



MBA Business Research

BMMB7028

Research Proposal Report

Global Gig Economy Trends and Their Effect on Worker Job Satisfaction: A Quantitative Study of Platform-Based Workers in the UK

Student Name: Shaekaparvin

Student ID: 2514895

Module: Business Research (BMMB7028)

Lecturer: Maggie Zhang

Submission Date: 30th March 2026

Word Count: 4,998

Executive Summary

This research paper describes the conceptual framework for a quantitative research project examining the impact of current global gig-economy trends on job satisfaction among platform-based workers in the United Kingdom. Over the last ten years, the gig economy has expanded rapidly across the globe. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) (2025) estimates that nearly seven-and-a-half million individuals within the United Kingdom have undertaken some form of gig work. Although much is discussed about the gig economy at both the policy level and in the media, there is surprisingly limited UK-specific quantitative evidence on how these types of jobs affect workers' attitudes toward their work.

The proposed methodology for this study would involve conducting an electronic survey of approximately 200 UK-based gig workers utilizing a web-based version of an electronic questionnaire constructed from validated measures, such as the short-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ-SF) and measures of income volatility, algorithmic management, and employment status ambiguity. The research perspective adopted in this study is that of a Positivist. Therefore, a deductive approach will be utilized, and statistical analysis will be conducted via descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS software to include correlation analysis and multiple regression. As noted above, the theoretical basis for this research includes the Job-Demands Resources Model and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction and research rationale	4
2. Research aim, objectives, and questions	5
2.1 Aim	5
2.2 Objectives	6
2.3 Research questions	6
3. Literature review	6
3.1 What the gig economy is (and what it is not)	6
3.2 Global trends driving gig economy growth	8
3.3 Job satisfaction: what the theory says	9
3.4 The UK context: policy, regulation, and evidence	10
3.5 Gaps in the literature	11
4. Research methodology	12
4.1 Research philosophy: positivism	12
4.2 Research approach: deductive	13
4.5 Data collection: online questionnaire	16
4.6 Data analysis	18
4.7 Advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods	19
4.8 Validity and reliability	20
5. Ethical considerations	21
6. Limitations	23
7. Resource implications and time plan	24
7.1 Resources	24
7.2 Time plan	25
Reference list	26

1. Introduction and research rationale

The gig economy has expanded from being an alternative to traditional employment arrangements to a major source of income for many in the UK. There are now numerous platforms, such as Uber, Deliveroo, Fiverr, and TaskRabbit which serve as the link between millions of workers and the clients or consumers needing their services. According to the ILO (2024), there have been a five-fold increase in digital labour platforms across the world since 2010 with similar trends existing in the UK. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2023) reported that approximately 4.4 million people were engaged in some form of gig work in the UK.

The development of several factors contributed to this expansion. First, the proliferation of smartphone technology provided platforms with the technological capacity to link workers with potential task opportunities on a mass basis (Kenney and Zysman, 2019). Second, the onset of COVID-19 created an additional acceleration factor for these developments. Demand for online delivery services skyrocketed, while individuals displaced from their original occupations due to COVID-19-related layoffs were forced to turn to gig-based job options to survive financially (Spurk and Straub, 2020). Finally, the rising cost-of-living crisis in the UK has resulted in many additional economic pressures upon people who have been priced out of employment options that provide sufficient wage income. Many of these people now view gig-based platforms as one of the few viable ways they can earn enough money to supplement their meager earnings (Work Foundation, 2025). Simultaneously, it is also true that gig-based platforms promote narratives about the benefits associated with gig-based labor, including: freedom, flexibility and entrepreneurialism (Gandini, 2019). While some argue that gig-based labor provides such choices, others contest whether such claims hold water.

Increasingly, research suggests that gig-based labor results in unstable earnings, limited employee rights or protections related to employment, diminished autonomous decision making through algorithmic based management systems and feelings of isolation among gig workers (Goods, Veen and Barratt, 2019; Wood et al., 2019)

The UK represents a particularly relevant case to examine this issue due to the changing landscape of regulation. Following the *Uber BV v Aslam* (2021) ruling by the Supreme Court, which defined Uber's drivers as 'workers', and subsequent proposals outlined within the Employment Rights Bill (2024), there are ongoing changes to regulations affecting platform workers. However, many studies have been conducted examining gig worker satisfaction using data collected in the US. Differences in welfare systems, legal environments, and labor market structures make direct application of these studies difficult. Therefore, there exists a pressing need for quantitative research in the UK examining the relationship between the terms and conditions of platform-based employment and job satisfaction through empirical methods. This is the purpose of the current study.

2. Research aim, objectives, and questions

2.1 Aim

To investigate the effect of global gig economy trends, specifically income volatility, algorithmic management, and employment status ambiguity, on the job satisfaction of platform-based gig workers in the United Kingdom.

2.2 Objectives

Objective 1: Analyze the major global trends affecting platform gig work and how these trends reflect the UK labor market. (Objective 1 will be analyzed via literature reviews and secondary data and NOT by way of the primary surveys.)

Objective 2: Assess the degree of job satisfaction among UK based gig workers utilizing a standardized survey instrument to gather relevant data.

