

# Work Motivation and Occupational Stress in the Gig Economy: A Study of Food Delivery Employees in Palakkad District

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyses the motivational and occupational stress factors among online food delivery employees in Palakkad district. The research adopts a descriptive and analytical design using primary data collected from 100 respondents. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and regression analysis were used. The findings reveal that independence at work and flexible working hours are the major motivating factors for employees. At the same time, occupational stress is significantly influenced by factors such as risk of accidents, harsh weather conditions, and traffic-related stress. The study also finds that stress leads to various inconveniences, particularly physical issues like headaches and body pain. Regression analysis confirms a significant relationship between causes of stress and occupational stress. The study concludes that while the job offers flexibility and independence, high stress levels negatively affect employee well-being.

**KEYWORDS:** Motivation, Occupational Stress, Online Food Delivery Employees, Gig Economy, Work Environment.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the gig economy has transformed employment patterns, especially in sectors such as online food delivery. Digital platforms have created flexible job opportunities for many individuals, particularly young workers. These jobs offer benefits such as independence, flexible working hours, and ease of entry. However, they also present several challenges, including long working hours, job insecurity, and high levels of occupational stress. Online food delivery employees play a crucial role in ensuring timely service, but their work environment often exposes them to physical and psychological stressors. Factors such as traffic congestion, harsh weather conditions, and pressure to meet delivery deadlines contribute to occupational stress. Understanding both motivational factors and stress-related challenges is essential for improving employee well-being and ensuring sustainable workforce management.

Furthermore, the role of motivation and occupational stress has become increasingly important in understanding employee behavior and performance in the gig economy. Motivation influences the willingness of employees to engage in their work and remain committed, while occupational stress can negatively impact their physical health, mental well-being, and productivity. In the case of online food delivery employees, the absence of traditional organizational structures and benefits further complicates

their work experience. Therefore, analysing both motivational and stress factors together provides a comprehensive understanding of their work conditions. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how these factors interact and affect the overall work experience of delivery executives in Palakkad district.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Apouey, Stabile, Solal, and Paneva (2020)** highlight that delivery workers are exposed to physical risks such as long working hours, road accidents, and musculoskeletal problems, which further contribute to occupational stress. **Sarkar (2022)** found that food delivery workers in urban India experience high job stress due to income uncertainty and performance pressure, despite valuing job flexibility. Similarly, **Kumar and Singh (2023)** observed that while autonomy and flexible schedules enhance job satisfaction, lack of organizational support and career growth opportunities reduce overall employee well-being. In a more recent study, **Nair and Joseph (2024)** examined gig workers in Kerala and reported that occupational stress is strongly influenced by traffic congestion, safety concerns, and irregular income patterns. Their findings emphasize the need for better policy interventions and support systems to improve workers' quality of work life. Furthermore, **Boro, M. (2025)** highlights that although gig platforms generate employment opportunities, they often create precarious working conditions, negatively affecting job satisfaction and long-term well-being.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rapid expansion of the gig economy, particularly in the online food delivery sector, has significantly transformed employment patterns by offering flexible and easily accessible job opportunities. Existing literature highlights that motivational factors such as independence, flexible working hours, and income opportunities attract individuals to this sector. At the same time, several studies have identified key occupational stress factors including long working hours, traffic congestion, safety risks, performance pressure, and lack of job security. Research findings consistently indicate that while gig work provides autonomy, it also leads to physical strain, mental stress, and reduced well-being among workers.

However, despite the growing body of literature on gig economy workers, there remains a lack of region-specific studies focusing on the combined impact of motivational and occupational stress factors, particularly in semi-urban areas like Palakkad district. Most studies are concentrated in metropolitan cities and often examine either motivation or stress in isolation rather than analysing both together. Additionally, limited research has explored how these factors interact and influence the overall work experience of online food delivery employees. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of both motivational and occupational stress factors among delivery workers in Palakkad district, offering insights into their work conditions and well-being.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the demographic and work profile of the online food delivery workers in Palakkad district.
2. To identify the factors that motivate delivery executives to join online food delivery platforms.
3. To identify the occupational stress factors faced by delivery executives in Palakkad district.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. It is based on primary data collected from 100 online food delivery employees working in different locations in Palakkad district. The sampling technique adopted for the study is convenience sampling, and the respondents include 50 employees each from Zomato and Swiggy. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on demographic profile, motivational factors, and occupational stress factors. For the purpose of analysis, statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, correlation, regression analysis, and ANOVA were employed to examine relationships between variables and to draw meaningful conclusions.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis begins with the demographic profile of the respondents, offering an overview of their age, gender, education, income, marital status, work experience, work hours, and employment type. Understanding these background characteristics is essential, as they provide context for interpreting the experiences and perceptions of the delivery executives.

