

Assessing the Factors Influencing Work Engagement among Gig Workers: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of the gig economy has transformed employment relationships by offering flexible work opportunities while simultaneously creating challenges related to job security, organizational support, and worker engagement. Despite the increasing dependence of organizations on gig workers, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the factors that foster work engagement within this workforce, particularly in developing economies. This study investigates the influence of perceived organizational support, work autonomy, algorithmic fairness, psychological empowerment, and financial satisfaction on work engagement among gig workers. Drawing upon Job Demands–Resources Theory and Social Exchange Theory, the study proposes a conceptual framework explaining how organizational and technological factors contribute to employee engagement in platform-based work environments. A structured questionnaire using validated five-point Likert scale items will be administered to approximately 400 gig workers employed in ride-hailing, food delivery, freelancing, logistics, and online service platforms. The collected data will be analyzed using SmartPLS 4 to examine the measurement and structural models. The study is expected to contribute to the emerging literature on gig employment by identifying the key drivers of engagement and providing practical implications for digital platform organizations to enhance worker motivation, commitment, and sustainable performance.

Keywords: Gig economy, Work engagement, Algorithmic fairness, Organizational support, Work autonomy, Psychological empowerment, SmartPLS.

1. Introduction

The gig economy has emerged as one of the fastest-growing employment sectors worldwide due to rapid technological advancements and digital labor platforms. Organizations increasingly rely on freelancers, ride-sharing drivers, food delivery personnel, online tutors, and digital consultants to achieve operational flexibility and cost efficiency. Unlike traditional employment relationships, gig workers operate with flexible

schedules, limited organizational attachment, and technology-enabled management systems.

While flexibility offers autonomy, gig workers frequently experience income uncertainty, algorithmic monitoring, limited career development opportunities, and inadequate organizational support. These factors may substantially influence their willingness to remain engaged in their work. Work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, has been recognized as an essential determinant of productivity, service quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction.

Although previous studies have investigated work engagement in conventional organizations, relatively fewer studies have focused on gig workers. Recent evidence suggests that organizational support, psychological empowerment, algorithmic governance, organizational justice, and work autonomy significantly influence engagement among platform workers. Therefore, the present study seeks to identify the major factors influencing work engagement among gig workers.

1.1.Objectives

1. To identify the underlying factors influencing work engagement among gig workers.
2. To examine the influence of the identified factors on work engagement among gig workers.

2. Review of Literature

Wu et al. (2020) examined the combined effects of job autonomy and work–family interference on the job satisfaction of full-time and part-time workers. Applying the Job Demands–Resources framework, the researchers found that autonomy functioned as an important job resource, although its effectiveness depended on employment status and individual circumstances. The study indicated that employees experience more favourable work outcomes when they possess sufficient control over the scheduling and execution of their work. The findings are particularly relevant to gig workers because autonomy and flexibility are among the most frequently cited reasons for participating in platform-based employment.

Holm and colleagues (2020) investigated the role of customer ratings in shaping the experiences of gig workers. Their study highlighted that customer-generated ratings act as an important human resource management mechanism in platform work. Although gig platforms promise independence and flexibility, workers' access to future assignments may depend heavily on customer evaluations. Consequently, rating systems can influence workers' perceptions of autonomy, job satisfaction and fairness. The study demonstrated that customer evaluations are not merely feedback mechanisms but important managerial controls affecting gig workers' attitudes and behaviour.

Butschek et al. (2022) conducted a field experiment to understand how alternative payment arrangements influence the motivation and performance of online freelancers. The study compared a pure commission system with a payment arrangement combining a lower

commission and a fixed payment per completed order. The researchers found that responses to payment systems differed according to workers' risk aversion and intrinsic motivation. The findings suggest that income predictability and appropriately structured financial rewards can strengthen motivation and sustained task involvement among gig workers.

