

**Strategizing GIG Workforce Management Through  
Performance Appraisal –  
A Study Among Food Delivery Workers in  
Thiruvananthapuram**

**MA Human Resource Management  
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**Strategizing GIG Workforce Management Through  
Performance Appraisal –  
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**MA Human Resource Management  
Course code: HR 547**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food delivery gig work has grown quickly in Thiruvananthapuram over the past few years, yet it operates outside the usual structures of formal employment. There is no fixed salary, no direct supervisor, and no appraisal process in the conventional sense. Instead, a worker's standing is decided almost entirely by an app, through customer ratings, delivery time, acceptance and cancellation rates, and a tipping system that rarely behaves predictably. This dissertation looks at how Zomato and Swiggy delivery workers in the city actually experience that system: how performance is evaluated, whether tips genuinely move the needle on motivation, and whether workers see any of this as something they could rely on years from now.

Part of the motivation for this topic came from the researcher's own experience working part-time as a Zomato delivery partner, which shaped both the choice of variables studied and how the survey responses were read. That experience made certain issues hard to ignore, tip amounts and per km charges that do not always add up consistently, for instance, and a tiered badge system (Blue, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Diamond) that is marketed as a measure of performance but is widely felt among workers to be arbitrary.

Data for the study was collected from 60 male delivery workers across Thiruvananthapuram, all working for Zomato or Swiggy, using a structured 32 item questionnaire. Responses were analyzed through percentage analysis, mean and standard deviation, and cross-tabulation.

Most respondents are young and treat delivery work as secondary income rather than a primary occupation. Appraisal is dominated by automated ratings and metrics, human review is rare, and feedback tends to arrive only when something has gone wrong rather than as ongoing guidance. Tips do appear to push workers toward accepting more orders and putting in more effort. No sense of long-term security. Most respondents have no intention of staying on the platform as their main livelihood five years from now, and fewer still think of it as a career.

Taken together, findings suggest that while food delivery platforms have built reasonably effective systems for driving short-term motivation and operational performance, they have not yet addressed the deeper structural gaps that is limited human centered feedback, unpredictable tip-based earnings, and the absence of any career pathway that would be necessary to position gig delivery work as a genuinely sustainable, long-term livelihood option. Addressing these gaps, as outlined in the suggestions above, would benefit not only the workers themselves but also the platforms that increasingly depend on a stable, motivated, and long-term delivery workforce.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management has traditionally been built around structured employment relationship; fixed job roles, defined reporting hierarchies, periodic performance appraisals conducted by supervisors, and long-term career planning within an organization. However, the last decade has witnessed a fundamental shift in how work itself is organized, driven largely by digital platforms that connect independent workers with customers on a task-by-task basis. This model of employment, widely referred to as the "gig economy," has given rise to an entirely new category of worker, one who is technically self-employed but functionally dependent on and governed by a platform's algorithms, policies, and rating systems.

Food delivery services represent one of the most visible and rapidly growing segments of gig economy in India. Platforms such as Zomato and Swiggy have built large delivery workforces that operate without the conventional HR infrastructure of fixed wages, formal supervision, or structured appraisal systems. Instead, worker performance is evaluated continuously through customer ratings, delivery efficiency metrics, and platform-generated scores, which directly determine order allocation, incentive eligibility, and overall earning potential.

This shift raises important questions for the field of Human Resource Management. How is "performance" defined and measured when there is no traditional manager-employee relationship? What replaces formal appraisal, feedback, and career development in a gig-based work environment? And most critically, does this system support or undermine the motivation and long-term sustainability of the workers who depend on it? These questions form the broader intellectual context within which this study is situated, before narrowing focus to the specific background, problem, and objectives outlined in the sections that follow.

Against this background, the present study examines the performance appraisal practices adopted by food delivery platforms and explores how these practices influence the motivation and long-term livelihood intentions of gig workers in Thiruvananthapuram. By focusing on the experiences and perceptions of delivery workers, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of gig workforce management and provide insights that may help create fairer, more transparent, and more sustainable human resource practices within the growing gig economy.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The emergence of the gig economy has fundamentally reshaped the traditional employer-employee relationship across the globe. India has witnessed one of the fastest rates of adoption of this model in recent years. Gig work, characterized by short-term, flexible, and task-based engagements rather than permanent employment contracts, has expanded rapidly across sectors such as transportation, logistics, and food delivery. Platforms such as Zomato and Swiggy have become central to this shift, engaging thousands of delivery workers across the nation.

Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, has similarly experienced significant growth in gig-based food delivery services over the past few years. With increasing urbanization, smartphone penetration, and consumer reliance on food delivery applications, a growing number of individuals have turned to platform-based delivery work as either a primary or secondary source of income. Unlike conventional organizations, these platforms do not follow standard human resource management practices such as fixed salaries, formal appointment letters, structured grievance redressal mechanisms, or traditional performance appraisal systems involving direct supervisory evaluation.

Instead, performance evaluation on these platforms is largely automated, driven by data points such as customer ratings, on-time delivery percentage, order acceptance rate, and cancellation rate. These metrics directly influence a worker's visibility for future orders, incentive eligibility, and overall standing on the platform. This system raises important questions about fairness, transparency, and its actual effectiveness in capturing the full scope of a worker's effort and performance.

Adding to this complexity is the role of the customer tipping system, which forms a variable but often significant portion of a gig worker's total earnings. Because tips are discretionary and inconsistently distributed, they introduce an additional layer of uncertainty into a worker's income and, by extension, their motivation to continue working under such conditions. Given the absence of long-term job security, structured career progression, or formal HR support systems, questions have increasingly been raised — both in academic literature and in public discourse — about whether gig work of this nature can serve as a sustainable, long-term source of livelihood.

It is within this context that the present study seeks to examine the performance appraisal practices adopted by food delivery platforms, understand their relationship with worker motivation (particularly through the tip system), and examine gig workers' perceptions of this form of employment as a sustainable, long-term livelihood option..

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

The rapid expansion of the gig economy has transformed the nature of employment, particularly in sectors such as food delivery, where platforms like Zomato and Swiggy have become major sources of income for a growing segment of the urban workforce in Thiruvananthapuram. Unlike traditional employment structures, gig work operates without conventional human resource practices, relying instead on algorithm-driven performance evaluation systems based on customer ratings, delivery time, acceptance rate, and cancellation rate.

While these metrics offer a measurable and scalable basis for evaluating worker output, they often fail to capture the holistic performance, effort, and contextual challenges faced by delivery workers — such as traffic conditions, weather, restaurant preparation delays, or customer unavailability, all of which are largely outside a worker's control yet can still negatively affect their ratings and standing on the platform. This creates a fundamental misalignment between how performance is measured and what actually constitutes fair or accurate evaluation of a worker's effort.

Furthermore, the absence of formal, constructive feedback mechanisms — beyond automated ratings — limits opportunities for skill development and professional growth among gig workers. Workers typically receive a numerical score or rating with little to no explanation of specific areas for improvement, and there is no structured channel through which they can contest unfair ratings or seek clarification, unlike in traditional appraisal systems that involve direct supervisor interaction.

The tip system, which reportedly forms a significant portion of worker income, adds another layer of complexity to this picture. Because tips are entirely discretionary and inconsistently distributed across orders, they introduce variability into a worker's earnings that is difficult to predict or plan around. This raises questions about whether reliance on tips as a motivational and income tool is sustainable, and whether its lack of transparency undermines workers' trust in the overall fairness of the platform's compensation structure.

Taken together, these issues — algorithmic evaluation that may not reflect true performance, lack of constructive feedback, income unpredictability tied to tipping, and absence of career progression — raise serious concerns about the long-term sustainability of gig work as a viable livelihood option. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the performance appraisal mechanisms adopted by food delivery platforms in Thiruvananthapuram, assess their relationship with worker motivation, and examine gig workers' own perceptions of this work as a sustainable, long-term livelihood option.

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

This study holds relevance for multiple stakeholders within the gig economy ecosystem, each of whom stands to benefit from a clearer understanding of how performance appraisal, motivation, and sustainability intersect in gig-based food delivery work. For food delivery platforms and their management, the findings can offer evidence-based insights into how current performance appraisal mechanisms — customer ratings, algorithmic monitoring, and objective delivery metrics — are actually perceived by the workers being evaluated. Platforms often design these systems from an operational efficiency standpoint, with limited direct input from workers themselves. This study can help bridge that gap by highlighting specific areas of dissatisfaction or ambiguity in the current appraisal process, enabling platforms to design more balanced, transparent, and motivating evaluation frameworks.

For policymakers and labour welfare bodies, the study contributes to the growing body of evidence needed to inform gig-worker-specific labour policy. In India, there is ongoing policy discourse — including provisions under the Code on Social Security, 2020 — around extending formal social security benefits to gig and platform workers, who currently fall outside traditional labour law protections. Empirical, localized data on worker income patterns, motivation, and sustainability concerns, such as that generated by this study, can support more informed policy discussions at the state and municipal level.

