The Impact of Task Management, Social Support and Income on Work-Life Balance among Gig Workers

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Abstract: The study addresses the growing concern about work-life balance among gig workers in Malaysia, a population facing unique challenges due to the nature of gig employment. This issue is particularly critical as gig workers often struggle with task management, securing social support, and dealing with income volatility, all of which impact their ability to achieve a balanced work-life dynamic. This study aims to analyze the effects of task management, social support, and income stability on the work-life balance of gig workers in Malaysia. A quantitative research methodology was employed, involving a survey of 70 gig workers across various sectors in Kedah. The data was analyzed using correlation analysis to assess the relationships between the independent variables, task management, social support, and income stability, and the dependent variable, work-life balance. The findings reveal that task management, social support, and income stability are all significantly correlated with better work-life balance, with task management being the most influential factor. The implications of this study suggest that improving task management practices, enhancing social support systems, and stabilizing income are crucial strategies for gig platforms and policymakers to consider. These measures can significantly improve the well-being of gig workers and contribute to a more sustainable gig economy. The study also highlights the need for further research to explore these relationships in different cultural contexts and over time, to better understand their long-term effects.

Keywords: *Work-life balance, gig workers, task management, social support, income stability*

1. Introduction

The global workforce is undergoing a significant transformation, largely driven by the rapid growth of the gig economy. This shift is redefining traditional employment structures, with an increasing number of individuals opting for freelance or contract-based work instead of conventional full-time jobs. Gig workers are drawn to this model due to its flexibility and autonomy; however, this flexibility often comes at a cost. Task management, social support, and income stability are crucial factors that directly influence the work-life balance of gig workers, a demographic increasingly vulnerable to burnout and job insecurity.

Globally, the gig economy has expanded rapidly, with an estimated 1.1 billion freelancers worldwide as of 2023, contributing significantly to various economies (Payoneer, 2023). However, the benefits of this flexible work arrangement are often offset by the challenges gig workers face in managing their tasks effectively, securing adequate social support, and ensuring a stable income. Notably, the role of social support and income stability in this context has been underexplored. By examining how access to support systems such as healthcare, retirement plans, and worker protections affect gig workers' mental well-being and stress levels, this study will provide valuable insights into interventions that could alleviate social isolation and improve job satisfaction. Furthermore, analyzing the impact of income stability on gig workers' financial planning, personal commitments, and risk of burnout is essential for addressing the broader challenges they face. These challenges can lead to significant work-life balance issues, with many gig workers struggling to maintain boundaries between their professional and personal lives (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018).

The gig economy in Malaysia has emerged as a significant part of the labor market, with around 26% of the workforce, or approximately four million people, involved in gig work as of 2023 (World Bank, 2023). Its appeal lies in the flexibility of work hours and the ability to control income, making it particularly attractive to younger Malaysians and those who face barriers to traditional employment. Gig work allows individuals to choose when, where, and how they work, which is ideal for those seeking work-life balance or managing multiple

responsibilities, such as students, caregivers, or part-time workers. However, while it provides an alternative for those struggling with unemployment or seeking extra income, the shift towards gig work raises concerns about maintaining a healthy work-life balance, with challenges often exacerbated by Malaysia's local economic conditions.

Recent studies in Malaysia highlight that while gig work offers flexibility, it often leads to poor work-life balance due to irregular working hours and the lack of job security. According to a survey by the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) in 2023, a significant portion of Malaysian gig workers reported working more than 60 hours per week, with many struggling to maintain a balance between their work and personal lives. This extended working time is often a result of the need to compensate for income instability, as gig workers typically do not have access to fixed salaries, benefits, or social protections available to traditional employees (EPF, 2023). Furthermore, the lack of social support and the precarious nature of gig work in Malaysia contribute to heightened stress levels among workers. The same survey indicated that over 60% of Malaysian gig workers expressed concerns about their financial security and long-term prospects, factors that significantly impact their mental well-being and overall quality of life (EPF, 2023). The Malaysian government's initiatives, such as allocating RM40 million in the 2023 budget to support 30,000 gig workers, reflect an awareness of these issues but also underscore the need for more comprehensive strategies to address the work-life balance challenges faced by gig workers (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2023).

