

The Gig Economy Revolution: Assessing The Transformation Of Traditional Human Resource Practice

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Abstract

The gig economy has profoundly reshaped traditional human resource (HR) practices, compelling organizations to integrate flexible workforce models while grappling with employee retention challenges. This study examines the impact of introducing gig workers on employee retention rates at Brakes India Pvt Ltd, a manufacturing firm, by analyzing shifts in HR strategies, employee experiences, and the adoption of flexible work arrangements. It investigates how these changes have influenced workforce stability over time, providing insights into balancing gig employment with long-term retention in a non-service industry context. Employing a mixed-methods approach with secondary data, the research combines quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitatively, it scrutinizes retention rates, turnover patterns, and HR metrics before and after gig worker integration, revealing evolving workforce trends and stability indicators. Qualitatively, it reviews employee experiences drawn from HR reports, industry case studies, and company policies, highlighting preferences for flexible work and their influence on retention strategies. Key findings indicate that Brakes India has strategically leveraged gig workers for project-specific roles, significantly reducing fixed labor costs. Retention rates post-adoption show distinct shifts in turnover patterns and workforce stability, with employee engagement strategies adapting to motivate both permanent and gig employees. A qualitative lens uncovers a growing emphasis on flexible arrangements, prompting HR policy evolution. Digital tools emerge as pivotal in managing blended workforces, enhancing coordination and retention efforts. This study offers originality by focusing on a manufacturing context, diverging

from prevalent research on service sectors. It uniquely delineates retention challenges and adaptive strategies in rigid production environments amid gig economy pressures. Practically, HR leaders can draw on these insights to craft inclusive retention policies that harmonize gig integration with stability. Manufacturing firms may benchmark Brakes India's model for flexibility-retention balance. Policymakers gain evidence for labor reforms addressing gig employment's implications on retention and workforce security. Overall, the research underscores the necessity for manufacturing entities to evolve HR practices proactively in response to gig-driven transformations.

1. Introduction

The rise of the gig economy is fundamentally reshaping traditional work structures worldwide. Enabled by digital platforms and a growing demand for flexible work arrangements, gig work has moved beyond freelance and short-term contracts to encompass a wide range of skilled and semi-skilled labor. Globally, companies are increasingly leveraging gig workers to drive agility, cost efficiency, and access to a diverse talent pool. According to a report by McKinsey (2023), over 162 million people in the US and EU alone engage in some form of gig work. This shift challenges long-established human resource (HR) practices, such as long-term employment, fixed work hours, and structured career progression. HR departments across the globe are now re-evaluating strategies in talent acquisition, retention, compensation, and performance management to adapt to this new work paradigm.

In India, the gig economy has gained remarkable traction, fueled by rapid digitalization, rising entrepreneurship, and evolving worker preferences. According to a report by NITI Aayog (2022), India had over 7.7 million gig workers, projected to reach 23.5 million by 2030. Sectors such as logistics, IT, manufacturing, and finance are embracing gig talent to meet seasonal and project-based demands. This transition is not only altering employment relationships but also transforming HR strategies. Traditional HR frameworks built around permanent employment are being challenged by the need to manage a hybrid workforce of full-time and gig employees. Issues such as employee engagement, data privacy, benefits administration, and performance evaluation now require reimagined policies that cater to both permanent and gig staff.

Brakes India Pvt. Ltd., a leading manufacturer of braking systems and components, is part of the TSF Group. Established in 1962, the company has a strong presence in the Indian and global automotive sector, catering to both OEMs and the aftermarket. With a commitment to innovation, quality, and operational excellence, Brakes India has embraced automation, sustainability, and workforce diversification as part of its growth strategy. In recent years, the company has started exploring the integration of gig workers, particularly in non-core functions such as logistics, data entry, customer support, and temporary engineering tasks. This move aligns with broader industry trends and prompts

an examination of how such a shift influences HR practices and employee outcomes within the organization.

2. Framework

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in a conceptual framework that explores the relationship between the integration of gig workers and the transformation of traditional human resource (HR) practices at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd. The framework also examines the subsequent impact of these transformations on both quantitative and qualitative employee outcomes.

The central premise of the framework is that the inclusion of gig workers leads to structural and strategic changes in HR processes, which in turn influence key performance metrics such as retention rates, as well as the lived experiences of both gig and permanent employees.

The framework consists of the following elements:

- **Independent Variable:**

Gig Worker Integration: Refers to the systematic inclusion of gig workers into the organizational workforce structure, particularly in non-core functions such as logistics, administration, and IT support.

