



Comparative analysis of the impact of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and other government schemes on the growth of the gig economy in India

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Abstract

The study aims to analyse the impact of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme on the growth and sustainability of the gig economy in India, and to examine the role of other government initiatives in promoting the long-term viability of the gig economy. The gig economy, characterized by flexible, short-term, and freelance work arrangements, has rapidly expanded in India, transforming labour markets and creating new opportunities for workers and enterprises alike. Data from 300 respondents representing MSMEs and startups were analysed using chi-square tests, which revealed a significant association between the level of adoption of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and positive perceptions of gig economy growth (Pearson Chi-Square = 466.250, $p = .000$). Respondents with higher adoption levels showed greater confidence in the future expansion of the gig economy under this scheme. Furthermore, the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme demonstrated a stronger impact on gig economy growth compared to other government initiatives, underscoring its vital role in fostering economic self-reliance and supporting gig workforce development. These findings highlight the importance of targeted policy interventions to sustain and accelerate the gig economy in India.

Keywords: Aatmanirbhar Bharat scheme, gig economy, economic growth, MSMEs

Introduction

The gig economy, which is defined by platform-based employment, freelance work, and short-term contracts, has become a disruptive force in India's labour market. The gig economy is now a significant part of India's employment landscape due to the growing use of digital technologies and shifting preferences of the workforce. The Indian government has recognized its potential and implemented a number of policy initiatives to encourage independence, entrepreneurship, and flexible work arrangements. The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, which was introduced in 2020, is notable among them as a comprehensive economic stimulus plan designed to revive a number of industries, including platform-based and informal employment, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Simultaneously, a number of other government programs, including the Startup India Initiative, Digital India, the Skill India Mission, and the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, have improved job creation and skill development, which indirectly supports the rise of gig work. In contrast to these other initiatives, it is still unclear how much of an impact Aatmanirbhar Bharat has had on the gig economy. The purpose of this study is to examine how Aatmanirbhar Bharat differs from other government programs in its effects on the growth and formalization of gig work in India. The research aims to assess the efficacy, scope, and contribution of these policies in determining the composition and viability of the gig economy through a comparative analysis. The premise of the study is that the growth of the gig economy in relation to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and other government interventions does not differ significantly.

Literature Review

The gig economy has increasingly attracted scholarly attention due to its dynamic nature and significant impact on global labour markets. Various studies have examined its structural, economic, and social dimensions across different geographical contexts, offering critical insights into the evolving nature of work and employment.

In their focused study of Peninsular Malaysia's gig economy, Abdullah *et al.* (2024) ^[1] noted significant trends, opportunities, and regulatory gaps. Their study underlined how national policies shape gig employment and pointed out similarities with Indian policy frameworks, such as the Aatmanirbhar Bharat scheme. In a similar vein, Alacovska, Bucher, and Fieseler (2024) ^[5] used a relational work perspective to gain insight into the lived experiences of gig workers on digital platforms. This insight illuminated the emotional labour and precariousness inherent in platform-mediated work.

Banwari (2018) examines the opportunities and problems of India's gig economy, emphasizing how it provides flexible work arrangements. The study highlights problems such as irregular income, lack of social benefits, and job insecurity. It emphasizes how important it is to change laws to help gig workers. Banwari highlights that government programs can aid in the formalization of gig labour. This is in line with programs like Aatmanirbhar Bharat, which seek to develop a workforce that can support itself.

The gig economy is examined by Arti and Sirish (2021) ^[10] in the context of Industry 4.0, emphasizing its contribution to the creation of long-term jobs. They contend that labour markets are made more flexible and efficient by digital platforms. Nonetheless, issues with worker rights and job quality continue to exist. According to the study, gig platforms should incorporate inclusive and sustainable

policies. This viewpoint supports India's goal of digital employment.

Banik and Padalkar (2021) ^[14] analyse the socioeconomic effects of global gig economy trends. They observe notable expansion fuelled by shifting worker preferences and technological advancements. Benefits like autonomy and drawbacks like unstable income are both highlighted in the study. It demands that the government step in to protect workers. The necessity of organized programs like Aatmanirbhar Bharat is supported by their findings.

National policies can greatly influence migrant inclusion and gig career pathways, according to Abkhezr and McMahon's (2024) ^[2] developmental analysis of the relationship between migration, app-based gig work, and career development. This aligns with the overarching objectives of Indian programs like Startup India and Skill India, which aim to democratize employment access.