For the gig workers themselves, the study provides a platform through which their lived experiences regarding performance evaluation, income stability, and motivation are documented and given empirical weight — experiences that are frequently overlooked in platform-designed, algorithm-driven systems that prioritize operational metrics over worker perception and wellbeing.

Finally, for future researchers, this study can serve as a reference point or comparative base for further research into other gig sectors (such as ride-hailing or e-commerce delivery), other geographic regions, or longitudinal studies tracking how gig worker sustainability perceptions evolve as the industry matures.

## 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The present study is guided by the following objectives, each aligned with a specific dimension of gig worker experience within the food delivery ecosystem:

1. To study the existing performance appraisal practices adopted by food delivery platforms for gig workers.

This objective seeks to identify and understand the specific methods — such as customer rating scores, algorithmic monitoring, objective performance metrics (delivery time, acceptance rate, cancellation rate), and manual reviews — used by platforms like Zomato and Swiggy to evaluate worker performance. It also examines the extent to which these evaluation criteria are transparent and clearly communicated to workers, and whether formal feedback mechanisms exist beyond automated scoring.

2. To understand the level of motivation among gig workers in the context of the customer tipping system.

This objective focuses on assessing gig workers' overall motivation to continue platform work, and specifically examines the role that customer tips play in shaping this motivation. It explores whether tips influence workers' willingness to accept orders, the effort they put into service delivery, and whether the presence or absence of tips affects the number of hours they choose to work.

3. To examine the perception of gig workers regarding platform based food delivery work as a sustainable long term livelihood.

This objective focuses on understanding gig workers' perception of platform-based food delivery work as a sustainable long-term livelihood. It examines whether workers consider food delivery to be a stable career option or merely a temporary source of income. The objective also explores how factors such as financial security, stable earnings, and sustained motivation influence their willingness to continue working in the platform over the long term.

Together, these three objectives are designed to build a comprehensive picture — starting from how performance is currently evaluated, moving to how that evaluation (along with tipping) affects motivation, and finally, how that motivation translates into long-term commitment to gig work as a livelihood.

## 1.5 Scope of the Study

The present study is confined to gig workers engaged in food delivery services on the Zomato and Swiggy platforms, operating within the geographical boundaries of Thiruvananthapuram city, Kerala. Respondents were drawn from across the city's North Zone (Kazhakootam), Central Zone (Thampanoor), and South Zone (Neyyattinkara), providing reasonable geographical coverage within the urban limits.

The study is based on primary data collected from 60 respondents through a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms, covering four broad areas: respondent demographics and work profile, performance appraisal practices, motivation in relation to the tipping system, and perceptions of long-term livelihood sustainability. The study is quantitative and descriptive in nature, relying on structured, closed-ended responses (primarily on a five-point Likert scale) rather than open-ended qualitative exploration.

The scope of the study is limited in the following respects:

- It covers only two food delivery platforms — Zomato and Swiggy — and does not extend to other gig sectors such as ride-hailing, e-commerce delivery, or grocery delivery platforms (e.g., Uber, Ola, Blinkit, Zepto), even though some of these were included as response options in the questionnaire.
- It is restricted to Thiruvananthapuram city and does not claim to represent the experiences of gig workers in other cities, states, or rural/semi-urban contexts.
- The findings are based on a limited sample of 60 respondents and reflect the perceptions and experiences of this specific group at a single point in time, rather than a longitudinal view of how motivation or sustainability perceptions may change over time.
- The study focuses specifically on performance appraisal, motivation (via tipping), and sustainability, and does not extensively cover other HR-related dimensions such as training, workplace safety, or grievance redressal mechanisms, though these may be briefly referenced where relevant.

## **2.REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews existing literature relevant to gig workforce management, algorithmic performance appraisal, worker motivation, tipping, and livelihood sustainability, drawing on studies conducted at the international, national, and regional levels. The review is presented as a continuous discussion of related studies, followed by the identification of the research gap this study seeks to address.

### **2.1 Review of Related Studies**

Vinayachandran, Biju, George, Siby and Joshua (2025) conducted a study titled "Study on Food Based Gig Workers in Kerala for Determining Work Nature and Defining Population Anthropometry." The study aimed to understand the working nature and occupational characteristics of food delivery partners in Kerala. Primary data were collected from 100 food delivery workers employed on digital platforms. The findings revealed that 60.9% of the respondents worked as part-time delivery partners, while the majority were below 26 years of age. On average, delivery partners travelled nearly 100 kilometres per day, exposing them to physical fatigue and health-related issues. The researchers concluded that the demanding nature of food delivery work necessitates ergonomic improvements, better occupational safety measures and supportive workforce management practices to enhance productivity and employee well-being.

Prafullakumar and Uneez (2025) analysed the economic impact of food delivery applications in Kollam District, Kerala. The study examined the effects of platforms such as Swiggy and Zomato on consumers, restaurants and delivery partners using data collected from 130 respondents, including delivery workers. The findings indicated that food delivery platforms have created employment opportunities and increased income generation for delivery partners. However, workers also reported challenges such as fluctuating earnings, high fuel expenses, work pressure and dependency on customer demand. The researchers recommended improving incentive policies, ensuring fair earnings and strengthening support mechanisms for delivery partners to achieve sustainable workforce management.

The Kerala Institute of Labour and Employment (KILE) (2024) carried out a comprehensive research study titled "Worklife and Challenges of Platform Workers in Kerala – Case of App-based Food Delivery and Transport Workers." The study explored the working conditions, income, occupational challenges and employment experiences of app-based workers across Kerala. The findings revealed that food delivery partners frequently faced income uncertainty, long working hours, algorithm-based performance monitoring and the absence of social security benefits. The study further highlighted that earnings depended heavily on customer demand, incentives and platform-generated ratings.

Hussain (2024) conducted an ethnographic study on algorithmic management among food delivery workers in India, focusing primarily on Swiggy and Zomato delivery partners. The research was carried out over 25 months in Hyderabad, including participant observation where the researcher worked as a delivery partner and interviewed workers and platform personnel. The study found that delivery partners are continuously monitored through GPS tracking, delivery time, customer ratings, order acceptance rate and cancellation rate. These algorithmic systems significantly influence order allocation, earnings and incentives. The study concluded that although technology improves operational efficiency, excessive algorithmic control reduces worker autonomy and increases occupational stress among delivery partners.

Gupta, Yadav, Nair, Chakraborty, Ranu and Bagchi (2022) developed the FairFoody model to improve fairness in order allocation among food delivery partners in India. Using real-world data collected from food delivery platforms operating in three Indian cities, the researchers proposed an algorithm that distributes delivery orders more equitably while maintaining timely customer service. The findings showed that unequal order allocation was one of the major reasons for income disparity among delivery partners. The FairFoody model substantially improved fairness in earnings without negatively affecting delivery efficiency. The study recommended that food delivery platforms adopt equitable performance management practices to enhance worker motivation and reduce income inequality.

Saini et al. (2024) analysed the job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of employees working in India's largest online food delivery company through qualitative content analysis of employee reviews posted on online platforms. The study identified salary, work-life balance, organisational culture, flexibility, company environment and career opportunities as the major determinants of employee satisfaction. Dissatisfaction was mainly associated with workload, favouritism, irregular incentives and limited work-life balance. The researchers concluded that improving HR policies and transparent performance appraisal systems could significantly enhance employee satisfaction and organisational commitment among food delivery workers.

Suvarnapathaki, Shah, Negi and Rangaswamy (2025) examined the invisible labour performed by food delivery partners working for Swiggy and Zomato in India. Through semi-structured interviews with delivery workers, the researchers identified waiting time, repetitive app interactions and continuous monitoring as significant but often overlooked aspects of platform work. Delivery partners reported spending substantial unpaid time waiting for restaurant orders and responding to frequent application notifications, reducing both productivity and job satisfaction. The study recommended worker-centred platform design and improved digital interfaces to minimise unnecessary workload and support employee well-being.

Fernando (2025) investigated the Quality of Work Life (QWL) of Zomato delivery partners in Thoothukudi District, Tamil Nadu. Using a structured questionnaire administered to 50 delivery executives, the study found that most respondents were young graduates attracted by flexible working hours and independent work. A majority reported satisfaction with their working environment and perceived their jobs as secure. Performance was identified as the primary criterion for incentives and career progression. The study recommended introducing wellness initiatives, flexible scheduling and career development programmes to improve work-life balance and reduce burnout among delivery partners.

Harikrishna and Kotteeswaran (2026) conducted a quantitative study among 103 delivery partners working with Swiggy, Zomato, Zepto and Eatsure in Chennai. The research examined how workload, technological reliability and delivery system design affected service quality and organisational productivity. Statistical analysis revealed that high workload significantly increased complaints and reduced job satisfaction, while reliable GPS technology positively influenced delivery performance. The study concluded that improving technological support and balancing workloads could enhance both employee productivity and customer satisfaction.

