

Research Article

Awareness of Gig Economy in Malaysia: Study At International University of Malaya-Wales

Amina Syarfina Abu Bakar^{1,2*} and Noor Hafizah Hassan²

¹Faculty of Arts & Science, International University of Malaya-Wales, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

ORCID

Amina Syarfina Abu Bakar: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1675-6518>

Noor Hafizah Hassan: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4396-7601>

Abstract.

Digitalization has transformed the world of business tremendously. The world of employment has shifted from a conventional method to a more flexible and seamless way. A gig economy has opened secondary careers that have created more opportunities that consequently have boosted the country's economy. This secondary career is referred to as "freelancing", or work on a job basis. In Malaysia, awareness and knowledge on this matter is still lacking and needs more studies and investigation. Past studies in Malaysia found that the gig economy faces challenges in terms of job security and safety, protection policies, proper platforms and dissemination, etc. Due to this, more studies are required to examine better development and implementation for gig communities. The findings will facilitate the development of better platforms and communities for a gig economy. Thus, this study aims to understand the awareness and knowledge of Malaysian private higher education staff and students on the gig economy. As such, this study specifically gathers data at the International University of Malaya-Wales. The findings will provide insights to lecturers, students, even alumni on how this kind of economy will benefit them and other stakeholders. These findings will also enrich the current data and information for policymakers, employers, and practitioners.

Keywords: gig economy, private university, human resource, awareness, knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

Gig economy refers to "word on demand" and "crowd-work" [1]. According to Roy et al. (2020) "work on demand" refers to conventional, physical occupations and duties. While "crowd-work" refers to bidding for and finishing tasks through public websites. It involves multi-party in gig economy; hence, the company deny certain responsibilities on the employees [2]. Other than that, gig workers are not required to have educational credentials, therefore the employer cannot be certain of their abilities and skills [3]. In the meanwhile, there is no structure or law for fostering an environment that is favorable for high-quality work and employee pay which causes the employers to deny the relationship or responsibility in the Employment Act [4]. Unlike union workers, there is no

Corresponding Author: Amina Syarfina Abu Bakar; email: amina@iumw.edu.my

Published 7 March 2024

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

© Bakar, Hassan. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the JICOMS Conference Committee.

 OPEN ACCESS

representative for gig workers and possess hardly little negotiating strength as a group [4]. Besides that, due to the nature of work in the gig economy, the income is inconsistent [5]. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a severe unemployment problem, and the gig economy is helping to offer flexible working conditions for labor participation [6]. Although the income is inconsistent and the benefit is not guaranteed, some vulnerable populations are overrepresented in gig economy, particularly those who have low incomes, a high unemployment rate, and may hold down many occupations [7]. Understand that unemployment is one of the factors to associate with homelessness and the lessening of welfare system impel in the developing country more diverse and complex [8].

Ministry of Human Resource of Malaysia implemented an active policy of Gig economy since 2019, which emphasis on the effort of 'Futurizing the Future of Work' [9]. The advancement and emergence of technology affects all aspects of life. Not only to individual moreover changes how work pattern is running [10]. Permanent jobs remain noticeable yet significant however the impact of gig economy towards youth development, especially students, is to be identified in this study. It is crucial to understand the context of gig economy along on the development of youth under the Twelve Malaysian Plan (RM12) (2021-2025) that focusing on resetting the economy, strengthening security, wellbeing and inclusivity as well as advancing sustainability [11]. Malaysia MADANI approach includes the effort for economy and financial particularly for youth including awareness to higher institutions students [12]. Nowadays, students tend to venture in freelancing or project basis jobs such as designing, event crew, part time modelling or even social media influencers [13]. Which lead to this study, the awareness and knowledge of students on the new term of Gig economy.

2. METHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative approach that followed an interpretive paradigm, this study investigated the awareness and knowledge of undergraduate students at private higher institutions in Malaysia. Particularly, at the International University of Malaya-Wales (IUMW). A Focus group is used in this study as the primary data collection method because it can provide detailed information related to the participant's awareness, knowledge, experience, ideas, and views that are beneficial to the researchers. It is also vital to gather the latest information on a specific issue or to search for a new idea or subsequent research. A Focus group is an essential tool to understand how a particular issue arises and how the issue is viewed in the group discussion. 13 undergraduate

students were selected for the focus group discussion, which was held on Monday, September 11, 2023, at the IUMW campus, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The session took about 2 hours, from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings concluded that 13 Malaysian students that comprised of 1 male and 12 female undergraduate students between the ages of 18 to 29 years old. The data generated from the focus group interviews were conducted live in the lab and transcribed. The researchers used codes to create categories (awareness and knowledge) in order to theme the data (Table 1 & 2). The following tables exhibit the findings from the focus group discussion. Table 1 presents the first category of assessment i.e., awareness. This category measured the consciousness for a better understanding of participants in the gig economy. Meanwhile, Table 2 highlights the second category that assessed the data and information understood and familiar by the participants in the gig economy.

