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GLOBAL RESEARCH PATTERNS ON ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY IN THE GIG ECONOMY: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT
The gig economy has seen exponential growth in recent years with online food delivery (OFD) services emerged as a prominent segment. Online food delivery (OFD) platforms offer a wide range of cousins from different restaurants, convenience, financial benefits like coupons and discounts which are the main factors of its popularity. Due to this popular trend, researchers are also interests in doing research in this field. This study conducted a bibliometric analysis to map global research patterns in the domain of online food delivery within the gig economy. Using a systematic search on dimension.ai database, 335 publications from 1994 to December, 2024 were extracted using the key terms like "gig economy", "gig", "food delivery", "online food delivery", and "OFD" to analyze key trends, influential authors, leading journals, most cited articles and dominant research countries. For bibliometric analysis, networks of collaboration and thematic clusters visualization bibliometric tool i.e. VOSviewer software and MS-Excel were used. The results of this study highlighted that the number of publications has increased since 2019-20 and in the publication patterns regional differences were observed, with Asia and North America contributed the most research. This study has also a limitation that the data extraction source (dimension.ai, an open access database) may not contain high quality literature in comparison with Scopus and Web of Science database. However, by providing a comprehensive overview of existing research, this bibliometric study served as a foundation for future investigations into online food delivery within the gig economy.

KEYWORDS- *Gig Economy, Gig Work, Online Food Delivery, Digital Revolution, Bibliometric Analysis*

INTRODUCTION
There is a knowledge asymmetry among different countries, regions, and research organizations for platform work and the related research projects because they are new. There is not yet globally accepted terminology for platform work. Jobs becoming gigs in the platform economy is another crucial area [1]. Transformational change regarding the nature of work is attributed to the gig economy. The advancement in the field technology have also a substantial influence in completely overhauling the landscape of food delivery services, shifting from traditional phone-based systems to seamless online ordering [2] mechanisms, all aimed at effectively catering to the ever-fluctuating preferences of consumers. Gig work associated with the online food delivery (OFD), which is characterized by temporary, flexible working arrangements, reshaped traditional labour structures by providing workers the possibility to earn income through a variety of platform-based occupations. Due to customers' busy schedules, the expansion and accessibility of the Internet, businesses have started to serve the customer needs like the need for affordable food delivery to customers' front doors [3]. As a result, OFD has emerged as a revolutionary approach for satisfying consumer demand for freshly prepared meals [4] and the world's online food ordering market is expanding significantly. Although there are many sectors which involved gig type of work but in the retail sector OFD services are the most popular among all because individuals preferring order food online instead of dining out. OFD services, facilitated by digital platforms such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats, have gained immense popularity due to increasing consumer demand for convenience and rapid technological advancements [3, 5] Such platforms operate as an intermediary between different restaurants, customers, and delivery workers that form a complex ecosystem with multiple economic, social, and technological drivers. Additionally, online food service platforms adopted a contactless delivery method to aid their customers during the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing delivery of food without any form of physical contact at the point of delivery [6]. Digital platforms have increasingly attracted individuals, especially younger generations to work in the digital labour platform due to the convenience and adaptability that these platforms offer [7].
This study seeks to analyze the global research patterns regarding online food delivery in the gig economy using bibliometric methods. As the bibliometric analysis serves as a valuable tool for assessing the evolution of research trends in a particular area with

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the help of publication patterns, citation networks, and scholarly collaborations [8]. Data collection from relevant databases, data cleaning and refining, and subjecting data to various bibliometric methods are the major steps for this analysis [9]. Understanding the global research patterns on OFD can also explain aspects of the intellectual structure of the discipline, key contributing countries and institutions, sources, and citation and keyword analysis. Despite a range of research focusing on OFD from economic, technological, and labor perspectives but a comprehensive bibliometric study of this growing body of literature remains limited. By mapping the existence knowledge landscape, this study provides an in-depth understanding of how research on OFD has evolved in the gig economy and identifies potential areas for future research. This study has some limitations as well, such as the dimension.ai database that is used in this study may not be as good as Scopus or Web of Science which might provide better results.

Conceptual framework

Although platform-mediated gig employment is relatively new but it has already penetrated numerous areas of the economy and stimulated debates about how to conceptualize this type of work structure [10]. OFD platforms such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats facilitate digital intermediation between customers, restaurants, and delivery workers, creating a dynamic ecosystem [11]. Vallas & Schor said, the rise in OFDs is associated with the gig economy and its unique effects on working conditions, which are driven by a combination of two key triggering factors: the success of the sharing economy, comprised of highly successful peer-to-peer operations, and the digital revolution and advancements in online communication and delivery of service. The framework analyzes how economic and market factors, along with flexibility and technological development, determine the online food delivery work phenomenon.