Parwez (2021) examined the precarious nature of food delivery work in India during the rapid expansion of digital platforms. The study reported that although food delivery services generated large-scale employment opportunities, delivery partners experienced irregular income, absence of social security, long working hours and dependence on customer ratings for incentives. The researcher observed that algorithm-based management increased pressure to complete deliveries quickly while limiting workers' bargaining power. The study recommended stronger labour protection policies and transparent performance evaluation mechanisms to improve the quality of employment for food delivery partners.

The reviewed studies demonstrate that performance appraisal plays a crucial role in influencing the productivity, motivation and job satisfaction of food delivery partners. While substantial research has examined working conditions, algorithmic management and occupational challenges at the international and national levels, comparatively limited research has specifically explored the relationship between performance appraisal practices and workforce management among food delivery partners in Thiruvananthapuram. Therefore, the present study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how performance appraisal practices influence the motivation and productivity of food delivery workers and by suggesting strategies for improving gig workforce management in the local context.

Kerala-specific literature is sparse, and none examines performance appraisal as a distinct function. A DJSR study highlighted underdeveloped institutional support and called for state-level intervention. A 2024 study of 100 Kerala food-gig workers found 60.9% part-time, nearly all under 26, averaging ~100 km daily travel — focused on physical workload, not management systems. Kavitha and Parvathy (2023), surveying 55 workers, found most preferred regular employment despite valuing flexibility. In 2024, Kerala's Department of Labour convened a seminar on the Kerala State Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, citing opaque payments and lack of algorithmic transparency (ILO, 2024) — underscoring this study's practical relevance to an active policy conversation.

India-specific work remains concentrated in a few metros and rarely engages the appraisal function directly. A 2021 Coimbatore survey (250 workers) found flexibility was the top reason for joining (48%), but income instability undermined satisfaction. A 2024 Coimbatore study found high work pressure and incentive-dependent pay compromised work-life balance. A 2024 Chennai study (100 workers) confirmed persistent income instability and absent employment benefits. A 2021 DEF India report found Swiggy and Zomato scored 1/10 on a decent-work index, with performance-linked suspensions occurring without due process. A 2023 Bangalore study found higher-skilled workers faced lower precarity, referencing the Kerala Knowledge Economy Mission as a relevant policy response.

A 2025 critical review argues sustainable gig-economy HRM requires trading off efficiency against fairness, accountability and wellbeing, proposing an integrated model this thesis empirically tests. Broader talent-management literature identifies onboarding and engagement best practices but notes these remain largely conceptual and rarely validated with field data, especially in India.

A 2025 study of 292 Chinese delivery workers found a double-edged-sword effect: threat appraisal of monitoring reduced engagement while challenge appraisal increased it, moderated by emotional stability and organisational support; industry turnover was noted at 30–40% annually. Venkataiah (2025) identified income unpredictability, job insecurity and absent grievance mechanisms as central stressors for Hyderabad's Zomato/Swiggy partners. A 2025 cross-platform study found algorithmic control affects engagement through psychological empowerment, moderated by emotional labour.

A 2024 study of 435 Uber drivers (Human Resource Management Journal) found perceived algorithmic fairness varies by decision type and is positively linked to job satisfaction and organisational support. A 2023 review noted customer ratings have effectively replaced conventional HR processes, with deactivation risk below a threshold. A 2025-26 Frontiers in Psychology study found algorithmic control affects workers' willingness to voice concerns via fairness perception, moderated by job insecurity. A 2021 legitimacy study of Uber drivers found perceived fairness raises commitment and lowers turnover intention. A 2026 fsQCA study found algorithmic control affects turnover through psychological contract breach and perceived usefulness, moderated by time pressure. A 2018 meta-analysis found procedural justice has the strongest indirect effect on turnover via burnout and satisfaction — a principle directly transferable to algorithmically rated gig work.

A 2023 topic-modelling study (Technological Forecasting and Social Change) found algorithmic control raised short-term motivation but also unmet expectations for skill development, calling for a human-AI collaborative approach. A 2022 qualitative study of Chinese platforms (Tourism Management) found AM operates as an algorithm-human hybrid, with riders responding through compliance, resistance and emotional coping — responses a purely metric-based system doesn't capture. A 2025 study of 423 Chinese riders found the same monitoring could be appraised as either a hindrance or a challenge depending on individual regulatory focus, showing performance data is filtered subjectively, much like traditional appraisal. A 2024 Finnish study found couriers had almost no direct dialogue with platform staff, undermining the feedback function normal appraisal provides. A 2025 Frontiers in Public Health study linked high-intensity algorithmic control to occupational burnout.

## 2.2 Research Gap

- Limited focus on performance appraisal among food delivery partners: Most existing studies on food delivery workers primarily examine working conditions, occupational stress, earnings, job satisfaction and algorithmic management. Comparatively few studies specifically investigate how performance appraisal practices influence the productivity and motivation of food delivery partners.
- Lack of comprehensive evaluation of performance appraisal dimensions: Previous research has generally analysed individual performance indicators such as customer ratings, delivery time, acceptance rate, cancellation rate or incentive schemes separately. There is limited research that examines the combined effect of these performance appraisal dimensions on the overall performance and motivation of delivery workers.
- Insufficient studies linking performance appraisal with workforce management: Existing literature has largely focused on operational and economic aspects of food delivery platforms, while limited attention has been given to how effective performance appraisal can be strategically used as a Human Resource Management tool for improving workforce management, employee engagement and organisational effectiveness.
- Limited empirical evidence from the Kerala context: Although a few studies have explored the working conditions and challenges of food delivery partners in Kerala, research specifically examining performance appraisal systems and their impact on employee productivity and motivation within the state remains scarce.
- Absence of studies focusing on Thiruvananthapuram: No comprehensive empirical study has been identified that examines the performance appraisal practices adopted by delivery platforms operating in Thiruvananthapuram. Factors such as customer behaviour, traffic conditions, delivery demand and working environment may significantly influence delivery partners' performance, making region-specific research essential.
- Need for strategic recommendations for platform-based workforce management: Most previous studies identify the problems faced by food delivery partners but provide limited practical recommendations for improving performance appraisal systems. Therefore, there is a need to develop strategies that enhance transparency, fairness, employee motivation and productivity, contributing to more effective gig workforce management in food delivery platforms.

- Conceptual gap: AM and organisational-justice studies rarely engage explicitly with performance-appraisal theory (rating methods, feedback dialogue, developmental purpose). They treat algorithmic control and appraisal as parallel literatures rather than examining whether algorithmic mechanisms actually fulfil appraisal's strategic functions — evaluation, development, motivation, workforce planning.
- Geographic gap: No study examines food-delivery performance appraisal or workforce-management strategy specifically in Thiruvananthapuram or within Kerala's labour-market and welfare-policy context. Existing Kerala studies focus on demographics, not appraisal.
- Strategic-managerial gap: Strategic-HRM models balancing efficiency with fairness remain conceptual, untested against a specific local workforce, and not translated into actionable strategy for Kerala platforms, policymakers or worker-welfare bodies.

### **3.METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach. Descriptive research design is appropriate here since the study aims to describe and analyze existing performance appraisal practices, motivation levels, and sustainability perceptions among gig workers, rather than establishing complex causal relationships between variables. The study relies on numerical data collected through a structured questionnaire, which is then analyzed using percentage analysis and basic descriptive statistics.

#### **3.2 Population and Sampling**

- **Population:** The population for this study consists of gig workers engaged in food delivery services for Zomato and Swiggy within Thiruvananthapuram city.
- **Sampling Technique:** A convenience sampling method (a non-probability sampling technique) was adopted for this study. This method was chosen due to the practical difficulty of accessing a complete, formal list of gig workers — since platforms do not publicly share worker databases — making random sampling impractical within the given time frame.
- **Sample Size:** The study is based on responses collected from 60 gig workers, drawn from the North Zone (Kazhakootam), Central Zone (Thampanoor), and South Zone (Neyyattinkara) of Thiruvananthapuram, ensuring reasonable geographical spread across the city.

#### **3.3 Sources of Data**

- **Primary Data:** Primary data was collected directly from gig workers through a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms.
- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data was gathered from published academic journal articles, industry reports (such as NITI Aayog and Fair Work India), and other online sources, used primarily to inform the review of literature and background of the study.

### **3.4 Tool for Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary tool for data collection, consisting of 32 questions divided into four sections:

1. Demographic and Work Profile (Q1–12): Age, gender, city/zone, platform, tenure, primary job status, working hours, income, tips, and vehicle used.
2. Performance Appraisal Practices (Q13–20): Eight statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), addressing rating-based evaluation, objective metrics, algorithmic monitoring, formal reporting, manual review, and clarity of appraisal criteria.
3. Motivation and Tips (Q21–27): Seven Likert-scale statements addressing overall motivation, and the specific influence of tips on order acceptance, effort, service quality, and working hours.
4. Long-Term Livelihood and Sustainability (Q28–32): Five Likert-scale statements addressing perceptions of long term continuation, career viability, financial security, and the role of motivation in sustaining long term engagement.

