

GENERATION Z AND THE GIG ECONOMY IN KERALA: ANALYZING PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE TPB

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Abstract

Purpose: Kerala's unemployment rate is 28.7%, while the national average is 10%. The most susceptible age group is 15-27, who are unemployed despite having a decent education. The gig economy serves as a safety net for millions of unemployed adolescents seeking subsistence and 'flexi-work' through platforms. The study attempts to understand the readiness of Generation Z to participate in the Gig Economy by adopting the TPB.

Methodology: A well structured questionnaire was administered to those generation Z who are willing to work in the Gig Economy. The questionnaire was developed using the scales adopted from TPB. A total of 390 samples were collected. The complexity of the relationships of the variables were analysed using PLS SEM.

Findings: The results suggest that Work-Life Balance, Learning and Development, Technology and Digitalisation, and Social Media had a substantial impact on the desire of Generation Z to join the gig economy, but Leadership did not have a major impact.

Managerial Implications: There are a lot of opportunities to perform well in the Gig economy. Employing more youth into Gig Economy can not only improve the employment rate but also foster the advantages the new employment model in the state.

Originality: The Literature on the generation Z is growing. There have been a number of studies on generation Z and also on Gig Economy. This study might be the first study on the readiness of Generation Z to participate in the Gig Economy in state of Kerala in India.

Keywords: Gig Economy, TPB, Flexible work, Unemployment, Generation Z

INTRODUCTION

Generations are formed once in every 15-20 years. From baby boomers, generation X, Y, Z and Alpha, generations emerge. Generation Z is specifically called the Centennial generation as they are known to be born with a mobile and tablet (*Generation X, Y, and Z: Differences and Characteristics - Iberdrola*, n.d.). They are also interested in earning while they are learning (Chillakuri, 2020). Therefore, comes the requirement of an employment model which promotes part time work. Gig Economy is such an employment set up which allows part time employment of working. It includes either freelancing or working under different employees without a formal employee- employer relationship (Schmidt & Ritter, 2022). Research says that the current growth of Gig Economy is around 17% and about 60% of the technology based companies are investing in Gig Economy (ASSOCHAM, 2020). The low barrier to entry and the flexibility allows more people to join the Gig Economy (Schmidt & Ritter, 2022). For conducting the study, the factors of the TPB are used for determining the attractiveness towards Gig Economy. This theory says that, the behaviour of people is influenced by Readiness. These Readiness are then determined by three factors. These factors are attitude, perceived behavioural norms and subjective attitude (*Theory of Planned Behavior*, n.d.). In this study, factors such as Work Life Balance and Learning and Development are used to measure the Attitude, Social Media Usage is used to measure Subjective Norms and Technology and Digitisation and Leadership Qualities is used to measure Perceived Behavioural Control (Huang et al., 2023). The major objective of the study is to find out the factors that determine the Readiness of Generation Z to participate in the Gig Economy by applying the TPB. Further, specific objectives and hypotheses are developed for the conduct of the study

LITERATURE REVIEW

Readiness to engage in Gig Economy

Gig Economy also known as Platform economy is an economy which exists without an employer-employee relationship. The jobs thus created are called Gig Jobs and the workers in this economy are called Gig Workers. The jobs can either be on demand jobs or they can be crowdsourcing jobs. This job design allows them flexibility of time and place (Bekal et al., 2023; Schmidt & Ritter, 2022; *The Gig Economy: A New Way of Working or a Race to the Bottom?*, n.d.).

"Readiness to Engage" in a particular task solely depends on the conscious and unconscious effort of the workers regarding the opportunities of a particular choice. They then rationally evaluate the positive and negative aspects of the choice. In Gig Economy, the "Readiness to Engage" in a job can be linked to the capacity of the Gig Worker to convert their opportunity into readiness to do the job. They show their readiness if they have skills or not (Huang et al., 2023).

Attitude

The attitude of a person showcases his Readiness and their way of doing a job. This also encompasses the people of the gig economy (Sikap & Keusahawanan, 2016). The decision of a gig worker to work in the Gig Economy will depend on their outlook towards the Gig Economy. If the Gig Workers have a positive attitude, they will have an optimistic attitude towards the Gig Economy (Huang et al., 2023). Today's working generation concentrate more on work life balance. Therefore, they will find Gig Economy as an optimal option. Also studies have showed that Learning and Development has a positive effect on the attitude towards Gig Economy (Huang et al., 2023). Therefore, this study also adopts the same two factors, learning and development and work life balance as the factors that influence the attitude of the gig workers.

