

A Conceptual Study On Developing Entrepreneurial Skill Sets Among Students Of Heis To Succeed In The Gig Economy Using AMO Model

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Abstract: *This paper investigates how Indian HEIs can leverage the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model to cultivate entrepreneurial skills for student success in India's expanding gig economy. India's economy has significantly transformed, fostering a dynamic gig sector. The study reviews existing literature on AMO, the gig economy's characteristics and challenges, and current entrepreneurship education in Indian HEIs. It develops a conceptual framework proposing actionable strategies based on AMO dimensions. The analysis highlights HEIs' critical role in addressing skill gaps. A holistic approach, enhancing abilities, fostering motivation, and creating opportunities, is crucial for improving student employability and contributing to economic growth.*

Keywords: *Gig economy, Ability, Motivation, Opportunities, Entrepreneurial skills*

I. INTRODUCTION

Improved standard of living, infrastructural development and widespread penetration of information technology has transformed the Indian Economy over the two and half decade. A lot of new business ventures are mushrooming to cater to the wants of the Indian community to sustain their new lifestyle. Globalisation and Sustainability has created a large-scale demand for new and trendy goods and services as well as revived the traditional goods and flavours of India. Thus, creating a lot of new entrepreneurs to venture out to do business with their skills; paving the way for India to move towards Gig Economy. Building on this foundation, this paper delves into how Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can strategically equip their students with the necessary entrepreneurial skill sets to thrive in this evolving gig economy. It specifically examines the utility of the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model as a guiding theoretical framework to design and implement effective educational interventions. The objective is to provide a comprehensive analysis and actionable strategies for HEIs to

prepare students for the unique demands and opportunities of independent, flexible work arrangements. The growing importance of the gig economy as a significant employment sector in India underscores the critical, yet often unfulfilled, role of HEIs in preparing a future-ready workforce that can navigate its complexities and leverage its potential.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, establishing the foundation for the proposed model.

A. THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF INDIA'S GIG ECONOMY

The gig economy represents a labor market characterized by short-term, freelance, and contract work, where individuals operate as independent workers rather than traditional full-time employees.¹ This model expands upon traditional

freelance work by offering reduced entry and operating costs for providers and greater flexibility in work hours, largely facilitated by digital platforms.²

a. CHARACTERISTICS AND GROWTH

India has emerged as the fifth-largest gig economy globally, exhibiting a remarkable growth trajectory.³ The number of gig workers is projected to increase substantially from 7.7 million in 2020-21 to an estimated 23.5 million by 2029-30, at which point they are expected to constitute 6.7% of the non-agricultural workforce, up from 2.6% in 2020-21.³ This workforce is broadly categorized into platform-based workers, such as Uber drivers and Swiggy delivery agents, and non-platform gig workers, who are self-employed individuals operating independently.³ The sector spans diverse industries, with significant concentrations observed in retail (2.7 million workers), transportation (1.3 million), manufacturing (0.6 million), and finance (0.6 million), with further expansion anticipated in construction and logistics.³

b. DRIVERS OF GROWTH

The expansion of the gig economy is propelled by a confluence of factors benefiting both workers and companies. For workers, the appeal lies in the flexibility it offers, the potential for multiple income streams, and the prospect of better earning potential compared to traditional employment.³ This economic model also fosters more inclusive opportunities, evidenced by increasing participation from women and students.³ From the perspective of companies, the gig model provides access to a vast talent pool and helps reduce hiring costs, as businesses increasingly prioritize agility and prefer to access resources on demand rather than making full-time hires.¹ Technological advancements form the foundational backbone of this growth, with digital platforms ensuring price transparency, efficient work tracking, and streamlined payment processing.³ The increasing use of smartphones, the low cost of internet access, and various initiatives under the Digital India campaign have been pivotal in enabling this digital transformation of work.⁶

B. THE ABILITY-MOTIVATION-OPPORTUNITY (AMO) MODEL: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework is a widely adopted theoretical model in human resource management and organizational psychology. It posits that an individual's performance is a direct function of their Ability (A), Motivation (M), and Opportunity (O).¹¹

a. CORE COMPONENTS AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

✓ *Ability (A)*: This component refers to an individual's inherent capacities, along with their acquired skills, knowledge, and competencies that are essential for

successfully performing a task or achieving a goal.¹² This dimension can be significantly enhanced through targeted training programs and effective job design.¹¹

