

The Dilemma and Thinking of Gig Workers in the Digital Organization Environment

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Abstract: With the rapid development of digital technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and blockchain, the gig economy has emerged as an emerging economic form and has gradually become the central pillar of global economic development. Globally, with the development of the Internet and the growing number, scale, and influence of gig workers who undertake "gig jobs", the new way of working makes the gig economy digital labour face many difficulties. Using the literature review method and combing the existing literature and research, this paper abstracts the dilemmas that gig workers encounter in the digital organisation environment. The countermeasures to solve these dilemmas need to start with gig workers and stakeholders concerned about the fairness of gig work. This study has practical significance for transforming the digital economy and developing the gig economy.

1. Introduction

The term "digital economy" first appeared in the 1990s. Tapscott First describes the meaning of "digital economy" in his book "Digital Economy: Promise and Crisis in the Era of Internet Intelligence" and details the changes and challenges it may bring to global development. Tapscott Point out that the digital economy discusses some themes of the new economy, including disintermediation and regenerative intermediation. In other words, on the one hand, the digital economy eliminates the traditional "middleman"; on the other hand, the Internet, as a new carrier, creates a new consumption way for producers and consumers. Therefore, the digital economy has had massive potential for economic growth since its inception. With the increasing number of Internet users worldwide, Internet usage and online trading volume show exponential growth [1]. The wide application of digital technology has enhanced the position and role of users in the market, and user value dominance has become the core concept of enterprises to create and supply value. In the digital economy, the expression form of information has changed from atoms to bits. The data-driven digitisation of enterprises highlights the value of intellectual capital, intensifies alternative competition, constructs the traditional business logic, and promotes the systematic transformation of enterprise goals, governance structure, and internal management. This new form of employment better caters to the high-tech labour force's work preference, and the gig economy's new economic form appears accordingly.

The impact of big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, blockchain, and other technologies

on productivity is still being determined. It can only be combined with a high-tech labour force in a specific context[2]. The advantages of a high-tech labour force in data analysis, deep thinking, and solving new problems can help empower and supplement big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, blockchain, and other technologies, and their market demand is increasing. As the long-term and stable labour contract is broken, workers will complete more different jobs throughout their careers, and lifelong learning will become a necessary new skill for everyone. Therefore, it is of great significance to deeply analyse the gig economy and employment mode for economic transformation and development[3].

2. Development and the Dilemma

The development and growth of the gig economy in the world must be connected to the development of Internet technology and the revolution of digital technology, especially in the construction of network platforms and the popularisation of mobile terminals, including smartphones and tablet computers. With the help of the intermediary nature of digital platforms, gig workers contract jobs more independently through the Internet. As an emerging economic form in the digital economy, the gig industry economy significantly impacts value creation, labour force structure adjustment, entrepreneurship and innovation, and the platform economic growth of the digital economy [4]

The gig economy can reduce the unemployment rate to a certain extent and has been vigorously promoted and supported by many national governments. The characteristics of the gig economy include the following five aspects: (1) irregular working hours due to the fluctuating demand for services; (2) gig workers in most jobs provide part or all of the capital and equipment required for work; (3) many gig workers have their workplaces and routes; (4) gig workers receive remuneration according to specific tasks rather than unit working hours, such as through piecework; (5) gig jobs are usually provided by digital intermediary organisations, such as platform enterprises [5].

The development of the Internet and digital technology has promoted the rapid matching between platform enterprises and gig workers and reached cooperation through establishing a short-term and flexible project contract relationship. Gig workers do not have to be constrained by the constraints of traditional organisations. Companies can recruit on demand, reduce labour costs, and improve innovation. In the era of the digital economy, the employment mode shows the characteristics of direct employment and rigidity, which causes a significant burden to enterprises in labour costs. Especially in the background of industrial transformation and upgrading, the principal value of intellectual capital, and urgent optimisation of labour structure and allocation, the new employment mode also has some development difficulties[6] as shown in figure 1.