TABLE 1: Awareness on Gig Economy.

	Explanation	Theme
Have you heard about gig economy? Freelance? Giggers? Remote/Contract Worker? When does this term occur? (A1)	All the participants heard the term “freelance” or ‘part timer” however not familiar of “Gig Economy”.	Familiar
Do you know about Gig economy on any platform? (A2)	Majority of the participants know about gig economy from search engine and social media such as Tiktok, Instagram, and Twitter, and Facebook. They mentioned Jobstreet and ‘Fast Gig’ as platform that they have applied.	Search Engine Social Media
Have you come across in any media about gig economy? (A3)	Two main media quoted by participants are Mass media and online platform. This new generation want to learn more about it. Influencers are the most popular that are working in contract basis, receive sponsorship and publicity.	Online Platform Mass Media
Do you know the reason why citizens jump into the gig economy? (A4)	Flexibility, supplemental income, allow to gain experience, build portfolio, wide array of opportunities, comfort	Flexibility Extra Income
Do you know that the government has implemented gig economy forces? (Guideline etc.) (A5)	Participants don't know about these forces	Unfamiliar
If you are in gig economy, do you feel secure in this work pattern? (A6)	No depends on the job opportunity and individual More effort needed for gig economy	Insecure

TABLE 2: Knowledge of Gig Economy.

	Explanation	Theme
What do you understand about the gig economy? (K1)	Working for certain period, contract, short term and part time.	Alternative
What types/examples of giggers that you know? (K2)	Freelance photographer, writers, software engineer, influencer, marketers, cashier.	On-demand
Why do you think the gig economy is relevant in the current economic situation? (K3)	Easy income, shortage of minimum paying jobs, alternative job, convenient for housewife and family, work life balance	Easy Income Work Life Balance
What are the differences between a permanent job and a freelance/gigger? (K4)	Structural organization, benefits, financial security and Diversity in work pattern and industry. Independent in choosing jobs.	Diversity Financial Security
When do you notice the rapid transition of gig economy development? How big is the gap between the era of the 80s 90s and now? (K5)	Yes, it effects work culture and diversity. Transition of digitalization for applying jobs. Community awareness and behaviour are evolved too.	Transformation Behaviour
Does the gig economy have any impact on Malaysian work patterns? (K6)	Impactful because more job opportunity, flexibility, accommodating to life responsibilities. Economy development with gig economy	Job Opportunity Economy Development
How about financial security for gig economy practitioners? (business setting, accounts, office documentation, etc.) (K7)	Not guaranteed as they will not have proper documentations. Risky Emergency fund	Risk

The first category of assessment is the awareness of respondents toward gig economy which is in Table 1. They were given questions that measured their acquaintance with a gig economy. The findings revealed that this group of undergraduate students were more familiar with “freelance” “contract worker” compared to “gigger”. Referring to their age and qualification, it is considered common for them to be unfamiliar with gig economy term as this term is frequently use in academic write up and policy makers. Nonetheless, due to their high usage of online platform, they came across the gig economy information that come with layman terms like “freelance”, “contract work”, “part-time work” in the search engine like Google and various social medias. Besides social media, IUMW undergraduate students also read and heard about gig economy in mass media like television, radio and e-publications. Their basic awareness of this type of employment has led them to conclude that the gig economy offers flexibility, supplementary income, as an alternative to gain experience and build portfolio especially for fresh graduates. However, they are hardly aware of the information provided by any government and non-government agencies on the gig economy. This information may relate to platform, policies, framework etc. Finally, the majority

of students will feel insecure with this kind of employment due to lack of security in terms of financial, risk, monetary etc.

