

Exploring the Relationship between Motivation, Work Engagement and Mental Well-being among GIG Workers

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic landscape of the gig economy, understanding the complexities of motivation, work engagement, and mental wellbeing among gig workers is important. This study delves into these dimensions, offering insights into the non-monetary factors determining the mental well-being in this workforce segment. Analysing data from 138 gig workers, aged between 23 to 35 years, through descriptive and inferential statistics, results showed significant positive correlations between motivation and mental wellbeing, as well as between work engagement and mental wellbeing. No notable gender differences were observed across these dimensions among gig workers. These findings highlight the key role of motivation and work engagement in fostering mental wellbeing, reflecting similar patterns found in self-employed and gig worker populations. Factors such as job flexibility and financial security inherent to gig work likely contribute to enhanced wellbeing. This study offers valuable insights for policymakers and organizations seeking to formulate strategies aimed at encouraging the well-being and quality of life of gig workers, thus uplifting the broader discussion on gig economy dynamics.

Keywords: *Gig economy, Motivation, Work engagement, Mental Well-being*

The landscape of employment has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, primarily marked by the ascendancy of gig work as a prevalent employment model (Baker & Pettit, 2017). Gig work, characterized by short-term contracts or freelance arrangements, has permeated various industries, offering individuals flexibility, autonomy, and diverse income opportunities (Benjamin et al., 2019). This shift has given rise to what is commonly referred to as the gig economy, a free market system where temporary jobs are commonplace, and organizations engage independent workers for short-term commitments (TechTarget, 2020). Within the broader category of "nonstandard employment," gig work represents a fluid and dynamic departure from traditional nine-to-five employment models, offering individuals the chance to engage in short-term, flexible work arrangements facilitated by online platforms such as Uber, TaskRabbit, Fiverr, and Upwork.

While the gig economy offers unparalleled flexibility and autonomy, it also presents unique challenges and opportunities to workers worldwide. Gig workers often contend with issues

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such as income volatility, lack of social protections, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life, which can significantly impact their mental health and overall well-being (Carroll, 2023; Fauzi et al., 2022). Understanding how gig workers navigate this landscape and what motivates them to work is crucial, especially considering the social isolation and job instability they may face. As more individuals transition to gig work, understanding the dynamics of motivation, employee engagement, and well-being within this context becomes crucial.

Well-being encompasses individuals' emotional, physical, and social dimensions of health and satisfaction. It is a subjective evaluation of one's life as a whole (Michaelson, 2012). In the context of gig workers, achieving well-being is multifaceted, as they balance the demands of gig work with individual responsibilities, manage inconsistent income flows, and often lack social support. Understanding the nuances of well-being among gig workers is essential for designing interventions that support their holistic welfare.

Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, plays a pivotal role in driving individuals to engage in work-related activities (Pinder, 1998). Intrinsic motivation, in particular, is relevant in the gig economy, leading to autonomous and self-determined motivation where individuals often seek autonomy and fulfilment in their work (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory provide frameworks for understanding the factors that influence motivation, highlighting the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in driving engagement.

Work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, reflects a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is distinct from employee engagement, which pertains to the emotional and mental bond employees develop with their organization, team, and tasks (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). The Job-Demand Resource Model, Social Exchange Theory, and Job Characteristics Theory offer insights into the factors that influence work engagement, emphasizing the role of job demands and resources, reciprocal relationships, and job characteristics.

Research suggests a significant relationship between motivation, work engagement, and mental well-being among gig workers. High levels of intrinsic motivation and work engagement have been associated with positive mental well-being outcomes, including reduced stress levels, higher life satisfaction, and greater psychological empowerment (Jackson & Rothmann, 2021). Conversely, low levels of motivation and work engagement have been linked to burnout, stress, and decreased overall well-being (Van Den Broeck et al., 2008). Understanding these interrelationships is crucial for developing interventions and policies aimed at promoting the holistic well-being of gig workers.

The study addresses the understanding of the non-monetary factors which contribute to the mental well-being of gig workers especially within the Indian demographic. Consequently, there is a need for research that comprehensively examines the relationships between motivation, work engagement, and mental well-being among gig workers. The study seeks to address the gap by examining the relationships between motivation, work engagement, and mental wellbeing among gig workers. By doing so, it aims to provide insights into the factors of motivation, work engagement and mental well-being in this evolving segment of the workforce. The findings of this study can inform policymakers, organizations in designing supportive programs for gig workers facilitating the development and aimed at

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enhancing the overall welfare of gig workers in the Indian context. Strategies can also be implemented to enhance motivation and work engagement to positively impact mental well-being, leading to improved productivity and job satisfaction.

Keeping this evidence in mind, the present study was planned with the following objectives:

1. To assess the relationship between motivation and mental well-being among gig workers.
2. To examine the relationship between work engagement and mental well-being among gig workers.
3. To find the gender difference in motivation, work engagement and mental well-being of gig workers.

Based on the above-mentioned objectives, the following hypotheses were framed.