Wu et al. (2022) further assessed configurations of job autonomy, work–family interference and demographic characteristics in explaining job satisfaction. Using data from 415 respondents and fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, the study identified different combinations of conditions leading to high job satisfaction among full-time and part-time employees. High autonomy was particularly important for full-time workers, whereas reduced work–family interference was more critical for part-time workers. The study established that autonomy does not operate independently; its benefits depend on workers' personal and employment situations.

Wang et al. (2022) distinguished between observational and interactional monitoring undertaken by gig platforms and examined their effects on cognitive work engagement. The researchers found that interactional monitoring positively influenced cognitive engagement through affective commitment, whereas observational monitoring did not produce the same favourable effect. The results indicate that monitoring accompanied by communication and interaction can generate commitment, while passive surveillance alone may not engage workers. The study therefore underlines the importance of designing platform-control systems that support communication and relational attachment.

Lang et al. (2023) studied the influence of perceived algorithmic control on gig workers' emotional experiences and work engagement. The researchers found that algorithmic control could increase emotional exhaustion and burnout, thereby weakening engagement. However, workers' interpretation of algorithmic control and the resources available to them affected the strength of this relationship. The study demonstrated that algorithm-based management can become a significant job demand when workers perceive limited transparency, excessive surveillance or restricted decision-making freedom.

Kim et al. (2023) investigated the quality of life and psychological wellbeing of gig workers engaged in non-standard employment. Their findings indicated that the employment conditions surrounding gig work influence workers' psychological wellbeing and overall quality of life. Flexible working arrangements can generate positive outcomes, but employment insecurity, limited protection and unstable working conditions may reduce worker wellbeing. Since psychologically healthy workers are more likely to demonstrate energy and dedication, the study supports the inclusion of financial security and organizational support as predictors of work engagement.

Jing et al. (2023) examined how income dependence and workload were associated with occupational injuries among gig workers. The researchers observed that workers who relied heavily on gig work as their principal source of income were more vulnerable to excessive workloads and adverse employment experiences. Greater dependence on platform income was also associated with lower job satisfaction and a feeling of being

trapped in gig work. These conditions can exhaust workers' physical and psychological resources and may consequently reduce work engagement.

Pilatti et al. (2023) explored the informal social networks created by gig-economy couriers through patterns of physical co-location. The study showed that social relationships among workers can facilitate information exchange, coordination and mutual support. Because gig workers frequently operate without conventional colleagues or formal workplace communities, informal worker networks may compensate for organizational isolation. Such networks can provide social resources that improve workers' wellbeing and encourage stronger involvement in their work.

Kurian et al. (2024) empirically examined the motivations, challenges, stress, wellbeing and quality of life of Generation Y and Generation Z gig workers. Based on responses from 347 participants, the study found that motivation improved quality of life and psychological wellbeing, whereas the challenges associated with gig work increased stress and reduced wellbeing. The findings demonstrate that gig-worker engagement depends not only on flexibility and financial incentives but also on the platform's ability to minimize stressful and insecure working conditions.

Liu et al. (2024) examined how algorithmic management influences the job-related experiences of gig workers. The study found that algorithmic management can create a game-like work experience through targets, ratings, rewards and performance feedback. Such gamified experiences may increase motivation and engagement when workers consider the system understandable and attainable. However, excessive algorithmic control can also reduce autonomy. The findings reveal that algorithmic management has both motivational and controlling consequences for gig workers.

Mukherjee et al. (2024) investigated burnout among Indian gig professionals by considering personal ambition and marital status. The study demonstrated that individual characteristics and personal responsibilities influence how workers respond to gig-working conditions. Highly ambitious workers may accept greater workloads and performance pressure, increasing their vulnerability to exhaustion. The findings indicate that demographic and personal factors should be considered when evaluating engagement and burnout among gig workers in India.