Work Life Balance

Work Life Balance is a state of well-being in which an individual has to manage his occupation, his family and the relation with the community (S. & S.N., 2023). Work Life Balance has a positive impact on job performance. Studies have shown that when there is a flexible environment, workers find it better to manage their personal and professional life (Redmond et al., 2006). Work Life Balance also helps in maintaining the well-being of the employees, reducing work related stress and in the overall development of the quality of the workers (Kedia et al., 2023). Studies have shown that men ask for more Work Life Balance than women (Warren, 2021). The generation Z also start demanding for Work Life Balance as they start buying new homes, getting married etc (*Why Is Work-Life Balance Important to Job Satisfaction for Gen Z & Millennials?*, n.d.)

Learning and Development

Learning is a continuous process which helps the workers to get adequate skills and talent as much as the workforce demands (UNIT -12, n.d.). It is very essential that employees get into the process of Learning and Development. Learning and Development help people to carry out their responsibilities in a well and organised manner and it also helps them in achieving their goals ((1) (PDF) *The Practice of Learning and Development in Organizations*, n.d.)

In Gig Economy especially, it is very important that workers tend to learn and develop themselves so that they will be able to better perform their tasks as well as to find better jobs and also it will enable them to sustain the gig economy (*Skill Development and Continuing Learning in the Online Gig Economy* | CEDEFOP, n.d.).

Subjective Norm

Subjective norm in general is a societal pressure which lets a person to behave or not behave in a particular way (*Theory of Planned Behavior*, n.d.). There exists a direct relationship between the subjective norm and the Readiness to perform (Worthington, 2021). In this study, social media is the only variable taken to measure the subjective norm construct. This variable is considered because generation Z is also understood as the generation born with internet and mobile phone.

Social Media

Social media is one of the most prominent methods through which people get influenced. Social media has the power to connect people, organisation as well as different communities. Social media also creates an acculturation which leads to innovative thinking in an individual (Grover et al., 2022). Research says that most of the Generation Z spend at least four hours daily on social media (Tracy & Hoefel, 2017). Social Media has also influenced the Gig Economy by helping them find work, connecting with people and also to build their personal brand (Vallas & Schor, 2020)

Perceived Behaviour Control

Perceived Behaviour Control is the easiness of performing the behaviour or interest of a person. As a person has more interest towards a particular behaviour they are likely to perform well (Ajzen, 1991). In this study, the Leadership Qualities and Technology and Digitalisation are selected variables to measure Perceived /behavioural Control.

Technology and Digitisation

Technology and Digitisation have transformed the world. They have increased the job opportunities and also more people have entered into digitised jobs. The introduction of ICT and mobile technology has increased the overall employability in the world (Mohammed et al., 2017). Many people join the Gig Economy due to its flexible nature (Gawer, 2022). Thus, prior research indicates that digitalisation and technology have a good effect on the gig economy. (Huang et al., 2023)

Leadership Qualities

Leadership is said to be the qualities that are essential for a person to motivate and lead others. In Gig economy also Leadership plays an important role. It is very important for the gig workers to impart self-leadership to thrive in gig work (*Self-Leadership: Thriving in the Gig Economy*, n.d.). Many People are said to join Gig Economy because of their leadership qualities and therefore the study hypothesises states that there is a positive effect of Leadership Qualities on Readiness to join Gig Economy (Huang et al., 2023)

RESEARCH GAP

Research has concentrated on the significance of certain factors pertaining to employees' motivation, particularly that of Generation Z, in diverse work settings. TPB is particularly useful for determining people's readiness for a given course of action. TPB has been used in studies on gig workers' readiness to work in the gig economy. India is among the nations that uses gig work

the most, thus it's important to identify the variables influencing the younger generation's readiness to enter the gig economy in order to grasp the potential for its growth. In order to determine whether Generation Z is prepared to work in the gig economy, this study uses the TPB.