Task management in the gig economy is complex due to the unpredictable nature of assignments, often leading to irregular working hours and difficulties in managing workload. This unpredictability can result in increased stress levels and decreased job satisfaction, ultimately affecting workers' overall well-being (Wood et al., 2019). Additionally, the lack of social support, both from employers and personal networks, exacerbates these challenges. Without the backing of a traditional work environment, gig workers often face isolation, which can negatively impact their mental health and ability to cope with work-related stress (Taylor et al., 2022). Income volatility is another critical issue for gig workers, as their earnings can be highly inconsistent. Unlike traditional employees, gig workers do not have the security of a regular paycheque, which can lead to financial instability and anxiety. This financial uncertainty further complicates their ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance, as they may need to work longer hours or take on multiple gigs to meet their financial needs (Warren, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature exploring the gig economy, significant gaps remain in understanding the specific factors that influence work-life balance among gig workers. Much of the existing research has focused on the broader impacts of gig work, such as job satisfaction and financial security, but has often overlooked the interconnected roles of task management, social support, and income. While studies like those by Wood et al. (2019) and Taylor et al. (2022) provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by gig workers, there is a need for more comprehensive research that specifically examines how these factors collectively impact work-life balance, particularly in the context of Malaysia. Additionally, the unique socio-economic dynamics of Malaysia's gig economy, including cultural expectations and varying levels of access to social support, suggest that a localized study could yield important findings that differ from those in other regions.

To address this research gap, the objectives of this study are threefold: First, to analyze the impact of task management on work-life balance among gig workers in Malaysia. Second, to examine the role of social support in mitigating the challenges faced by gig workers, particularly in managing stress and maintaining mental well-being. Third, to investigate how income volatility affects gig workers' ability to achieve a balanced work-life dynamic. By achieving these objectives, this study aims to contribute to the literature by providing a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing work-life balance in the gig economy, with a specific focus on the Malaysian context.

2. Literature Review

Defining Work-Life Balance and the Gig Economy: Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium that individuals strive to maintain between their professional responsibilities and personal lives. Achieving this balance is crucial for overall well-being, as it reduces stress, increases job satisfaction, and improves mental health (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Traditionally, work-life balance has been associated with standard employment, where fixed working hours and a stable income allow employees to allocate time effectively

between work and personal commitments. However, with the rise of the gig economy, this balance has become increasingly difficult to achieve.

The gig economy, characterized by short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs, has transformed the traditional employment landscape. Gig workers, including freelancers, independent contractors, and platform-based workers, are drawn to the gig economy for its flexibility, autonomy, and potential for higher income (De Stefano, 2016). However, this flexibility often comes with trade-offs, such as income instability, lack of social protections, and irregular working hours, which can negatively impact work-life balance (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018). As the gig economy continues to expand globally, with an estimated 1.1 billion freelancers worldwide in 2023 (Payoneer, 2023), understanding the factors that influence work-life balance in this context is critical for both workers and policymakers.

Theoretical Framework: Job Demand-Resources Theory: The Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the factors that influence work-life balance in the gig economy. According to this theory, job demands are the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of a job that require sustained effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs (Demerouti et al., 2001). In contrast, job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of a job that assist in achieving work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth and development.

In the context of the gig economy, task management, social support, and income can be viewed through the lens of the JD-R Theory. Task management, which includes the ability to manage workload and maintain control over working hours, can be seen as a job demand that, if not handled effectively, can lead to stress and burnout. Social support, on the other hand, acts as a job resource that can buffer the negative effects of job demands. The presence of strong social support, whether from family, peers, or professional networks, can mitigate the stress associated with gig work and enhance work-life balance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Lastly, income serves as both a job demand and a resource; while the need to secure income can increase stress, a stable and sufficient income can improve job satisfaction and contribute to a better work-life balance (Warren, 2021).