Objective 3: Evaluate the relationship(s) between the gig working conditions (i.e., income instability; algorithmic control; ambiguous employment status) and job satisfaction.

Objective 4: Determine which of the gig working conditions has the greatest effect on job satisfaction for gig workers in the United Kingdom

2.3 Research questions

RQ1: What are the levels of intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction among UK platform-based gig workers?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between income volatility and the job satisfaction of UK gig workers?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between algorithmic management intensity and the job satisfaction of UK gig workers?

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between perceived employment status ambiguity and the job satisfaction of UK gig workers?

3. Literature review

3.1 What the gig economy is (and what it is not)

One of the biggest problems that researchers are facing when they try to study the gig economy is that there isn't one agreed-upon definition of what constitutes "the gig economy." On one level, the term "gig economy" can be used to describe just about any type of short-term, freelance, or task-oriented job. While Stewart and Stanford (2017) identify some useful ways to narrow down the definition of the gig economy -- specifically focusing on those jobs that rely on a digital intermediary to connect workers with clients -- this study will focus on their definition. This includes all types of location-based platform-mediated work, including but not limited to: rideshare services, food delivery, and remote digital work such as freelance graphic designers, freelance writers, etc., working for companies like Upwork and Fiverr.

There are several differing perspectives on what types of jobs gig work actually represents. Kalleberg & Vallas (2018), argued that gig work is simply another form of "insecure, contingent" employment; the current manifestation of a long-standing trend of insecurity, simply presented in a different format than previous forms of this type of employment. Similarly, Gandini (2019), noted that while platform-based gig work may present itself to consumers and investors as being "empowering," "entrepreneurial," etc., for many gig workers it will represent traditional piece rate labor, merely enhanced by having a mobile phone. On the opposite end of the continuum from these two authors, Kost et al. (2020), cautioned against making generalizations regarding the gig economy that do not recognize the diversity of experiences among gig workers. While some gig workers report feeling exploited by platforms such as Uber or TaskRabbit, others report preferring gig work, especially when they have high-demand skills and can operate under their own conditions. Therefore, studies examining the effects of gig

work should clearly identify whether they are examining one portion of the gig economy or another.

3.2 Global trends driving gig economy growth

The growth of the gig economy was no accident. A number of global trends have propelled it forward and an understanding of these trends is important, as they are likely to influence the work environments within which this research will be conducted. First and foremost, technology: the advent of smartphones and mobile internet allowed platforms to link workers with tasks on a near instantaneous basis and at scales hitherto unimaginable (Kenney and Zysman, 2019). Next, there was the pandemic of COVID-19. It had two effects on the gig economy. Firstly, it increased the demand for services delivered through platforms. Secondly, it caused millions of newly unemployed individuals to seek out gig platforms as an alternative means of survival (Stephany et al., 2020).

The rise of globalisation has created a globalised space for cross-border gig work, allowing those who live in developing nations to engage in digital tasks for those who live in developed economies, and has raised issues regarding whether such opportunities represent opportunities or forms of exploitation (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017). In addition, the recent cost-of-living crisis within the UK has led to many individuals turning to gig platforms as an alternative way to earn supplemental income to meet their increasing costs of living (Work Foundation, 2025). As these drivers evolve, they create a labour market where gig work continues to expand, even if the conditions of the gig economy are ultimately bad for the individuals completing the work.

3.3 Job satisfaction: what the theory says

The authors of this article have used two theoretical models to explore gig work. First, the authors apply Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor model of employee motivation. In this model there are two types of factors; hygiene factors include the things that employees experience at work such as salary, job security, and working conditions. When these factors are low, employees will generally report dissatisfaction with their job. However, once the basic needs of employees in terms of these hygiene factors are met, improvements will not lead to higher levels of reported satisfaction. On the other hand, motivator factors include characteristics of a job or workplace that motivate employees, including feeling a sense of accomplishment from doing one's job, being recognized for accomplishments, having opportunities to use discretion or autonomy while performing tasks. According to Herzberg, it is these motivators that create high levels of job satisfaction. While platform workers tend to report relatively positive scores on some motivator dimensions (e.g., autonomy, task variety), many platform workers also report negative experiences related to hygiene factor dimensions (e.g., income instability, lack of employment rights/social protections). Ashford et al. (2018) refer to this phenomenon as a "conflicted satisfaction profile" because while employees may derive enjoyment from their work activities, they are often highly dissatisfied with the overall context of their work.

The second theoretical framework to be discussed was the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), which suggests that jobs have both demands, in the form of requirements that utilize worker effort and energy, as well as

resources, which provide a means by which to manage, develop, and fulfill those efforts. According to this model, when demands exceed resources, worker burnout and dissatisfaction occur. For example, many gig workers experience demands such as: uncertainty with their income; pressure from algorithms tracking their performance; and confusion about their actual legal employment status. Conversely, gig workers may also experience resources, including flexibility, variety, and a lack of a traditional boss. This makes the JD-R model an excellent lens through which to evaluate the gig economy's effect on worker satisfaction. It allows us to assess both positive and negative effects of gig work based upon very specific factors, rather than making assumptions about how all gig work will affect worker satisfaction. As such, the JD-R model serves as an appropriate framework for our research.

