growth opportunities.

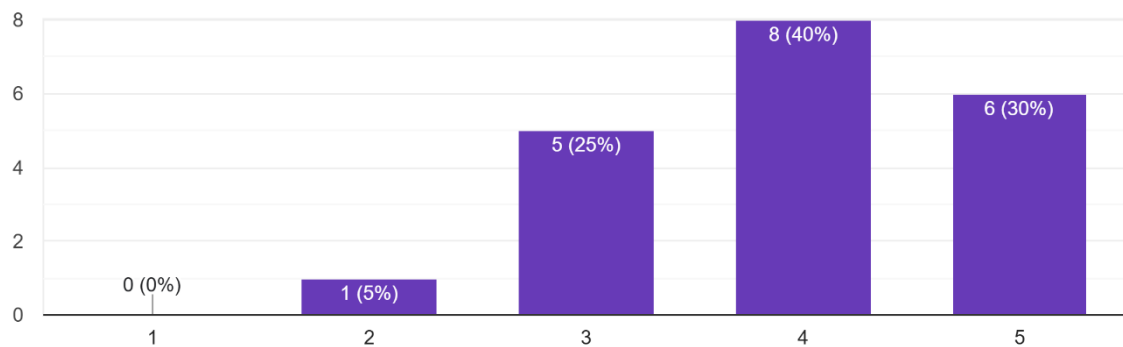
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents agreed that gig arrangements offer good career growth opportunities.

15. My employer's digital tools and platforms improve my work efficiency.

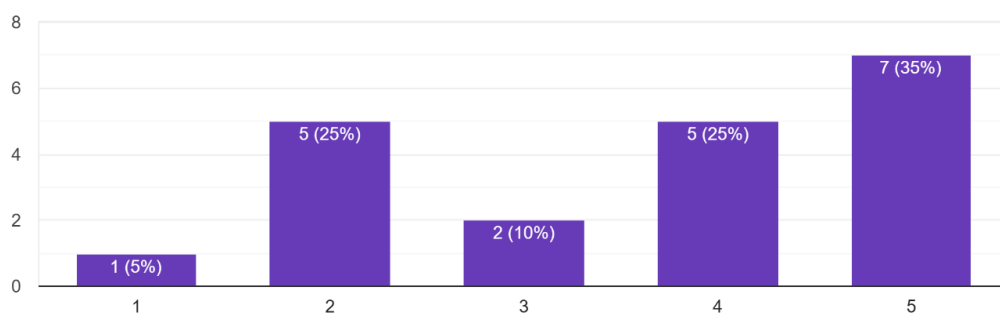
20 responses



Interpretation: The Majority of the respondents believed their work efficiency is improved with the access to digital tools provided by the employer.

16. I am satisfied with the level of communication from my employer.

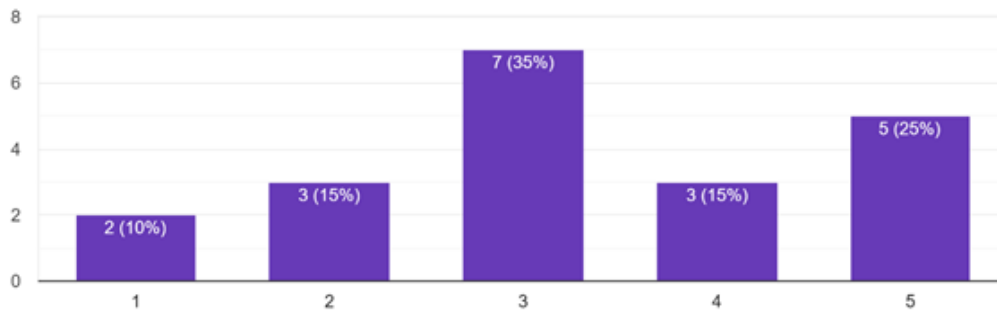
20 responses



Interpretation: Most of the respondents are satisfied with the communication maintained by their employer.

17. The performance evaluation process for gig workers is fair and transparent.

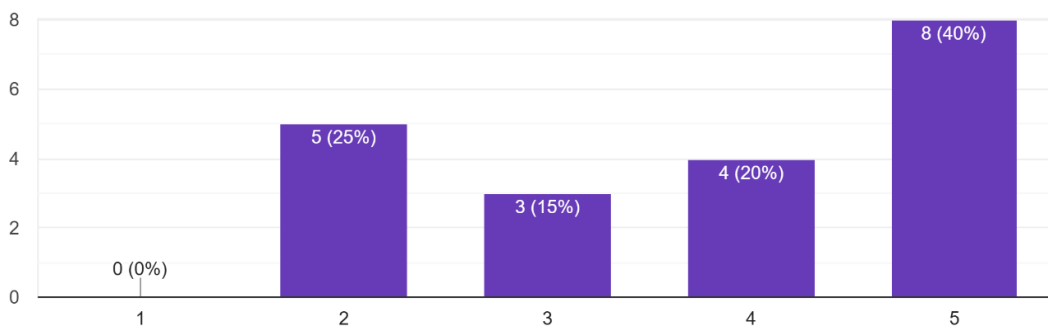
20 responses



Interpretation: Many respondents have not received regular performance appraisal while notable respondents receive performance feedback.