Factors Influencing Work-Life Balance in the Gig Economy

Task Management: Task management in the gig economy presents inherent challenges due to the unpredictable nature of assignments. Unlike traditional jobs with fixed hours, gig work often involves fluctuating demands, leading to irregular working hours and difficulties in maintaining a consistent workload. Wood et al. (2019) found that while gig work offers autonomy, it is also accompanied by algorithmic control, which can exacerbate stress and disrupt work-life balance. This unpredictability complicates the separation of work and personal life, contributing to higher stress levels and lower job satisfaction among gig workers.

Social Support: The absence of a structured work environment in the gig economy means that gig workers often have limited access to social support from employers or colleagues. This lack of support can intensify the difficulties associated with gig work, as workers may struggle to find the emotional and practical assistance needed to manage work-related stress. Taylor et al. (2022) revealed through a quantitative survey that the absence of social support exacerbates mental health issues among gig workers. Conversely, strong support networks from family or peers can help alleviate stress and enhance work-life balance, highlighting the critical role of social support in mitigating job demands.

Income Stability: Income volatility is a significant concern in the gig economy, as earnings can vary widely from month to month. Unlike traditional employees with regular paychecks, gig workers often face financial instability, leading to anxiety and a constant need to secure additional work to meet financial obligations (Warren, 2021). This financial pressure can result in longer working hours and fewer opportunities for rest and leisure, further disrupting work-life balance. Zulkefli and Omar (2023) demonstrated that income instability and irregular hours negatively impact work-life balance, with income stability correlating with higher job satisfaction.

Recent studies reinforce these findings across various contexts. Jain et al. (2023) used bibliometric analysis to highlight how remote gig work blurs work-life boundaries, underscoring the need for improved support mechanisms. Rasheed et al. (2022) qualitatively explored how unpredictable work schedules challenge gig workers' ability to maintain balance, emphasizing the importance of personal time management and social support. Asfahani et al. (2023) examined how structured human resource practices in the Saudi gig economy could enhance job satisfaction and work-life balance, while Sakarji et al. (2018) provided insights into how job demands, similar to those in gig work, impact mental health and balance, revealing parallels between different work environments.

Research Gaps and Conclusion: Despite the growing body of literature on the gig economy, significant gaps remain in understanding the specific factors that influence work-life balance among gig workers. While the JD-R Theory provides a valuable framework for exploring these factors, there is a need for more empirical research that examines how task management, social support, and income collectively impact work-life balance, particularly in different cultural and economic contexts. Most studies have focused on Western countries, and there is a lack of research addressing the unique challenges faced by gig workers in developing economies like Malaysia.

