DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

THE FUTURE OF WORK:

GIG ECONOMY, REMOTE WORK & AI CHALLENGES

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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GIG ECONOMY: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The gig economy, characterized by short-term contracts and freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs, has transformed labor markets across the globe. Fueled by digital platforms and the increasing demand for flexible work arrangements, the gig economy has experienced exponential growth in recent years. In India and globally, gig work spans a wide range of sectors, including ride-sharing, food delivery, online freelancing, and professional services. While the gig economy offers advantages such as flexibility, autonomy, and employment generation, it also presents critical challenges including income insecurity, lack of social protection, algorithmic control, and regulatory ambiguity. This paper explores the current trends in the gig economy, evaluates the socioeconomic and technological drivers behind its growth, and critically examines the challenges it poses to workers, employers, and policymakers. The paper concludes by suggesting strategic frameworks for inclusive, sustainable, and rights-based growth of gig work in a digital-first world.

Keywords

Gig economy, platform work, digital labor, informal employment, labor rights, freelancing, social protection, worker welfare, algorithmic management, labor policy

1. Introduction

The world of work is undergoing a radical transformation. Traditional employment models are increasingly being replaced by more flexible, task-oriented forms of labor known collectively as the **gig economy**. Gig workers typically engage in short-term, on-demand tasks, mediated through digital platforms such as Uber, Swiggy, Fiverr, and UrbanClap. These platforms match service providers with consumers, offering convenience and speed on one hand, and flexibility and independence on the other.

The gig economy, once seen as a side hustle, has evolved into a significant component of national labor markets. In India, for instance, a 2022 NITI Aayog report estimates that the gig