1. **Economic factor:** The financial gains are the primary motivation for workers associated with gig work in the online food delivery. With traditional employment opportunities scarce, this sector has been providing income opportunities for individuals offering competitive earnings and incentive-based compensation [12]. However, workers do face financial uncertainties due to missing out on fixed salaries, social benefits, and social security [13].
2. **Flexibility factor:** The gig work is known by its flexibility. Workers within OFD can decide how much they want to work and their hours to suit them best by making it an attractive employment option [14]. This is ideal for students, part time workers, and anyone with multiple jobs. On the downside, employment allocation through an algorithmic approach may result in unpredictability of income and work availability [15].
3. **Technological factor:** The expansion of OFD services was greatly facilitated by mobile apps and digital platform adoption, which has seen rapid growth across the globe. The integration of GPS, digital payment platforms, and automated order processing systems have undoubtedly improved the company's operational productivity [16]. Despite these benefits, concerns regarding worker surveillance and dependency on platform algorithms raise ethical and labor-related issues [17].
4. **Market trends:** Changing consumer preferences lead to increased demand for online food delivery services. Urbanization, increasing disposable incomes, and the shift in lifestyle further expand the market [18]. Additionally, promotional offers and subscription-based models influence consumer behavior, shaping the demand for delivery services [19]. However, the competitive nature of the gig economy often results in fluctuating earnings for workers due to high market saturation [20].

Interplay Between Factors

This interplay between all these factors represents the core structure defining the experiences of online food delivery workers in the gig economy. On one hand, flexibility and economic incentives attract workers, while the advancements in technology and market dynamics determine job stability and sustainability. Such interplay demonstrates the need for policy interventions to provide compensation, proper working conditions and social-protection for gig workers [21]. This conceptual framework provides a structured understanding of the drivers influencing online food delivery (OFD).

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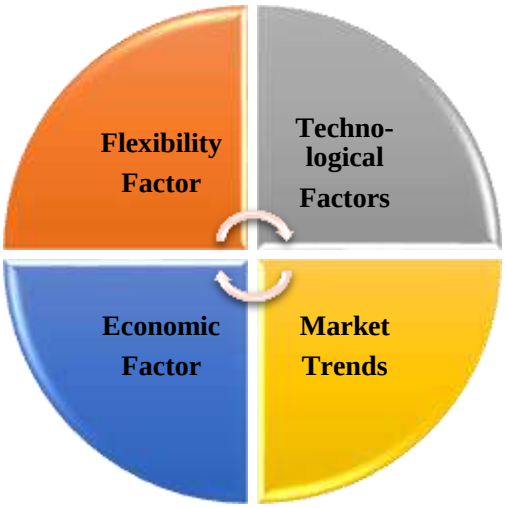


Fig. 1 Interplay between factors
Source: Author's Compilation

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The gig economy has undoubtedly revolutionized the food delivery sector, driven by digital platforms that connect consumers, restaurants, and delivery workers on one finger tabs. Many research studies have explained the implications of this development, especially regarding working conditions, technological control, and expansion of markets. Research indicated that online food delivery (OFD) platforms deploy algorithmic management to control their workers' tasks, influencing their autonomy and earnings [22]. Scholars have also examined the precarious nature of gig work, emphasizing job insecurity, lack of social protection, and unpredictable income streams [14]. OFD services are characterized by flexibility, convenient, affordability and mobile applications are widely used so that they have grown popularity among individuals [23]. According to studies, customer preferences and loyalty are significantly affected by elements like promotions, service quality, and platform reputation [24]. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has promoted OFD word adoption and studies show that lockdown procedures and health concerns have changed consumer behaviour and increased demand [25]. Most of the bibliometric studies on OFD and the gig economy have examined publication trends at regional levels, influential authors, and research hotspots. Prior studies have highlighted increasing interest of academicians in platform labour and digital work, with a focus on economic sustainability and regulatory challenges [22, 23]. There is still gaps remain in understanding regional variations, legislative frameworks, and long-term implications of platform-based work. By using bibliometric analysis, this study seeks to address these gaps by mapping global research patterns in OFD in the gig economy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the evolution of research publications and trend on online food delivery within the gig economy over time.
2. To identify the leading institutions, countries, and journals contributing to the research on online food delivery in the gig economy.
3. To uncover the co-occurrence patterns of authors' keywords driving the discourse on online food delivery in the gig economy.
4. To assess the most influential publications and authors by analyzing citation patterns in the field.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study conducted a bibliometric analysis to explore the global research landscape on online food delivery (OFD) in the gig economy. The data for this study has been taken using dimensions.ai (https://www.dimensions.ai/) free web access database. The authors performed the following set of Boolean expressions to limit the study by using the search term: "gig economy" OR "gig" AND ("food delivery" OR "online food delivery" OR "OFD" OR "food") to extract relevant academic publications pertaining to the present study. The search query produced of 335 publications in total including abstracts and titles, covering the starting year from the first publication was found on relevant terms i.e. 1994 to December, 2024. The publication type included all the articles, chapters, preprints, proceedings, monographs and edited books which have been published in the research fields of science, social sciences and humanities. These documents were initially selected for further review based on their relevance to the objectives of study. The inclusion criteria had required that articles should be published in English and directly related to the theme of online food delivery. As a result, 02 articles were there that did not meet the criteria and excluded from the dataset due to non-compliance with the criteria. Finally, 333 publications were selected for the final study. From these selected publications, insightful information was gathered regarding different aspects of online food delivery such as consumer behavior, technological development, market trend, economic implication, and operational challenges. By

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using bibliometric analysis tool VOSviewer, this paper has made an attempt to trace publication trend, citation analysis including the most cited publications and influential authors, co-occurrence relationships among keywords, and highlight countries, organizations and journals that contributed the most in this particular field. The overall process of data extraction from dimension.ai has been summarized in the Fig. 2.