The second category in Table 2 of the focus group session assessed the respondents' knowledge. This category measured the understanding, familiarity and experience toward the gig economy. The overall findings indicated that IUMW undergraduate comprehensions are more on the surface, and they need more information and guidance on the gig economy. These results are displayed in their response to knowledge questions. Most of them understand that giggers work for a short span of time, under a certain contract and offer flexibility in work. They can provide examples of giggers types of job. They agreed that gig economy is relevant to the current economic condition because it offers flexibility, easy income, alternative to fixed income jobs. The participants are also capable of differentiating between fixed income jobs and giggers. Yet, as undergraduate students they are hardly able to provide an opinion on the transition of the gig economy between the eras. This is common because they are mostly around 21 years old and categorize in the same group of generation. But they commonly agreed that digital transformation is one of key factors that has transformed the employment structure, and impactful to Malaysian work patterns. Most of them concerned with the risks with this kind of jobs and they are not informed with any policies, or any other government implementation on gig economy existence, status, policies even protection (act or law that related to it).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Awareness and knowledge of undergraduate students about the gig economy is important in Malaysia. This is due to the current economic condition with higher numbers of unemployed graduates. Graduates should take any opportunity in the gig economy to gain experience either as a side income to a full-time job or as the main career. Based on the above findings, this study proposes several strategies that could be implemented by government agencies, private corporations, and MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise). Firstly, the dissemination of the gig economy with the proper platform for the giggers has big room for improvement. Due to high demand for giggers in the current market. A proper and trusted web and application could be introduced and enhanced to allow three main parties namely, job seekers, employers, recruiters, advertisers. Due to job insecurity views by the youngsters, the Malaysian government should provide appropriate and accurate information regarding the gig economy that increases the security of this type of employment. For instance, the implementation

of Employee Provident Fund (EPF) savings for self-employed workers. Insurance is provided for electronic hailing workers. There are many more to discuss and implement in ways to enhance giggers job security. Policies and regulations that could protect this group of employees in the near future. This will increase interest and open new opportunities for the gig economy to enlarge the market size and number of industries covered. Future study could be focus on woman, youth or rural area community towards work pattern of Gig economy. Each ministry perhaps could collaborate with Ministry of Human Resource to implement the renewed policies and more upgraded framework should be part of future study that could enhance the financial stability for nation.

References

- [1] Kaine S, Josserand E. The organisation and experience of work in the gig economy. *J Ind Relat.* 2019;61(4):479–501.
- [2] Roy G, Shrivastava AK. Future of gig economy: Opportunities and challenges. *IMI Konnect.* 2020;9(1):14–27.
- [3] Herrmann AM, Zaal PM, Chappin MM, Schemmann B, Lühmann A. ‘We don’t need no (higher) education’ – How the gig economy challenges the education-income paradigm. *Technol Forecast Soc Change.* 2023;186:122136.
- [4] Doshi BM, Tikyani H. A theoretical integration of gig economy: Advancing opportunity, challenges and growth [IJM]. *Int J Manag.* 2020;11(12).
- [5] Jacques JT, Kristensson PO. “Crowdworker economics in the gig economy,” in *Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2019, pp. 1–10.
- [6] Basavaraj N, Foutz NZ, Li B. Resilience of the US gig economy during the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from location big data. 2021.
- [7] Bajwa U, Gastaldo D, Di Ruggiero E, Knorr L. The health of workers in the global gig economy. *Global Health.* 2018;14(1):124.
- [8] Speak S. “The state of homelessness in developing countries,” in *Presentated at: United Nations expert group meeting on “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness.”* May 2019, pp. 22–24.
- [9] Ghazali AJB, NMBN. An overview of gigs economy in Malaysia. *Nasrul Aiman Bin Abd Aziz Web designer*, 162, 2021.
- [10] Uchiyama Y, Furuoka F, Akhir MN. Gig workers, social protection and labour market inequality: Lessons from Malaysia. *Jurnal Ekonomi Malaysia.* 2022;56(3):165–184.

- [11] Amirah W. The Malaysian economy and COVID-19: Policies and responses from January 2020–April 2021. 2022.
- [12] Aziz NA, Rusli R. Embracing Islamic values in governance: Reflecting the concept of ‘Madani’ in the Holy Qur’an. *Res Stud.* 2023;3(7):1304–1312.
- [13] Anggarini DT. GENERATION Z AND MILLENIAL PERSPECTIVES TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS IN THE ERA OF THE GIG ECONOMY”. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Manajemen.* 2022;16(1):10–26.