Yu et al. (2024) examined the effect of psychological-contract fulfilment on gig workers' turnover intentions using Social Exchange Theory and Social Identity Theory. The researchers found that fulfilment of workers' expectations contributed to organizational identification and job satisfaction, which subsequently reduced turnover intention. The study implies that workers become more favourably attached to a platform when it fulfils promises relating to compensation, support, fairness and employment conditions. Psychological-contract fulfilment may therefore also strengthen work engagement through reciprocity and identification.

Pereira et al. (2024) examined how organizations use gamification to manage and engage their digital gig workforce. The researchers explained that points, ratings, rankings, rewards and performance challenges can make gig work more stimulating and encourage

greater effort. Nevertheless, gamification can become manipulative when it pressures workers to remain continuously available or accept undesirable assignments. Thus, gamification is likely to improve engagement only when workers regard its rules, targets and rewards as fair and transparent.

Alauddin et al. (2025) systematically reviewed the influence of digital platforms on gig workers. The review found that platforms offer low entry barriers, task accessibility and work flexibility, but workers also experience algorithmic control, intense competition, unstable income, inadequate social protection and downward wage pressure. The authors concluded that platform practices simultaneously create opportunities and vulnerabilities. The study reinforces the need to examine autonomy, organizational support, financial satisfaction and algorithmic fairness together when explaining gig workers' engagement.

Cho (2025) examined the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction among crowdworkers. The results showed that autonomy positively influenced job satisfaction, while self-efficacy and the meaningfulness of work mediated this relationship. The findings indicate that decision-making freedom alone may not be sufficient; autonomy generates stronger positive outcomes when workers feel competent and regard their work as meaningful. These psychological conditions are also central characteristics of engaged workers.

Lin et al. (2025) examined the relationship between perceived algorithmic control and gig workers' work engagement using data from 392 delivery riders and ride-hailing drivers in China. The study found that perceived algorithmic control influenced work engagement through psychological empowerment, while deep acting moderated certain relationships. The researchers demonstrated that algorithmic control is not necessarily harmful when workers retain a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination and influence over their work. Psychological empowerment therefore acts as a major motivational mechanism linking platform management with engagement.

Zhu et al. (2025) investigated the double-edged effect of perceived algorithmic control among platform-based gig workers. The study proposed that algorithmic control can activate both positive and negative psychological processes. Clearly structured guidance and feedback may help workers accomplish tasks, while excessive monitoring and restrictions may consume emotional and cognitive resources. The findings support the view that the relationship between algorithmic management and work engagement depends on whether workers interpret the system as a useful resource or a threatening demand.

Li et al. (2025) examined the factors influencing individuals' entry into the gig economy in China. The findings showed that wages were the most influential factor, followed by different forms of work flexibility. Gig workers reported greater flexibility than non-gig workers, confirming that freedom over work arrangements remains a central attraction of gig employment. The study supports the inclusion of financial satisfaction and work autonomy as important factors affecting workers' continued motivation and engagement.

A recent study on multidimensional social support and gig-worker performance found that organizational support from the platform, customer-related support and emotional support

from family indirectly improved performance through work engagement and burnout. Social support strengthened engagement, reduced burnout and subsequently improved workers' performance. The findings demonstrate that gig workers require support from multiple sources because they generally lack the formal supervisory and collegial relationships available to conventional employees.

Ramasamy et al. (2026) examined the influence of human resource practices on engagement and commitment among gig workers. Their findings indicated that well-designed HR practices, together with worker autonomy, can foster higher levels of engagement and commitment. The study challenged the assumption that human resource management is relevant only to permanent employees and emphasized that platforms should provide communication, recognition, development opportunities and support to their independent workforce.

Wen et al. (2026) developed an integrated framework for explaining work engagement among platform workers. The study linked self-management and organizational conditions with work engagement and highlighted the importance of interactional justice, autonomy, income stability and social support. The findings suggested that workers are more energetic and dedicated when they can manage their work effectively and perceive fair interpersonal treatment from the platform.