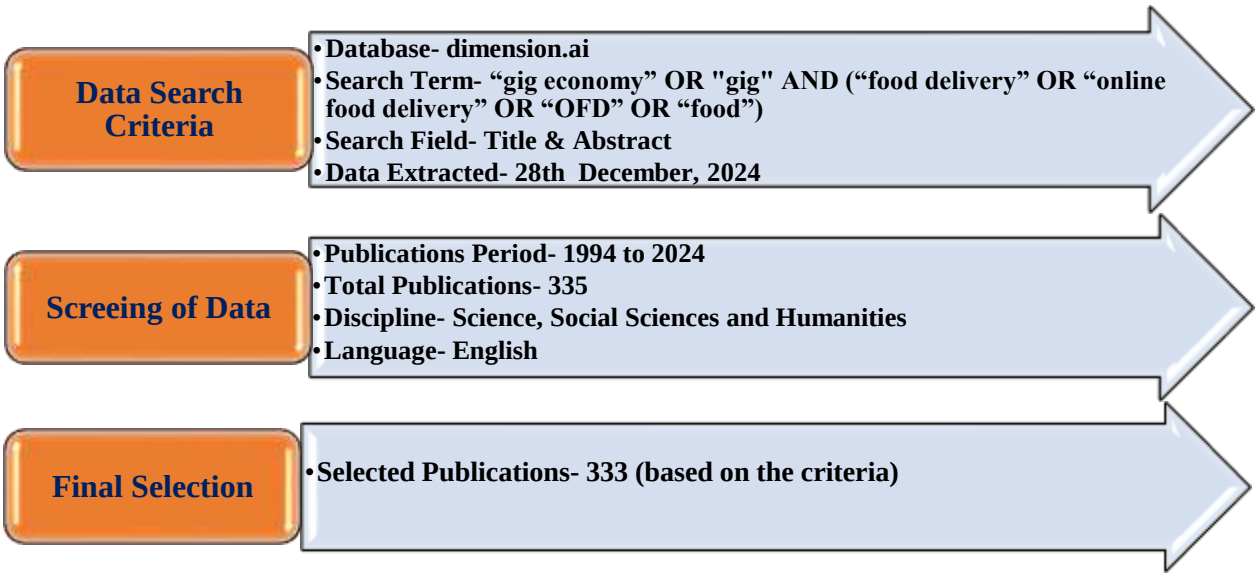


Fig. 2 Process of data extraction

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

1. Publications Trends

In order to examine the publication trend, analysis was conducted using the articles from the last ten consecutive years of publication, from 2014 to 2024 because prior to this time, the publications were not consistent. The publication trend in the Fig. 3 indicated that there has been a notable increase in research activity over time. From 2014 to 2018, the number of publications remained very low, ranging from one to three annually. Nonetheless, there is a noticeable increasing trend started in 2019, as publications rise from 2 (2018) to 12 (2019), 24 (2020), and 38 (2021). These figures showed increasing interest and research in the field from 2022 to 2023 because the publications were raised from 67 to 95 respectively. However, the number slightly declined to 84 in 2024, suggesting either a transitory dip in research productivity or a stabilization. Overall, the pattern shows an exponential growth in publications, especially after 2019, underscoring growing academic interest and contributions to this field of study. It is just because of COVID-19 pandemic, when the gig work has gain the popularity among individuals.