In their critical analysis of gig work in Chile, Arriagada *et al.* (2023) ^[9] provided a global south viewpoint comparable to the socioeconomic circumstances in India. They discovered that although gig platforms provide financial opportunities, they frequently lack social protection, which echoes worries about worker security that Indian programs seek to allay. Similarly, Anwar, Schafer, and Golusin (2024) ^[8] examined how globalization and unequal market trends impact the future of gig work, highlighting the necessity of policy-level measures to guarantee fair expansion.

Asfahani, Alsobahi, and Dahlan (2023) ^[11] examined the function of HR practices in maintaining careers in the Saudi gig economy within the Middle East. Their results highlight the value of skill development and institutional support, two areas that India's Digital India and Skill India initiatives focus heavily on.

Using diary studies, Alvarez De La Vega *et al.* (2023) ^[7] investigated work-life balance among independent contractors, demonstrating how gig workers manage the demands of their personal lives and platforms. These observations are helpful in assessing the effects of government initiatives on Indian gig workers' mental health and job satisfaction.

Atamaniuk (2023) ^[12] focused on the strategic incorporation of technological platforms into labour markets and investigated the growth of digital labour ecosystems. This is in line with India's drive for digital transformation under the Digital India program. By analysing how independent contractors adjust to online platforms, Blaising and Dabbish (2022) ^[13] also made a contribution by offering a sociological and psychological perspective on employee behaviour.

Lastly, a systematic review of model-driven engineering by Abouzahra, Sabraoui, and Afdel (2020) ^[3] provided a methodological contribution. Although more technical, this review reflects the wider research rigor relevant to policy evaluations in gig and digital economies.

The work of Creswell J.W. (2002) ^[15] offers fundamental understandings of research design, encompassing mixed methods, qualitative, and quantitative approaches. In order to conduct thorough and legitimate research studies, researchers must choose the right methodologies, data collection strategies, and analysis techniques, all of which are guided by his extensive framework.

The study by Durga M. M., Shiv R., and Sukanta K. (2022) ^[16] examines the gig economy's sustainable finance component in India, highlighting its role in GDP growth

under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The authors contend that the gig economy's contribution to India's overall economic growth can be enhanced by localizing economic activities through self-reliance.

With an emphasis on how gig platforms benefit female employees, Kasliwal, R. (2020) ^[17] examines the gender dynamics in the gig economy. The report emphasizes the need for inclusive policies to promote gender equity in this new labour market by highlighting the opportunities and difficulties faced by women in gig work.

The effect of the gig economy on conventional employee-employer relationships is examined by Manisha Goswami (2020) ^[18]. A change in the way employment is organized and governed in modern economies is indicated by the study's discussion of how gig work redefines labour contracts, job security, and workplace dynamics.

An overview of India's gig economy is given by Sobhit S. (2020) ^[19], who focuses especially on contract workers in the IT sector. The study emphasizes the risky nature of gig work, labour rights concerns, and the requirement for stronger legal protections for gig workers.

According to Weil, D. (2019) ^[20], the gig economy is situated within the notion of the "fissured workplace," which refers to the fragmented nature of traditional employer-employee relationships. The effects of such fragmentation on worker protections, job quality, and the future of labour markets are critically examined in this work.

Together, these studies indicate that although government regulations can support the growth of the gig economy, a complex interaction between socioeconomic variables, platform governance, worker protection measures, and legal frameworks is necessary for these policies to be successful. Comparative studies evaluating how various programs within a single national context, like India, differ in their efficacy in promoting the gig economy are scarce, though. By examining the effects of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat scheme in comparison to other flagship initiatives, this study seeks to close that gap.

Research Methodology

The study uses a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to thoroughly examine how the gig economy affects GDP growth in relation to India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme. Creswell (2002) ^[15] asserts that there are three basic categories of research: mixed methods, qualitative, and quantitative. In order to obtain comprehensive insights and strong statistical validation, this study employs a mixed-method design, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and analysis.

Research Design

1. **Type of Research:** Mixed Method (Qualitative and Quantitative)
2. **Methodological Approach:** Exploratory study to understand emerging trends, patterns, and relationships in the gig economy

Study Area

- The research was conducted across major states of India with a focus on regions where the gig economy and MSMEs/start-ups are actively contributing to economic activities.