**Objective 1: To analyse the demographic and work profile of the online food delivery workers in Palakkad district.**

**Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents**

Gender	No of Respondents	Percent
Male	100	100.0
Age	No of Respondents	Percent
15-20	24	24.0
20-25	37	37.0
25-30	25	25.0
30-35	10	10.0
35 above	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0
Educational Qualification	No of Respondents	Percent
Below SSLC	7	7.0
SSLC	19	19.0
Plus Two	49	49.0
Graduate	21	21.0
Post graduate	2	2.0
Others	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0
Average monthly income	No of Respondents	Percent
Less than 10000	13	13.0

10000-20000	38	38.0
20000-30000	43	43.0
More than 30000	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0
Marital status	No of Respondents	Percent
Married	47	47.0
Unmarried	53	53.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution (gender, age, education, average monthly income and marital status) of respondents participating in the study. It is evident that 100% of the respondents are male, with a total of 100 participants. *This indicates a complete gender skew in the sample, suggesting that the field of online food delivery in the study area (Palakkad) is predominantly or exclusively male-dominated.* Most of the respondents fall in the 20–25 age group (37%), making it the largest segment. This is followed by the 25–30 group (25%) and the 15–20 group (24%), indicating that a significant majority of participants are below 30 years of age. In fact, 61% of respondents are between 15 and 25 years, showing a strong concentration of younger individuals. *The number of respondents declines as age increases.*

Out of the total 100 respondents surveyed, the largest proportion, 49%, have completed their Plus Two, indicating that nearly half of the participants possess higher secondary education. This is followed by 21% who are graduates, showing a moderate level of higher education among the respondents. *The above data suggests that the majority of the respondents have attained at least secondary education, with a significant number achieving graduate-level qualifications, while a minimal percentage have pursued education beyond the undergraduate level.* The above table also indicates that a slight majority of the respondents, 53%, are unmarried, while 47% are married. *This near-equal representation suggests that both married and unmarried individuals are actively involved in online food delivery work, possibly due to the flexible and income-generating nature of the job.* The small margin difference also implies that marital status may not be a major determinant in choosing this occupation.

From the above table it is also clear that the majority, 43%, earn between ₹20,000 and ₹30,000, followed by 38% earning ₹10,000–₹20,000, indicating that most workers fall into a lower-middle income bracket. A smaller group, 13%, earns less than ₹10,000, and only 6% earn more than ₹30,000. *This income distribution reflects the moderate earning potential in the online food delivery sector, with limited representation at higher income levels.*

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Work Experience**

	No of Respondents	Percent
Less than 1year	25	25.0
1-3 years	42	42.0
More than 3years	33	33.0
Total	100	100.0

*Source: Primary Data*

Table 2 shows the respondents’ distribution based on work experience in the food delivery industry. A plurality of respondents, 42%, have between 1 to 3 years of experience, followed by 33% with more than 3 years, and 25% who have worked for less than a year. *This indicates a relatively experienced workforce, with most participants having at least a year of experience in the field, which may influence their perceptions of job satisfaction, stress, and quality of work life.*

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Based on Hours Worked Per Day**

	No of Respondents	Percent
Less than 6 hours	12	12.0
6-8 hours	28	28.0
More than 8 hours	60	60.0
Total	100	100.0

*Source: Primary Data*

According to Table 3, a significant majority of respondents (60%) work more than 8 hours per day, suggesting a high level of work intensity and potential for job-related fatigue or stress. 28% work between 6 to 8 hours, and only 12% work less than 6 hours. *The dominance of long working hours reflects the demanding nature of the job and may have implications on health, well-being, and work-life balance.*

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents Based on Work Schedule**

	No of Respondents	Percent
Fixed shifts (consistent working hours each day)	7	7.0
Rotational shifts (varying working hours on different days)	4	4.0
Part time employment	31	31.0
Full time employment	56	56.0
Flexible/ on demand schedule	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