3.4 The UK context: policy, regulation, and evidence

The U.K. regulatory environment is important for understanding what will be the characteristics of the work experience that gig workers have. The Taylor Review (2017) highlighted how there were significant gaps in legal protection available to gig workers; and proposed the creation of an entirely new employment category. However, the Supreme Court decision in *Uber BV v Aslam* (2021) represented a turning point. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that Uber's drivers were "workers" with rights to the national minimum wage and paid annual leave. However, although this ruling was landmark, it only applies to Uber and other companies in the gig economy that have many workers who still do not understand their status under law as employees, workers or self-employed individuals.

Although there is very little research on the well-being of gig economy workers in the United Kingdom; what does exist shows many worrying signs. A recent study by the CIPD (2024), reported that compared to employees working in conventional employment arrangements, gig workers reported greater levels of anxiety and lower life-satisfaction. Similarly, the results from a study carried out by Bates et al. (2023), revealed that financial uncertainty was the one factor that predicted poor well-being amongst UK gig workers above all else. Additionally, in their own UK-based study using a survey of 510 platform workers, Wood, Martindale and Burchell (2025), discovered that job-quality varies significantly depending on whether gig-workers are undertaking local or remote work. Furthermore, the researchers also found that the perceived level of autonomy fell as algorithmic management became increasingly intense. However, most of this existing research tends to investigate worker's overall well-being generally, but do not specifically examine workers' job satisfaction. Moreover, because of the lack of theoretically driven surveys designed to allow for statistically valid comparisons of those conditions that contribute most to job satisfaction, it remains unclear exactly how many of the factors associated with poor well-being can actually be attributed to specific aspects of gig-working.

3.5 Gaps in the literature

There are four gaps to be justified by this study. The first one is the spatial gap – with very little quantitative evidence on how satisfied gig workers are in the United Kingdom compared to other countries like the United States. Most prior work has been conducted in the U.S., and because of the major differences in both regulatory environments and social welfare provisions, these findings will not be applicable. The second gap is a measurement gap — many of the studies based in the U.K. do use a variety of general

wellbeing metrics, but they rarely include specifically designed job satisfaction scales which can differentiate between extrinsic (e.g., pay) and intrinsic (e.g., autonomy) components of satisfaction. The third gap is for examining specific gig work characteristics (such as algorithmic management and ambiguous employment status) as separate variables which predict gig worker satisfaction. Finally, the fourth gap is an examination of the impact of U.K.-specific regulatory uncertainty on worker satisfaction. There is limited research on this topic, even though ambiguities regarding employment status have defined the U.K. gig economy since the Aslam decision.

4. Research methodology

This section explains the methodological choices for the study, working through the layers of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2019) Research Onion. Each choice is justified, and alternatives that were considered but rejected are discussed.

4.1 Research philosophy: positivism

The study is based upon a positivistic philosophical position. Positively, there is an assumption of a measurable social reality existing independently of the researchers' views. In terms of epistemology, it is assumed that the most effective way of gaining knowledge is through the application of objective measurement and statistical analysis of observable phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). Axiologically, the goal of the positivist researcher is to act as if they are detached from the research and therefore, act in accordance with a set of value-neutral principles. These principles will help minimise the influence of the researchers' beliefs on the research process. It doesn't mean the researcher has no values at all. What it means is that the research design is structured in such a way as to prevent the values of the researcher from influencing the results.

The use of validated, standardised measuring tools and transparent statistical techniques is a key method by which this can occur.

Positivism was selected for this study because it fits with what this study wants to achieve. Research questions ask if measurable associations exist between specific working conditions and job satisfaction. As this relates to observable patterns within data and not to subjective meanings, a positivistic approach provides a framework for using validated measuring scales, statistical hypothesis testing, and reproducible methods that fit well into answering the research questions.

An alternative philosophical position could have been taken. Interpretative research designs were examined but ultimately dismissed. While an interpretive approach may provide some insight into how gig workers describe their experiences using their own words; it would not permit the exploration of the magnitude and/or directionality of associations between variables nor the generalisation of research findings beyond the individual participants. Similarly, pragmatism was explored as it permits mixed methodologies including both surveys and interviews. However, a mixed methodology study would require additional time commitments to include interview scheduling, transcription and qualitative data analysis along with completing the survey-based study. Therefore, given time and budgetary constraints associated with a Master's level project, a focused quantitative design conducted under a positivistic paradigm, although less than ideal in terms of comprehensiveness, meets the requirements of the research questions.

4.2 Research approach: deductive

A deductive approach is used. This study begins with established theory, namely the JD-R Model and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, produces testable hypotheses based on those theories, and tests those hypotheses using empirical data (Saunders et al., 2019). For example, according to the JD-R model, income volatility (high job demands) should have an inverse relationship with job satisfaction. In addition, high levels of flexibility and autonomy (job resources) should increase job satisfaction. Thus, the surveys are designed to empirically test the proposed relationships.

