

## **BEYOND THE GIG: THE INFLUENCE OF GIG ECONOMY ON EMPLOYEE'S INTENTION TO MOONLIGHT**

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### **Abstract**

The labour market is transforming with emerging trends like freelancing, side hustles, gig work, and moonlighting, which are reshaping workplaces and traditional work cultures. It has opened up enormous opportunities for employees searching for and practicing alternative employment. Moonlighting has become a major challenge in the IT sector due to the proliferation of Internet companies and their employee-friendly labour practices. Moonlighting through platform work practiced during frequent lockdowns continues as a safety cushion for tech-savvy IT professionals facing massive layoffs due to technology upgrades, financial insecurity, and limited opportunities for career growth. This study adds to the existing literature by analyzing the influence of gig economy attractiveness on moonlighting intentions. Data collected from 186 IT/ITES professionals revealed that gig economy attractiveness strongly influences employees' intentions to moonlight, with this relationship being stronger among younger employees compared to more experienced ones. As moonlighting is a challenge faced by HR globally, the study provides insights for organizations and policymakers to develop strategies to address the benefits and attractiveness of the gig economy in tackling the potential challenges of employee moonlighting. This facilitates the implementation of thoughtful interventions to address moonlighting intentions among employees.

Keywords: Freelancing, Side hustles, Gig works, Platform work, Moonlighting.

### **1. Introduction**

The gig economy and moonlighting are transforming traditional employment models and reshaping the workforce. The gig economy is a labour market characterized by temporary, contract, and freelance jobs rather than permanent positions and is also known as a sharing economy or access economy. It is driven by temporary or part-time positions and has become increasingly prominent. Instead of offering full-time jobs, employers provide part-time opportunities, benefiting both parties. Employers can reduce costs associated with employee benefit programs, while employees enjoy greater flexibility and independence in their work. Moonlighting is the act of engaging in a secondary job along with primary full-time employment. The gig economy is providing a wider range of options to employees interested in moonlighting. This practice is not new among employees and has existed for years across various countries and sectors. It gathered significant attention in the 2000s and surged in popularity during the Covid pandemic. The Covid pandemic and ongoing financial crises have significantly declined

employment opportunities and job security (Akkermans et al., 2020). Some of the employees adopted habitual coping strategies to deal with the issues of rise and fall in job security (Elissa et al., 2022). Whereas a vast majority of employees decided to take up part-time jobs to supplement their income and diversify their skills. Moonlighting is not equally widespread across all sectors i.e. healthcare employees (70%), FMCG employees (71%), and IT sector employees (57%) think that moonlighting is unethical. The IT sector has a comparatively greater portion of employees supporting moonlighting. It is shown that one in five employees in India want to moonlight in India (Indeed hiring tracker research report, 2022). In light of the above-mentioned facts, this study examines the influence of gig economy attractiveness in encouraging undeclared work intentions among IT/ITES employees.

## 2. Literature Review

The gig economy is a labour market consisting exclusively of short-term jobs. It includes income-generating activities outside of the usual, long-term employer-employee relationships, and traditional employment relationships. It is a free market system in which temporary jobs are common and companies hire independent workers for short-term commitments (Chirag et al., 2023). Economic downturns and the rise in cost have led companies to seek more flexible and less costly labour arrangements (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009). It consists of a variety of freelance or independent contract work. The availability of various gig platforms, such as Fiverr, Upwork, Guru, Freelancer, People Per Hour, and Top Coder, has significantly promoted gig works (Srinath Sridharan, September 2022). The rise in internet-enabled remote working increased the attractiveness of the gig economy worldwide (Sundararajan, 2016). The gig economy is expanding rapidly as more and more people look for temporary, flexible jobs via digital platforms. There are currently about 7 million gig workers in India, which is expected to increase to 25 million by 2033, with a compound annual growth of nearly 12%. The NITI Aayog Report 2022 stated that 22% are engaged in high-skilled jobs, 47% of gig workers are engaged in medium-skilled jobs and 31% are in low-skilled jobs. Employers are also benefiting from the gig economy because of the wider reach to specialized people (Pal. B, 2021). Many studies have been conducted to identify the drivers and motivators of the gig economy (Allon et al., 2018, Van der Zwan et al., 2020). The possibility of higher earnings and flexible working hours are the main reasons for taking up gig work (Allon et al., 2018). Another study pointed out that higher pay, low stress, flexibility in the workplace, and time are the advantages of employees participating in the gig economy (Tay, K.W. & Mohamad, S. F. 2022). In a study, it is pointed out that Freelancers and gig workers often have more control over their work, which can lead to increased job satisfaction (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). The rise in gig economy participation coincided with the entry of Gen Z into the workforce. There is a growing preference for flexibility and work-life balance among workers, particularly millennials and Gen Z, who prioritize diverse work experiences over traditional career paths. This shift reflects a broader trend towards autonomy and the pursuit of meaningful, varied professional engagements. (Burtch, Carnahan, & Greenwood, 2018)