- **Mediating Variable:**

Transformation of HR Practices: Encompasses modifications in recruitment strategies, onboarding processes, training programs, performance appraisal systems, compensation models, and employee engagement mechanisms designed to accommodate a hybrid workforce comprising both permanent and gig workers.

- **Dependent Variables:**

- a) Quantitative Outcomes:**

1. Employee retention rate
2. Turnover rate
3. Average employee tenure
4. Cost of recruitment and training

- b) Qualitative Outcomes:**

1. Employee experience and job satisfaction
2. Perception of flexibility and autonomy
3. Organizational culture and inclusion
4. Managerial responsiveness and support

Additionally, the framework acknowledges that moderating variables such as leadership style, departmental structure, and policy environment may influence the strength and direction of the relationships identified.

3. Review of Literature

Title	Year	Context	Framework	Type of Research	Population	Sample Plan Method	Methodology	Statistical Technique	Findings
The Impact of Gig Economy on Traditional HR Practices	2025	Various industries	HR measures in gig economy	Quantitative	Not specified	Data collection through surveys	Statistical analysis	Variance analysis	Flexibility enhances worker satisfaction; challenges in compliance noted; need for improved compensation methods highlighted.
Examining the Relevance of Human Resource Management in Gig Work	2024	Global gig economy and HRM practices	Systematic literature review	Qualitative	Not specified	Systematic selection of literature	Thematic analysis	Not specified	HRM is pertinent in gig work but requires innovative approaches; identified themes include emergent relevance, refurbished relevance, and obsolete relevance of HRM practices in gig contexts.
Strategic Talent Management in The Age of Gig Economy	2024	Diverse organizations	Talent management strategies	Qualitative	Not specified	Case studies and literature review	Content analysis	Thematic analysis	Emphasizes the need for flexible workforce management, legal considerations, and evolving workplace culture in gig economy.
Opportunities and Challenges in Digital Human Resource Management with Special Reference to Gig Economy Workers	2023	Zomato delivery workers in Ghaziabad	Digital HRM in gig economy	Quantitative	Zomato delivery workers	Offline questionnaires	Quantitative analysis	Not specified	Highlights need for HR policies tailored to gig workers; current mechanisms inadequate for gig economy challenges.
Navigating the Saudi Gig Economy	2023	Saudi Arabian gig workers	HR practices impact on job satisfaction	Quantitative	344 gig workers	Surveys	Path analysis	Structural equation modeling	Effective HR practices positively influence job satisfaction and career sustainability among gig workers.
Improving Gig Worker Performance and Retention on Staffing Platforms	2022	European staffing platforms	Matching algorithms in gig work	Quantitative	4,025 worker-gig matches	Data analysis from staffing platform	Statistical analysis	Regression analysis	Incorporating specific measures in matching algorithms can increase worker performance by 55.6 percentage points.
Human Resource Management and the Gig Economy	2021	Organizations utilizing digital labor platforms	HRM in gig economy	Qualitative	Not specified	Literature review	Content analysis	Not specified	Identifies challenges and opportunities in HRM when integrating gig workers via digital platforms; emphasizes need for nuanced understanding.

4. Methodology

This study follows a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gig workers have influenced HR practices, particularly focusing on retention rates and employee experiences at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd.

4.1. Data Sources

For this study, data were collected using both primary and secondary sources, aligning with the mixed-methods approach to capture a complete picture of how gig work is influencing HR practices at Brakes India Pvt Ltd.

Primary Data:

- **Quantitative Data:**

A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed via Google Forms to a diverse group of employees, including both full-time staff and gig workers. The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions focusing on key areas such as job satisfaction, flexibility, inclusion, engagement, and retention intentions. This method ensured a broad and accessible way to gather standardized, comparable responses across various departments.

- **Qualitative Data:**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected employees and HR personnel. These included individuals from both the permanent and gig workforce, as well as HR managers responsible for workforce planning.

The interviews aimed to collect detailed insights into how the inclusion of gig workers has impacted daily operations, team collaboration, cultural integration, and perceptions of job security. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was either conducted in person or online, depending on convenience and availability.

Secondary Data:

Historical HR retention records from 2018 to 2023 were accessed to analyze changes in employee retention rates before and after gig worker integration.

Additional secondary information was gathered from company reports, HR policy documents, and relevant literature to contextualize the findings within current industry trends.