Conceptual Model

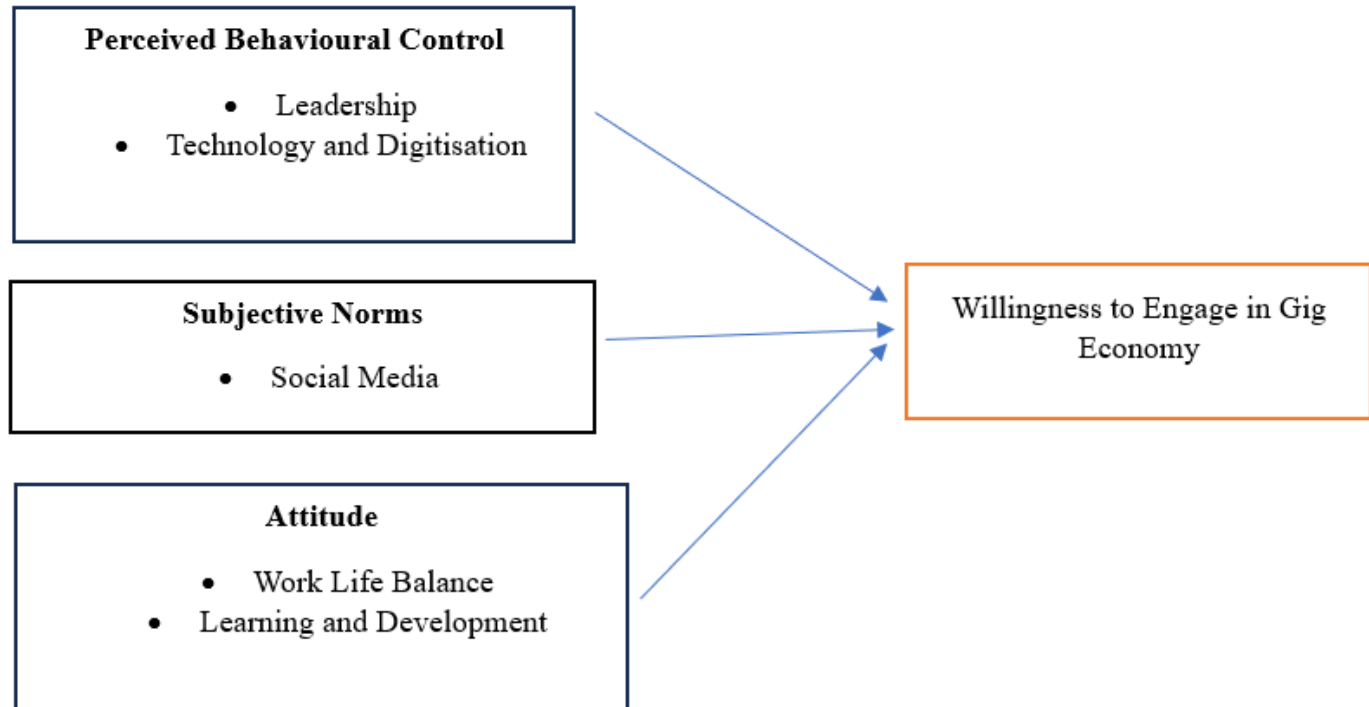


Figure 1 Conceptual Model of Theory of Planned Behaviour on the willingness to engage in Gig Economy
According to the studied research, Subjective Norms are measured by social media, while Perceived Behavioural Control is measured by Leadership, Technology, and Digitisation. The Attitude is measured using Learning and Development and Work-Life Balance. These variables are used to measure the Readiness to Engage in Gig Economy as shown in Figure 1.

OBJECTIVE

To examine the factors that influence the readiness of generation Z in Kerala to work in the Gig Economy.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were developed

- H1: There is a significant influence of Leadership on the Readiness to engage in Gig Economy
- H2: There is a significant influence of Learning and Development on the Readiness to engage in the Gig Economy
- H3: There is a significant influence of Social Media on the Readiness to engage in Gig Economy
- H4: There is a significant influence of Technology on the Readiness to engage in Gig Economy
- H5: There is a significant influence of Work Life Balance on the Readiness to engage in Gig Economy

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Analytical and Descriptive design of research was employed in the study. The Population of the study was Generation Z of Kerala. The sample size was estimated to be 384. A total of 390 sample were collected through a well-structured questionnaire which was circulated through Google Forms. For analysing the collected data, PLS SEM was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model (Table 1) was assessed using internal consistency, composite reliability, and Henseler's rhoA for reflective components, all falling below the 0.70–0.95 threshold range. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE); all reflective constructs in our model were found to be above the critical threshold of 0.50. With the exception

of two indicators, all reflective construct indicators had outer loadings greater than 0.70, signifying sufficient indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2022). Nevertheless, since the construct had reached the AVE threshold value of 0.50 and the aforementioned two indicators had values above 0.50, they were kept. (Hair et al., 2022). The result showed that the data was absent from multicollinearity, as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value was lower than 3.33 (Diamantopoulos et al., 2008).

Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 1

<i>Measurement Model of Behavioural Willingness</i>			<i>Gig Economy</i>		→		
Construct	Items	Loadings ^a	VIF	AVE ^b	Rho_a	CR ^c	CA ^d
Leadership	LQ1	0.824	2.071	0.711	0.904	0.925	0.898
	LQ2	0.817	2.076				
	LQ3	0.817	2.419				
	LQ4	0.882	3.276				
	LQ5	0.873	2.645				
Learning and Development	LND1	0.864	2.909	0.733	0.911	0.932	0.909
	LND2	0.852	2.695				
	LND3	0.854	2.48				
	LND4	0.841	2.314				
	LND5	0.868	2.689				
Social Media	SM1	0.617	1.530	0.601	0.844	0.882	0.831
	SM2	0.792	1.963				
	SM3	0.828	2.211				
	SM4	0.802	2.005				
	SM5	0.816	2.492				
Technology	TND1	0.740	1.709	0.577	0.825	0.870	0.810
	TND2	0.845	2.376				
	TND3	0.844	2.347				
	TND4	0.769	1.856				
	TND5	0.563	1.332				
Willingness to engage in Gig Economy	WTG1	0.817	1.875	0.693	0.899	0.918	0.889
	WTG2	0.886	1.884				
	WTG3	0.868	3.098				
	WTG4	0.751	3.227				
	WTG5	0.834	3.096				
Work Life Balance	WLB1	0.729	2.292	0.643	0.862	0.900	0.860
	WLB2	0.744	3.038				
	WLB3	0.857	2.722				
	WLB4	0.823	2.133				
	WLB5	0.846	2.382				

Source: Primary Data (Run through PLS algorithm)

Items Removed: None

- All Items Loading >0.5 indicates reliability (Hulland, 1999)
 - Average variance Extracted >0.5 indicates convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)
 - Composite Reliability >0.7 shows internal consistency (I. B. Nunnally, 1995)
- Cronbach Alpha >0.7 shows internal consistency (J. C. Nunnally, 1978)

The discriminant validity was investigated by Heterotrait – Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Table 2). HTMT inference method was used as the ratio between behavioral Readiness and the gig economy was below the limit of 0.85 (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2016). In order to determine whether the square root of AVE on the diagonal was larger than the inter-construct correlation values, the study additionally used Fornell and Larcker's criterion. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 3).

Discriminant Validity

Table 2 *Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation^a)*

	LQ	LND	SM	TND	WTG	WLB
LQ						
LND	0.622					
SM	0.665	0.663				
TND	0.804	0.743	0.745			
WTG	0.682	0.796	0.732	0.745		
WLB	0.643	0.724	0.693	0.766	0.802	-

Note(s): LQ= Leadership, LND=Learning and Development, SM=Social Media, TND = Technology, WTG= Willingness to engage in Gig Economy, WLB= Work Life Balance

Table 3 *Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Lacker criterion^a)*

	LQ	LND	SM	TND	WTG	WLB
LQ	0.843					
LND	0.569	0.836				
SM	0.578	0.577	0.775			
TND	0.692	0.646	0.602	0.760		
WTG	0.625	0.730	0.636	0.640	0.833	
WLB	0.579	0.651	0.586	0.646	0.667	0.802

Note(s): LQ= Leadership, LND=Learning and Development, SM=Social Media, TND = Technology, WTG= Willingness to engage in Gig Economy, WLB= Work Life Balance