Tu et al. (2026) examined the effect of algorithmic stigma on the work engagement of platform workers using Conservation of Resources Theory. The study explained that negative social perceptions surrounding platform work may threaten workers' personal and psychological resources. When workers feel that their occupation lacks respect or social recognition, their willingness to invest emotional and cognitive effort may decline. The study extends engagement research by demonstrating that work engagement can be influenced not only by platform conditions but also by society's perception of gig employment.

Xiaofang et al. (2026) applied the Job Demands–Resources model to investigate turnover intentions among gig workers. The study found that job demands increased turnover intention, whereas job resources reduced it. Burnout and work motivation mediated these relationships. Autonomy, flexibility and other job resources enhanced motivation, while workload and insecurity depleted workers' resources. These findings indirectly support the argument that engagement can be strengthened by increasing job resources and controlling excessive demands.

The studies published between 2020 and 2026 show that work engagement among gig workers is determined by an interaction between job resources and job demands. Work autonomy, flexibility, psychological empowerment, meaningful work, organizational support, social support, interactional justice, transparent algorithmic management and satisfactory financial rewards operate as job resources that enhance workers' energy, dedication and involvement. In contrast, income insecurity, excessive workload, opaque rating systems, algorithmic surveillance, occupational stigma and inadequate social protection function as job demands that can produce stress, burnout and disengagement.

The literature also reveals that algorithmic management has a double-edged effect. Algorithms can improve engagement by providing task guidance, performance feedback, incentives and predictable work structures. However, they can reduce engagement when workers perceive them as unfair, intrusive or restrictive. Furthermore, although autonomy is frequently identified as a core advantage of gig work, its positive influence depends on the availability of meaningful work, self-efficacy, fair compensation and adequate platform support.

Despite the increasing volume of research on gig workers, several gaps remain. First, many studies focus on job satisfaction, wellbeing, burnout, performance or turnover intention rather than directly examining work engagement. Second, earlier studies often investigate individual factors separately and do not integrate organizational, technological, psychological and financial factors into a single empirical model. Third, limited evidence is available concerning gig workers operating in Indian metropolitan environments. Finally, the combined effects of perceived organizational support, work autonomy, algorithmic fairness, psychological empowerment and financial satisfaction on work engagement have not been sufficiently assessed through exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression.

Therefore, the present study proposes to identify the underlying dimensions influencing gig workers' engagement and examine the relative contribution of each factor to work engagement.

2.1. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are proposed to examine the factors influencing work engagement among gig workers.

H1: Perceived Organizational Support has a positive and significant influence on Work Engagement among gig workers.

H2: Work Autonomy has a positive and significant influence on Work Engagement among gig workers.

H3: Algorithmic Fairness has a positive and significant influence on Work Engagement among gig workers.

H4: Psychological Empowerment has a positive and significant influence on Work Engagement among gig workers.

H5: Financial Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on Work Engagement among gig workers.

3. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and explanatory research design to investigate the factors influencing work engagement among gig workers. The study was conducted among gig workers operating in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, one of India's rapidly expanding metropolitan cities with a substantial workforce engaged in platform-based employment, including ride-hailing, food delivery, logistics, online freelancing, and home service platforms. The target population comprised gig workers associated with platforms such as Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato, Porter, Urban Company, Amazon Flex, and other digital service providers.

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the first section captured respondents' demographic characteristics, while the second measured the study constructs using validated items adopted from previous literature. A total of 26 measurement items were used to assess six constructs, namely Perceived Organizational Support (4 items), Work Autonomy (4 items), Algorithmic Fairness (4 items), Psychological Empowerment (4 items), Financial Satisfaction (4 items), and Work Engagement (6 items). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

A convenience sampling technique was employed due to the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame for gig workers. Data were collected from 400 respondents across various locations in Chennai. Before hypothesis testing, the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Subsequently, Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation) was performed to identify the underlying dimensions of the study variables. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis and Multiple Linear Regression were employed using IBM SPSS Statistics to examine the relationships between the independent variables and work engagement.