Moonlighting refers to having a second job or engaging outside one's primary employment. This often involves dual job-holding, where an individual simultaneously maintains two positions, frequently alongside a full-time job. The gig economy grew with more business openings and varied job choices, making side hustles alongside full-time jobs common. Despite the rising concern over the potential harm of moonlighting on the primary job, the employees believe they feel empowered while engaging in side hustles (Dathi Mol W. S, J. Bhavani. 2024). Undeclared work, which is a closely guarded secret among employees, came to light after the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. In India, no constitutional court has yet ruled against it. Even though there is some legislation that touches upon it, no existing law covers it

comprehensively. Moonlighting has become a significant issue in India, with 73% of the workforce taking on multiple jobs to boost their income. Lack of job satisfaction in primary employment also plays an important role in employee moonlighting (Ara, K., & Akbar, A. (2016). This trend poses risks, including employee disengagement, reduced productivity, revenue losses, and potential confidentiality breaches. To address these challenges, companies must establish clear moonlighting policies, ensure employees are satisfied with their job roles and compensation, and collaborate with skilled talent management agencies for recruitment (Gupta, V. 2023). The need for additional income, skill diversity and to effectively utilize free time forces employees to moonlight (AS George et al., 2022). Organizational commitment had an inverse relationship with moonlighting intentions (Choudhary, V., & Saini, G. 2021). Various factors are there to drive employees toward moonlighting and companies must have to reinvest in HR initiatives to motivate employees to stay committed to their primary job (Ashwini A., et.al, 2017). Preventing moonlighting entirely through the introduction of anti-competitive clauses is challenging. Employees have the right to engage in activities outside their office hours. In this difficult scenario, firms can prevent moonlighting by implementing measures that enhance employees' sense of dignity and strengthen their loyalty to the organization.

### **3. Research Gap**

Exploring the influence of gig economy attractiveness on moonlighting intentions reveals a significant research gap that warrants attention. While the existing literature discusses the general trends in gig economy participation and its impact on traditional employment, there is a lack of studies that specifically examine the attractiveness of gig work and its direct impact on moonlighting intentions. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how factors such as flexible working arrangements, additional income, opportunity to pursue passion, learning, and development opportunities in gig work motivate individuals to engage in moonlighting. The study also seeks to offer nuanced insights into the role of experience level in the relationship between the gig economy's attractiveness and moonlighting intentions. The following hypotheses are set to effectively address the research gaps;

H01: The attractiveness of the gig economy does not significantly influence employees' intentions to moonlight.

H02: Experience level doesn't moderate the relationship between gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intentions among employees.

H03: The attractiveness of the gig economy does not differ significantly across genders.

### **4. Methodology**

Standardized scales are used to measure the gig economy's attractiveness and moonlighting intentions. The Moonlighting Intentions Scale was adapted from Seema and Sachdeva (2020), they developed it after interviewing fifteen volunteer IT/ITES professionals who intended to moonlight. The scale was tested for reliability and validity before it was used for final data collection and analysis. After the elimination of one item, the six items on the Likert scale achieved a reliability value of 0.921. The gig economy's attractiveness was measured using a 9-item self-developed questionnaire, which underwent reliability and validity testing. This study focuses on IT/ITES professionals working in start-ups established since 2019 in Kerala. A total of 230 questionnaires were distributed. After excluding inappropriate responses, 186 responses, comprising eighty percent of the initial surveys, were deemed suitable for this study. Purposive sampling is the sampling technique used. The data was collected with the help of Google Forms and the whole dataset was processed correctly using SPSS Statistics 26 with no missing data.