### **3.5 Variables of the Study**

- Independent Variables: Appraisal Frequency, Appraisal Method, Feedback Quality, Tip System Transparency, Recognition Mechanisms
- Dependent Variables: Motivation Level, Worker Productivity, Perceived Long Term Sustainability.
- Control Variables: Age, Years of Experience, Education, Hours per Day

### **3.6 Tools for Data Analysis**

- Percentage Analysis — used to summarize demographic data and Likert-scale responses across all 32 questions, presented through frequency tables and charts (pie charts, bar graphs).
- Mean and Standard Deviation — calculated for each Likert-scale item to indicate the overall agreement level and the degree of variation in worker responses.
- Cross-tabulation — used selectively to examine relationships between key variables where relevant (e.g., platform vs. motivation, primary/secondary job status vs. sustainability intent).

## 4.DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 Demographic and Work Profile of Respondents

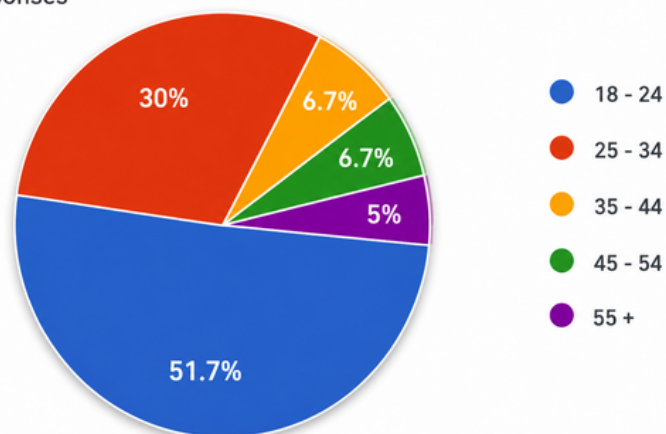
| Age Group | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| 18-24     | 31                 | 51.7%      |
| 25-34     | 18                 | 30.0%      |
| 35-44     | 4                  | 6.7%       |
| 45-54     | 4                  | 6.7%       |
| 55+       | 3                  | 5.0%       |

Table 4.1: Age Distribution

Over 80% of respondents fall within the 18–34 age bracket, indicating that food delivery gig work in Thiruvananthapuram is predominantly taken up by younger individuals, likely reflecting the physical demands of the job and its appeal as flexible, entry-level income for youth.

#### Age (Years)

60 responses



| Gender | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------|--------------------|------------|
| Male   | 60                 | 100%       |

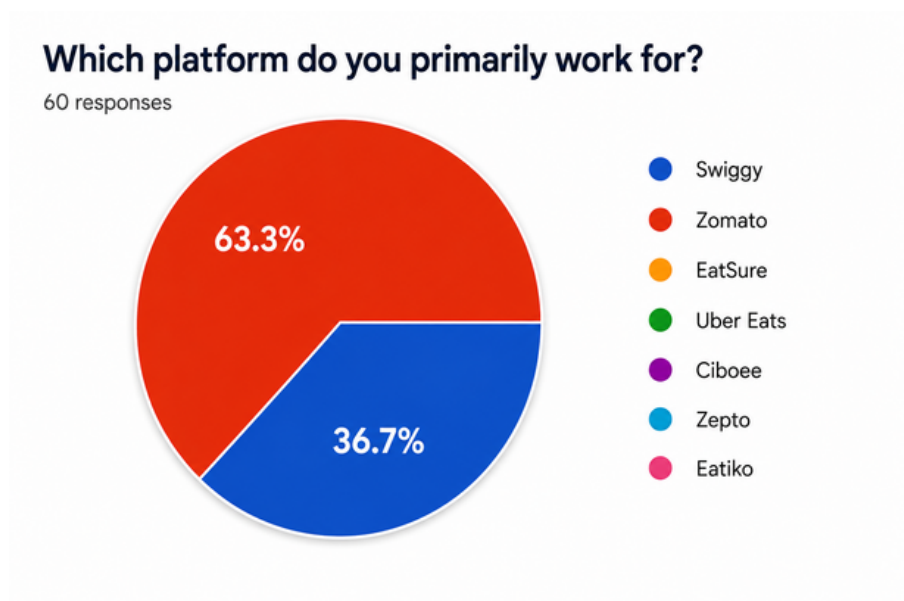
Table 4.2: Gender Distribution

The entire sample consists of male respondents, consistent with existing literature that consistently identifies food delivery gig work as a heavily male-dominated occupation in India.

| Platform | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|----------|--------------------|------------|
| Zomato   | 38                 | 63.3%      |
| Swiggy   | 22                 | 36.7%      |

Table 4.3: Platform Worked For

Zomato is the dominant platform among surveyed workers, with nearly two-thirds of respondents primarily working for it, followed by Swiggy.



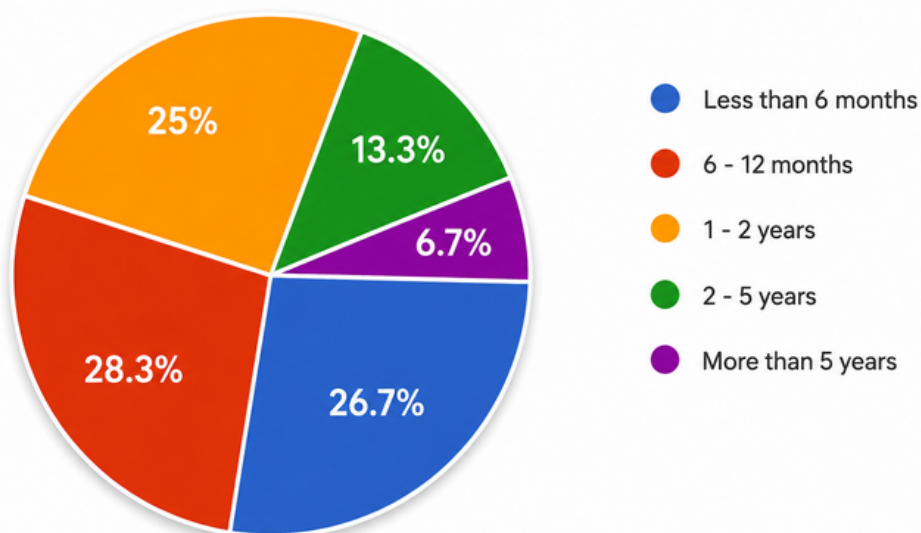
| Duration          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Less than 6months | 16                 | 26.7%      |
| 6-12 months       | 17                 | 28.3%      |
| 1-2 years         | 15                 | 25.0%      |
| 2-5 years         | 8                  | 13.3%      |
| More than 5 years | 4                  | 6.7%       |

Table 4.4: Work Tenure on Platform

More than half the sample (55%) has worked on their platform for less than a year, suggesting relatively high entry/turnover in this workforce, while a smaller core (about 20%) has stayed on for 2+ years.

### How long have you worked on this platform?

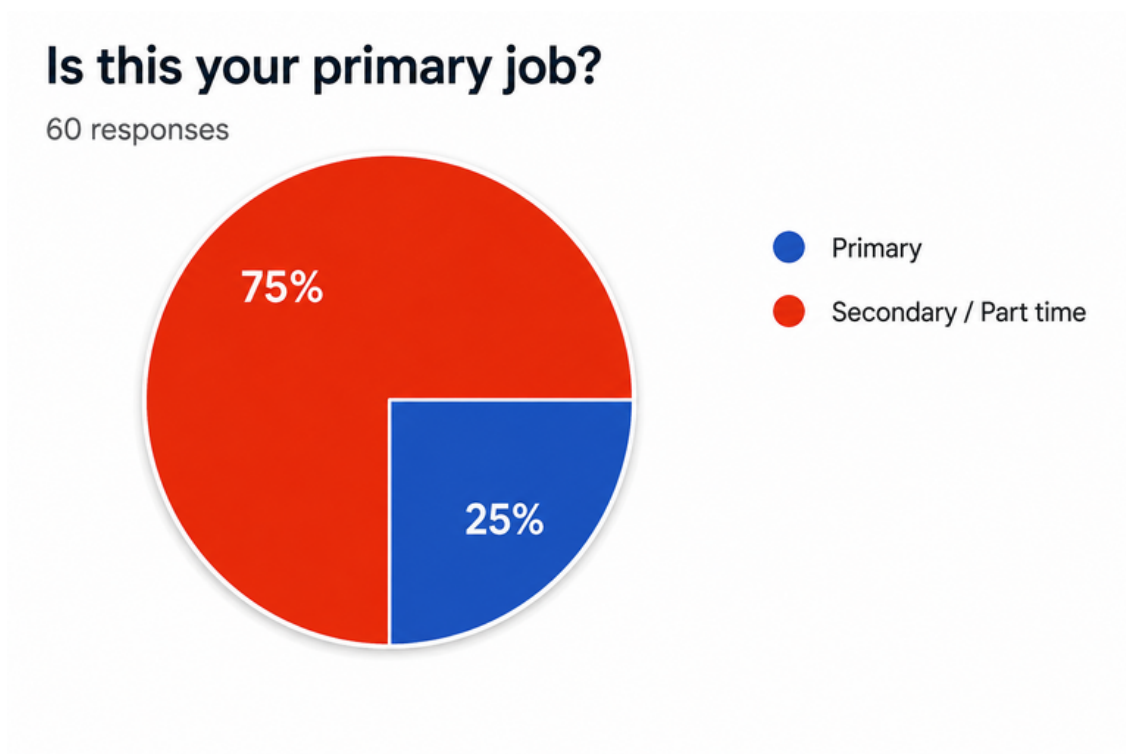
60 responses



| Status    | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| Secondary | 45                 | 75.0%      |
| Primary   | 15                 | 25.0%      |