*Source: Primary Data*

Table 4 highlights the distribution of respondents based on their work schedule. A majority (56%) are engaged in full-time employment, while 31% work on a part-time basis. Only 7% have fixed shifts, and a small number follow rotational shifts (4%) or flexible/on-demand schedules (2%). *This indicates that while the job offers part-time opportunities, most workers treat it as a full-time occupation, often without structured or predictable scheduling.*

**Objective 2: To identify the factors that motivate delivery executives to join online food delivery platforms.**

The second objective of the study is to identify the factors that motivate delivery executives to join online food delivery platforms. In the context of the growing gig economy, understanding what drives

individuals to engage in this form of employment is essential for companies aiming to attract and retain a stable workforce. Motivational factors such as flexible work hours, income opportunities, independence, and low entry barriers are believed to play a crucial role in shaping employment choices. This objective also examines whether there is a significant association between these motivational factors and the level of job satisfaction experienced by the delivery executives.

**Table 5: The factors that motivate delivery executives to join online food delivery platforms**

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Flexible working hours	4.351	1.257	28.890
Higher earnings	3.870	0.884	22.834
Independence at work	4.510	0.674	14.947
Lack of alternative job opportunities	3.130	1.203	38.439
Low entry requirements	3.950	0.989	25.027
Ability to work as a part time or second job	4.040	0.963	23.841
Covid-19 impact	2.210	1.233	55.807
Enjoy travelling and exploring new location	3.340	1.241	37.152
Social interactions with customer	3.340	1.257	37.637
Recommendation from family or friends	3.480	1.291	37.093

*Source: Primary Data*

Table 5 provides an analysis of various factors that motivate delivery executives to join online food delivery platforms. The data is presented using three statistical measures: mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation (CV), which together offer insights into both the average level of agreement and the consistency of responses among the executives. The factor "*Independence at work*" has the highest mean score of 4.510, indicating that most respondents strongly agree with this as a motivating factor, while also showing the lowest standard deviation (0.674), suggesting high consistency in responses. "*Flexible working hours*" is another major motivating factor, with a high mean of 4.351. In contrast, "*Covid-19 impact*" has the lowest mean score of 2.210, implying that this was not a significant motivating factor for most respondents. The standard deviations for some factors, such as "*Recommendation from family or friends*" and "*Social interactions with customers*", are relatively high, indicating variability in opinions. The coefficient of variation further helps in understanding the relative dispersion of each factor, guiding which factors are most consistently regarded as motivating.

When analysing the factors using the coefficient of variation (CV), which expresses the extent of variability in relation to the mean, the factor with the lowest CV is "*Independence at work*" with a CV of 14.947. This indicates that not only is it highly rated by delivery executives (with the highest mean of 4.510), but also that responses regarding this factor are highly consistent across the sample. A lower CV signifies less relative variability, suggesting a strong and uniform agreement among the respondents about the importance of this factor. *Therefore, "Independence at work" emerges as the most significant and reliably motivating factor influencing delivery executives to join online food delivery platforms.*

**Objective 3: To identify the occupational stress factors faced by delivery executives in Palakkad district.**

The third objective of the study is to identify the occupational stress factors faced by online food delivery executives. In the gig economy, delivery personnel are often exposed to numerous stressors such as long working hours, pressure to meet delivery deadlines, customer complaints, and safety risks. Recognizing the causes and impact of occupational stress is vital for improving working conditions and supporting employee well-being.

**Table 6: Primary Causes Stress**

Primary Causes of Stress	Mean	SD	CV
Long working hours	2.630	1.244	47.316
Have faced harassment and assault from workplace	2.220	1.160	52.241
Traffic related stress	3.400	1.356	39.879
Customer complaints and negative feedback	2.490	1.159	46.547
Have constant pressure to work fast	2.970	1.337	45.009
Inadequate rest breaks	2.550	1.038	40.722
Payment related issues (delay or deductions)	2.210	1.057	47.824
Multitasking	1.970	1.010	51.249
Harsh weather conditions	3.410	1.006	29.501
Inadequate salary and incentives	3.060	0.962	31.442
Pressure to maintain high ratings	2.420	1.075	44.412
Risk of life(accidents)	3.370	0.939	27.867
Lack of recognition	3.040	1.034	34.012
App malfunctions	2.350	1.019	43.351
Limited personal time	2.450	1.104	45.078
Physical fatigue and tiredness	3.200	1.181	36.895
Low confidence level and self-esteem	2.400	1.101	45.873
Feeling of choosing wrong job	2.080	1.070	51.446