In conclusion, task management, social support, and income are critical factors that influence work-life balance in the gig economy. While these factors are interrelated, their impact can vary depending on the specific context in which gig workers operate. As the gig economy continues to grow, it is essential to develop strategies that address these challenges and promote a healthier work-life balance for gig workers. Future research should focus on exploring these issues in greater depth, particularly in regions where gig work is becoming increasingly prevalent, such as Southeast Asia.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of factors influencing work-life balance among gig workers
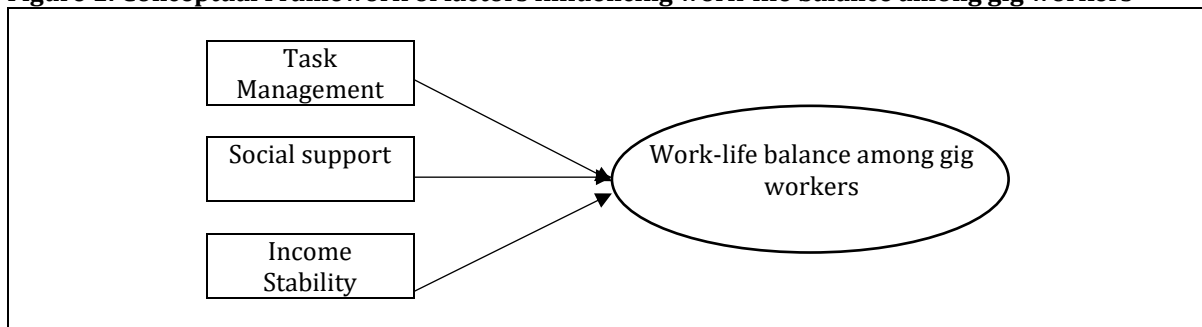
The conceptual framework for examining work-life balance among gig workers is grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, which delineates how job demands and job resources influence employees' well-being and performance. This framework identifies task management, social support, and income stability as key components impacting work-life balance. According to the JD-R Theory, task management serves as a job demand that can increase stress and disrupt work-life balance if not effectively handled (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The unpredictable nature of gig work, characterized by fluctuating tasks and irregular hours, intensifies these demands (Wood et al., 2019).

In contrast, social support functions as a job resource that mitigates the negative effects of high job demands by providing emotional and practical assistance, thereby enhancing work-life balance (Taylor et al., 2022). Income stability is another crucial job resource; it reduces financial stress and supports a healthier work-life balance by diminishing the need for excessive working hours (Warren, 2021; Zulkefli & Omar, 2023). The framework posits that effective task management, robust social support, and stable income each positively influence work-life balance by reducing stress and improving the integration of work and personal life. This approach highlights the importance of balancing job demands with adequate resources to foster a sustainable work-life equilibrium in the gig economy.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing work-life balance among gig workers. The unit of analysis is the individual gig worker, with a specific focus on e-hailing riders. According to Roscoe (1975), a sample size of between 30 and 500 is typically adequate for most behavioral studies. Therefore, the sample size consisted of 70 respondents, all of whom were gig workers operating in Alor Setar, Kedah. The study utilized a combination of purposive sampling as the primary approach and snowball sampling as a secondary technique. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that respondents met specific criteria: they must be e-hailing riders visibly carrying a company-branded bag, identified at specific locations within Alor Setar. Following this, snowball sampling was employed, whereby initial participants were asked to recommend other potential respondents who met the study's criteria.

To gather quantitative data on work-life balance, task management, social support, and income stability, a questionnaire was developed. Table 1 provides the list of variables and the number of items used to measure each variable in the study. The questionnaire was bilingual, available in both English and Malay, to accommodate the language preferences of the respondents.

Table 1: Measurement and data analysis

Variables	Items	Data analysis
Work-life balance (DV)	6	
Task management (IV)	6	Bivariate Analysis
Social support (IV)	6	(Correlation)
Income stability (IV)	6	

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics provided a summary of the data, while bivariate analysis (correlation) was conducted to examine the relationships between the variables of interest.

4. Findings

Table 2: Demographic Profiles

No.	Profile		Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender			
		Male	59	84.3
		Female	11	15.7
		Total	70	100
2	Age			
		18 – 22	11	15.7
		23 – 27	39	55.7
		28 – 32	18	25.7
		33 – 37	2	2.9
		38 – and above	0	0
		Total	70	100
3	Status			
		Single	55	78.6
		Married	15	21.4
		Others	0	0
		Total	70	100
4	Doing the delivery job as			
		Part-time	45	64.3
		Full-time	25	35.7
		Total	70	100

The demographic profile of the respondents in this study provides insight into the characteristics of gig workers in Alor Setar, Kedah. Out of the 70 respondents, 84.3% were male, and 15.7% were female, highlighting

a predominance of male gig workers in this area. Age distribution shows that the majority of respondents (55.7%) were between 23 and 27 years old, followed by 25.7% aged 28 to 32, and 15.7% aged 18 to 22. Only a small fraction, 2.9%, were between 33 and 37 years old, with no respondents over 38 years old. In terms of marital status, 78.6% of the respondents were single, while 21.4% were married. Regarding the nature of their work, 64.3% of the respondents worked part-time as gig workers, while 35.7% worked full-time. This demographic data underscores the youth-dominated, predominantly male, and largely part-time nature of the gig workforce in the region.

