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CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS FAIR LABOUR PRACTICES AND WELFARE VULNERABILITIES OF GIG WORKERS IN APP-BASED TRANSPORT SERVICES – COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT
The rapid expansion of app-based transport services has created new employment opportunities for gig workers, but it has also exposed them to several challenges related to fair labour practices and welfare vulnerabilities. This study examines consumer attitudes toward these issues and their level of awareness in Coimbatore district. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using quantitative tools such as percentage analysis and Chi-square tests. The study focuses on key concerns like fair wages, job security, and working conditions, while also assessing whether consumers are aware of and concerned about the difficulties faced by gig workers. The findings aim to provide insights into consumer perception and support the need for improved labour policies and responsible practices in the gig economy.
KEYWORDS: *Gig Workers, Consumer Attitude, Fair Labour Practices, Welfare Vulnerabilities, App-Based Transport Services, Consumer Awareness, Gig Economy*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rapid advancement of digital technology has led to the emergence and expansion of the gig economy, particularly in app-based transport services such as ride-hailing platforms. These platforms have revolutionized urban mobility by offering convenience, flexibility, and accessibility to consumers, while also creating employment opportunities for a large number of individuals as gig workers. In cities like Coimbatore, the increasing dependence on such services reflects changing consumer lifestyles and preferences in the digital era.

Gig workers in app-based transport services operate as independent contractors rather than traditional employees, which often excludes them from basic labour rights and social security benefits. While these platforms provide income-generating opportunities, they also expose workers to several welfare vulnerabilities such as income instability, lack of job security, absence of health insurance, long working hours, and limited legal protection. These issues raise concerns about the fairness of labour practices followed by platform companies and the overall well-being of gig workers.

At the same time, consumers play a significant role in shaping market dynamics through their choices and perceptions. Consumer awareness and attitudes toward fair labour practices can influence the demand for ethically managed services and encourage companies to adopt more responsible practices. However, there is limited understanding of how consumers perceive the working conditions and welfare issues of gig workers, especially in the context of app-based transport services.

This study focuses on analysing consumer attitudes toward fair labour practices and their awareness of welfare vulnerabilities faced by gig workers in Coimbatore district. By examining consumer perceptions, the research aims to identify whether ethical considerations influence service usage and to what extent consumers are concerned about the challenges faced by gig workers. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to better policy formulation, increased platform accountability, and the promotion of socially responsible consumer behaviour in the growing gig economy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Schor (2016) highlighted that the gig economy offers flexibility but often at the cost of job security and social protection, making workers vulnerable to exploitation. The study emphasized that consumers are generally less aware of these hidden labour conditions while enjoying the convenience of digital services.

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Rosenblat and Stark (2016) explored the working conditions of ride-hailing drivers and found that algorithmic management and commission structures significantly affect driver earnings and autonomy. Their findings indicate that platform-controlled pricing and high commission rates reduce fair pay, which may not be fully understood by consumers using these services.

Sundararajan (2017) discussed the role of consumers in shaping ethical platform economies, stating that informed consumers can influence companies to ensure fair wages and better working conditions. However, the study found that most consumers prioritize convenience and cost over ethical considerations, indicating a gap between awareness and behaviour.

International Labour Organization (2021) reported that digital platform workers face significant challenges such as lack of job security, absence of social protection, and income instability. The report emphasizes that gig workers are often excluded from traditional labour laws and benefits like insurance and paid leave. This finding is relevant to the current study's first objective, as it highlights the importance of assessing consumer awareness regarding these welfare vulnerabilities in the gig economy**.**

Fair work Foundation (2021) evaluated platform-based companies in India based on fairness in pay, working conditions, and contracts. The study revealed that many platforms fail to ensure minimum wage standards and transparent commission policies. It also noted increasing public concern about ethical labour practices. These findings align with the second objective of the present study, which examines consumer attitudes toward fair pay and commission structures, showing that there is growing support for equitable treatment of gig workers.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To know the level of consumer awareness regarding the welfare conditions of gig workers in app-based transport services.
2. To understand consumer attitude towards commission structures and fair pay of app-based transport platforms.