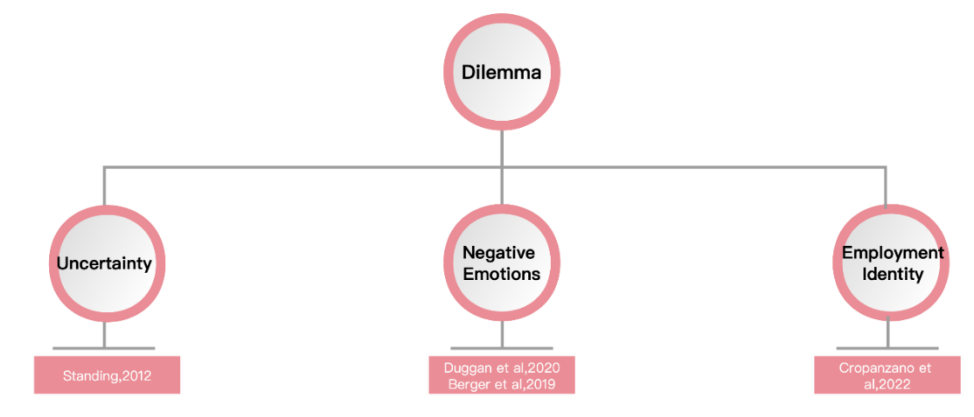


Figure 1: Development dilemma of gig workers

2.1 Uncertainty

Guy Standing's analysis emphasises the profound impact of globalisation and the Washington Consensus on forming a global class structure. Within this structure, there has been a rise in new groups comprising millions of individuals engaged in precarious and unpredictable labour relationships. The advent of Internet technology and the subsequent emergence of the gig economy can be viewed as an extension of the neoliberal principles advocated by the Washington Consensus [6]. This shift has led to the gradual displacement of traditional employment models, characterised by regular working hours, fixed workplaces, and predictable wages, by gig jobs offering flexible schedules, variable work locations, and uncertain income. Within the gig economy, digital labours, whether performing manual or intellectual tasks, face significant challenges in accessing essential labour protections. They often struggle to access benefits such as unemployment insurance, compensation for workplace injuries, pensions, and maternity leave. Furthermore, gig workers face difficulties safeguarding their rights and seeking recourse when labour disputes arise. This lack of comprehensive labour security leaves them vulnerable. It contributes to the emergence of a new category of precarious workers, intensifying long-term social and economic instability on a global scale.

The uncertain nature of gig work affects individual workers and has broader societal implications. As gig jobs become increasingly prevalent, they disrupt traditional labour markets and contribute to a broader transformation in economic organisation. The emphasis on flexibility and adaptability comes at the expense of stability and comprehensive social protections traditionally associated with employment. This creates a complex dynamic where workers are exposed to a higher degree of uncertainty and vulnerability, perpetuating inequalities and exacerbating social divisions. The uncertainty faced by gig workers calls for reevaluating labour policies and social safety nets to ensure adequate protection in this evolving landscape. Addressing the challenges posed by gig work requires a holistic approach that acknowledges this workforce's unique characteristics and needs. By fostering dialogue and collaboration among policymakers, labour organisations, and stakeholders, it is possible to develop strategies that promote more excellent stability, fair treatment, and improved labour rights within the gig economy[7].

Understanding the implications of uncertainty in the gig economy is crucial for developing policies that support the well-being and rights of workers. By addressing these challenges head-on, we can strive towards a more equitable and sustainable future, where the potential benefits of gig work are balanced with adequate safeguards for all individuals involved in this evolving labour market.

2.2 Negative Emotions

With the popularisation and application of the Internet and digital technology, digital platform as emerging organisation form in the development of the digital economy, throughout the production, circulation, media, search engines and financial services, etc., to the global value chain and labour market reconstruction, gradually become the main thrust of global economic growth and development[8]. In the digital economy, digital platforms with many advantages can better allocate and integrate resources and promote the sustainable development of the global economy. On the one hand, algorithm technology is the main driving force of the development of the platform to promote the development of enterprises, but on the other hand, with the continuous innovation and refinement of algorithm technology, algorithm technology gradually instead of humans for gig workers work scheduling, performance evaluation, algorithm rating and even terminate work, algorithm technology for gig workers comprehensive monitoring also let it in the negative emotions such as isolation and anxiety[9].

With the widespread adoption and advancements in the Internet and digital technology, digital

platforms have emerged as a prominent organisational form within the ever-evolving digital economy. These platforms span various domains such as production, circulation, media, search engines, and financial services, revolutionising the global value chain and labour market and becoming a significant driver of global economic growth and development[8]. In the realm of the digital economy, digital platforms offer numerous advantages in resource allocation, integration, and fostering sustainable economic development. However, algorithm technology's rapid development and constant evolution present a double-edged sword for gig workers within digital platforms. While algorithms are the primary driving force behind platform development and facilitate enterprise growth, their continuous innovation and refinement have gradually replaced human involvement in crucial aspects of gig work. Algorithm technology now governs work scheduling, performance evaluation, and algorithmic rating and can even terminate gig workers' employment. Furthermore, comprehensive monitoring by algorithmic systems has introduced a range of negative emotions among gig workers, including feelings of isolation and anxiety[9].