## 5. Results and Discussion

Statistical software SPSS version 26 is used for descriptive, regression, moderation, and independent t-test analysis. The results and their interpretations are detailed in this part.

**Table 1: Exploratory factor analysis of the items in ethical excellence and moonlighting intentions scale**

Items	Mean	Factor loadings	Factor loadings
<b>Gig economy attractiveness</b>			
The gig economy provides workers with enough flexibility in Choosing working hours.	4.1730	.792	
Gig workers can choose and perform interesting job tasks from anywhere.	4.0649	.823	
Gig workers have the potential to earn more by having dual jobs	4.0703	.821	
Gig workers are liberated from the implications of various employment-related legal mandates.	4.0216	.847	
Gig economy is suitable for those who don't want to commit to long-term jobs	3.9514	.853	
Gig workers can find jobs quickly because there are a lot of opportunities available	4.0000	.791	
Gig workers can gain experience from diverse job assignments.	4.0541	.738	
Gig work platforms provide wider entrepreneurial opportunities.	3.9568	.864	
<b>Moonlighting Intention</b>			
How frequently do you scan newspapers/employment websites in search of part-time job opportunities.	3.8486		.813
How often do you dream about getting another job with your primary job, which would collectively suit your personal needs.	3.8541		.805
How often do you consider pursuing your hobby/passion other than a professional career to make extra money.	3.7730		.831
How often do you think of taking another job with better growth opportunities.	3.8541		.769
How likely you would accept another job along with the primary job at a desired compensation level if offered to you.	3.8486		.824
Have you ever registered on online platforms for taking up second jobs along with your primary job.	3.8595		.842

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics 26

The exploratory factor analysis was carried out using the statistical software SPSS version 26. All items were suitably loaded above the customary cut-off of 0.4 (Bagozzi, & Yi, 1986) on their intended factors of gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intentions. The result implies that the gig economy's perceived attractiveness and moonlighting intentions have a clear two-dimensional structure. The mean value obtained for all the items measuring the gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intentions is high. The item's flexibility in terms of working location, hours and need for additional income has a comparatively high value as compared to that of others. It shows that flexibility in the work arrangement

and the possibility to earn more income are the main reasons that attract more employees towards gig work.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the variables**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	No of respondents
<b>Moonlighting Intention</b>	3.8396	.86032	186
<b>Gig economy attractiveness</b>	4.0276	.81372	186

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics 26

The high mean values obtained for gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intention among IT professionals reflect a positive outlook toward flexible work arrangements and supplementary income opportunities aligned with their career aspirations and lifestyle preferences in the gig economy and their intention to moonlight. These factors underline the growing attractiveness of the gig economy and the increase in the desire to moonlight among IT/ITES professionals.

### Testing of Hypothesis 1

The regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of gig economy attractiveness on moonlighting intention. The results and the interpretations are detailed below.

H0: The attractiveness of the gig economy does not significantly influence employees' intentions to moonlight.

**Table 3: Regression analysis**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
.870	.756	567.250	.000

Source: IBM

SPSS Statistics 26

The R-value indicates a simple correlation, which is .870 and denotes a strong positive correlation. The R squared value 0.756 shows the extent to which the dependent variable (Moonlighting Intention) can be explained by the independent variable (Gig economy attractiveness). In this case, 75.6 percent can be explained. As the P-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at a significance level of 5 percent. Hence the null hypothesis (Gig economy attractiveness does not have a significant influence on employee's intentions to moonlight) stands rejected. It can be concluded that the attractiveness of the gig economy has a significant influence on the moonlighting intention of employees. The unstandardized coefficient table provides the necessary information to predict moonlighting intention from gig economy attractiveness and to derive the regression equation. It is explained in such a way that a one percent increase in gig economy attractiveness results in a 0.919 increase in moonlighting intention among employees.

### Testing of Hypothesis 2

H0: Experience level doesn't moderate the relationship between perceived gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intentions among employees.