Although the survey could have employed an inductive method of research design by first testing the theory through a collection of data, and then developing the theory based upon what were identified as trends in that data, this was not feasible for this study. An extensive amount of literature exists regarding job satisfaction and gig economy jobs. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is not to develop a new theory related to either of these concepts, but to evaluate whether existing theoretical models apply within a UK gig economy. Deductive methods fit best with that objective.

4.3 Research strategy: survey

The research approach used was cross-sectional. There will be an online questionnaire completed by gig workers based in the United Kingdom that collects all the data at one point in time. Cross-sectional surveys can be useful when researchers want to collect standardized information about a large sample of subjects at the lowest possible cost and when there is an interest in determining if there is a relationship between different variables (Saunders et al., 2019).

Alternative approaches could have been employed. If the researcher had wanted to make stronger causal statements, he/she may have used an experimental approach;

however, it is not viable as it would be impossible to randomly assign individuals to gig working conditions. If the researcher had chosen to conduct a case study (Yin, 2018), he/she would have had the opportunity to investigate a single organization/platform. However, the purpose of this investigation is to identify trends across the gig economy as opposed to trends within individual companies. A longitudinal survey that collected data from the same participants over time would have also provided evidence for causality. Unfortunately, due to time constraints for this project, it was not possible. Therefore, given the research question(s), the subject area/population, and the resources available, a cross-sectional survey provides the most appropriate methodological approach.

4.4 Sampling

The intended target population is adults who have done platform-based gig work in the U.K., from age 18 upwards; regardless of what type of platform they use. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods will be used to obtain 200 responses. Gig worker forums on Reddit and Facebook, gig economy community groups on social media, and personal professional connections of the researchers will be used for recruitment. After participants complete their survey, they will be asked if they can distribute the survey link to other gig workers they may know. This is an example of the 'snowball' portion of the sampling process.

In theory, probability sampling (a method where each member of the population has a known probability of being selected into the sample) would have been the preferred choice because it allows for stronger statements regarding generalizability. However, since there does not exist a single definitive source listing all current gig workers in the

U.K. for use as a sampling frame; therefore, probability sampling is unworkable for this particular population (Bryman, 2016). The number of desired respondents (approximately 200) was determined using the rule-of-thumb of having at least ten to fifteen subjects for each predictor variable within a multiple regression model. As indicated earlier, there are five predictor variables in the proposed model: income variability, degree of algorithmic management intensity, level of ambiguity concerning employment status, hours worked per week, and platform type; thus, 200 represents a generous amount (Field, 2018). One drawback of using non-probability sampling techniques is that you are unable to generalize the findings to all gig workers in the U.K.; and this fact is stated explicitly.

4.5 Data collection: online questionnaire

The survey will be administered via an online self-report questionnaire utilizing Qualtrics as the platform. The total number of sections for the survey is four. Background data, including age, gender, primary gig-work platform used, amount of time spent per week performing gig work, how long the respondent has been performing gig work, and whether the gig work constitutes their main or supplemental source of income, will be collected in section A.

Job satisfaction will be measured within section B using the 20-item short version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss et al., 1967). This measure assesses two dimensions of job satisfaction: intrinsic (autonomy, variety, accomplishment) and extrinsic (compensation, stability, workplace environment). As this is one of the best-validated measures of job satisfaction across all organizational

studies, and as both the intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions map directly to the conceptual model developed for this study, the MSQ was selected.

Three additional independent variables are assessed within section C utilizing Likert scale items that were adapted from existing studies on the gig economy. These include: Income Volatility: Items measuring how predictable versus unpredictable respondents perceive their earnings were adapted from Bates et al. (2023). Algorithmic Management Intensity: Items assessing how much direction, monitoring, and evaluation of their work by platform-based algorithms respondents report experiencing were adapted from Wood et al. (2019).

Employment Status Ambiguity: Items measuring the degree of uncertainty respondents report regarding their employment status based upon their gig work were adapted from Adams, Freedland, and Prassl (2022); and Meijerink and Keegan (2019). A final open-ended question is located in section D allowing respondents to identify any other aspects related to their gig work experiences that they would like to describe.

Online surveys were chosen over paper-based or face-to-face formats for reasons of practicality. Most gig workers do not work in the same location; they are dispersed throughout the U.S., and are already accustomed to using digital platforms, therefore the online format was considered both accessible and familiar to gig workers (Saunders et al, 2019). One of the most common limitations associated with online surveys is generally lower response rates. To minimize this issue, the length of the survey will be limited (under 12 minutes), the intent of the survey will be made clear at the beginning of each question, and optimized for use on a mobile device, as many gig workers access their digital platforms via phone. Before conducting the full survey, a pilot test with 15

participants will be conducted to evaluate if there were any questions that had unclear wording, technical issues with the electronic version of the survey, or took too much time to complete.

4.6 Data analysis

All analyses will be performed within IBM SPSS Version 29. Descriptive statistical procedures will be used to analyze the data by calculating the mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution for all variables. These will provide an overview of the sample population and how it has scored on each variable. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha will be used to assess the reliability of each measurement tool. Reliability is defined as a measure of how consistently a scale measures what it claims to measure. A minimum value of .70 is considered an adequate reliability coefficient (Field, 2018). Bivariate statistical procedures will also be employed. To determine if there exists any relationship between two or more variables (e.g., income volatility & job satisfaction), Pearson Correlation Coefficients will be calculated.