As algorithm technology takes on an increasingly prominent role, gig workers may be subjected to the whims and decisions of automated systems that dictate their work dynamics and determine their value. The reliance on algorithms for critical decision-making and performance assessment introduces uncertainty, disempowerment, and detachment from their work environment. The lack of direct human interaction and the opaqueness of algorithmic processes can further intensify negative emotions, leaving gig workers feeling isolated and disconnected from their peers and the broader work community. The pervasive influence of algorithm technology in the gig economy highlights workers' more significant challenges in the digital age. It prompts meaningful discussions about finding a harmonious equilibrium between technological progress and the well-being of individuals engaged in gig work. Striving for such a balance necessitates thoughtful considerations of the human experience within the digital work landscape, ensuring that gig workers' emotional well-being and sense of agency are not compromised by the algorithmic control that governs their work lives.

2.3 Employment Identity

The contractual nature of the gig economy introduces complexities that blur the lines of traditional employment relationships, leading to disputes regarding the formation of labour contracts among intermediaries, enterprises, and gig workers, as well as challenges in safeguarding the rights of workers who fall outside the protective scope of labour laws. Surplus labour supply and insufficient employment opportunities are prevalent within the gig economy. Faced with fierce competition, gig workers are often compelled to lower their prices while maintaining high-quality services to secure ongoing employment. Even if gig workers manage to secure an "employment contract," it is often based on short-term projects, differing from the stability offered by full-time employment contracts, and the workload itself often exhibits fragmentation characteristics. In the gig economy, the relationship between employers (demanders, customers) and gig workers need the formal structure of a conventional employment relationship. As a result, gig workers frequently face the risks associated with irregular work schedules, unstable income streams, and the absence of insurance benefits typically provided by employers. The lack of security and stability in their work arrangements often leads to mental anxiety among gig workers as they navigate the uncertainties and challenges inherent in their occupations [10].

The unique employment identity of gig workers necessitates carefully examining the legal and social frameworks surrounding their work. The blurring of employment boundaries and the absence of traditional employer-employee relationships demand reevaluating labour laws and regulations to ensure the protection and well-being of gig workers. Adequate measures need to be implemented to address the risks and vulnerabilities faced by gig workers, including providing suitable safeguards,

access to social protections, and establishing mechanisms to address disputes and ensure fair treatment. Additionally, the employment identity of gig workers raises essential questions about the nature of work in the modern economy. The gig economy's reliance on flexible, on-demand labour challenges conventional notions of employment and calls for innovative solutions that balance the needs of workers, businesses, and society. It prompts discussions about reimagining labour policies and social safety nets to adapt to the evolving landscape of work, where traditional employment models are no longer the sole paradigm.

3. Countermeasures and Thinking

Under the trend of the gig economy today, opportunities and challenges coexist. Flexible employment methods for practitioners and enterprises provide a more convenient and efficient matching mechanism and lower cost of choosing and employing persons; enterprises can better find suitable for the current competitive environment, pay more attention to enterprise internal and external resources, the importance of the people, at the same time the change must be accompanied by obstacles, work and life more difficult to separate and balance, people to the enterprise commitment and identity become fuzzy. Thus, gig work forms may not apply to some employees familiar with corporate culture and work process and improve the work proficiency of traditional industry. Platform enterprises should also clarify the domestic and international trends of the gig economy in combination with the development status of the gig economy and plan the transformation strategy or development direction of enterprises in the critical period of the digital economy transformation. The introduction of related digital talents, the network and flat development of organisational structure, the diversification and flexibility of post-design, and the contractual relationship under the new labour relations are all problems that enterprises need to consider.

3.1 The dimension of gig labour economy workers

First, the gig economy workers, in the face of the development of the Internet and the revolution of digital technology, need based on the latest digital technology to strengthen the cultivation of science and technology complementary skills and training, constantly improve their professional skills and update the knowledge structure, better adapt to the change of the gig economy job market and the way of work. Secondly, in the increasingly fierce market competition, on the one hand, they need to strengthen the construction of professional ethics, and they cannot lower the price of service by lowering the quality of service to form vicious competition among the labour force. Thirdly, gig economy workers must fully use the network and social resources to express their opinions and conduct collective consultation with the platform or employers to improve their working conditions and environment. Whether gig economy workers can unite and take active collective actions to protect their legitimate rights and interests is one of the critical issues that digital labour researchers pay attention to.

3.2 Focus on the dimension of equity stakeholders in gig work

First, how do employers balance the competition between enterprise employees and gig economy workers? Is it necessary to sign a formal employment contract with gig economy workers? How do make they express their interests through effective channels? These are all questions that need further thinking. Secondly, intermediary organisations, such as industry associations, should not only play an active role in managing the gig economy workers but also care about their mental health, organise regular exchange activities, and provide them with various legal and policy assistance. Industry associations and other intermediary organisations should devote themselves to the active and effective

evaluation of network service platforms to provide valuable reference information and suggestions for gig economic workers when choosing network platforms. Again, for all stakeholders concerned with gig work fairness, they need to consider whether it is necessary to establish at the national or local level a "fair work committee" The committee can supervise and urge the gig economy platform to provide a good working environment and has a specific affordable social welfare[11].

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