RESEARCH GAP

Although many studies have discussed the growth of the gig economy and the problems faced by gig workers, very few studies have focused on the role of consumers in supporting fair labour practices. Existing research has mainly concentrated on worker perspectives, labour rights, and platform management, while consumer awareness regarding gig worker welfare has received limited attention. In addition, there is a lack of studies examining consumer attitudes toward fair wages and ethical treatment of gig workers in app-based transport services in Coimbatore. Hence, this study aims to bridge this gap by analysing consumer awareness and attitudes toward the welfare vulnerabilities of gig workers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine consumer attitudes toward fair labor practices and welfare issues of gig workers in app-based transport services. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data was gathered from journals, articles, and online sources. A convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents. The sample consists of 384 respondents of app-based transport services in Coimbatore. The questionnaire included close-ended questions such as Likert scale and multiple-choice questions. Data analysis was carried out using percentage analysis and the Chi-square test.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Factors	Categories	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20	97	25.3
	21–30	152	39.6
	30–45	83	21.6
	Above 45	52	13.5
Gender	Male	179	46.6
	Female	200	52.1
	Others	5	1.3
Occupation	Student	133	34.6
	Private Employee	87	22.7

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	Government Employee	81	21.1
	Self-Employed	69	18
	Others	14	3.6
Primary App Used	Ola	68	17.7
	Uber	107	27.9
	Rapido	139	36.2
	Namma Yatri	43	11.2
	Others	27	7
Frequency of Ride Booking	Daily	91	23.7
	1–2 Times a Week	113	29.4
	3–5 Times a Week	71	18.5
	Rarely	109	28.4
	Total	**384**	**100**

The demographic profile shows that the majority of respondents belong to the 21–30 age group (39.6%), indicating that young adults are the major users of app-based transport services. Female respondents slightly outnumber male respondents, accounting for 52.1% of the sample. Students form the largest occupational group with 34.6%, followed by private employees and government employees. Among the transport applications, Rapido is the most preferred platform with 36.2% usage, followed by Uber. Regarding ride-booking frequency, most respondents use app-based transport services either 1–2 times a week (29.4%) or rarely (28.4%), showing moderate dependence on such services. Overall, the demographic analysis indicates that younger consumers and students are the primary users of app-based transport services in Coimbatore.

Table 2: Age group and Awareness level

Age Group	Aware	Neutral	Not Aware	Total
Below 20	28	38	31	97
21–30	50	55	47	152
30–45	22	28	33	83
Above 45	14	20	18	52
Total	**114**	**141**	**129**	**384**

The cross-tabulation shows the relationship between age group and awareness level regarding the welfare conditions of gig workers. Respondents in the age group of 21–30 show the highest level of awareness (50 respondents), indicating that younger adults are relatively more informed about gig worker issues. The below 20 categories also shows moderate awareness. However, respondents aged 30–45 and above 45 display comparatively lower awareness levels and a higher proportion of neutral responses. Overall, the analysis suggests that awareness regarding gig worker welfare differs across age groups, with younger respondents showing greater awareness compared to older respondents.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study reveal that consumers of app-based transport services in Coimbatore possess a moderate level of awareness regarding the working conditions and welfare vulnerabilities of gig workers. While a considerable number of respondents understand that gig workers lack job security, fixed income, and social benefits, there is still a gap in complete awareness. This indicates that frequent usage of such services does not necessarily translate into deeper knowledge about worker conditions.

Further, the study highlights a strong positive attitude toward fair labour practices. Most consumers believe that gig workers deserve fair wages and better commission structures. The concern over high platform commissions and their impact on driver earnings was evident among respondents. Analytical results also suggest that demographic factors like age and education influence awareness and attitudes. Overall, the discussion indicates a growing consumer consciousness and ethical concern, but also points to the need for better awareness and transparency.

SUGGESTIONS

- Digital awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate consumers about the working conditions and welfare issues of gig workers.

- App-based transport platforms should ensure fair and transparent commission structures to improve driver earnings.
- Government and regulatory bodies should introduce policies for social security benefits such as insurance, pension, and paid leave for gig workers.
- Companies should improve communication with users regarding how fares are distributed between the platform and drivers.
- Educational institutions can include topics related to gig economy and labour ethics in their curriculum to build awareness among students.
- Consumers should be encouraged to support ethical platforms and fair pricing practices.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that consumers of app-based transport services in Coimbatore possess a moderate level of awareness regarding the welfare conditions of gig workers, including issues such as lack of job security, irregular income, absence of social benefits, and long working hours. At the same time, consumers show a positive attitude toward fair labour practices, as most respondents support fair pay, reduced commission charges, welfare schemes, and better protection for gig workers. The findings further reveal that higher awareness of welfare issues leads to a more favourable attitude toward fair pay and ethical treatment of gig workers. Overall, the study highlights the growing concern among consumers toward gig worker welfare and emphasizes the need for greater awareness, transparency, and responsible labour practices in app-based transport services.

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