The third stage of the research process involves a Multiple Regression Analysis. This statistical technique enables researchers to determine the degree to which each of the predictor variables independently contributes to an understanding of the relationship between job satisfaction and the various work conditions, in addition to allowing control for all other predictor variables and demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, number of hours worked per week, and platform type) of participants. More specifically, the analysis addresses the question; "Which working condition has the greatest impact?" Prior to conducting the multiple regression analysis, it will be necessary to check that three primary assumptions have been met: (1) the distribution

of residuals approximates normality; (2) there exists a linear relationship among the predictor variables and their corresponding residuals; (3) no multicollinearity exists among predictor variables (based on the variance inflation factor); and (4) homoscedasticity exists within residuals. When one or more assumptions fail to meet acceptable criteria, appropriate corrective measures may include transforming data and/or using robust standard error estimates.

4.7 Advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods

Quantitative surveys produce data that can be analyzed as numbers and statistics. This allows the study to test hypotheses about the existence of certain relationships, the size of those relationships, and which factors have the greatest impact on the outcome (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). The fact that these studies utilize standardized measures (MSQ), and established scales for each variable being studied allow researchers to compare their findings to previous studies. Additionally, utilizing an internet-based platform provides a method for collecting data from individuals across different geographic locations, while also reducing costs associated with traditional methods of data collection and providing access to participants who would otherwise not participate.

As there are advantages of utilizing quantitative surveys; however, there are significant drawbacks. A quantitative survey measures responses from the individual based upon self-reporting at a single point in time. Therefore, this methodology is unable to provide insight into changes in experience over time. Furthermore, this methodology will identify if a relationship exists between two variables, but will not elucidate "why" such a relationship exists. There are multiple forms of measurement error that occur when

utilizing self-reporting methodologies. Measurement errors include Social Desirability Bias (respondents' reporting of self-image, rather than actual behavior) and Common Method Variance (measurement of both independent and dependent variables by the same tool/methodology at the same time) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As previously stated, the primary form of sampling utilized in this study was Non-Probability Sampling, therefore the sample collected may not be representative of all gig workers located throughout the United Kingdom. While this represents legitimate limitations associated with quantitative survey methodology at this level, these limitations are inherent in conducting research via this methodology and do not diminish the value of this study due to the utilization of validated tools and explicit reporting of the limitations associated with this methodology.

4.8 Validity and reliability

It is possible to test construct validity by utilizing well-established and valid measuring instruments that have had their psychometric properties evaluated previously. For example, the MSQ has been utilized in over 100 different studies across a variety of industries and demographics (Weiss et al., 1967). In addition, some of the items from the gig-specific scales were developed based on items that were published within peer-reviewed journals. Content validity will be examined during the pilot study: If respondents indicate that particular questions are confusing, or that certain questions are irrelevant or unclear, these questions will be modified before sending the final version of the full survey. Internal Validity. To control for demographic variables and increase internal validity (i.e., increase one's confidence that the results are due to actual relationships among variables rather than confounding variables), demographic variables will be controlled for in the regression model. Due to the use of non-

probability sampling, external validity is limited. This project does not attempt to generalize the results to all UK gig workers; instead, this project aims to identify patterns and relationships that would be worth examining again with a sample size large enough, or a sample representative of gig workers in the UK.

Reliability cronbach's alpha will be calculated for each scale to assess reliability. Additionally, there will be complete transparency regarding how the data was analyzed, such that replication of the study may occur (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

5. Ethical considerations

This study includes humans and could be perceived as being related to subjects that are personal or sensitive, such as lack of financial stability and uncertainty regarding job security. The research will be carried out in accordance with the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Policy for the period 2025-26, the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2021), and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulations. The ethics committee application (PG2 form) for this study will be formally completed and accepted by the committee prior to beginning to collect any data from participants.

An Information Sheet will be provided to all participants prior to them commencing completion of the online survey detailing an explanation of the purpose of the study, what it entails to complete the online questionnaire and that participation is optional. Participants will also be informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide a reason. Digital consent will be sought via an electronic consent box at commencement of the questionnaire; participants cannot continue with the questionnaire until they select to give their consent.

The survey will be anonymous. Using Qualtrics, we have selected options which allow us to anonymise responses by configuring it so that no respondent's IP address or any other identifiable information will be captured. Each response will not be linked to any specific respondent. To prevent respondents from inadvertently providing any identifying information in the open-ended section, all responses will be reviewed prior to use in any reports. All data will be stored using a password protected, cloud-based service approved by the University; this service will only be accessible to the researcher and academic supervisor. In terms of the legal basis for the collection and processing of participant data, the study relies on the explicit consent of participants under article 6(1) (a) of the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR); participants may withdraw their consent at any time. Once the research project has concluded and the participant data has been used for the intended purpose, participant data will be held by the University for a period consistent with its retention policy and thereafter securely destroyed.