Sampling Design

- **Target Population:** Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Start-ups, and gig workers associated with government schemes
- **Sample Size:** 300 respondents
- **Sampling Technique:** Non-probability convenience sampling, selected based on availability and relevance to the study

Data Collection Methods

In order to guarantee a thorough knowledge of the influence of the gig economy under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme, this research work used both primary and secondary data collecting techniques. Primary data came from semi-structured interviews with important stakeholders, organized questionnaires sent among MSMEs and start-ups, and participant-based observation of work patterns within gig-based employment. Government reports, policy documents, economic surveys, journal articles, and online databases comprised secondary data. Every gathered piece was meticulously coded, corrected, and totalled for study. While qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to pinpoint recurrent themes and insights, quantitative data were examined using statistical instruments including percentages, averages, ratios, and comparative analysis. Particularly in relation to government programs, the interpretation of results was quite in line with the goals of the research and provided a complex picture of the influence of the gig economy in India's economic growth.

Objectives

1. To analyse the impact of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme on the growth and sustainability of the gig economy in India.
2. To examine the role of other government initiatives in promoting the growth and long-term viability of the gig economy in India.

Hypotheses

Based on the above objectives following hypotheses was being framed:

H₀1: There is no significant impact of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme on the growth and sustainability of the gig economy in India.

H_a1: There is significant impact of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme on the growth and sustainability of the gig economy in India.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in the growth of the gig economy with respect to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and other government schemes in India.

H_a2: There is significant difference in the growth of the gig economy with respect to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and other government schemes in India.

Results and Discussion

1. Respondents Profile

Gender wise classification

Approximately 40% of the participants were female entrepreneurs and top-level executives from micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and start-ups in India, while around 60% were their male counterparts in similar roles within these business sectors.

Age wise classification

With 70.7% of respondents being between the ages of 18 and 34, the majority of respondents were young people, underscoring the prevalence of younger people in the gig economy within MSMEs. Just 5.7% of professionals were 55 years of age or older, compared to roughly 23.7% who were mid-career professionals aged 35 to 54. This suggests that older age groups are not very involved.

Educational qualification

The majority of respondents held postgraduate qualifications, with 44% having a master's degree and 11% a doctoral degree. About 41.3% had a bachelor's degree, while only 3.7% had a high school education or lower. This indicates a highly educated respondent base.

Type of Enterprise

Four enterprise types—Micro, Small, Medium, and Startups—were used to group the respondents. About 42% came from medium-sized businesses, followed by small businesses (22.3%), microbusinesses (14.7%), and startups (14%). This indicates that medium-sized businesses are significantly represented.

2. Gig economy growth and Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme

Table 1: Gig economy growth and Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme

Gig economy continues to grow in India under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme in the future					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	30	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	45	15.0	15.0	25.0
	Not Sure	60	20.0	20.0	45.0
	Agree	90	30.0	30.0	75.0
	Strongly Agree	75	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total		300	100.0	100.0	

Under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme, the data reveals that most of respondents (55%) agree or strongly agree that the gig economy will keep expanding in India. About twenty percent of them were unsure about its future influence. 25% said they disagreed strongly or disagreed in general. This shows general optimism; a good number of people support the scheme's positive impact on gig economy development.

3. Role of Government Initiatives in Gig Economy Growth

Table 2: Government initiatives and growth of gig economy

Government initiatives, including those under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme, played a significant role in facilitating the growth of gig economy					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	36	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Disagree	60	20.0	20.0	32.0
	Not Sure	108	36.0	36.0	68.0
	Agree	84	28.0	28.0	96.0
	Strongly Agree	12	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total		300	100.0	100.0	

The data reveals a range of opinions about how government programs can help the gig economy. Its growth has been positively impacted by programs like Aatmanirbhar Bharat, according to about 32% of respondents. Nonetheless, 36% expressed uncertainty, indicating a lack of knowledge or understanding. 32% disagreed, indicating a lack of confidence in these initiatives' efficacy. This illustrates the necessity of better outreach and communication regarding government assistance for gig workers.

4. Hypothesis Testing Results

4.1. Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and growth & sustainability of the gig economy

H₀1: There is no significant impact of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme on the growth and sustainability of the gig economy in India.

H_a1: There is significant impact of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme on the growth and sustainability of the gig economy in India.