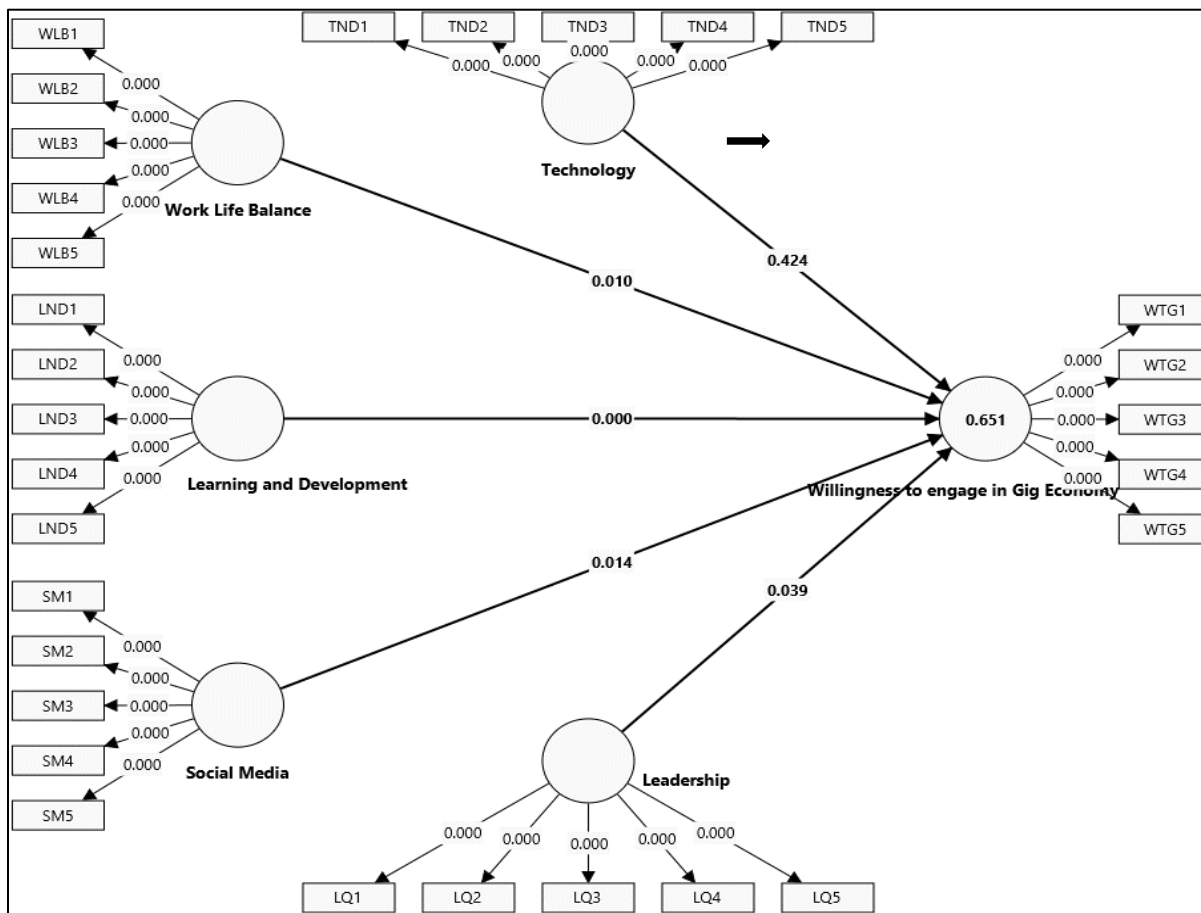
^a(Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model assessment was carried out in accordance with (Hair et al., 2018, 2022). The study then used the bootstrapping method on 10,000 subsamples to investigate the relevance of path coefficients (Hair et al., 2022). Leadership positively influences readiness to engage in the gig economy ($\beta=0.156, p < 0.039$), thus supporting H1. Learning and development positively affect the readiness to engage in the gig economy. Learning and development had a significant relationship with readiness to engage in the gig economy ($\beta=0.376, p < 0.001$) therefore supporting H2. H3 was supported as social media significantly affects readiness to engage in the gig economy ($\beta=0.185, p < 0.014$). H4 was not supported where technology did not influence the readiness to engage in the gig economy ($\beta=0.058, p < 0.424$). In addition to this, H5 depicts that work-life balance and readiness to engage in the gig economy are positively significant. It was obtained that work-life balance had a favorable relation with the key target construct of readiness to engage in the gig economy ($\beta=0.186, p < 0.010$).

The endogenous construct, willingness to engage in gig economy, has a substantial R² (coefficient of determination) of 0.651. Studies in the social sciences typically regard R² values of 0.20 and above to be significant. (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016). The results indicate that leadership, learning and development, social media, and work-life balance do go on to determine readiness to engage in the gig economy. The effect size was determined by f² (Cohen, 1988), which was found to be moderate.