Table 4.5: Primary vs Secondary Job Status

Three-quarters of respondents treat gig delivery work as a secondary or part-time income source rather than their primary occupation — an important context for interpreting later questions on long-term livelihood intent



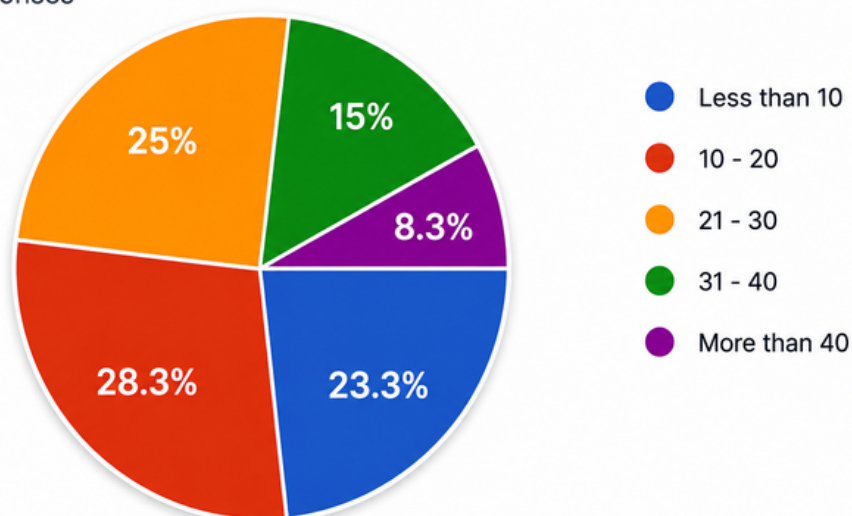
| Hours/Week   | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|
| Less than 10 | 14                 | 23.3%      |
| 10-20        | 17                 | 28.3%      |
| 21-30        | 15                 | 25.0%      |
| 31-40        | 9                  | 15.0%      |
| More than 40 | 5                  | 8.3%       |

Table 4.6: Weekly Working Hours

Working hours are fairly spread out, with just over half the sample (51.6%) working 20 hours or fewer per week — reinforcing that gig work functions more as supplementary income for the majority.

### On average, how many hours per week do you work on the platform?

60 responses



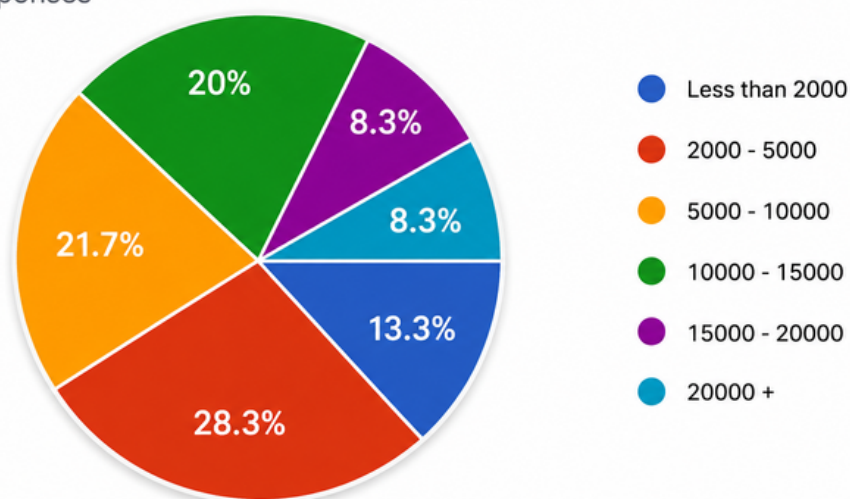
| Income         | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| Less than 2000 | 8                  | 13.3%      |
| 2000-5000      | 17                 | 28.3%      |
| 5000-10000     | 13                 | 21.7%      |
| 10000-15000    | 12                 | 20.0%      |
| 15000-20000    | 5                  | 8.3%       |
| 20000+         | 5                  | 8.3%       |

Table 4.7: Average Monthly Income (INR)

Monthly earnings are concentrated in the lower-to-mid range, with 63.3% of respondents earning below ₹10,000/month from platform work — consistent with its role as a secondary income source for most workers.

### Average monthly income from the platform (INR)

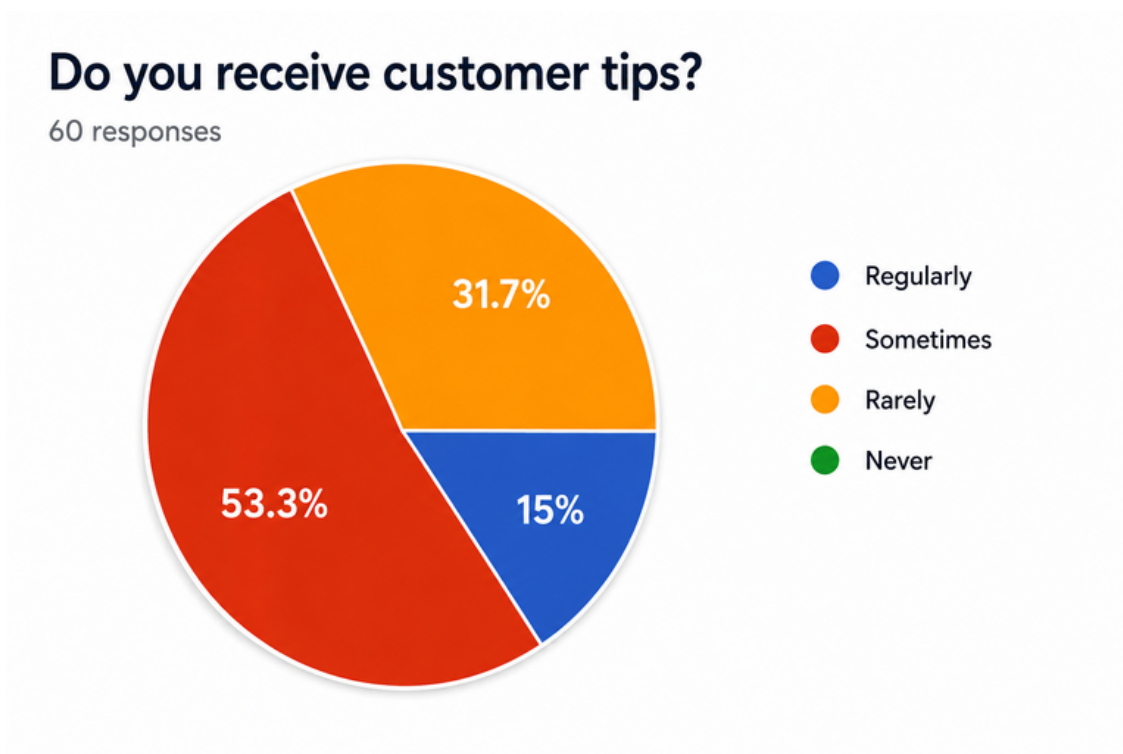
60 responses



| Frequency | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| Regularly | 9                  | 15.0%      |
| Sometimes | 32                 | 53.3%      |
| Rarely    | 19                 | 31.7%      |

Table 4.8: Frequency of Receiving Customer Tips

Over half of respondents report receiving tips only "sometimes," and roughly a third "rarely" — highlighting the inconsistent, unpredictable nature of tipping as an income source,