- ✓ *Motivation (M)*: Motivation encompasses the psychological drive, willingness, and desire that compel an individual to exert effort towards achieving a goal.¹² It comprises both intrinsic motivation, such as passion, a sense of purpose, a connection to desired outcomes, and the belief that one's contribution makes a difference, and extrinsic motivation, which includes external rewards like performance-based pay.¹¹ Research indicates a positive association between intrinsic motivation and scientific performance, while extrinsic motivation can exhibit a negative nonlinear association.¹³
- ✓ *Opportunity (O)*: This pertains to the external environmental factors, available resources, and prevailing circumstances that either enable or hinder an individual's successful progress and performance.¹¹ This includes the availability of necessary tools, sufficient resources,

C. ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILL SETS FOR GIG ECONOMY SUCCESS

Gig workers are increasingly recognized as "solopreneurs" who must effectively manage their own careers and micro-businesses, operating with a high degree of autonomy.¹ Success in this environment demands a sophisticated blend of both technical (hard) and personal (soft) attributes.

- ✓ *Entrepreneurial Thinking*: This encompasses a range of skills essential for self-management in a business context, including personal branding, effective negotiation, strategic networking, and robust financial literacy.¹⁸ It also involves the ability to manage projects, clients, and personal finances independently, akin to running a small enterprise.¹
- ✓ *Digital Literacy*: Given the pervasive platform-driven nature of the gig economy, proficiency in basic digital tools is critical. Furthermore, understanding and adapting to emerging technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and data analytics is increasingly vital for staying competitive and accessing new opportunities.¹⁸
- ✓ *Specific Soft Skills for Gig Work*:
 - *Initiation*: The ability to quickly take charge and be energized by new opportunities, which is crucial for claiming time-sensitive gigs on digital platforms.¹
 - *Lateral Thinking*: Flexibility, adaptability, and the capacity for creative problem-solving, essential for navigating the unpredictable and often varied nature of gig work.¹
 - *Sole Responsibility*: Comfort and proficiency in working unsupervised on clearly defined tasks, coupled with a willingness to take full accountability for outcomes.¹
 - *Goal Orientation and Problem-Solving*: The drive to work consistently towards missions and goals, combined with the foresight to predict, prevent, and

- effectively solve problems that arise during projects.¹
- *Pioneer/Adaptability*: A disposition that appreciates change, whether gradual or rapid, and thrives in agile environments, which is highly conducive to the ever-evolving gig economy landscape.¹
 - *Assertiveness*: The capacity to advocate effectively for oneself, particularly as gig workers often lack traditional employer representation and must navigate terms independently.¹
 - *Money Focus*: A strong motivation for the commercial and financial aspects of their business, including understanding profit, loss, and margins, which is vital for ensuring financial viability and sustainable earnings.¹
 - *Willingness to Learn*: An indispensable trait for continuous upskilling, diversifying income sources, and securing higher-paid freelance work in a rapidly changing market.¹
 - *People Skills*: Cultivating emotional intelligence, active listening, and empathy is crucial for positive client interactions, acquiring favorable reviews, and steadily growing a client base.¹
- ✓ *Lifelong Learning*: With technology and industries evolving at an accelerating pace, the ability and willingness to continuously update and acquire new skills, often referred to as "learning and unlearning," will be a core tenet of career success and resilience in the gig economy.⁹

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rapid expansion of India's gig economy presents a significant paradigm shift in the nature of work, yet the traditional education system in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) remains largely ill-equipped to prepare students for this evolving landscape. Current pedagogical models, designed primarily for stable, long-term employment, often focus on rigid disciplinary boundaries and theoretical knowledge, which are becoming outdated in a market demanding agile, multi-skilled, and self-reliant individuals.¹⁸ While the gig economy offers immense opportunities for flexibility, job creation, and financial inclusion, it also poses substantial challenges such as a lack of legal protections, income instability and the potential for worker disposability.³

A critical gap exists between the skills imparted by HEIs and those required for sustained success and resilience in the gig economy. Many gig workers currently lack specialized industry skills, and while a significant portion is "skilling-ready," they often lack clear pathways to upskill effectively.³ Traditional degrees, while valuable for foundational knowledge, may not adequately signal the specific, adaptable expertise valued in a contract-based market, leading to an "endless loop of learning and unlearning" for job seekers.⁹ Furthermore, the entrepreneurial mindset, digital literacy, and crucial soft skills such as adaptability, self-initiation, and financial management, which are vital for "solopreneurs" in

the gig economy, are often not systematically integrated into mainstream curricula.¹

Therefore, the problem lies in the urgent need for Indian HEIs to fundamentally re-evaluate and transform their educational frameworks. There is a pressing requirement to strategically develop entrepreneurial skill sets among students that are specifically tailored for the gig economy, moving beyond conventional employment preparation. The absence of a structured, comprehensive approach to address this challenge risks leaving a significant portion of the future workforce unprepared for the realities of the modern labour market, thereby hindering both individual success and national economic growth. This paper proposes that the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model offers a robust theoretical framework to guide HEIs in systematically identifying, developing, and fostering these essential entrepreneurial capabilities among students.