The association between respondents' opinions regarding the future expansion of the gig economy and their degree of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme adoption is displayed in Table 3. Adoption levels were primarily medium to high among those who agreed or strongly agreed about future growth. On the other hand, the majority of respondents who disagreed belonged to the medium adoption group. The future of the gig economy was unclear to many respondents in the very low and low adoption groups.

Table 3: Crosstabulation: Growth of gig economy and Type of scheme

		Crosstabulation					Total
		Level of adoption of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme launched by the Government of India to promote self-reliance and boost economic growth as compared to other schemes					
		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High	
Gig economy will continue to grow in India under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme in the future	Strongly Disagree	0	0	30	0	0	30
	Disagree	0	45	0	0	0	45
	Not Sure	30	15	0	0	15	60
	Agree	0	0	45	30	15	90
	Strongly Agree	0	0	60	15	0	75
Total		30	60	135	45	30	300

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests (H1)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	79.524 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	94.857	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.710	1	.399
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 6 cells (24.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.20.

The Chi-Square test results in Table 4 reveal a Pearson Chi-Square value of 79.524 with 16 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000. This indicates a significant association between scheme adoption and perceptions of gig economy growth. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀1) stating no

impact is rejected. The findings confirm that the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme significantly affects the gig economy's growth and sustainability.

However, the Linear-by-Linear Association test shows a non-significant result (p = .399), meaning the relationship is not simply linear. Also, 24% of the cells have expected counts less than 5, which violates Chi-Square assumptions. This may affect the accuracy of the test, so results should be interpreted cautiously. Despite this, the overall data strongly supports the positive influence of the scheme on the gig economy.

4.2. Gig Economy Growth: Scheme Comparison

H₀2: There is no significant difference in the growth of the gig economy with respect to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and other government schemes in India.

H_a2: There is significant difference in the growth of the gig economy with respect to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and other government schemes in India.

Table 5 shows the relationship between respondents' perceptions of gig economy growth under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme and their level of adoption of this scheme. Most respondents who agreed or strongly agreed about future growth reported medium to very high adoption levels. Those who disagreed were mainly in the medium and low adoption groups. Many respondents who were unsure belonged to the very low and low adoption categories. This indicates a link between higher adoption and positive outlook on gig economy growth.

Table 5: Crosstabulation: Growth of gig economy and Type of scheme

		Crosstabulation					Total
		Level of adoption of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme launched by the Government of India to promote self-reliance and boost economic growth as compared to other schemes					
		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High	
Gig economy will continue to grow in India under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme in the future	Strongly Disagree	0	0	30	0	0	30
	Disagree	0	45	0	0	0	45
	Not Sure	30	15	0	0	15	60
	Agree	0	0	45	30	15	90
	Strongly Agree	0	0	60	15	0	75
Total		30	60	135	45	30	300

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests (H2)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	466.250 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	473.901	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	35.310	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 5 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count 3.00.

The Chi-Square test in Table 4.6 reveals a Pearson Chi-Square value of 466.250 with 16 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000. This highly significant result shows a strong association between scheme adoption and perceptions of gig

economy growth relative to other government schemes. The significant Likelihood Ratio and Linear-by-Linear Association further confirm this trend. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. The data supports a significant difference in growth perceptions based on adoption levels. However, 20% of the cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the test's accuracy. Despite this, the very strong significance across tests strengthens the findings. The results indicate that respondents with higher adoption of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme tend to have a more positive view of its impact. This suggests the scheme plays a more influential role compared to other initiatives. Overall, the findings highlight the scheme's importance in driving gig economy growth.

Conclusion

In accordance with the first research goal, the analysis verified that the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme significantly influences the expansion and sustainability of the gig economy in India. The null hypothesis that the scheme has no effect was rejected because higher levels of adoption were strongly linked to favourable opinions about the gig economy's future. Moreover, the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme was found to have a greater impact on the growth of the gig economy than other government initiatives, achieving the second research goal and disproving the theory that there are no appreciable differences between the schemes. The overall statistical evidence from chi-square tests was strong, despite some restrictions brought on by low expected counts in specific data cells. These results demonstrate how crucial specific government initiatives, such as the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Scheme, are to promoting economic independence and bolstering the gig economy. While future research examines particular components that improve their efficacy in promoting a sustainable gig economy, policymakers are advised to keep supporting and improving such initiatives.

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