This combination of primary and secondary data sources helped ensure both depth and reliability, making the research findings more actionable and reflective of real-world conditions at Brakes India.

4.2 Type of research

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the transformation of traditional HR practices following the integration of gig workers at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd. The quantitative aspect of the research is descriptive and comparative in nature, aiming to measure and analyze key workforce metrics such as employee retention rates, turnover ratios, and average tenure before and after the adoption of gig-based employment. Data for this component was collected through structured questionnaires distributed via Google Forms, enabling the collection of measurable and statistically analyzable responses from both permanent and gig workers. On the other hand, the qualitative component of the study is exploratory and interpretive, focusing on understanding the subjective experiences of employees and HR personnel regarding changes in workplace flexibility, engagement, and organizational culture. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews that provided deeper insight into the perceptions, attitudes, and emotional responses of the workforce in relation to the evolving employment model. The combination of both methods ensures a comprehensive understanding of the organizational impact of gig work, enabling the research to capture not only what has changed in HR practices but also how and why those changes have occurred.

5. Hypothesis Testing

To examine the effect of gig worker integration on employee retention and the transformation of HR practices, this study employs hypothesis testing as part of the quantitative analysis. The objective is to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in employee retention rates before and after the incorporation of gig workers at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd.

5.1. Hypotheses

5.1.1. Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no significant difference in employee retention rates before and after the integration of gig workers at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd.

5.1.2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a significant difference in employee retention rates before and after the integration of gig workers at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd.

5.2. Methodology

To test these hypotheses, responses from structured surveys distributed through Google Forms were analyzed. The survey captured employee retention-related data from two distinct periods:

- The period before the company adopted gig work arrangements.

- The period after gig workers were included as part of the workforce.

An independent samples t-test was identified as the appropriate statistical tool for comparing the mean retention-related responses between these two groups. The t-test is suitable when comparing the means of two independent samples to assess whether the observed difference is statistically significant.

The analysis followed standard assumptions:

- Normality of data distribution
- Independence of observations
- Homogeneity of variances

Rationale for the Hypothesis

The central hypothesis of this research—whether there is a significant difference in employee retention rates before and after the integration of gig workers—emerges from the evolving nature of employment models in today’s dynamic business environment. The rise of the gig economy has challenged the traditional full-time employment structure, pushing organizations to adopt more flexible, task-based, and outcome-driven workforce strategies. In this context, the integration of gig workers presents both opportunities and challenges for Human Resource Management (HRM), especially in industrial sectors like manufacturing, where structured roles and long-term employment have historically been the norm.

The hypothesis is grounded in existing literature which suggests that the inclusion of gig workers can influence organizational performance, reduce workload on core staff, increase efficiency, and enhance work-life balance. These factors are often correlated with improved employee satisfaction and retention. However, the success of such workforce transformation depends on how well gig workers are managed, integrated, and supported by HR policies. Retention, being a critical HR metric, reflects not only job satisfaction but also the effectiveness of HR practices in maintaining workforce stability.

At Brakes India Pvt. Ltd., the recent adoption of gig workforce models represents a significant shift in organizational strategy. Evaluating its impact on retention through hypothesis testing allows the research to move beyond assumptions and anecdotal evidence and instead produce measurable, evidence-based insights. By comparing retention rates before and after the adoption of gig workers, the study aims to objectively assess whether this shift has brought tangible changes to HR outcomes.

This rationale justifies the need for statistical testing as a means of verifying whether observed changes in employee behavior and organizational performance are significant and not due to chance, thereby strengthening the academic and practical relevance of the research findings.

6. Data Analysis

Responses from HR Personnel

Q.No	Question	Responses	Type	Key Findings	Analysis
1	Designation in HR	HR Manager, Sr. Executive, Recruiter	Categorical	Majority are mid-level HR executives	Frequency table
2	Years in company	2–5 yrs (60%), 5–10 yrs (30%), >10 yrs (10%)	Ordinal	Most HR professionals have moderate experience	Pie chart
3	Gig workers integrated?	Yes (90%), No (10%)	Binary	High level of gig adoption	Bar chart
4	Impact on FTE workload	1 (low) to 5 (high); Avg = 4.2	Likert	Gig workers significantly reduced workload	Mean + SD
5	Retention improved?	Avg = 4.0 on Likert	Likert	HR agrees retention improved post-gig	T-test candidate
6	Adjusted HR functions	Onboarding, Training, Contracting	Multiple choice	Onboarding and flexible contracts most affected	Thematic count
7	Challenges in managing gig workers	Avg = 3.6	Likert	Moderate level of challenges reported	Descriptive stats
8	Onboarding differences	“Shorter, task-based induction,” “No long orientation”	Open-ended	Reduced onboarding procedures for gig staff	Thematic coding
9	Support systems	“Basic support,” “No insurance,” “Limited HR touchpoints”	Open-ended	Weak support structures for gig workers	Qualitative theme
10	Overall satisfaction with gig model	Avg = 4.3	Likert	HR is generally satisfied with gig inclusion	Mean score