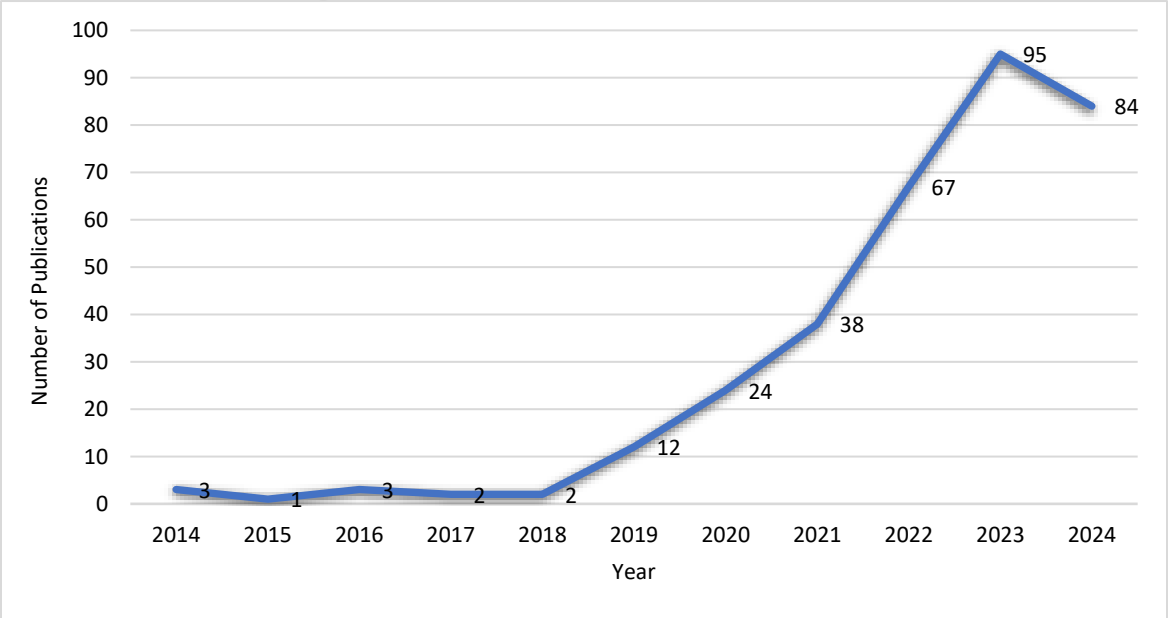


Fig. 3 Publication trend on OFD from 2014 to 2024

Source: Dimensions.ai & MS-Excel

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2. Bibliographic Coupling

The analysis concentrates on the division of publications into thematic clusters based on shared references, and is best used within a specific timeframe. This provides the strong research networking and collaboration among countries, institutions, authors and others [24, 25]. The current study used the bibliographic coupling approach to find important publications on OFD from different nations, organizations, and sources. OFD services have been widely accepted as a major response to a new circumstances triggered by COVID-19 pandemic. So, understanding the bibliometric inquiry becomes a critical and focus domain for academic exploration [26, 27].

1.1 Countries with the highest publication and networking

The analysis has shown that the United States appears on the top globally in research production, followed by China, the United Kingdom, India, and Australia. The countries mentioned below in the table have a significant impact on the research landscape related to the OFD and contributing extensively to the academic discourse in the field.

Table 1 Top 15 countries with the highest publication on OFD

S. No.	Country	Number of Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
1.	United State	56	687	5865
2.	Chine	28	237	4877
3.	United Kingdom	26	907	4128
4.	India	22	54	2633
5.	Australia	19	569	3173
6.	France	10	159	2226
7.	Canada	10	134	1838
8.	Sweden	10	82	1477
9.	Malaysia	10	15	480
10.	Germany	8	355	1494
11.	Italy	8	72	1082
12.	Spain	7	83	1021
13.	Netherlands	6	210	1379
14.	Finland	5	18	824
15.	Denmark	5	18	654

Source: Dimensions.ai & VOSviewer Software

The table 1 has shown, the top fifteen country-wise bibliometric coupling based on the number of documents, citations, and total link strength (which represents the strength of connections between countries in bibliometric networks). The United States is the most dominant contributor with the highest number of documents (56) and citations (687) also, the strongest link strength (5865), indicating extensive research collaborations. China holds the second position in number of published documents (28) and in link strength (4877) reflecting significant global research connections. The United Kingdom, with 26 documents, stands out with the highest citation count (907) and a strong link strength (4128). India has 22 articles among emerging contributors, however its moderate link strength (2633) and comparatively low citation count (54) indicate that its research output is expanding but with a limited global influence. Australia, with 19 documents and 569 citations, demonstrates a higher impact, supported by strong bibliometric connectivity (3173). Despite having fewer publications, France, Germany, and the Netherlands have better citation impacts, demonstrating that quality matters more than number. Sweden, Canada, Italy, and Spain are among the European nations that make moderate contributions to the research showing stable citation impact and bibliometric linkages. On the other hand, countries with lower document counts, citations, and link strengths such as Malaysia, Finland, and Denmark reflect a lack of international research influence. Fig. 4 has demonstrated the networking among countries.