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 presents the statistical analysis of various primary causes of stress experienced by delivery executives, measured using mean scores, standard deviations, and coefficients of variation. The mean values reflect the average level of agreement or intensity of stress caused by each factor, while the standard deviation indicates the variability of responses. The coefficient of variation (CV), expressed as a percentage, provides a relative measure of dispersion, helping to identify which factors are most consistently perceived as stress-inducing. Among the factors, "Harsh weather conditions" has the highest mean score of 3.410, closely followed by "Traffic related stress" at 3.400 and "Risk of life (accidents)" at 3.370, indicating that these are some of the more significant sources of stress based on respondents' average ratings. Conversely, factors like "Multitasking" and "Feeling of choosing the wrong job" have lower mean scores (1.970 and 2.080, respectively), showing that these are perceived as less intense stressors by most respondents. The table also reveals that variability in perception differs across factors, which is further explored through the coefficient of variation.

When examining the coefficient of variation to determine the most significant and consistently perceived stress factor, the lowest CV indicates the most uniform and reliable response among participants. The factor with the lowest CV is "Risk of life (accidents)" at 27.867, followed closely by "Harsh weather conditions" at 29.501 and "Inadequate salary and incentives" at 31.442. The low CV for "Risk of life" suggests that a large majority of respondents consistently perceive the threat of accidents and personal safety risks as a major source of stress in their profession. Despite having several high mean scores across different factors, this particular factor stands out not only due to its high average importance but also due to the consistency in responses. *Therefore, the primary cause of stress for delivery executives, based on the coefficient of variation, is the perceived risk of life or accidents, highlighting the critical need to address safety measures and risk management in this line of work.*

**Table 7: Inconvenience in Occupation Due to Stress**

Inconvenience in Occupation due to Stress	Mean	SD	CV
High blood pressure	1.980	1.101	55.5949
Headache	3.370	0.991	29.4193
Tension	2.630	1.178	44.7795
Body pain	3.300	1.330	40.2891
Sleep disorder	2.370	1.338	56.4679
Poor nutrition	2.380	1.245	52.3294
Anxiety	1.990	1.049	52.7256
Depression	2.130	1.253	58.8033
Work life imbalance	2.430	1.139	46.8860
Errors in work	2.140	1.054	49.2654
Personal problems	2.430	1.037	42.6848
Decreased productivity	2.280	1.074	47.0982
Accidents and injuries	2.890	1.081	37.4215
absenteeism	2.990	1.291	43.1759
Turnover intention	2.540	1.201	47.2906

*Source: Primary Data*

Table 7 presents data on the occupational inconveniences experienced by delivery executives due to work-related stress, as measured through mean scores, standard deviations, and coefficients of variation (CV). The mean values indicate the average level of inconvenience caused by each stress-related symptom or outcome, while the standard deviations reflect how much individual responses vary from the average. The coefficient of variation offers a relative measure of consistency in the responses, enabling identification of issues that are not only common but also widely agreed upon by respondents. Among all factors, *headache* has the highest mean score at 3.370, followed closely by *body pain* at 3.300 and *absenteeism* at 2.990. These results suggest that physical health issues and absenteeism are prominent concerns among delivery executives due to stress. Meanwhile, *depression*, although having a lower mean of 2.130, shows higher variability in responses. *Overall, the data highlight a broad range of physical, emotional, and occupational issues caused by stress in this line of work.*

To identify the most significant and consistently perceived inconvenience due to occupational stress, we consider the factor with the lowest coefficient of variation, as it indicates the least dispersion in

responses. The lowest CV is observed for *headache*, at 29.4193, suggesting that this symptom is not only a major issue (as evidenced by its high mean of 3.370) but also a consistently experienced one across the sample. This makes headache the most universally acknowledged inconvenience among delivery executives. Other factors such as *body pain* and *accidents and injuries* also have relatively low CVs, but their mean scores are slightly lower or less consistent than that of headache. *Therefore, based on both the average intensity and the uniformity of responses, headache emerges as the most prominent and commonly experienced inconvenience in this occupation due to stress.*

**Hypotheses:**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between causes of stress and occupational stress among online food delivery executives.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between causes of stress and occupational stress among online food delivery executives.