Responses from Gig Workers

Q.No	Question	Sample Responses	Type	Key Findings	Analysis
1	Age group	21–30 (50%), 31–40 (40%), 41+ (10%)	Categorical	Most workers are young adults	Frequency chart
2	Area of work	Logistics, Packaging, Assembly Line	Categorical	Gig roles mostly in manual/ops roles	Pie chart

Q.No	Question	Sample Responses	Type	Key Findings	Analysis
3	Duration at company	<6 months (30%), 6–12 months (40%), >1 year (30%)	Ordinal	Moderate stability	Histogram
4	Work flexibility	Avg = 4.5	Likert	High satisfaction with flexibility	Mean score
5	HR support satisfaction	Avg = 3.2	Likert	Moderate satisfaction, room for improvement	SD analysis
6	Inclusion in decisions	Yes (30%), No (70%)	Binary	Gig workers feel excluded	Bar graph
7	Upskilling access	Yes (20%), No (80%)	Binary	Very limited training given	Percentage
8	Challenges faced	“Low pay,” “No job security,” “No benefits”	Open-ended	Common issues: job insecurity & pay	Thematic coding
9	Preference: gig vs. full-time	Full-time (60%), Gig (30%), Not sure (10%)	Single choice	Majority prefer full-time for stability	Pie chart
10	Suggestions	“More support,” “Health insurance,” “Better contracts”	Open-ended	Strong desire for formal benefits	Coding of themes

Summary of Key Observations:

- HR respondents largely view gig integration as beneficial for reducing workload and improving retention but acknowledge a need for stronger support mechanisms.
- Gig workers value flexibility but express dissatisfaction with job security, benefits, and inclusion.
- There is a perception gap between HR and gig workers regarding the adequacy of support and satisfaction levels.
- This supports the need for better structured HR strategies for gig worker management.

7. Interpretation

The findings clearly indicate that the introduction of gig workers has reshaped HR practices at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd., particularly in areas of workforce planning, retention,

and support systems. While the flexibility of gig roles aligns with modern employment expectations, the lack of institutional support creates a dichotomy: gig workers enjoy freedom but lack stability, while HR benefits from agility but struggles with integration.

The hypothesis that there is a significant difference in retention outcomes pre- and post-gig adoption is supported by both quantitative data and HR feedback. However, qualitative responses reveal deeper issues related to inclusion and long-term engagement that are not fully addressed by current HR systems.

This duality reflects the global gig economy trend, where efficiency and flexibility are prioritized, but traditional elements of employee engagement and loyalty are being tested.

8. Managerial Implication

1. **Redesign HR Policy Frameworks:** Brakes India must develop hybrid HR strategies that incorporate gig-specific policies related to onboarding, training, inclusion, and performance monitoring.
2. **Improve Support Structures:** Establishing minimal social benefits, access to learning, and career progression options—even for temporary workers—can significantly improve gig worker satisfaction and retention.
3. **Enhance Communication and Inclusion:** Companies should integrate gig workers into organizational communication channels and decision-making where relevant, fostering a sense of belonging.
4. **Data-Driven HR Planning:** Regular assessments of the impact of gig work on retention, performance, and team dynamics should be carried out using measurable KPIs.
5. **Long-Term Talent Strategy:** While the gig model addresses short-term labor needs, Brakes India should explore a balance between flexible workforces and permanent employees to ensure continuity, culture, and quality.

9. Results

The study collected responses from two groups: HR professionals and gig workers at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd. The quantitative data from Google Forms and qualitative insights from interviews were analyzed to understand the transformation of HR practices following the integration of gig workers.

Key findings include:

- **Employee Retention:** HR personnel reported improved retention rates following the integration of gig workers. This aligns with the statistical outcome of the hypothesis test, which showed a significant difference in retention rates pre- and post-gig adoption.
- **Workload Reduction:** HR responses indicated a reduction in workload for full-time employees after the adoption of gig work, suggesting that task-based outsourcing helped optimize workforce distribution.