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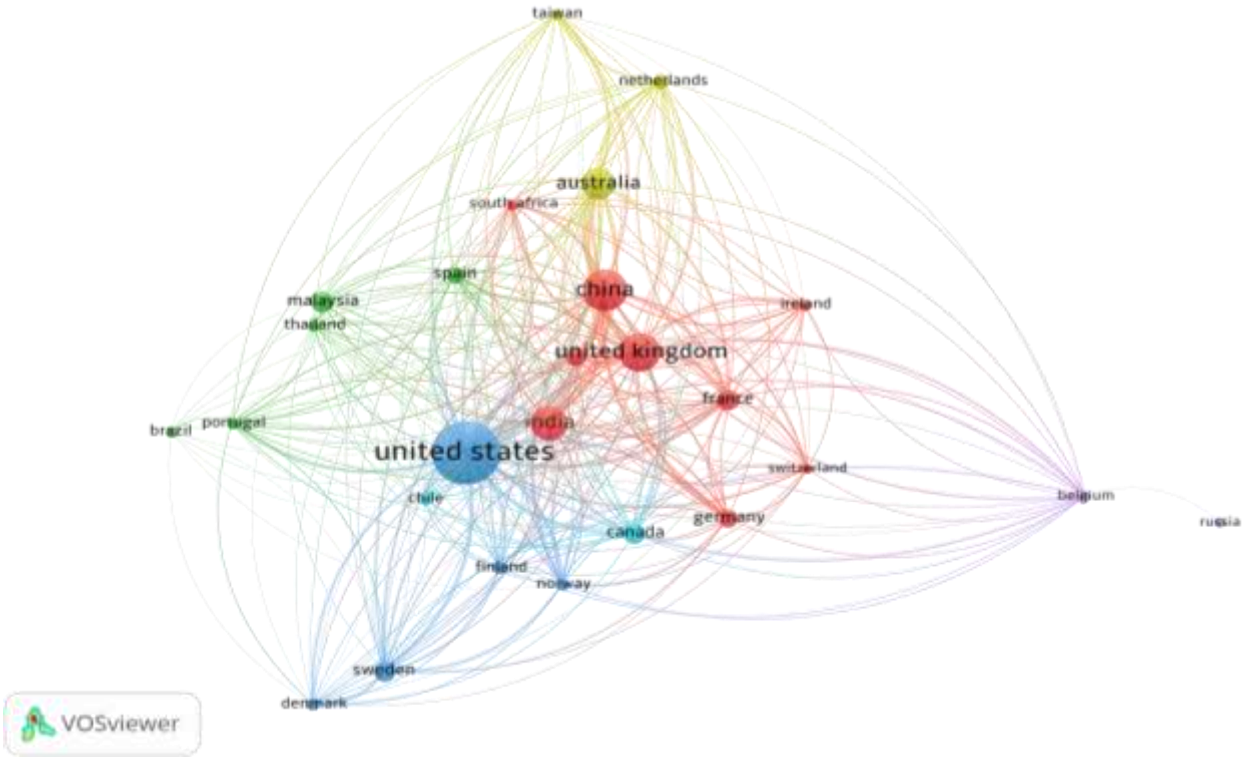


Fig. 4 Countries with the highest publication and their networking on OFD

1.2 Organizations with the Highest Publication and Networking

The analysis of organizations with the highest publications reveals the high interest on OFD research. These institutions exhibit extensive research collaborations as reflected in their bibliometric link strengths.

Table 2 Top 15 organizations with the highest publication on OFD

S. No.	Organization	Number of Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
1.	The university of Sydney	5	428	774
2.	Stockholm University	5	56	367
3.	University of western australia	4	428	691
4.	University of copenhangen	4	18	309
5.	Boston College	4	26	238
6.	Lancaster University	4	36	186
7.	Edith Cowan University	3	420	519
8.	Carnegie Mellon University	3	36	459
9.	University of Lisbon	3	14	379
10.	Nottingham Trent University	3	66	284
11.	Manchester Metropolitan University	3	54	207
12.	University of Helsinki	3	15	163
13.	University College Dublin	3	558	150
14.	Indian Institute of Technology Delhi	3	12	28
15.	Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology	3	4	122

Source: Dimensions.ai & VOSviewer Software

From table 2, it is highlighted The University of Sydney as the leading institution, with 5 documents, a high citation count (428), and the strongest link strength (774), indicating extensive research influence and global collaborations. A substantial influence has been demonstrated by the University of Western Australia, which has 4 papers, an identical number of citations (428), and a strong strength link (691). Other noteworthy contributors include Edith Cowan University (3 documents, 420

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citations, 519 link strength) and University College Dublin, which, despite having only 3 publications, has the highest citation count (558), indicating extremely significant research. A number of universities, including the University of Lisbon, Carnegie Mellon University, and Stockholm University, have moderate link strengths, suggesting stable research connections. The contributions of Nottingham Trent University, Lancaster University, and Boston College have comparatively fewer network links but reasonable citation. Fig. 5 has shown the network visualization of organizations.