As gig economy workers often experience precarious working conditions, they could therefore represent a potentially vulnerable population. To promote transparency and trustworthiness within our survey methodology, we intend to avoid using leading questions and/or language which may be perceived as judgmental. Additionally, we have placed hyperlinks to various forms of support, such as Citizens Advice and the Samaritans helpline, on the final webpage of our online survey. We acknowledge that, as an MBA student with no direct experience of gig work, we are aware that our lack of direct experience could influence both how we design and interpret our study (Berger, 2015).

6. Limitations

There are several limitations. A major limitation is the fact that the sample was selected using a non-probability technique. Therefore, the results do not provide a reliable basis upon which to make generalisations across the whole population of gig workers in the United Kingdom. Additionally, recruiting participants via the Internet will likely result in those who are most digitally active being recruited into the study; they may also have higher levels of engagement than others regarding issues such as their employment conditions. This recruitment strategy, therefore, may result in an unrepresentative sample. Furthermore, the survey was conducted at a single point in time. As such, it is able to demonstrate statistically significant associations between income volatility and low job satisfaction. However, it is unable to determine whether one condition directly influences another (i.e., whether the experience of income volatility leads to dissatisfaction with work, or if individuals experiencing dissatisfaction with their jobs are more sensitive to fluctuations in their incomes). For example, individuals with lower baseline levels of job satisfaction may be more aware of fluctuations in their incomes and therefore more likely to identify and report income volatility. The self-report nature of this research has associated problems with social desirability and common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Participants may overstate or understate their experiences, and when respondents report predictor variables and outcome variables in the same instrument, it increases the reported association. Although the use of established scales minimises but does not remove these threats. In addition, categorising all gig workers as a singular entity hides variations between different forms of gig labour. For instance, there are considerable differences between a Deliveroo delivery driver and a freelance software developer employed by a third

party company such as Upwork. Treating them as identical may add 'noise' to the results. The inclusion of platform type within the regression analysis reduces the potential problem; however, this could potentially be overcome in a larger scale study by separating out each group completely.

7. Resource implications and time plan

7.1 Resources

This research will have a very minimal cost. We do not anticipate having to pay extra for software since the University has an Institutional Licence agreement for both SPSS and Qualtrics. Any expenses we might incur are expected to be small, such as printing consent forms and informational materials (in case some face-to-face recruitment is conducted); and potentially a small amount of money as an incentive to boost the response rate, perhaps £5 vouchers via a prize draw if initial recruitment is slow. As well, we will not need to engage in transcription services or use qualitative analysis software; hence, the simplicity of our plans.

Our sample size is based on collecting responses from 200 survey participants. Therefore, there will be ongoing contact over several weeks with online gig worker communities. The researcher may also contact organisations that support these workers, like the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB), which can assist with circulating the survey. There should be regular meetings with the Academic Supervisor throughout the process of designing the questionnaire, piloting the instrument, and analysing the results.

This Project commenced in March 2026 and is scheduled to end in September 2026. Since this study is simply a Quantitative Research Study with one data collection point,

our timeline will be less complicated than if this were a Mixed-Methods study. Below is our proposed Gantt Chart Schedule.

7.2 Time plan

Activity	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Finalise proposal and objectives							
Literature review							
Ethics application (PG2 form)							
Design questionnaire							
Pilot study (15 respondents)							
Revise questionnaire after pilot							
Full survey distribution and collection							
Data cleaning and descriptive analysis							
Inferential analysis (SPSS)							
Write up findings and discussion							
Final editing and proofreading							
Submission							

Figure 1: Research timeline, March to September 2026

(Source: Author, 2026)

Reference list

1. Adams, A., Freedland, M. and Prassl, J. (2022) 'The zero-hours contract: regulating casual work, or legitimating precarity?', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 42(2), pp. 328-358.
2. Ashford, S.J., Caza, B.B. and Reid, E.M. (2018) 'From surviving to thriving in the gig economy: a research agenda for individuals in the new world of work', *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 38, pp. 23-41.
3. Bajwa, U., Gastaldo, D., Di Ruggiero, E. and Knorr, L. (2018) 'The health of workers in the global gig economy', *Globalization and Health*, 14(1), p. 124.
4. Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E. (2017) 'Job demands-resources theory: taking stock and looking forward', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), pp. 273-285.
5. Bates, L., Reuschke, D., McArthur, D. and Houston, D. (2023) 'Financial precarity and wellbeing among UK gig workers: evidence from the Understanding Society COVID-19 Study', *Work, Employment and Society*, 37(4), pp. 1012-1030.
6. Berger, R. (2015) 'Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research', *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), pp. 219-234.
7. Bryman, A. (2016) *Social research methods*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8. Duggan, J., Sherman, U., Carbery, R. and McDonnell, A. (2020) 'Algorithmic management and app-work in the gig economy: a research agenda for

- employment relations and HRM', *Human Resource Management Journal*, 30(1), pp. 114-132.
9. CIPD (2024) *The gig economy and working lives: UK survey findings*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
 10. Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. (2023) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. 6th edn. London: Sage.
 11. De Stefano, V. (2016) 'The rise of the just-in-time workforce: on-demand work, crowd work, and labour protection in the gig economy', *Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal*, 37(3), pp. 471-504.
 12. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2023) *The characteristics of those in the gig economy*. London: BEIS.
 13. Drahokoupil, J. and Piasna, A. (2019) 'Work in the platform economy: Deliveroo riders in Belgium and the SMart arrangement', *ETUI Research Paper*, pp. 1-28.
 14. Eurofound (2024) *Platform work in the EU: developments in regulation and policy*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
 15. Field, A. (2018) *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. 5th edn. London: Sage.
 16. Gandini, A. (2019) 'Labour process theory and the gig economy', *Human Relations*, 72(6), pp. 1039-1056.
 17. Goods, C., Veen, A. and Barratt, T. (2019) 'Is it gig or is it gig? platform workers, work identities, and the gig economy', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 61(5), pp. 635-653.