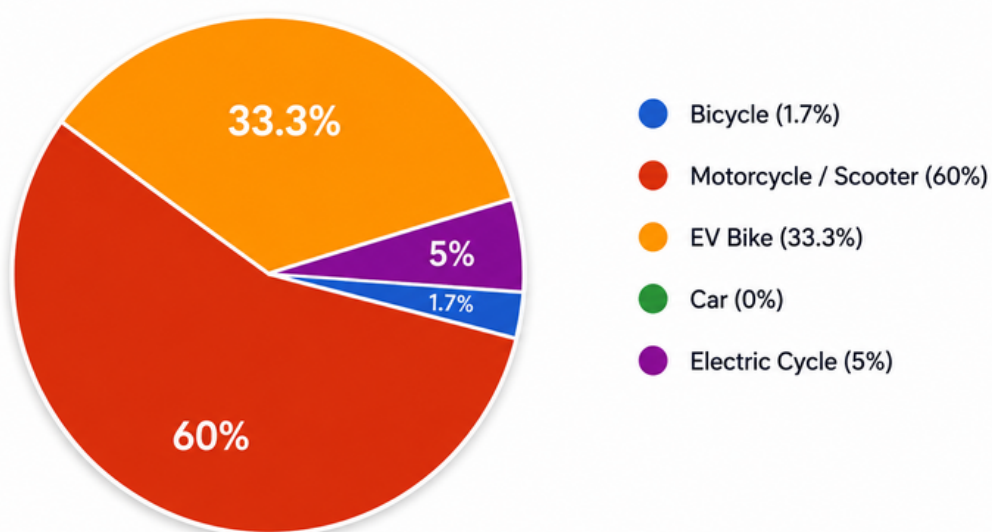
| Vehicle Type   | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| Motorcycle     | 36                 | 60.0%      |
| EV Bike        | 20                 | 33.3%      |
| Electric Cycle | 3                  | 5.0%       |
| Bicycle        | 1                  | 1.7%       |

Table 4.9 : Vehicle used for deliveries

Petrol motorcycles remain the dominant mode of delivery (60.0%), though a substantial third of respondents (33.3%) have already shifted to electric bikes — suggesting meaningful EV adoption is underway among delivery workers even without platform mandates, while cycles remain a marginal choice (6.7% combined).

## Vehicle used for deliveries

60 responses



#### 4.2 Performance Appraisal Practices (Objective 1)

This section presents responses to statements measuring how gig workers perceive the performance appraisal practices used by their platforms (Q13–Q20), rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). For each item, the Mean was calculated using Excel's AVERAGE formula and the Standard Deviation (SD) using the STDEV formula, based on all 60 responses. A lower SD indicates greater agreement among workers; a higher SD indicates more mixed opinions.

Table 4.10: My platform uses customer rating scores as a primary method to evaluate my performance

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 1                  | 1.7%       |
| Neutral           | 6                  | 10.0%      |
| Agree             | 39                 | 65.0%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 14                 | 23.3%      |

Mean = 4.10, SD = 0.63

An overwhelming 88.3% of respondents agree or strongly agree that customer ratings are used as a primary evaluation method, confirming that star-based ratings remain the central appraisal mechanism on these platforms.

Table 4.11: The platform evaluates my performance using objective metrics (delivery time, acceptance rate, cancellation rate)

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Neutral           | 9                  | 15.0%      |
| Agree             | 36                 | 60.0%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 15                 | 25.0%      |

Mean = 4.10, SD = 0.63

No respondent disagreed with this statement, and 85.0% agreed or strongly agreed, indicating strong worker awareness that objective, measurable metrics form a core part of how platforms assess performance.

Table 4.12: The platform uses algorithmic/automated monitoring (GPS tracking, route/speed analytics) to assess my work

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Neutral           | 14                 | 23.3%      |
| Agree             | 31                 | 51.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 15                 | 25.0%      |

Mean = 4.02, SD = 0.70

Over three-quarters of respondents (76.7%) acknowledge that algorithmic monitoring tools track their work, confirming that automated surveillance mechanisms are widely recognized among gig workers as part of the appraisal process.

Table 4.13: The platform offers formal performance reports or dashboards that summarize my performance metrics

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 3                  | 5.0%       |
| Neutral           | 12                 | 20.0%      |
| Agree             | 33                 | 55.0%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 12                 | 20.0%      |

Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.77

While a majority (75.0%) agree that formal performance dashboards exist, nearly a quarter of respondents remain neutral or disagree — suggesting that reporting tools, while present, may not be equally accessible or clear to all workers.

Table 4.14: Supervisors or human staff sometimes perform manual reviews of my performance (not only automated systems)

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 2                  | 3.3%       |
| Disagree          | 14                 | 23.3%      |
| Neutral           | 11                 | 18.3%      |
| Agree             | 28                 | 46.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 5                  | 8.3%       |

Mean = 3.33, SD = 1.04

This item shows the most disagreement and highest variability (SD = 1.04) among all appraisal-related questions, with over a quarter (26.6%) disagreeing that human/manual review occurs — reinforcing that appraisal on these platforms is perceived as predominantly automated, with limited human oversight

Table 4.15: I receive performance feedback based on complaints or customer disputes

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 2                  | 3.3%       |
| Neutral           | 9                  | 15.0%      |
| Agree             | 44                 | 73.3%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 5                  | 8.3%       |

Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.60

With the lowest standard deviation in this section (SD = 0.60), there is strong consensus (81.7%) that feedback is primarily complaint-driven — suggesting that most workers only hear from the platform when something has gone wrong, rather than through constructive, developmental feedback.

Table 4.16: The criteria used to evaluate my performance are clearly explained to me

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 2                  | 3.3%       |
| Neutral           | 12                 | 20.0%      |
| Agree             | 40                 | 66.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 6                  | 10.0%      |

Mean = 3.83, SD = 0.64

While a majority (76.7%) feel appraisal criteria are clearly explained, close to a quarter remain neutral, pointing to room for platforms to improve transparency and communication around evaluation standards.

Table 4.17: I understand how each performance metric affects my standing on the platform

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1                  | 1.7%       |
| Disagree          | 3                  | 5.0%       |
| Neutral           | 4                  | 6.7%       |
| Agree             | 43                 | 71.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 9                  | 15.0%      |

Mean = 3.93, SD = 0.76

A strong 86.7% of workers report understanding how individual metrics affect their platform standing, suggesting that despite limited formal explanation (Table 4.16), workers largely self-learn or infer how the system evaluates them through experience.

### 4.3 Motivation and Tips (Objective 2)

This section presents responses to statements measuring gig worker motivation and the specific role of customer tips (Q21–Q27), rated on the same 5-point Likert scale.

Table 4.18: I feel motivated to work on the platform most days

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 8                  | 13.3%      |
| Neutral           | 11                 | 18.3%      |
| Agree             | 31                 | 51.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 10                 | 16.7%      |

Mean = 3.72, SD = 0.90

Nearly 69% of respondents report feeling motivated to work most days, though a meaningful 13.3% disagree — indicating that while overall motivation is reasonably positive, it is not uniformly experienced across the workforce.

Table 4.19: Receiving tips increases my motivation to accept orders

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 2                  | 3.3%       |
| Disagree          | 1                  | 1.7%       |
| Neutral           | 8                  | 13.3%      |
| Agree             | 31                 | 51.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 18                 | 30.0%      |

Mean = 4.03, SD = 0.90

Nearly 82% of workers agree that tips increase their motivation to accept orders, confirming that tipping functions as a meaningful behavioural incentive in day-to-day order acceptance decisions.

Table 4.20: The possibility of receiving tips is an important reason I work on this platform

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 3                  | 5.0%       |
| Neutral           | 16                 | 26.7%      |
| Agree             | 33                 | 55.0%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 8                  | 13.3%      |

Mean = 3.77, SD = 0.74

While the majority (68.3%) agree tips are an important reason for working on the platform, over a quarter remain neutral, suggesting tips are a contributing but not universally dominant motivator.

Table 4.21: When I receive tips, I put more effort into completing each delivery

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 3                  | 5.0%       |
| Disagree          | 3                  | 5.0%       |
| Neutral           | 8                  | 13.3%      |
| Agree             | 27                 | 45.0%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 19                 | 31.7%      |

Mean = 3.93, SD = 1.06

Around 76.7% of workers agree that tips lead to greater delivery effort, reinforcing tips as a direct behavioural driver of service quality and effort, though the relatively higher SD indicates some variation in how strongly workers feel this.

Table 4.22: Receiving tips leads me to provide better customer service (politeness, care of order)

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 5                  | 8.3%       |
| Disagree          | 2                  | 3.3%       |
| Neutral           | 8                  | 13.3%      |
| Agree             | 26                 | 43.3%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 19                 | 31.7%      |

Mean = 3.87, SD = 1.16

This item shows notably high variability (SD = 1.16) — while 75% agree tips improve their customer service, a notable 11.7% disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting opinions are more polarized on whether tips specifically affect service behaviour versus general effort.

Table 4.23: I would work fewer hours if tips were eliminated or reduced

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 6                  | 10.0%      |
| Disagree          | 10                 | 16.7%      |
| Neutral           | 17                 | 28.3%      |
| Agree             | 17                 | 28.3%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 10                 | 16.7%      |

Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.22

This item shows the lowest mean and highest SD in the entire motivation section, reflecting genuinely mixed opinions — only 45% agree they'd reduce hours without tips, while 26.7% disagree, suggesting tips influence but do not solely determine workers' time commitment.