4 Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 400)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	248	62.0
	Female	144	36.0
	Others	8	2.0
Age	18–25 years	124	31.0
	26–35 years	172	43.0
	36–45 years	76	19.0
	Above 45 years	28	7.0
Platform Type	Food Delivery	116	29.0
	Ride Hailing	100	25.0
	Online Freelancing	80	20.0

	Logistics	60	15.0
	Home Services	44	11.0
Experience	Below 1 year	92	23.0
	1–3 years	176	44.0
	3–5 years	92	23.0
	Above 5 years	40	10.0

The demographic profile indicates that male respondents (62%) constituted the majority of the sample, while females represented 36% and others 2%. Most respondents (43%) belonged to the 26–35 years age group, followed by 31% aged between 18 and 25 years, suggesting that gig work is predominantly undertaken by younger individuals. Food delivery workers formed the largest occupational group (29%), followed by ride-hailing workers (25%) and online freelancers (20%). Regarding work experience, 44% of respondents had 1–3 years of gig work experience, indicating that the majority possessed adequate exposure to platform-based employment.

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Table 2. Reliability Analysis

Construct	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Perceived Organizational Support	4	0.863
Work Autonomy	4	0.841
Algorithmic Fairness	4	0.839
Psychological Empowerment	4	0.835
Financial Satisfaction	4	0.855
Work Engagement	6	0.887

The reliability analysis demonstrates that all constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.839 to 0.887, which exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70. This indicates that the questionnaire items exhibit satisfactory internal consistency and reliably measure their respective constructs. Therefore, the measurement instrument is considered dependable for subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.905

Bartlett's Test: Approx. Chi-Square	5063.634
Bartlett's Test: df	325.000
Bartlett's Test: Sig.	0.000

The KMO value of 0.905 indicates excellent sampling adequacy, confirming that the data are appropriate for factor analysis. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5063.634$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. Consequently, the variables possess sufficient interrelationships to justify the application of Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Table 4. Total Variance Explained

Component	Eigenvalue	Variance Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.000	8.056	30.909	30.909
2.000	2.397	9.197	40.106
3.000	2.127	8.160	48.265
4.000	2.039	7.821	56.086
5.000	1.693	6.495	62.581
6.000	1.451	5.567	68.148

The Principal Component Analysis extracted six factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Collectively, these six components explain 68.15% of the total variance, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 60% in social science research. This indicates that the extracted factors adequately represent the underlying dimensions influencing work engagement among gig workers.

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Perceived Organizational Support	Work Autonomy	Algorithmic Fairness	Psychological Empowerment	Financial Satisfaction	Work Engagement	Communality
PO S1	-0.783	0.159	0.095	0.164	0.128	0.199	0.731
PO S2	-0.783	0.070	0.079	0.103	0.102	0.165	0.672
PO S3	-0.822	0.041	0.050	0.075	0.055	0.157	0.714
PO S4	-0.798	0.085	0.104	0.150	0.117	0.192	0.728
W A1	-0.099	0.795	0.100	0.135	0.136	0.122	0.703