18. Graham, M., Hjorth, I. and Lehdonvirta, V. (2017) 'Digital labour and development: impacts of global digital labour platforms and the gig economy on worker livelihoods', *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 23(2), pp. 135-162.
19. Herzberg, F. (1968) 'One more time: how do you motivate employees?', *Harvard Business Review*, 46(1), pp. 53-62.
20. Howcroft, D. and Bergvall-Kareborn, B. (2019) 'A typology of crowdwork platforms', *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(1), pp. 21-38.
21. International Labour Organization (2024) *World employment and social outlook: the role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work*. Geneva: ILO.
22. Kalleberg, A.L. and Vallas, S.P. (2018) 'Probing precarious work: theory, research, and politics', *Research in the Sociology of Work*, 31, pp. 1-30.
23. Kassi, O., Lehdonvirta, V. and Stephany, F. (2024) 'How many online workers are there in the world? A data-driven assessment', *Open Research Europe*, 1(53), pp. 1-20.
24. Kenney, M. and Zysman, J. (2019) 'Work and value creation in the platform economy', *Research in the Sociology of Work*, 33, pp. 13-41.
25. Kost, D., Fieseler, C. and Wong, S.I. (2020) 'Boundaryless careers in the gig economy: an oxymoron?', *Human Resource Management Journal*, 30(1), pp. 100-113.

26. Lehdonvirta, V. (2018) 'Flexibility in the gig economy: managing time on three online piecework platforms', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 33(1), pp. 13-29.
27. Meijerink, J. and Keegan, A. (2019) 'Conceptualising human resource management in the gig economy: toward a platform ecosystem perspective', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 34(4), pp. 214-232.
28. Petriglieri, G., Ashford, S.J. and Wrzesniewski, A. (2019) 'Agony and ecstasy in the gig economy: cultivating holding environments for precarious and personalized work identities', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(1), pp. 124-170.
29. Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Lee, J. and Podsakoff, N.P. (2003) 'Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), pp. 879-903.
30. Prassl, J. (2018) *Humans as a service: the promise and perils of work in the gig economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
31. Ravenelle, A.J. (2019) *Hustle and gig: struggling and surviving in the sharing economy*. Oakland: University of California Press.
32. Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research methods for business students*. 8th edn. Harlow: Pearson.
33. Schor, J.B. (2020) *After the gig: how the sharing economy got hijacked and how to win it back*. Oakland: University of California Press.

34. Spurk, D. and Straub, C. (2020) 'Flexible employment relationships and careers in times of the COVID-19 pandemic', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 119, pp. 1-9.
35. Stephany, F., Dunn, M., Sawyer, S. and Lehdonvirta, V. (2020) 'Distancing bonus or downscaling loss? The changing livelihood of US online workers in times of COVID-19', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 111(3), pp. 561-573.
36. Stewart, A. and Stanford, J. (2017) 'Regulating work in the gig economy: what are the options?', *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 28(3), pp. 420-437.
37. Taylor, M. (2017) *Good work: the Taylor review of modern working practices*. London: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
38. Trades Union Congress (2025) *The gig is up: reforming the UK gig economy for fair work*. London: TUC.
39. *Uber BV v Aslam* [2021] UKSC 5.
40. Vallas, S. and Schor, J. (2020) 'What do platforms do? Understanding the gig economy', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46, pp. 273-294.
41. Veen, A., Barratt, T. and Goods, C. (2020) 'Platform-capital and its appetite for control: a labour process analysis of food-delivery work in Australia', *Work, Employment and Society*, 34(3), pp. 388-406.
42. Weiss, D.J., Dawis, R.V., England, G.W. and Lofquist, L.H. (1967) *Manual for the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

43. Wood, A.J., Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V. and Hjorth, I. (2019) 'Good gig, bad gig: autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy', *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(1), pp. 56-75.
44. Wang, S., Li, L.Z. and Coutts, A. (2022) 'National survey of mental health and life satisfaction of gig workers: the role of loneliness and financial precarity', *BMJ Open*, 12(12), e066389.
45. Woodcock, J. and Graham, M. (2020) *The gig economy: a critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
46. Work Foundation (2025) *The cost-of-living crisis and the UK gig economy: trends and projections*. Lancaster: Lancaster University.
47. Yin, R.K. (2018) *Case study research and applications: design and methods*. 6th edn. London: Sage.
48. Guo, Y., Ling, W., Fan, W. and Wang, S. (2025) 'Dependence and precarity in the gig economy: a longitudinal analysis of platform work and mental distress', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 76(4), pp. 1-18.
49. Kadolkar, A., Bauer, T.N., Erdogan, B. and Truxillo, D.M. (2025) 'Algorithmic management in the gig economy: a systematic review and research integration', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 46(1), pp. 108-136.
50. Wood, A.J., Martindale, N. and Burchell, B.J. (2025) 'Beyond the gig economy: towards variable experiences of job quality in platform work', *Work, Employment and Society*, early online publication, pp. 1-22.