18. My employer considers gig workers as an important part of the workforce.

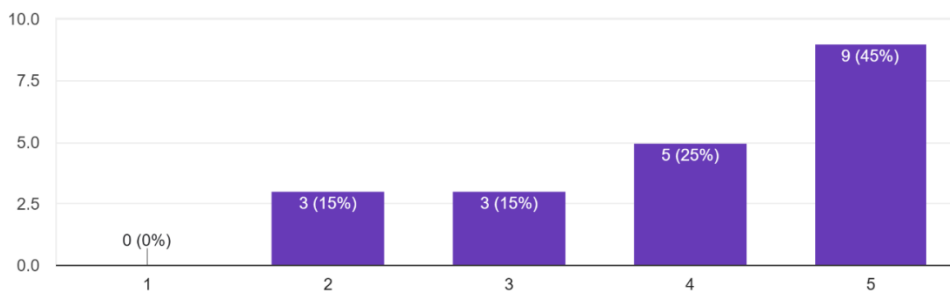
20 responses



Interpretation: The majority of respondents have strongly agree that their employer considers gig workforce as an important part of the workforce.

19. I would recommend this gig work platform/employer to others.

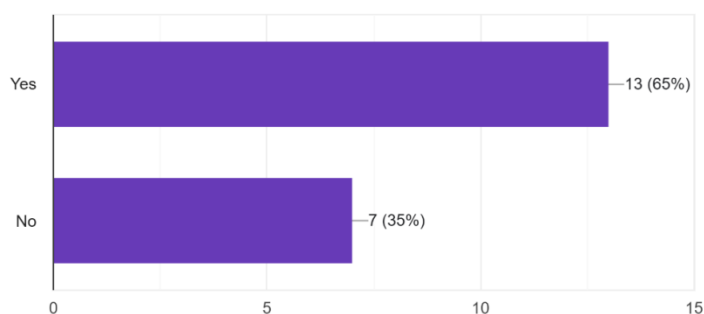
20 responses



Interpretation: Many respondents recommended their network to be part of gig workforce or join their employer.

20. Do you feel secure in your current gig job?

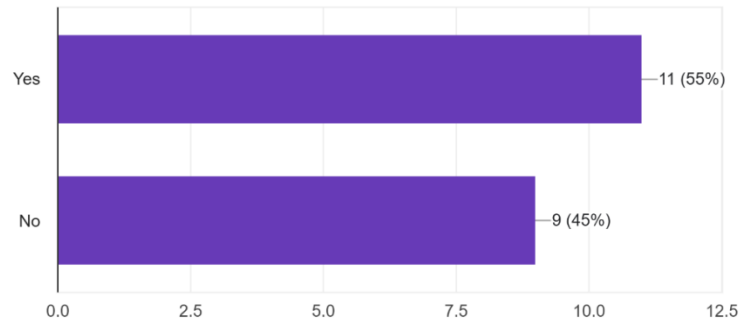
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents strongly agree that job security is extended by their employer.

21. Are you satisfied with the payment structure and timeliness?

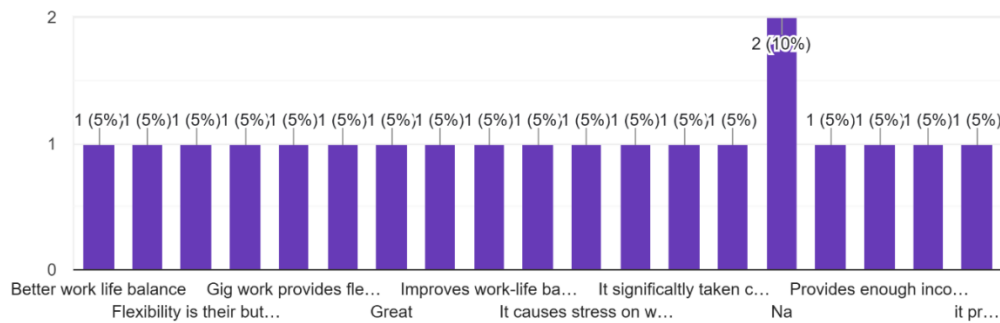
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents are satisfied with the payment structure and timeline.