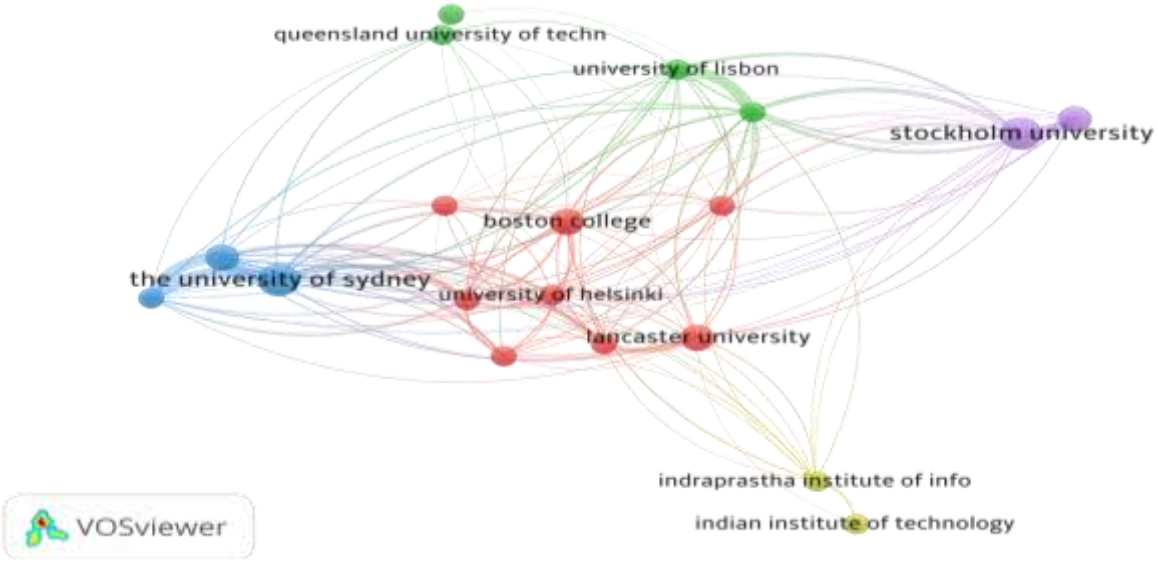


Fig. 5 Organizations with the highest publication on OFD

1.3 Sources/journals with the highest publication and networking

Here is the table showing the journals with their highest number of publications.

Table 3 Top 10 Source/journals with highest publications on OFD

S. No.	Source/Journals	Number of Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
1.	SSRN electronic journal	14	36	182
2.	Work employment and society	5	675	269
3.	Journal of industrial relation	5	253	104
4.	Socarxiv	5	19	0
5.	New technology work and employment	4	154	235
6.	Environment and planning a economy…	4	220	182
7.	Safety science	4	68	70
8.	Studies in systems, decision and control	4	3	4
9.	Work in the global economy	3	3	182
10.	Critical sociology	3	103	16

Source: Dimensions.ai & VOSviewer Software

According to the analysis table 3, with the 14 documents SSRN Electronic Journal has the highest number of publications but a relatively low citation count (36) and a moderate link strength (182). Work, Employment and Society was the most influential source with 5 papers, 675 citations, and the strongest link (269), demonstrating a high level of research influence and connectivity. Similarly, the Journal of Industrial Relations having 5 documents, 253 citations, 104 link strength and New Technology, Work and Employment having 4 documents, 154 citations, 235 link strength. These sources also have a high citation influence with strong bibliometric connections. The research fields benefited greatly from the contributions of other sources such as Environment and Planning an Economy and Space (4 documents, 220 citations, 182 link strength) and Safety Science (4 documents, 68 citations, 70 link strength). However, a lack of substantial research interlinkages is indicated by the fact that some sources, such as Socarxiv (5 documents, 19 citations, 0 link strength), have no bibliometric coupling. Here, Fig. 6 is showing the network visualization among various sources.

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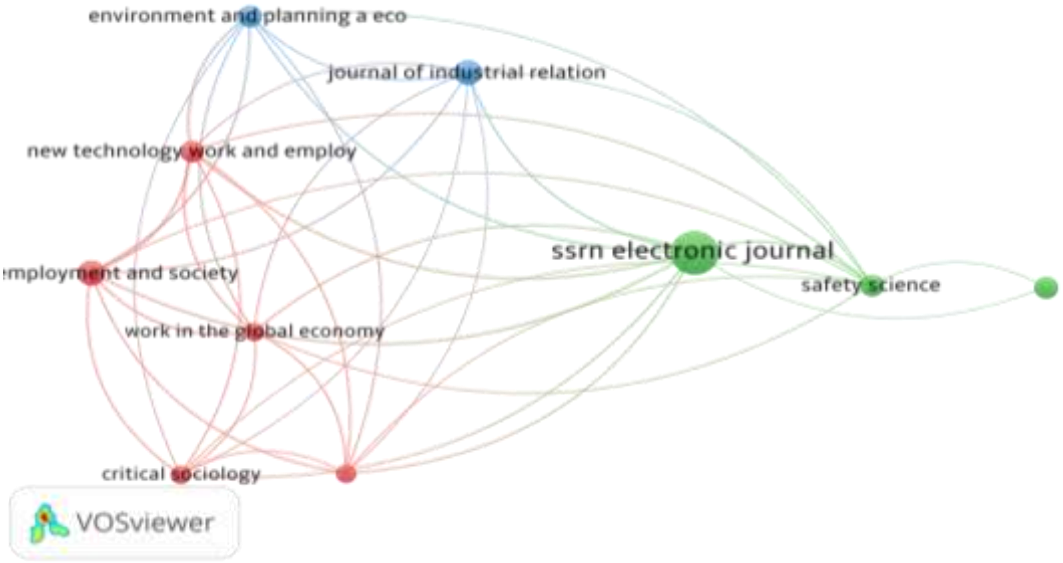


Fig. 6 Networking Among Source/Journals

2. Author's keyword co-occurrence analysis

It is used to determine the most significant and novel keywords as well as the existing or future relationship among them, where a cluster of keywords indicates a common subject in a field of study [8, 28].