Hypotheses

- **H1** There will be a significant relationship between motivation and mental well-being among gig workers.
- **H2** There will be a significant relationship between work engagement and mental well-being among gig workers.
- **H3** There will be a significant gender difference in motivation, work engagement and mental well-being among gig workers.

METHOD

Aim

To study the relationship between motivation, work engagement and well-being in the context of gig workers.

Design

The present study was of cross-sectional, correlational, comparative, and quantitative design.

Sample

The total number of participants in the present study was 138, comprising (65) males and (73) females. All the participants belonged to the age group between 23-35 residing in India. The technique utilized was non-probability sampling. Under non-probability, purposive, snowball and convenience sampling were employed. Purposive sampling is when a researcher chooses a sample based on the study's goals. Snowball sampling is a technique used to rely on existing social networks to find participants who meet the study criteria. Convenience sampling is a method for selecting participants who are "convenient" to reach.

Tools

Three scales were employed in the present study namely the Short Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (SWEIMS), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS).

Short Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

Developed by Kotera et al (2008) SWEIMS is a tool that measures six types of work motivation. Conceptualized on self-determination theory, the original scale consists of 18 items. In this present study, SWEIMS is taken which is a shorter version of the original WEIMS. It is a 12-item version of this questionnaire. SWEIMS exhibited sufficient internal

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consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.65$), and strong correlations with the original version of WEIMS ($r = 0.73$). The scale measures the six types of work motivation.

- 1. Intrinsic Motivation.** Intrinsic motivation occurs when employees engage in tasks they find interesting or valuable, driven by internal factors rather than external rewards.
- 2. Integrated Regulation.** Integrated regulation arises when employees recognize the value of their work and are motivated by its importance to them.
- 3. Identified Regulation.** Identified regulation occurs when workers are driven by their self-image, seeking validation from others through their work.
- 4. Introjected Regulation.** Introjected regulation happens when workers are motivated by their self-image. They engage in work activities because they want other people to look at them a certain way.
- 5. External Regulation.** External regulation occurs when an employee works to get an external reward.
- 6. Amotivation.** Amotivation refers to being not motivated at all. It can occur when the employees do not believe that they can perform the way they are required to.

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

Developed by Schaufeli et al (2002) based on Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). This scale comprises 17 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). The internal consistency of the three scales within the UWES is strong, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.83 for vigor, 0.92 for dedication, and 0.82 for absorption. The scale was developed to assess three key components of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption.

- 1. Vigor.** It refers to high energy levels, resilience, willingness to invest effort, persistence, and low susceptibility to fatigue.
- 2. Dedication.** It involves finding significance in work, feeling enthusiastic and proud, and being inspired and challenged by the job.
- 3. Absorption.** It relates to being deeply engrossed in work, losing track of time, and having difficulty disengaging from tasks.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale

Developed by Tennant et al. (2007) at Warwick Medical School in the University of Warwick Coventry, UK. This inventory is a 14-item 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time). It is a psychometric instrument designed to measure a person's subjective well-being including both hedonic and eudemonic aspects. The minimum score can be 14 and the maximum can go up to 70. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.89 (for student samples) and 0.91 (for population samples) suggests potential redundancy among items in the scale. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) demonstrates strong correlations with other mental health and well-being measures, while showing weaker associations with scales assessing overall health.

Procedure

After conceptualization of the research problem that aimed to assess the relationship between motivation, work engagement and mental well-being among gig workers, a questionnaire was created in Google Docs. The questionnaire consisted of a consent form, demographic details, and three established scales. The participants were also informed about their basic rights at the beginning of the form, such as confidentiality of data. Participants

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were requested to answer as honestly as possible. Instructions were specified in the Google form regarding the questionnaire.

In total, 138 responses were collected after which, data collection was stopped and the data were analysed using SPSS. Pearson's correlation was calculated between motivation and mental well-being and work engagement and mental well-being among gig workers. T-test was performed to find out the gender difference in motivation among gig workers.

Statistical Analysis

In order to attain the objectives and to verify the hypotheses, various descriptive as well as inferential statistical analysis techniques were used using SPSS 20.0. Descriptive statistics was employed and Pearson's correlation analysis was utilized as a statistical tool to quantify the degree of relationship between two variables, indicating whether changes in the score of one variable correspondingly affect the other variable. The t-test is a statistical method that is used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups.

RESULTS

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of motivation, work engagement and mental well-being (N=138)

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Motivation	Male	65	4.415	6.3379	.7861
	Female	73	5.301	8.1903	.9586
Work Engagement	Male	65	4.6412	1.18187	.14659
	Female	73	4.5478	.99872	.11689
Mental Wellbeing	Male	65	55.12	10.437	1.294
	Female	73	52.40	10.221	1.196

Table 2 Pearson's correlations between motivation and mental well-being. (N=138)

		Motivation	Mental Wellbeing
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.357**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	138	138
Mental Well-being	Pearson Correlation	.357**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	138	138

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 3 Pearson's correlation between work engagement and mental well-being. (N=138)

		Work engagement	Mental Well-being
Work engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.779**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	138	138
Mental Well-being	Pearson Correlation	.779**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	138	138