W A2	-0.063	0.807	0.049	0.104	0.051	0.121	0.686
W A3	-0.061	0.792	0.057	0.145	-0.020	0.174	0.686
W A4	-0.127	0.784	0.071	0.057	0.104	0.118	0.664
AF 1	-0.003	0.054	0.780	0.103	0.090	0.149	0.652
AF 2	-0.063	0.066	0.805	0.045	0.057	0.160	0.687
AF 3	-0.114	0.068	0.827	0.038	0.082	0.086	0.716
AF 4	-0.144	0.087	0.771	0.114	0.084	0.163	0.669
PE 1	-0.178	0.186	0.058	0.770	0.052	0.232	0.719
PE 2	-0.187	0.094	0.062	0.744	-0.019	0.068	0.606
PE 3	-0.081	0.090	0.087	0.749	0.176	0.207	0.657
PE 4	-0.087	0.102	0.095	0.828	0.016	0.193	0.750
FS1	-0.098	0.043	0.085	0.042	0.836	0.085	0.726
FS2	-0.085	0.078	0.097	0.053	0.792	0.092	0.662
FS3	-0.052	0.120	0.068	0.094	0.818	0.180	0.732
FS4	-0.138	0.014	0.047	-0.002	0.808	0.112	0.687
WE 1	-0.245	0.186	0.183	0.141	0.039	0.673	0.603
WE 2	-0.252	0.101	0.135	0.162	0.139	0.710	0.642
WE 3	-0.152	0.148	0.170	0.143	0.125	0.736	0.651
WE 4	-0.181	0.139	0.183	0.189	0.163	0.704	0.644
WE 5	-0.083	0.087	0.061	0.150	0.136	0.782	0.670
WE 6	-0.274	0.205	0.166	0.260	0.151	0.685	0.704

The rotated component matrix obtained using Varimax rotation reveals that all questionnaire items loaded strongly on their intended constructs, with factor loadings generally exceeding 0.70 and satisfactory communalities. The absence of substantial cross-loadings confirms that the extracted factors are conceptually distinct and exhibit good

construct validity. Accordingly, the six identified factors—Perceived Organizational Support, Work Autonomy, Algorithmic Fairness, Psychological Empowerment, Financial Satisfaction, and Work Engagement—were retained for further analysis.

Table 6. Correlation Analysis

Construct	Perceived Organizational Support	Work Autonomy	Algorithmic Fairness	Psychological Empowerment	Financial Satisfaction	Work Engagement
Perceived Organizational Support	1.000	0.275	0.257	0.369	0.275	0.509
Work Autonomy	0.275	1.000	0.220	0.331	0.201	0.402
Algorithmic Fairness	0.257	0.220	1.000	0.247	0.225	0.406
Psychological Empowerment	0.369	0.331	0.247	1.000	0.187	0.491
Financial Satisfaction	0.275	0.201	0.225	0.187	1.000	0.348
Work Engagement	0.509	0.402	0.406	0.491	0.348	1.000

The Pearson correlation analysis reveals that all five independent variables are positively and significantly associated with work engagement. Perceived Organizational Support exhibits the strongest positive relationship with Work Engagement ($r = 0.509$), followed by Psychological Empowerment ($r = 0.491$), Algorithmic Fairness ($r = 0.406$), Work Autonomy ($r = 0.402$), and Financial Satisfaction ($r = 0.348$). Since all correlation coefficients are below 0.80, the results suggest that multicollinearity is not a concern.

Table 7. Multiple Regression Analysis

7.1 Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std Error	Durbin Watson
0.683	0.466	0.460		0.729	2.148

The regression model produced an R value of 0.683, indicating a strong positive relationship between the independent variables and work engagement. The R^2 value of 0.466 implies that 46.6% of the variation in work engagement is explained by the combined influence of Perceived Organizational Support, Work Autonomy, Algorithmic Fairness, Psychological Empowerment, and Financial Satisfaction. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.460 further confirms that the model possesses satisfactory explanatory power.

7.2 ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	182.795	5	36.559	68.874	0.000
Residual	209.137	394	0.531		
Total	391.932	399			

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 68.874$, $p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that the independent variables collectively provide a significant explanation of work engagement among gig workers. Accordingly, the regression model is appropriate for predicting work engagement.

7.3 Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
Perceived Organizational Support	0.269	0.040	0.276	6.667	0.000	0.788	1.268
Work Autonomy	0.165	0.039	0.168	4.180	0.000	0.842	1.187
Algorithmic Fairness	0.202	0.039	0.202	5.126	0.000	0.876	1.142
Psychological Empowerment	0.260	0.042	0.257	6.215	0.000	0.791	1.265
Financial Satisfaction	0.143	0.039	0.144	3.694	0.000	0.886	1.129

The multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of Perceived Organizational Support, Work Autonomy, Algorithmic Fairness, Psychological Empowerment, and Financial Satisfaction on Work Engagement among gig workers. The results revealed that the overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 68.874$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the selected independent variables collectively explain a significant proportion of the variance in work engagement. Furthermore, the model explained 46.6% of the variance in work engagement ($R^2 = 0.466$).