Table 4 Top 20 selected keywords in the publications on OFD

S. No.	Keyword	Occurrences	Relevance Score
1.	Gig work	73	0.85
2.	Food	69	0.73
3.	Technology	59	1.02
4.	Opportunity	59	0.97
5.	Food delivery platform	55	0.65
6.	Covid	55	1.36
7.	Rider	51	0.61
8.	Courier	50	1.63
9.	Challenges	48	1.28
10.	Order	45	0.91
11.	Risk	45	0.63
12.	App	44	1.18
13.	Labour	38	0.99
14.	Rise	36	1.73
15.	Food delivery worker	34	1.92
16.	Food delivery service	30	0.64
17.	Food delivery sector	29	0.55
18.	Digital platform	26	0.70
19.	Restaurant	25	0.85
20.	Platform work	24	2.08

Source: Dimensions.ai & VOSviewer Software

The table 4 mentioned above, highlighted the keywords associated with gig employment and online food delivery, ranked by keywords occurrences and relevance scores. Gig work (73 occurrences) and food (69 occurrences) are the most commonly cited terms demonstrating their importance in academic discussions. On the other hand, the high-relevance terms like platform work (24 occurrences), food (69 occurrences), food delivery worker (34 occurrences) and courier (50 occurrences) have relevance score 2.08, 1.92, 1.63 respectively that reflected the important terms in the research field. The key terms like

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technology (1.02) and apps (1.18) also have their significance in influencing platform work, while COVID-19 (1.36) highlighted its effective influence on the overall research related to this particular area. Furthermore, the terms like challenges (1.28) and risk (0.63) brought attention to the issues faced by gig workers. Overall, the keywords effectively convey the dynamics, prospects, and potential risks inherent in the gig economy of food delivery. These co-occurrence pattern of keywords in different publications has also shown in Fig. 7, in the form of network visualization.

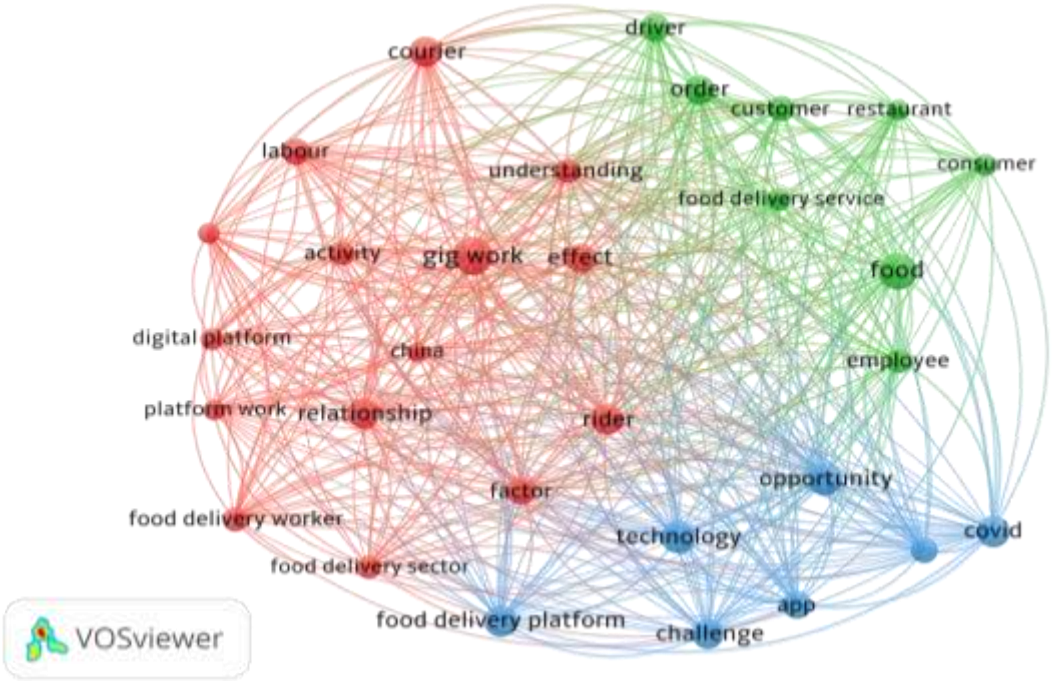


Fig. 7 Keywords co-occurrence in the publications

3. Citation pattern analysis

Citation analysis operates on an assumption that citations reflect intellectual connections between publications that are occur when one publication cites the other [29-31]. In citation analysis authors have included the most cited authors and publications only. The number of citations a publication obtains determines its influence in this analysis. Finding the most influential papers in a field of study is made possible by the analysis.