22. How does gig work impact your work-life balance and financial stability?

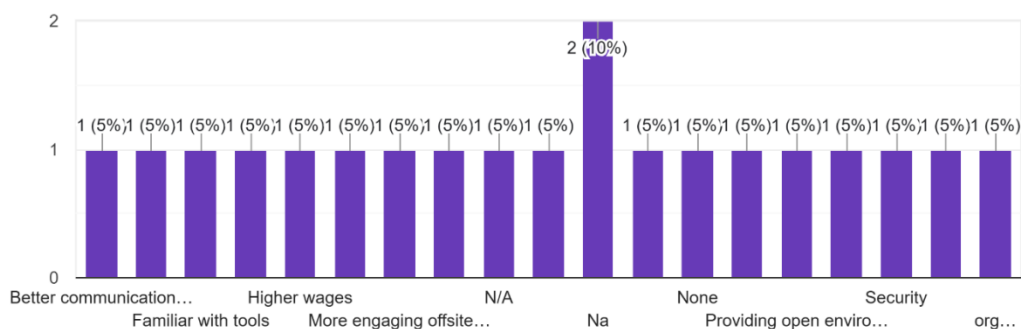
20 responses



Interpretation: Many of the respondents believe in the positive impact of gig workforce arrangement in striking balance between work-life balance and financial stability.

23. What improvements would you suggest for enhancing the experience of gig workers in your organization?

20 responses



Interpretation: The Majority of the recommendation is towards extending the broader scope of HR function to integrate gig workers as a part of the organization’s policy and strategies.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS

7.1. Findings and Interpretation of an Interview:

Recognition is very implied concerning gig workers as it is perceived through repetitive or extended workloads. The integration of the gig workers can be enhanced through structured training, career development, and HR engagement interventions. The access to digital tools is limited, with more formal communication. To improve the experience of the gig workers, organizations should implement structured onboarding, training programs, and performance appraisals for better inclusion and engagement.

7.2. Findings and Interpretation of Survey:

1. The majority of respondents acknowledged that HR plays a crucial role in integrating gig workers into the organizational culture and enhancing their overall employee experience.
2. Many respondents felt a sense of inclusion and identified with the organization's brand identity, largely due to HR policies promoting flexible work arrangements—an essential aspect of contingent talent management through gig workers.
3. However, several respondents were unable to recognize innovative engagement models implemented by HR to unify the brand image across a diverse workforce.

Based on the survey findings and interpretations, alternative hypotheses H_1 and H_2 are supported, while the null hypothesis H_{03} is also accepted.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The HR policy framework should be revised to formally integrate the gig workforce into people management strategies, ensuring equity in recognition, rewards, performance management, learning and development, and career planning.
2. Training programs should incorporate a human-centered approach to foster a sense of belonging among gig workers.
3. Clearly defined performance metrics should be established and effectively communicated to enhance the competencies of gig workers while ensuring transparency and fairness.
4. HR strategies with a stronger emphasis on human engagement should be implemented to align the gig workforce with the organization's brand identity.
5. An innovative HR model should be developed to map gig workers' contributions to brand identity, organizational ROI, and overall stakeholder impact, fostering a more inclusive culture.

9. LIMITATIONS

1. The study is based on a relatively small sample size of approximately 20 respondents and two professionals currently working in the gig economy, which may not fully represent diverse industries.
2. The research primarily focuses on popular gig workforce trends such as flexibility and timely payments, potentially overlooking other HR interventions and their long-term impact on aligning gig workers with the organization's brand identity.
3. The findings may not be generalizable, as gig workforce dynamics vary across sectors and industries.
4. Further empirical research using **stratified random sampling** would be beneficial in providing deeper insights into HR's role in shaping brand identity through contingent talent management.

10. CONCLUSION

The study emphasized the pivotal role of HR in acclimatizing gig workers into the organizational culture and enhancing their overall employee experience. The research suggests that HR policies specifically related to flexible work arrangements contribute majorly to fostering inclusivity and reinforcing brand identity among contingent workers. Though a gap is addressed notably in recognizing innovative engagement models that can contribute effectively in unifying the workforce and finally strengthening the brand alignment.

To overcome these challenges, HR strategies must adapt to incorporate gig workers into broader people management frameworks by implementing equity in performance evaluation, career growth, and learning opportunities. Furthermore, nurturing a sense of belongingness through offsite training programs by providing opportunities for more human interactions and transparent performance metrics can improve engagement and increase in productivity among gig workers.

The study contributes significant insights but has certain limitations, such as a small sample size and a focus on selected gig workforce trends. It emphasized the need for future scope of research with a larger and more diverse sample, utilizing stratified random sampling, would help to gain deeper insights and unfold the long-term impact of HR interventions on contingent talent management.

Finally, organizations must integrate an inclusive and strategic HR approach to effectively assimilate gig workers, synchronize them with the brand identity, and optimize their contributions to accelerate overall business success.

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