Table 3: Result of Pearson Correlation

No.	Variable	R-value	p-value
1	Task Management	0.855	< 0.05
2	Social Support	0.760	< 0.05
3	Income Stability	0.744	< 0.05

The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation with an R-value of 0.855 and a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating that effective task management significantly improves work-life balance among gig workers. Next, the results showed a positive correlation with an R-value of 0.760 and a p-value of less than 0.05, suggesting that social support plays a crucial role in enhancing work-life balance. Furthermore, a positive correlation was found with an R-value of 0.744 and a p-value of less than 0.05, demonstrating that income stability is a key factor in achieving a balanced work-life dynamic for gig workers.

Discussion
The findings of this study provide significant insights into the factors influencing work-life balance among gig workers in Malaysia, particularly in the context of task management, social support, and income stability. The results indicate a strong positive relationship between task management and work-life balance (R-value = 0.855, p < 0.05), suggesting that effective task management practices significantly enhance gig workers' ability to balance their work and personal lives. This finding aligns with the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory, which posits that better management of work tasks can reduce job demands, thereby improving overall work-life balance.

Similarly, social support was found to have a positive impact on work-life balance (R-value = 0.760, p < 0.05). This underscores the importance of social networks in mitigating the stress associated with gig work, which often lacks the structural support found in traditional employment. The protective role of social support in mental well-being, as highlighted in previous studies, is particularly relevant in the gig economy, where workers face unpredictable work schedules and income instability (Liu et al., 2024).

Income stability also demonstrated a positive correlation with work-life balance (R-value = 0.744, p < 0.05). The results suggest that stable income is crucial for gig workers to achieve a balanced work-life dynamic, supporting previous literature that emphasizes the financial uncertainty inherent in gig work as a significant stressor. These findings highlight the need for policy interventions aimed at improving income stability and providing greater financial security for gig workers.

Overall, the study contributes to the existing literature by confirming the critical roles of task management, social support, and income stability in enhancing work-life balance among gig workers. Future research should explore these relationships further, considering different contexts and additional variables that may influence work-life balance in the gig economy.

5. Conclusion

This study has identified critical factors influencing work-life balance among gig workers in Malaysia, including task management, social support, and income stability. The key findings revealed strong positive correlations between these factors and work-life balance, with task management, social support, and income stability all significantly contributing to gig workers' ability to maintain a balanced life. In addition to contributing to the growing body of literature on work-life balance in the gig economy, the study's focus on e-hailing riders in a developing country fills a gap in the existing research, which has predominantly centered on gig workers in

Western economies. These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gig workers in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts manage work-life balance, making a valuable contribution to the discourse on gig work and well-being.

The findings support and extend the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory, highlighting that effective task management and robust social support systems can serve as resources that mitigate job demands and improve work-life balance. The positive impact of income stability also adds a new dimension to the theory, emphasizing the role of financial security in the gig economy. Practically, these results suggest that gig platforms and policymakers should prioritize the development of tools and support mechanisms that help workers manage their tasks efficiently, foster strong social networks, and ensure income stability. These measures could enhance the well-being and productivity of gig workers, leading to a more sustainable gig economy.

Despite the valuable insights, the study has limitations. The sample was limited to gig workers in Malaysia, which may not fully represent gig workers in other regions. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causality between the variables. Future research should explore these relationships longitudinally to better understand the causal effects and investigate additional variables such as job autonomy and flexibility. Comparative studies across different countries would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing work-life balance in the gig economy globally.

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