**Table 4: Moderation estimates of the variables**

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Gig economy attractiveness</b>	0.8363	0.0366	22.84	< .001
<b>Experience level</b>	-0.2897	0.0244	-11.88	< .001
<b>Gig economy attractiveness * Experience level</b>	-0.0760	0.0315	-2.41	0.016

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

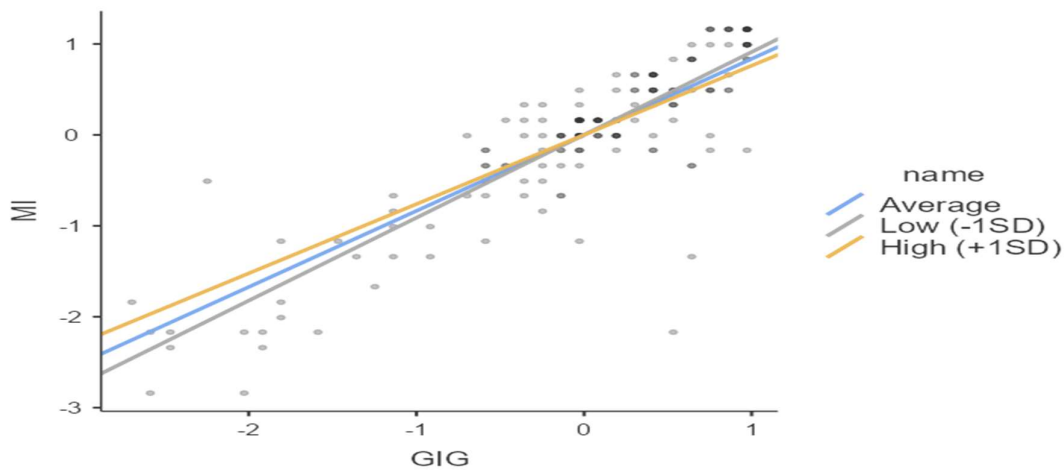
A moderation test is done, with the gig economy attractiveness as the predictor, moonlighting intention as the dependent variable, and experience level as a moderator. A significant main effect was found between the gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intentions,  $b = 0.8363$ ,  $z = 22.84$ ,  $p < .001$ . The effect of experience level on moonlighting intention are  $b = -0.2897$ ,  $z = -11.88$ ,  $p < .001$ . For experience level, the estimate value is negative, which means that as experience increases moonlighting intention decreases. There was a significant interaction effect found by experience level and gig economy attractiveness on moonlighting intentions,  $b = -0.0760$ ,  $z = -2.41$ ,  $p = .016$ . Hence the null hypothesis that “Experience level doesn’t moderate the relationship between gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intention among the employees” stands rejected. Experience level moderates the relationship between gig economy attractiveness and moonlighting intentions and the effect is not very strong as compared to the individual effect.

**Table 5: Simple Slope Estimates**

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Average</b>	0.836	0.0370	22.6	< .001
<b>Low (-1SD)</b>	0.911	0.0607	15.0	< .001
<b>High (+1SD)</b>	0.761	0.0319	23.9	< .001

**Note.** shows the effect of the predictor (Gig economy attractiveness) on the dependent variable (Moonlighting Intentions) at different levels of the moderator (Experience level)

**Figure 1: Simple slop plot of moderation analysis**



It was found that the participants with lesser experience had a greater influence of gig economy attractiveness on moonlighting intentions ( $b= 0.91, z= 15.0, p <.001$ ) than participants with average or above average levels of experience. ( $b= 0.836, z= 22.6, p <.001$  and  $b= 0.761, z= 23.9, p <.001$ , respectively). From these results, it can be concluded that the effect of gig economy attractiveness on moonlighting intention is partially moderated by experience level.

Generation Z is now entering into the global workforce and significantly influencing its dynamics. It is known that Gen Z individuals are more realistic, career-focused, and entrepreneurial compared to earlier generations. They are global and environmentally conscious, concerned about social justice, and want their ideas to be heard and valued (Oryunova, E., Jenkins, D. 2023). This trend is reflected in this study also, as younger employees or those with less work experience show a strong inclination towards moonlighting in the gig economy.

**Testing of Hypothesis 3**

H03: The attractiveness of the gig economy does not differ significantly across genders.

The t-test for independent samples is used to compare the mean values of the gender groups and the following results are obtained.

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics of independent t-test**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gig economy attractiveness	Male	86	4.4693	.39223
	Female	100	3.6522	.88898

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

From the mean value, it can be able to see that the Male group has a very high attractiveness towards the gig economy as compared to that of females.