Structural Model Assessments



Source: Primary Data (Run through Bootstrapping)
Figure 2: Structural Model of Behavioural Willingness Gig Economy

Table 4 Hypothesis Testing (Structural Model Assessments)

	Hypothesis Testing	Beta (β)	T-Value	P- Value	f^2 ^a	Decision
H1	LQ \rightarrow WTG	0.156	2.064	0.039	0.032	Supported
H2	LND \rightarrow WTG	0.376	4.356	<.001	0.188	Supported
H3	SM \rightarrow WTG	0.185	2.455	0.014	0.051	Supported
H4	TND \rightarrow WTG	0.058	0.800	0.424	0.004	Not Supported
H5	WLB \rightarrow WTG	0.186	2.583	0.010	0.045	Supported

Source: Primary Data

^a Effect of size rule of thumb: $0.02 \leq f^2 \leq 0.15$ = small effect, $0.15 \leq f^2 \leq 0.35$ = moderate effect and $0.35 \leq f^2$ = strong effect

Note(s): LQ= Leadership, LND=Learning and Development, SM=Social Media, TND = Technology, WTG= Willingness to engage in Gig Economy, WLB= Work Life Balance

PLS Predict

PLS predict was applied to find out the predictive relevance of readiness to engage in the gig economy (Danks & Ray, 2018; Shmueli et al., 2019). It was found out that the value of Q2 predicts, which indicates predictive importance, is more than zero. Predictive error, Q2 predict, and the root mean squared error (RMSE) were applied to the primary endogenous construct of readiness to participate in the gig economy. Since the prediction errors were found to be symmetrically distributed, the RMSE values of the theoretical PLS and untheorized linear regression benchmarks were compared (Shmueli et al., 2019). This indicates that the construct preparedness to participate in the gig economy has high predictive relevance power because the RMSE values of the PLS version of the construct are lower than the standards for the linear regression model (LM)(Hair et al., 2018) as shown in Table 5

Table 5 PLS Predict

Constructs	Indicators	PLS-SEM RMSE ^a	Q2 Predict ^c	LM RMSE ^b
Willingness to engage in Gig	WTG001	0.623	0.550	0.674
	WTG002	0.629	0.505	0.725

Economy	WTG003	0.778	0.370	0.865
	WTG004	0.843	0.244	0.925
	WTG005	0.766	0.418	0.813

Source: Primary Data (Run through PLS Predict)

PLS Predict Algorithm (Shmueli et al., 2016).

^aRoot of Mean Square Error for Partial Least Square Model

^b Root of Mean Square Error for Linear Model

^c Rule of thumb: 0.02 – 0.15: Weak predictive power, 0.15-0.35: moderate predictive power, above 0.35: high predictive power (Wong, 2013).

The goodness of fit index was measured using the standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). According to (Hair et al., 2018), the estimated model has the best fit when the SRMR value is less than 0.08. The estimated model's SRMR in the current investigation was determined to be 0.068, which is below the 0.08 threshold and indicates a high level of explanatory power (Henseler et al., 2012).

FINDINGS

Gig Economy is not a new term but the developments and research in the area is still growing. In this study, the readiness of Generation Z to work in the Gig Economy has been examined. For this, the TPB is applied, where factors such as Attitude, Perceived Behavioural Control and Subjective norms were considered. The study reveals that out of the five variables taken, Learning and Development, Leadership, Social Media and Work Life Balance acts as the major motivators for Generation Z to enter into the Gig Economy. In an Era, of increased unemployment and lack of permanent jobs, Gig Economy also called the Platform Economy will definitely prove to be a better way of employment. The continuous Learning, the self-leadership qualities, the peer group influence and the flexible work arrangement of the Gig Economy will attract the future generation into the Gig Economy. This will certainly solve the problem of youth unemployment to an extent. Therefore, this study reveals that, Gig Economy will not only provide job opportunities but also a satisfied youth.

LIMITATIONS

One of the major limitations of the study was the Novelty of the term which insisted the researcher to personally clarify the concept to the respondents. Secondly the respondents were only of Generation Z which did not consider any other generations.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future Research can be undertaken on different generations and also various other theories can be applied. The Scope of the study is limited in Kerala State of India, which could be applied to other geographical regions also.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

- **Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest :** The authors do not have any potential conflict of interest
- **Research involving Human Participants and/or Animals:** The Research has involved Human Participants and have been granted permission from the Research Advisory Board of the Institution
- **Informed consent:** The participants have been informed the purpose of the study.

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