Table 5 Top 20 most cited authors with highest publications on OFD

S. No.	Author	Number of Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
1.	Veen, alex	7	435	1227
2.	Barratt, tom	6	435	1137
3.	Goods, caleb	6	435	1137
4.	Popan, cosmin	5	81	188
5.	Chakraborty, abhijnan	5	12	42
6.	Brown, barry	4	8	542
7.	Lampinen, airi	4	8	542
8.	Shaikh, riyaj	4	8	542
9.	Mendonca, pedro	4	66	301
10.	Heiland, heiner	4	187	297
11.	Bagchi, amitabha	4	11	40
12.	Gupta, Anjali	4	11	40
13.	Nair, ashish	4	11	40
14.	Ranu, sayan	4	11	40
15.	Yadav, rahul	4	11	40
16.	Maury, olivia	3	15	149
17.	Krishna, shyam	3	9	116
18.	Furuoka, fumitaka	3	3	91
19.	Friday, Adrian	3	34	88
20.	Oviedo-trespalacios, oscar	3	104	57

Source: Dimensions.ai & VOSviewer Software

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In the table 5, bibliometric coupling analysis of authors identified Alex Veen as the most influential contributor, with 7 documents, 435 citations, and the highest link strength (1227), followed closely by Tom Barratt and Caleb Goods, both with 6 documents, 435 citations, and a link strength of 1137. This indicated author's substantial influence in their field and excellent research collaborations with others. Other noteworthy contributors include Cosmin Popan having 5 documents, 81 citations, 188 link strength and Heiner Heiland having 4 documents, 187 citations, 297 link strength, highlighted a symmetry between publication count and citation effect. Despite having less citations, Pedro Mendonca likewise has excellent network collaboration with 301 link strength. A group of authors including Barry Brown, Airi Lampinen, and Riyaj Shaikh have shared a high link strength (542) with little citations (8) which indicated the robust collaboration networks with limited citation impact. Similar to this, authors such as Rahul Yadav, Anjali Gupta, Ashish Nair, Sayan Ranu, and Amitabha Bagchi have a moderate publication counts with lower citation counts and link strengths. This shows the need to have their research more widely recognized. While others Veen, Barratt, and Goods have less citations but significant connection strengths, indicates the possibility of greater research impact through international collaborations and wider dissemination. They also have their crucial position in bibliometric networks.

Table 6 Top 5 highly cited publications on OFD

S.No.	Document title	Year	Source	Citation Score
1.	Riders on the storm: workplace solidarity among gig economy couriers in Italy and the UK	2019	Work employment and society	460
2.	Algorithmic control in platform food delivery work	2019	Socius sociological research for a dynamic world	267
3.	"Is your gig any good?" analyzing job quality in the Australian platform-based food delivery sector	2019	Journal of industrial relations	248
4.	Algorithmic surveillance in the gig economy: the organization of work through lefebvrian conceived space	2020	Organization studies	221
5.	'I'm my own boss…': active intermediation and 'entrepreneurial' worker agency in the Australian gig-economy	2020	Environment and planning a economy and space	140

Source: Dimensions.ai & VOSviewer Software

The table 6 presented above, has shown five influential research publications on the gig economy and platform-based food delivery work, they were all published between 2019 and 2020. This indicates a surge in academic interest during this period. Their effect is demonstrated by their citation scores, the study that received the most citations (460) examined the workplace solidarity among gig workers in Italy and the UK. Some additional research has examined the fundamental aspects that represented the significant issues in platform-based labour, including algorithmic control, job quality, worker agency and monitoring. The scientific value of these works is further supported by their publication in respectable journals such as Work, Employment, and Society and Organisation Studies. Collectively, these research studies have been provided insightful information regarding the evolving nature of gig work, its difficulties, and its effects on employees.

CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study has aimed to provide valuable insights into the global publication trends, bibliometric coupling, citation analysis and keyword patterns in the research domain. The study revealed a significant rise in academic contributions over the past decade with a relatively high increase after 2019, reflecting growing academic interest over the time. In this study, bibliometric coupling highlighted the dominance of countries like the United States, China, and the United Kingdom on the research domain with the highest publications, a good number of citations on their publications and strong networking. However, countries like India, Australia, France and Canada are the emerging economics in the field of research on online food delivery and gig economy. While institutions such as The University of Sydney and The University of Western Australia have been emerged as a key contributor in the research. Some of the other institutions like Edith Cowan University, University College Dublin, University of Lisbon, Carnegie Mellon University, and Stockholm University are also showing their interest on this particular domain of research. Leading authors with substantial networks of collaboration and research influence include Alex Veen, Tom Barratt, Caleb Goods, Cosmin Popan, and Abhijnan Chakraborty. Moreover, the Journal of Industrial Relations, New Technology, Work and Employment, and Work, Employment and Society are notable sources with a significant influence. In order to promote research awareness, the findings underscored the importance of multidisciplinary research, international collaboration, and enhanced participation to enhance research visibility. Overall this study served as a foundation for future bibliometric analyses, enabling scholars to understand evolving research trends, highly influential countries, institutions, journal and authors. Further areas of bibliometric study may include consumer's satisfaction on online food delivery, employment in the gig economy and other related aspects for future exploration.

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