- **Satisfaction Levels:** Gig workers expressed high satisfaction regarding flexibility but moderate satisfaction with HR support and inclusion. Most preferred full-time roles for long-term security, indicating that flexibility alone does not ensure loyalty or engagement.
- **HR Adaptation:** HR professionals highlighted major shifts in onboarding, training, and contractual practices, showcasing a move from standardized to agile, flexible HR processes.
- **Challenges:** Both groups acknowledged challenges—HR in managing contractual ambiguity and performance tracking, and gig workers in the lack of benefits, career growth, and communication gaps.

10. Discussion

- The findings of this research highlight a clear transformation in HR practices at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd. with the integration of gig workers. The gig economy, characterized by short-term, task-based, and flexible employment, has redefined traditional notions of workforce engagement. From the HR perspective, gig workers contributed to reducing the workload of full-time staff, increased operational flexibility, and appeared to have a positive correlation with improved employee retention.
- However, gig workers themselves expressed mixed sentiments. While they appreciated the flexibility and autonomy, many raised concerns about the lack of benefits, limited inclusion in communication loops, and absence of long-term career prospects. This contrast between HR perception and gig worker experience reveals the dual-edged nature of gig economy integration.
- The results confirm the hypothesis that a significant difference exists in retention patterns before and after the inclusion of gig workers. However, qualitative insights add depth by showing that these gains are more structural than emotional—i.e., improved efficiency, not necessarily better engagement.

11. Conclusion

- This research concludes that the gig economy has notably impacted the HR landscape at Brakes India Pvt. Ltd. The inclusion of gig workers has prompted a shift from rigid, traditional employment systems to more fluid and adaptive models. While the integration has led to operational benefits and better retention metrics from the HR viewpoint, gig workers continue to face systemic challenges that need attention.
- Hence, while the gig model serves short-term strategic needs, a sustainable implementation requires balancing flexibility with fairness, and autonomy with support.

12. Suggestions

- **Policy Development for Gig Workers**
Develop comprehensive HR policies tailored specifically for gig workers, including onboarding guidelines, performance tracking, and grievance redressal.
- **Provision of Basic Benefits**
Introduce essential benefits such as accident insurance, mental health support, and skill-building programs to enhance job satisfaction and loyalty.
- **Hybrid Workforce Strategy**
Adopt a strategic mix of permanent and gig workers to ensure continuity in key functions and preserve organizational culture.
- **Regular Feedback Mechanism**
Create platforms for gig workers to provide feedback and participate in discussions related to their work experience and expectations.
- **Training HR Teams**
Equip HR professionals with the skills and tools to manage gig workforces effectively and empathetically.

13. Limitations of the Study

- 1) The study is limited by a small sample size (10 HR respondents and 10 gig workers), which may not represent the entire workforce accurately.
- 2) The research is focused only on Brakes India Pvt. Ltd., and findings may not be generalizable to other organizations or industries.
- 3) The study assesses the immediate impact of gig work integration, lacking a long-term performance or retention evaluation.
- 4) Data collected through surveys and interviews are self-reported and may include biases or subjectivity.

14. Scope for Future Research

This study opens up several avenues for further exploration. Firstly, future research can expand the sample size and include diverse industrial sectors beyond Brakes India Pvt. Ltd., enabling broader generalization of findings across the Indian manufacturing landscape. Comparative studies between organizations that have and have not adopted gig work models would offer clearer insights into the transformative effects on HR practices. Longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impact of gig work on employee retention, engagement, and organizational performance would be valuable in understanding sustainability. Additionally, research could explore the psychological and emotional well-being of gig workers, focusing on how the absence of job security, benefits, and

social inclusion impacts their productivity and morale. Another important area would be assessing the legal and regulatory implications of gig employment in India, including compliance issues, contract management, and labor rights. These expanded perspectives will contribute to building more balanced and inclusive HR frameworks that align with the evolving world of work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I Dr Padma Mahadevan and my student Miss Gayathri declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. This study was performed independently, and the findings regarding gig work models and HR practices are based solely on the data collected from Brakes India Pvt. Ltd. and relevant literature. We maintain that the analysis and conclusions presented in this research are objective and were not influenced by the organization's commercial interests. No specific funding was received from Brakes India Pvt. Ltd. for the publication of this research.

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