**Table 8: Regression Analysis Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.664 <sup>a</sup>	0.441	0.435	0.64743

**a. Predictors: (Constant), Causes of Stress**

The relationship between stress causes and the level of occupational stress was examined through regression analysis. In Table 15, the model summary shows a strong correlation (R = 0.664) and an R Square of 0.441, meaning that 44.1% of the variation in occupational stress is explained by the stress causes included in the model. *This is a substantial proportion, indicating that the identified stress factors are strong predictors of perceived occupational stress among respondents.*

**Table 9: ANOVA of Regression Analysis**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.374	1	32.374	77.236	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	41.078	98	0.419		
	Total	73.452	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

b. Causes of Stress.

The ANOVA table (Table 9) supports the significance of the regression model. With an F-value of 77.236 and a p-value of 0.000, the model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. *This confirms that the stress causes collectively have a meaningful impact on the level of occupational stress experienced by delivery executives.*

**Table 10: Coefficients<sup>a</sup> of Regression Analysis**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.204	0.272		0.750	0.011

	Causes of Stress	0.866	0.099	0.664	8.788	0.000
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Table 10 provides the results of a simple linear regression analysis conducted to examine the influence of "Causes of Stress" on a dependent variable (which could be an outcome such as "Inconvenience in Occupation" or "Occupational Impact"). The unstandardized coefficients (B) show the magnitude of change in the dependent variable for each unit increase in the independent variable, while holding other variables constant. Here, the constant (intercept) value is 0.204, indicating the expected value of the dependent variable when the "Causes of Stress" score is zero. The unstandardized coefficient for "Causes of Stress" is 0.866, suggesting that for every one-unit increase in the stress cause score, the dependent outcome increases by 0.866 units. *The standardized beta coefficient (0.664) shows a strong positive relationship between the two variables. The t-value of 8.788 with a significance (p-value) of 0.000 indicates that this relationship is statistically significant. The constant also has a p-value of 0.011, which is significant at the 5% level, suggesting the intercept term adds explanatory power to the model.* Based on the unstandardized coefficients, the regression equation can be written as:  $Y = 0.204 + 0.866 \times X$ . Where:

- Y = Predicted value of the dependent variable (e.g., Inconvenience due to stress)
- X = Causes of Stress score

This equation demonstrates that as the causes of stress increase, the inconvenience or impact on occupation rises significantly and positively.

### FINDINGS

The study reveals that the majority of respondents are young male workers below the age of 30, with moderate educational qualifications and income levels. Most employees work more than 8 hours per day and are engaged in full-time employment, indicating a high workload. Among motivational factors, independence at work and flexible working hours emerged as the most significant drivers, while COVID-19 impact was the least influential. Regarding occupational stress, major stressors include risk of accidents, harsh weather conditions, and traffic-related issues. Stress leads to various inconveniences, with headaches and body pain being the most commonly reported. Regression analysis confirms a strong and statistically significant relationship between causes of stress and occupational stress, explaining 44.1% of variation, indicating that increased stress factors significantly increase occupational stress levels.

### SUGGETIONS

Based on the findings, it is suggested that platform companies improve working conditions by implementing safety measures such as insurance coverage and accident protection. Reducing long working hours and providing adequate rest breaks can help minimize stress levels. Companies should also ensure fair compensation and timely payments to enhance motivation. Introducing stress management programs and improving support systems can further enhance employee well-being. Additionally, maintaining flexible work arrangements while ensuring job security and stability can help balance both motivation and stress among employees.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that online food delivery employment in Palakkad district is largely driven by strong motivational factors such as independence at work and flexible working hours, which attract a predominantly young workforce. However, these benefits are accompanied by significant occupational stress arising from factors like risk of accidents, harsh weather conditions, long working hours, and traffic-related challenges. The findings clearly indicate that while the job provides flexibility and income opportunities, it also exposes employees to physical and psychological strain, leading to issues such as headaches, body pain, and reduced well-being. The significant relationship between causes of stress and occupational stress highlights the need for effective interventions to improve working conditions and ensure employee welfare.

In the present context, this study is highly relevant as the gig economy continues to expand rapidly, creating employment opportunities while also raising concerns about worker safety, job security, and well-being. The insights from this study can help platform companies and policymakers take necessary steps to improve working conditions, provide better support systems, and enhance motivation among employees. Looking towards the future, the relevance of this study will increase as digital platforms and app-based employment continue to grow. Future research can build upon this study by exploring larger samples, comparative analyses across regions, and additional variables such as mental health and employee retention. Thus, the study contributes to understanding the evolving nature of gig work and emphasizes the need for sustainable and worker-friendly employment practices.

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