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 4 Difference between males and females on motivation, work engagement and mental well-being (N=138)

Variables	F	Sig	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error
Motivation	2.542	.113	-.704	136	.482	-.8860	1.2580
			-.715	133	.476	-.8860	1.2397
Work engagement	.541	.463	.503	136	.616	.09342	.18567
			.498	125	.619	.09342	.18749
Mental wellbeing	.073	.787	1.548	136	.124	2.726	1.760
			1.546	133	.124	2.726	1.763

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to understand the relationship between motivation, work engagement and well-being in the context of gig workers. The total sample of 138 gig workers were taken, both male and female ranging between the age group of 23 to 35 years were taken. To collect this data, 3 questionnaires were administered on the participants. Short Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (Kotera et al., 2008), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002) and Warwick Edinburgh mental well-being scale (Tennant et al., 2007). The data was analysed with the help of descriptive and inferential statistics. Thus, this research work in the light of previous studies, will help to bridge the gap in our understanding of non-monetary factors on well-being among gig workers.

The first objective of the study was to assess the relationship between motivation and mental well-being among gig workers. The findings of the present study revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between motivation and mental well-being (.357), $p < .001$. which means that a higher level of motivation will lead to higher mental well-being. Thus, the first hypothesis that there will be a significant positive relationship between motivation and mental well-being is accepted. Berger et al. (2019) studied gig economy through the lens of Uber and drivers in the UK and found flexibility as an important motivation to join Uber also report higher levels of subjective well-being.

The second objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between work engagement and mental well-being. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship which means that an increase in the level of work engagement will lead to an increase in the level of mental well-being .779, $p < .001$. Thus, the second hypothesis stating that there will be a significant positive relationship between work engagement and mental well-being is accepted. The finding is in line with previous studies. Garg and Singh (2020) examined the role of work engagement as a mediator in the relationship of subjective well-being with work performance among Indian software developers and found that subjective well-being has a significant positive association with work engagement and this had enhanced employee's work performance.

The third objective of the present study was to find the gender difference in motivation, work engagement and mental well-being among gig workers. In the study, males and females were assessed. The result showed that there is no significant difference in the dimension of motivation, work engagement and mental well-being between male and female. Although the mean score of motivation for male ($M = 4.415$) was slightly lower than

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of females ($M= 5.301$) this difference was not statistically significant as $t = -.704$, $p= .482$. The analysis revealed that male participants report slightly higher mean work-engagement scores ($M=4.64$) compared to females ($M=4.54$). However, the difference was not yet again statistically significant as $t=.503$, $p= .616$. This suggests that both males and females experience similar kind of work engagement. The results again revealed that male participants have higher mean score of mental well-being ($M=55.12$) compared to female participants ($M=52.40$) this difference was not yet again statistically significant as $t=1.548$, $p=.124$. Thus hypothesis 3 which states that there is a significant gender difference in motivation, work engagement and mental well-being among gig workers is rejected.

The results of this study are in line with previous studies. Peterson (2022) investigated the heterogeneity that exists among gig workers in the USA, with an emphasis on the moderating role of gender. Results suggested that motivations for entering the gig economy were relatively similar for males and females and there has been no such difference found but the types of gigs engaged in differed somewhat between males and females. Another study by Vučković et al. (2023) assessed general subjective well-being of freelancing and investigate the differences between gender. Results revealed that gender was found not to be significant for overall work satisfaction.

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between motivation, work engagement, and mental well-being among gig workers, it's important to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional design which was employed limits the ability to establish causality between variables. Future research using longitudinal designs could provide a more nuanced understanding of how these factors interact over time. Secondly, relying solely on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias and social desirability bias, potentially impacting the accuracy of the results. Additionally, the sample was limited and restricted to gig workers within a specific age range. Furthermore, the study focused on quantitative data, overlooking qualitative insights that could offer a deeper understanding of gig workers' experiences. Moderating or mediating variables were also not explored, which could have provided further insights into the observed relationships. Addressing these limitations in future research would enhance the strength and applicability of the findings. The future research suggestions would be to complement quantitative findings with qualitative research. Interviews or focus groups with gig workers can provide deeper insights into their experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms and investigate how motivation, engagement, and well-being vary across different demographic groups (e.g., age, ethnicity, education level).

CONCLUSION

The study aims to assess the relationship between motivation, work engagement, and mental well-being among gig workers. The study found motivation and work engagement to be key factors in mental well-being for gig workers, with no significant gender differences. This emphasizes significant implications on the need for organizations and policymakers to prioritize strategies that enhance motivation and engagement in gig work settings, ultimately promoting worker well-being. By bridging the gap in understanding non-monetary influences on well-being among gig workers, this research contributes to the broader discourse on employee welfare and organizational behaviour. By understanding these dynamics, organizations can implement targeted measures such as flexible work arrangements, autonomy support, and skill development opportunities to create more

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conducive work environments for gig workers, ultimately benefiting both individuals and the broader economy.

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Conflict of Interest

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