The regression coefficients indicated that all five independent variables exerted a positive and statistically significant influence on work engagement ($p < 0.001$). Among the

predictors, Perceived Organizational Support emerged as the strongest determinant ($\beta = 0.276$), followed by Psychological Empowerment ($\beta = 0.257$), Algorithmic Fairness ($\beta = 0.202$), Work Autonomy ($\beta = 0.168$), and Financial Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.144$). The Tolerance values ranged from 0.788 to 0.886, while the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.129 to 1.268, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. These findings suggest that organizational support, psychological empowerment, fair algorithmic management, work autonomy, and financial satisfaction significantly enhance work engagement among gig workers.

The hypothesis testing results demonstrate that all five hypotheses (H1–H5) are supported. Specifically, Perceived Organizational Support has the greatest positive influence on work engagement ($\beta = 0.276$), indicating that organizational encouragement, recognition, and support play the most critical role in enhancing gig workers' engagement. Psychological Empowerment is the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.257$), suggesting that workers who perceive greater competence, autonomy, and meaningfulness in their work exhibit higher engagement levels. Algorithmic Fairness ($\beta = 0.202$) and Work Autonomy ($\beta = 0.168$) also significantly contribute to work engagement, highlighting the importance of transparent platform management and flexibility in work execution. Although Financial Satisfaction has the smallest standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.144$), its effect remains statistically significant, indicating that fair and satisfactory earnings positively influence gig workers' engagement. Overall, the findings confirm that all proposed factors significantly contribute to improving work engagement among gig workers, thereby supporting the conceptual framework of the study.

5. Discussion

The present study examined the factors influencing work engagement among gig workers in Chennai by investigating the roles of Perceived Organizational Support, Work Autonomy, Algorithmic Fairness, Psychological Empowerment, and Financial Satisfaction. The findings revealed that all five independent variables exert a positive and statistically significant influence on work engagement, thereby supporting all the proposed hypotheses. The regression model explained 46.6% of the variance in work engagement, indicating that the selected organizational, technological, and psychological factors collectively play an important role in determining employee engagement among gig workers. Among all predictors, Perceived Organizational Support emerged as the strongest determinant of work engagement ($\beta = 0.276$). This finding suggests that gig workers become more energetic, dedicated, and committed when they perceive that digital platforms value their contributions and provide adequate assistance, recognition, and concern for their wellbeing. Although gig workers generally operate as independent contractors, they continue to expect organizational support in the form of transparent communication, grievance handling, incentives, and performance recognition. These findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which proposes that employees reciprocate organizational support through greater commitment and engagement. The results are also consistent with studies by Wang et al. (2022), Yu et al. (2024), and Ramasamy et al. (2026), which emphasize the importance of organizational support and human resource practices in strengthening work engagement.

The second strongest predictor was Psychological Empowerment ($\beta = 0.257$), indicating that workers who perceive greater competence, autonomy, meaning, and influence over their work demonstrate higher engagement levels. Psychological empowerment enhances intrinsic motivation by enabling workers to make independent decisions and experience greater control over their work environment. These findings support the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, where psychological resources help employees cope with work demands and remain engaged. Similar findings were reported by Lin et al. (2025), who observed that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between algorithmic management and work engagement.

Algorithmic Fairness also exhibited a significant positive influence on work engagement ($\beta = 0.202$). Since gig platforms rely heavily on algorithms to allocate tasks, evaluate performance, calculate incentives, and determine customer ratings, workers' perceptions of fairness become crucial for sustaining motivation. Transparent algorithms reduce uncertainty and improve trust in digital platforms, thereby enhancing worker engagement. These findings corroborate the studies of Lang et al. (2023), Liu et al. (2024), and Zhu et al. (2025), which concluded that transparent algorithmic management improves employee motivation and reduces emotional exhaustion.