**Table 7: Independent t-test**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
	F Value	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	29.940	.000	7.847	.000
Equal variances not assumed			8.291	.000

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

The p-value at the significance level of 5 percent is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis stating that the attractiveness of the gig economy does not differ significantly across genders stands rejected. It can therefore be concluded that there is a significant difference in gig economy attractiveness across the genders.

## 6. Contribution of the study

While moonlighting intentions can impact organizational and employee performance, they can also be considered a critical component for talent retention and work commitment. Studies on the gig economy's attractiveness and moonlighting intentions contribute several insights into managing employee moonlighting. This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into how gig economy attributes, such as flexibility, autonomy, and freelancing opportunities, influence traditional employment patterns and particularly moonlighting intention. It helps organizations for designing strategies to attract and retain employees engaged in gig work by understanding their motivations and needs. Additionally, the study offers insights into designing flexible work arrangements and policies that cater to the varying needs of employees, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and productivity in the primary job. The study also revealed the need to prioritize the preferences of younger employees, as they are the future pillars of the workforce and their needs are not as same as the older generation. Younger employees are highly attracted to moonlighting in the gig economy. Effectively addressing moonlighting intentions among employees helps organizations to mitigate the risks such as conflicts of interest, fatigue, burnout, and other negative consequences associated with engaging in dual jobs.

## 7. Limitations and recommendations

One of the main limitations of this study is limited generalizability. Due to typically small sample sizes and viewpoints being restricted to those of included participants, it's unreliable to assume that these viewpoints are the same across the population. We recommend conducting replications with diverse populations to know whether the findings are more universally shared viewpoints. The attractiveness of the gig economy and moonlighting intentions can fluctuate over time due to economic conditions, policy changes, or social trends. A snapshot in time may not capture all these dynamic changes. Rapid advancements in technology can alter the landscape of the gig economy. The results of the study will



quickly change, as employee motivations for participating in the gig economy are diverse, have many facets, and are constantly changing.

Traditional HR roles are no longer sufficient to deal with the change in demands of employees in the era of gig work and side hustles. Organizations need to adapt them by introducing new positions such as Gig Work Strategist, Mentor, Manager for the Future of Work, etc. The companies shall opt for optimal engagement plans to make the employees engage in skill development and other productive activities by utilizing flexible work arrangements. Companies should actively involve employees in framing their career development plans to address issues such as limited growth opportunities and insufficient support for fast-track advancement. Effective corporate branding efforts are essential to instil a sense of security and belonging among employees. It will make a feel among the employees that they are on a safe turf. Younger employees, particularly from Gen Z, are driven by creativity, innovation, and the pursuit of diverse opportunities. Empowering these employees, including those with less experience, through delegation of responsibilities can enhance job satisfaction and reduce the inclination towards seeking external side hustles. This approach can mitigate potential negative impacts associated with employee moonlighting.

## **8. Conclusion**

The emergence of Industry 5.0, dynamics in the economic environment, changes in working conditions, and the emergence of AI with great intensity across all spheres of the business environment have significantly altered the employment landscape. Gig work, online freelancing, remote working, and moonlighting are increasingly becoming the new normal. In this context, organizations cannot simply ban moonlighting through policy restrictions. Such an approach may be counterproductive, potentially leading to employee dissatisfaction and disengagement. Instead, organizations must adopt a more strategic and proactive approach in managing moonlighting. This involves investing time and effort in restructuring Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. By doing so, organizations can address the root causes that drive employees to seek additional work outside their primary job. By implementing strategic HRM practices, organizations can foster a work environment that accommodates the varying preferences that force employees to look for moonlighting in the gig economy, which will ultimately benefit both the employees and the organization.

## **9. Scope of future research**

Future studies should aim to include a more representative sample to understand how gender, race, age, and socioeconomic status influence participation in the gig economy. Comparing gig work and moonlighting trends across different geographic regions and cultures will help differentiate the findings for a broader audience. Additionally, investigates how juggling multiple jobs affects employees' mental and physical health, explores how gig work and moonlighting fit into long-term career strategies and professional development, analyzes how gig economy participation affects loyalty and retention of employees in traditional employment, and examines the potential conflicts or synergies between primary jobs and gig work are important areas for further research.

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