Table 4.24: Tips make gig work more financially rewarding and therefore more motivating

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0                  | 0.0%       |
| Disagree          | 3                  | 5.0%       |
| Neutral           | 17                 | 28.3%      |
| Agree             | 35                 | 58.3%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 5                  | 8.3%       |

Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.70

A clear majority (66.6%) agree that tips enhance the financial appeal and motivation of gig work, reaffirming tips' broader role in shaping the perceived value of the job.

#### 4.4 Long-Term Livelihood and Sustainability (Objective 3)

This section presents responses to statements measuring gig workers' perceptions of platform work as a sustainable, long-term livelihood option (Q28–Q32).

Table 4.25: I intend to continue working on this platform as my primary source of livelihood for the next five years

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 11                 | 18.3%      |
| Disagree          | 20                 | 33.3%      |
| Neutral           | 18                 | 30.0%      |
| Agree             | 10                 | 16.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 1                  | 1.7%       |

Mean = 2.50, SD = 1.03

This item records one of the lowest mean scores in the entire questionnaire. Just 18% agree or strongly agree with a five-year commitment to the platform as their primary livelihood, while over half (51.6%) disagree — indicating limited long-term commitment among the majority of workers.

Table 4.26: I see gig work on this platform as a long-term career choice

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 15                 | 25.0%      |
| Disagree          | 20                 | 33.3%      |
| Neutral           | 15                 | 25.0%      |
| Agree             | 8                  | 13.3%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 2                  | 3.3%       |

Mean = 2.37, SD = 1.10

This item shows the lowest mean of any question in the study. Over 58% of workers disagree or strongly disagree that they view this as a long-term career, with only 16.6% agreeing — a clear indication that most workers see gig delivery work as transitional rather than a career destination.

Table 4.27: I feel financially secure enough from platform earnings to rely on it long term

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 7                  | 11.7%      |
| Disagree          | 20                 | 33.3%      |
| Neutral           | 16                 | 26.7%      |
| Agree             | 16                 | 26.7%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 1                  | 1.7%       |

Mean = 2.73, SD = 1.04

Responses are fairly split — 45.0% disagree with feeling financially secure enough to rely on platform earnings long-term, while 28.4% agree, reflecting genuine division in financial confidence among the sample.

Table 4.28: Stable earnings influence my decision to continue working on the platform

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 4                  | 6.7%       |
| Disagree          | 19                 | 31.7%      |
| Neutral           | 23                 | 38.3%      |
| Agree             | 11                 | 18.3%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 3                  | 5.0%       |

Mean = 2.83, SD = 0.98

With over a third of respondents (38.3%) neutral and 38.3% disagreeing, this item suggests considerable uncertainty about how strongly earnings stability alone drives continuation decisions.

Table 4.29: If my motivation remains high, I expect to stay with the platform even if earnings fluctuate

| Response          | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 11                 | 18.3%      |
| Disagree          | 19                 | 31.7%      |
| Neutral           | 16                 | 26.7%      |
| Agree             | 14                 | 23.3%      |
| Strongly Agree    | 0                  | 0.0%       |

Mean = 2.55, SD = 1.05

Just over a fifth (23.3%) agree that motivation alone would keep them on the platform despite earnings fluctuations, while half (50.0%) disagree — suggesting that for most workers, income stability outweighs motivation as a determinant of continued engagement.

#### 4.5 Cross-Tabulation Analysis

This section presents cross-tabulations between select demographic/work-related variables and key Likert-scale responses, to explore whether patterns differ across sub-groups of respondents.

Table 4.30: Platform vs. Perception of Gig Work as a Long-Term Career Choice

| Platform   | Disagree  | Neutral   | Agree     |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Zomato(38) | 21(55.3%) | 10(26.3%) | 7 (18.4%) |
| Swiggy(22) | 14(63.6%) | 5(22.7%)  | 3 (13.6%) |

Workers on both platforms show similarly low agreement with viewing gig work as a long-term career, with Zomato workers marginally more likely to agree (18.4%) than Swiggy workers (13.6%). The overall pattern suggests that low career-perception is consistent across both platforms rather than being specific to one.

Table 4.31: Primary/Secondary Job Status vs. Intent to Continue as Primary Livelihood  
(Next 5 Years)

| Job Status    | Disagree  | Neutral   | Agree     |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Primary(15)   | 2(13.3%)  | 6(40.0%)  | 7 (46.7%) |
| Secondary(45) | 29(64.4%) | 12(26.7%) | 4(8.9%)   |

This cross-tabulation reveals a clear and expected pattern: workers who already treat gig work as their primary job are far more likely to intend continuing it long-term (46.7% agree) compared to those who treat it as secondary work, where only 8.9% agree and nearly two-thirds disagree. This confirms that current job status is strongly linked to future livelihood intent.

Table 4.32: Frequency of Receiving Tips vs. Tips Increasing Motivation to Accept Orders

| Tips Frequency | Disagree | Neutral  | Agree     |
|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Regularly(9)   | 1(11.1%) | 2(22.2%) | 6(66.7%)  |
| Sometimes(32)  | 1(3.1%)  | 4(12.5%) | 27(84.4%) |
| Rarely(19)     | 1(5.3%)  | 2(10.5%) | 16(84.2%) |

Regardless of how often they actually receive tips, a large majority across all three groups (66.7%–84.4%) agree that tips increase their motivation to accept orders. This indicates that the motivational power of tips is driven more by their possibility than by their frequency — even workers who rarely receive tips are strongly motivated by the chance of getting one.

## 5: FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Findings

#### A. Demographic and Work Profile

- The majority of respondents (51.7%) belong to the 18–24 age group, with over 80% under the age of 35, indicating that food delivery gig work is predominantly undertaken by younger individuals.
- The entire sample consisted of male respondents, confirming that food delivery gig work in Thiruvananthapuram remains a heavily male-dominated occupation.
- Zomato is the more widely represented platform among respondents (63.3%), compared to Swiggy (36.7%).
- Over half the respondents (55.0%) have worked on their platform for less than one year, indicating relatively high entry and turnover within the workforce.
- Three-quarters of respondents (75.0%) treat gig delivery work as a secondary or part-time source of income rather than their primary occupation.
- A majority of respondents (63.3%) earn less than ₹10,000 per month from platform work, reinforcing its role as supplementary rather than primary income for most.
- Tips are inconsistently received, with over half of respondents (53.3%) reporting they receive tips only "sometimes" and a further 31.7% "rarely."

## B. Performance Appraisal Practices

- It is found that customer rating scores are used as the primary method of performance evaluation, as agreed upon by the majority of respondents (88.3%), indicating that customer ratings constitute the central appraisal mechanism on food delivery platforms.
- It is found that objective performance metrics—including delivery time, acceptance rate, and cancellation rate—are recognized as key evaluation criteria by the majority of workers (85.0%). Similarly, algorithmic or automated monitoring is acknowledged as an important component of performance appraisal by 76.7% of the respondents.
- The findings reveal that manual or human-led performance reviews receive the lowest level of agreement (55.0%) and exhibit the highest variability ( $SD = 1.04$ ) among all appraisal-related items, suggesting that workers largely perceive the appraisal system to be automated rather than human-supervised. This finding is further supported by the researcher's practical experience as a part-time Zomato delivery partner, where the badge or tier system (Blue → Bronze → Silver → Gold → Diamond) operates entirely through automated delivery counts without any human intervention.
- It is found that the badge-based performance appraisal system follows a strict streak-based progression rather than a cumulative scoring mechanism. Workers must complete consecutive successful deliveries to advance between badge levels, while a single unsuccessful delivery resets their progress regardless of whether the delay was caused by the worker, restaurant, customer, traffic, or weather conditions. This finding reflects the fairness concerns highlighted in the Problem Statement regarding the penalization of factors beyond workers' control.
- The study found that feedback is predominantly complaint-driven rather than developmental, with 81.6% of respondents agreeing that feedback is generally provided only when complaints or disputes arise.
- The findings indicate that although appraisal criteria are considered clearly communicated by a majority of respondents (76.7%), an even larger proportion (86.7%) reported understanding how individual performance metrics influence their platform standing, suggesting that workers primarily learn the appraisal system through practical experience.

### C. Motivation and Tips

- It is found that a majority of workers (68.4%) feel motivated to work on most days, indicating a generally positive level of day-to-day motivation among food delivery workers.
- The study found that tips have a significant motivational influence on workers' behaviour, with 81.7% agreeing that tips encourage order acceptance and 76.7% agreeing that they increase delivery effort.
- The findings reveal that the statement regarding the influence of tips on reducing working hours recorded the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.25) and the highest variability within this section, indicating that although tips are valued, they are not the sole factor influencing workers' decisions on the duration of work.
- Cross-tabulation analysis found that the motivational impact of tips depends more on the possibility of receiving tips than on their actual frequency. Workers who rarely received tips (84.2%) reported levels of tip-driven motivation comparable to those who received tips regularly (66.7%) or sometimes (84.4%).