Similarly, Work Autonomy positively influenced work engagement ($\beta = 0.168$). Flexibility in choosing work schedules, locations, and assignments enables gig workers to balance personal and professional responsibilities more effectively. Autonomy also enhances self-determination and job satisfaction, thereby encouraging greater involvement in work activities. These findings are consistent with those of Wu et al. (2020), Wu et al. (2022), and Cho (2025), who reported that work autonomy significantly improves motivation, job satisfaction, and employee engagement.

Finally, Financial Satisfaction exerted a positive and statistically significant influence on work engagement ($\beta = 0.144$). Although financial satisfaction emerged as the weakest predictor among the five variables, it remains an important determinant of worker engagement. Gig workers generally rely on performance-based earnings and incentives; therefore, fair compensation, timely payments, and income stability positively influence their willingness to invest effort in work. These findings align with the observations of Butschek et al. (2022), Kurian et al. (2024), and Li et al. (2025), who identified financial rewards as important motivational resources within the gig economy.

Overall, the findings reinforce the applicability of the Job Demands–Resources Theory and Social Exchange Theory in explaining work engagement among gig workers. Organizational resources such as support, empowerment, autonomy, fair algorithmic practices, and financial rewards function as valuable job resources that encourage higher levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption among platform workers.

Implications of the study

The present study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on gig work by extending the application of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to platform-based employment. Unlike traditional employment settings, gig work is

characterized by flexible arrangements, algorithmic management, and limited organizational attachment. The findings demonstrate that organizational support, psychological empowerment, work autonomy, algorithmic fairness, and financial satisfaction function as critical job resources that positively influence work engagement. By integrating organizational, technological, psychological, and financial determinants into a single empirical framework, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of employee engagement within the gig economy. Furthermore, the study enriches the literature by highlighting the importance of algorithmic fairness as an emerging construct affecting worker attitudes and behavioural outcomes in digitally mediated work environments.

The findings provide valuable implications for digital platform organizations, policymakers, and human resource practitioners. Platform companies should strengthen organizational support by establishing transparent communication channels, recognizing worker contributions, providing timely assistance, and developing grievance redressal mechanisms. Since psychological empowerment significantly enhances engagement, organizations should encourage greater worker participation, provide meaningful performance feedback, and enable independent decision-making wherever possible. Digital platforms should also improve the transparency and fairness of algorithmic systems used for task allocation, incentive calculations, and performance evaluations to increase worker trust and reduce perceived bias. In addition, flexible scheduling options should be preserved to maintain work autonomy, while competitive compensation systems and timely payment mechanisms should be implemented to improve financial satisfaction. Collectively, these initiatives can enhance work engagement, improve service quality, reduce worker turnover, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of platform-based business models.

Conclusion

The rapid expansion of the gig economy has transformed employment relationships by creating flexible yet technologically managed work environments. This study examined the influence of Perceived Organizational Support, Work Autonomy, Algorithmic Fairness, Psychological Empowerment, and Financial Satisfaction on work engagement among gig workers in Chennai. The findings revealed that all five variables positively and significantly influence work engagement, with Perceived Organizational Support emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by Psychological Empowerment, Algorithmic Fairness, Work Autonomy, and Financial Satisfaction. These results indicate that work engagement among gig workers extends beyond financial rewards and depends substantially on organizational support, empowerment, autonomy, and fair digital platform practices. The study therefore concludes that platform organizations seeking sustainable growth should adopt worker-centric management practices that balance technological efficiency with fairness, transparency, empowerment, and employee wellbeing. Such practices are likely to foster stronger engagement, improve worker performance, and enhance the overall effectiveness of platform-based employment systems.

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