Appendix A: Research questionnaire

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title: Global Gig Economy Trends and Their Effect on Worker Job Satisfaction:
A Quantitative Study of Platform-Based Workers in the UK

Researcher: Shaekaparvin, MBA Student, UWTSD | Email:
2514895@sudent.uwtsd.ac.uk

Supervisor: Maggie Zhang | Email: maggie.zhang@uwtsd.ac.uk

What is this study about? This research examines how conditions of platform-based gig work (income unpredictability, algorithmic management, unclear employment status) relate to job satisfaction among UK gig workers. The findings will be used for academic purposes only.

What does taking part involve? An online questionnaire taking approximately 10-12 minutes. Questions cover your background, job satisfaction, and experience of specific working conditions. There is one optional open-ended question at the end.

Do I have to take part? No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You can stop at any point without giving a reason and skip any question. There are no consequences for withdrawing.

Will my answers be anonymous? Yes. The survey does not collect your name, email, IP address, or any identifying information. Responses are completely anonymous.

How will my data be stored? Anonymised responses will be stored on password-protected, university-approved cloud storage accessible only to the researcher and

supervisor. Data will be deleted after the study, in line with the university retention policy and UK GDPR.

Ethics approval: This study has received ethical approval from UWTSD (PG2 reference: [to be added]).

CONSENT

By ticking the box below, you confirm that: (1) you have read the information above; (2) participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time; (3) your responses are anonymous; (4) you are aged 18+; (5) you currently do platform-based gig work in the UK; (6) you consent to your data being used for this research.

☐ **I consent to participate in this study.**

[In Qualtrics: participants must tick this box to proceed. If not ticked, survey ends.]

SECTION A: About you and your gig work

A1. Age group: ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65+

A2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Non-binary ☐ Prefer not to say

A3. Primary platform: ☐ Uber/Bolt ☐ Deliveroo/Just Eat/Uber Eats ☐ Amazon
Flex/DPD ☐ Upwork/Fiverr/PeoplePerHour ☐ TaskRabbit/Bark ☐ Other: _____

A4. Weekly hours of gig work: ☐ Under 10 ☐ 10-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 40+

A5. Time in gig work: ☐ Under 6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 2-5 years
☐ 5+ years

A6. Is gig work your main income? ☐ Yes, main/only income ☐ No, alongside other
employment ☐ No, occasional supplement

SECTION B: Job satisfaction

How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your gig work? (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied)

Adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, Short-Form (Weiss et al., 1967)

On my gig work, how I feel about...	VD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	S (4)	VS (5)
B1. Being able to keep busy all the time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B2. The chance to work alone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B3. The chance to do different things from time to time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B4. The chance to be somebody in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B5. The way the platform handles workers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B6. The competence of the platform in making decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B7. Being able to do things that do not go against my conscience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B8. The way my gig work provides steady employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B9. The chance to do things for other people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B10. The chance to tell people what to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B11. The chance to do something that uses my abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B12. The way platform policies are put into practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B13. My pay and the amount of work I do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B14. The chances for advancement in this line of work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B15. The freedom to use my own judgement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B16. The chance to try my own methods of doing the job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B17. The working conditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B18. The way other gig workers get along with each other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B19. The praise I get for doing a good job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B20. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C: Your experience of gig working conditions

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Part 1: Income volatility

Adapted from Bates et al. (2023) and Wood et al. (2019)

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
C1. My earnings vary a lot from week to week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C2. I find it difficult to predict how much I will earn in any given week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C3. I have experienced weeks where my earnings were too low to cover basic expenses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C4. The unpredictability of my income causes me stress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C5. I feel financially secure in my gig work (reverse-scored)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 2: Algorithmic management intensity

Adapted from Wood et al. (2019) and Duggan et al. (2020)

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
C6. The platform algorithm has a strong influence over when and how I work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C7. I feel my performance is constantly monitored by the platform	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C8. I do not understand how the platform decides which tasks I receive	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C9. I have little control over my work because decisions are made by the platform system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C10. The platform rating/scoring system puts pressure on how I work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 3: Employment status ambiguity

Adapted from Adams, Freedland and Prassl (2022) and Meijerink and Keegan (2019)

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
C11. I am unclear whether I am legally an employee, a worker, or self-employed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C12. The lack of clarity about my employment status causes me concern	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

C13. The platform treats me like an employee but classifies me as self-employed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C14. I would feel more secure if my employment status were clearer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C15. I am unsure what legal rights and protections I am entitled to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION D: Anything else? (Optional)

Is there anything else about your experience of gig/platform work that you would like to share?

THANK YOU

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your responses are anonymous and will contribute to a better understanding of gig working conditions in the UK.