### D. Long-Term Livelihood and Sustainability

- It is found that workers exhibit the lowest level of agreement across all study dimensions regarding the long-term sustainability of gig work. Only 18.4% of respondents expressed an intention to continue platform work as their primary livelihood over the next five years, while only 16.6% considered it a viable long-term career option.
- The findings indicate that perceptions regarding financial security and earnings stability remain divided. Nearly half of respondents (45.0%) disagreed with feeling financially secure, while just over a quarter each were neutral (26.7%) or agreed (28.4%), indicating disagreement was the dominant view.
- Cross-tabulation analysis found that current employment status significantly influences future career intentions. Workers who already considered gig work their primary occupation were substantially more likely (46.7%) to express an intention to continue long-term compared to those treating it as a secondary source of income (8.9%).
- Overall, the findings reveal that although workers demonstrate reasonably positive motivation and engagement with the existing performance appraisal system, they have limited confidence in gig food delivery as a sustainable long-term livelihood.

## 5.2 Suggestions

- Replace the binary streak-reset badge mechanic with a rolling-average or weighted-point system. Instead of resetting all progress after one imperfect delivery, platforms should evaluate performance over a rolling window (e.g., the last 20–30 deliveries), where a single lapse reduces standing marginally rather than erasing all prior progress.
- Introduce structured human review checkpoints, particularly for workers with borderline or declining standing, to complement the current fully automated system and reduce perceived unfairness.
- Move from complaint-driven to proactive feedback — e.g., regular performance summaries with specific, constructive improvement points — rather than only surfacing feedback after a customer dispute.
- Improve transparency of appraisal criteria through a simple in-app explainer showing exactly how each metric (rating, on-time rate, acceptance rate, badge progress) affects earnings and order allocation, reducing the current reliance on workers self-learning the system through trial and error.
- Introduce route/order clubbing. Assigning two or more deliveries heading in the same direction to a single worker within one trip would reduce redundant travel, save time and fuel, and raise effective per-hour earnings without added cost to the platform.
- Audit and log discrepancies between assigned and actual travel distance, so km-based fare components reflect real distance travelled rather than platform-estimated distance, addressing a concrete issue the researcher has personally encountered.
- Redistribute badge-tier incentives proportionally across all tiers, not just Gold and Diamond — e.g., a modest fuel allowance or small fare bonus from Bronze onward — so that lower-tier and part-time workers, who make up the majority of the workforce, also receive tangible reward rather than being structurally excluded.

### 5.3 Conclusion

This study set out to examine whether the way food delivery platforms measure and reward performance actually reflects what workers put into the job, and whether it gives them any real reason to see this work as something they can rely on long term. The research was grounded, in part, in the researcher's own experience as a part-time Zomato delivery worker in Thiruvananthapuram, which shaped both the questions asked and the interpretation of the findings.

The 60 valid responses collected largely bear this concern out. Performance evaluation on Zomato and Swiggy is almost entirely automated — ratings, delivery time, acceptance and cancellation rates, and GPS tracking — with very little human involvement, and whatever feedback does reach a worker tends to arrive only after a customer complaint rather than as anything constructive. Most respondents indicated that appraisal criteria had never been properly explained to them; understanding was instead built up gradually through trial and error on the job. What the survey instrument alone could not fully capture, but what the researcher's field experience helps illuminate, is the badge system that governs day-to-day standing on these platforms. Advancing from one tier to the next, such as Blue to Bronze, requires a run of consecutive "perfect" deliveries, and a single failure — even one clearly outside the worker's control, such as a delayed restaurant or an unreachable customer — resets the entire streak to zero. There is no partial credit and no accounting for context, which raises a legitimate question as to whether this can be considered a genuine performance appraisal system at all.

Tips emerged as a genuinely strong motivator, with workers reporting greater willingness to accept orders and greater effort when a tip was possible — notably, this effect held even among those who rarely received one, suggesting the motivational pull comes from the possibility of a tip rather than its actual frequency. However, this is also where a gap appears between what the survey data shows and what happens in practice. The researcher's own experience points to recurring issues such as customers promising a tip at the point of delivery and not paying it, or an in-app tip being reversed after the order is marked complete. Inconsistencies between the distance charged by the app and the actual distance travelled compound this unpredictability. Tips, then, do motivate workers, but toward an income stream that is not always reliable or transparent.

These threads converge in the findings on long-term sustainability, which stood out as the most telling part of the study. Very few respondents expressed confidence in continuing this work five years from now, and even fewer viewed it as an actual career path. This is consistent with how the badge tier structure operates: the most meaningful benefits, including significantly higher order allocation and priority support at the Diamond tier, are concentrated at the top of a system that most part-time workers are unlikely to reach, given that a single setback can erase accumulated progress. As the majority of respondents undertake this work alongside another primary occupation, the current system offers limited incentive to remain or to regard the role as a long-term prospect.

Taken together, the findings indicate that these three areas are not separate concerns but a connected chain: how performance is appraised shapes how effective the motivational incentives can be, and both together shape whether workers see any future in the role. The recommendations put forward in the preceding section — replacing the all-or-nothing badge reset with a system that accounts for factors within a worker's control, introducing transparency in fare and tip calculation, enabling the clubbing of nearby deliveries to reduce time and fuel costs, and distributing badge-tier benefits more proportionally rather than concentrating them at the highest levels — follow directly from this chain rather than standing as isolated fixes. Addressing them would benefit not only the workers who depend on this income, including those for whom it is a part-time source alongside other commitments, but also the platforms that increasingly rely on a stable, motivated, and long-term delivery workforce to sustain their own operations.

Beyond the immediate context of Zomato and Swiggy in Thiruvananthapuram, these findings carry broader relevance for the study of Human Resource Management as it adapts to non-traditional forms of employment. The gig economy has effectively replaced the conventional appraiser-appraisee relationship with an automated, algorithm-driven substitute, and this study demonstrates that such substitutes, however efficient administratively, cannot be assumed to function as fair or complete performance management systems simply because they generate measurable data. As platform-based work continues to expand across Indian cities, the questions raised here — around appraisal fairness, income transparency, and the absence of a genuine career pathway — are likely to recur across other gig sectors such as ride-hailing and quick commerce. Future research building on this study could extend the sample across a wider geography, incorporate qualitative interviews to capture worker experiences in greater depth, or track the same cohort of workers over time to observe whether sustainability perceptions shift as platforms revise their appraisal and incentive structures. In the interim, the findings of this study offer a modest but concrete starting point for platforms, policymakers, and future researchers seeking to build gig work arrangements that are not only operationally efficient but also equitable and sustainable for the workers who depend on them.

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## **7.APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **Section A: Demographic and Work Profile**

1. I confirm that I am 18 years or older and voluntarily agree to participate in this research survey.
2. Name (Optional)
3. Age (Years)
4. City / Place where you work
5. Gender
6. Which platform do you primarily work for?
7. How long have you worked on this platform?
8. Is this your primary job?
9. On average, how many hours per week do you work on the platform?
10. Average monthly income from the platform (INR)
11. Do you receive customer tips?
12. Vehicle used for deliveries

### **Section B: Performance Appraisal Practices (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)**

13. My platform uses customer rating scores (stars/ratings) as a primary method to evaluate my performance.
14. The platform evaluates my performance using objective metrics (e.g., delivery time, acceptance rate, cancellation rate).
15. The platform uses algorithmic or automated monitoring (GPS tracking, route/speed analytics) to assess my work.
16. The platform offers formal performance reports or dashboards that summarize my performance metrics.
17. Supervisors or human staff sometimes perform manual reviews of my performance (not only automated systems).
18. I receive performance feedback based on complaints or customer disputes.
19. The criteria used to evaluate my performance are clearly explained to me.
20. I understand how each performance metric (e.g., rating, on-time rate) affects my standing on the platform.

### **Section C: Motivation and Tips**

- 21. I feel motivated to work on the platform most days.
- 22. Receiving tips increases my motivation to accept orders.
- 23. The possibility of receiving tips is an important reason I work on this platform.
- 24. When I receive tips, I put more effort into completing each delivery.
- 25. Receiving tips leads me to provide better customer service (e.g., politeness, care of order).
- 26. I would work fewer hours if tips were eliminated or reduced.
- 27. Tips make gig work more financially rewarding and therefore more motivating.

### **Section D: Long-Term Livelihood and Sustainability**

- 28. I intend to continue working on this platform as my primary source of livelihood for the next five years.
- 29. I see gig work on this platform as a long-term career choice.
- 30. I feel financially secure enough from platform earnings to rely on it long term.
- 31. Stable earnings influence my decision to continue working on the platform.
- 32. If my motivation remains high, I expect to stay with the platform even if earnings fluctuate.