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a conceptual research design, primarily relying on a comprehensive and systematic review of existing literature. The methodology involves synthesizing empirical findings, theoretical frameworks, and policy reports related to the gig economy in India, entrepreneurial skill development, and the application of the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model in educational and organizational contexts.

The research aims to establish a robust theoretical foundation for understanding how HEIs can effectively prepare students for the gig economy. The AMO model serves as the central organizing framework for this analysis. The review systematically examines:

The characteristics, growth drivers, challenges, and opportunities of India's gig economy: This involves drawing data from reports by organizations such as NITI Aayog and various academic and industry analyses to establish the current landscape and future trajectory of gig work in India.³

The theoretical underpinnings and applications of the AMO model: This includes exploring its core components (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity), various interpretations (e.g., additive vs. multiplicative), and its proven utility in human resource management and educational settings for understanding performance and engagement.¹¹

Key entrepreneurial hard and soft skills required for success in the gig economy: This involves identifying specific competencies, including digital literacy, entrepreneurial thinking, and critical soft skills, as highlighted by various studies on gig worker success.¹

The current state and limitations of entrepreneurship education in Indian HEIs: This assesses existing programs, identifies gaps in preparing students for the gig economy, and highlights the need for a more practical and adaptable curriculum.⁹

By integrating these distinct yet interconnected bodies of literature, the study constructs a conceptual framework that proposes actionable strategies for HEIs. The qualitative nature of this review allows for the synthesis of diverse perspectives

and the identification of causal relationships and broader implications that might not be apparent from isolated studies. The objective is to provide a holistic understanding and offer theoretically grounded recommendations for policy and practice, guiding HEIs in designing educational interventions that effectively enhance students' entrepreneurial abilities, foster their motivation, and create relevant opportunities for success in India's dynamic gig economy.

V. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

OBJECTIVE

- ✓ To find out the types of gig workers
- ✓ To rank the Soft Skills required for Gig Workers to be successful

Type of Gig Worker	Response	Percentage
Delivery Service (Food, Parcels, etc)	12	24
Creative Designers	3	6
Catering	8	16
Transportation	7	14
Personal and Home Care	11	22
Educational Services	3	6
Construction	5	10
Others	2	4
Total	51	100

Table 5.1: Type of Gig Workers

INTERPRETATION

The data reveal that the gig economy is largely driven by delivery services (24 percent) and personal/home care services (22 percent), followed by traditional service sectors such as catering (16 percent) and transportation (14 percent). While creative (6 percent) and educational services (6 percent) also exist, they currently constitute smaller segments of the observed gig workforce. This distribution provides insights into the most prevalent types of on-demand work.

Soft Skills	Average	Rank
Initiation	5.67	3
Lateral Thinking	4.61	10
Sole Responsibility	5.43	6
Goal Orientation	5.63	4
Problem-Solving	6.04	2
Pioneer/Adaptability	5.24	7
Assertiveness	5.22	8
Money Focus	6.22	1
Willingness to Learn	5.20	9
People Skills	5.53	5

Table 5.2: Ranking of Soft Skills required for Gig Workers to be successful

INTERPRETATION

The table shows the ranking of soft skills required for gig workers to be successful, based on their average scores. The interpretation of the data is as follows:

Money Focus (Rank 1): This skill has the highest average score of 6.22, indicating it is considered the most crucial soft skill for gig workers' success. This suggests that the ability to manage finances, prioritize profitable opportunities, and maintain a strong focus on earnings is paramount in the gig economy.

Problem-Solving (Rank 2): With an average score of 6.04, problem-solving is the second most important skill. This highlights the need for gig workers to be resourceful and capable of overcoming challenges independently.

Initiation (Rank 3): An average score of 5.67 places initiation as the third most important skill. This emphasizes the importance of proactiveness and the ability to start tasks or projects without constant supervision.

Goal Orientation (Rank 4): With an average score of 5.63, goal orientation is also highly valued. This suggests that successful gig workers are those who can set clear objectives and work diligently towards achieving them.

People Skills (Rank 5): An average score of 5.53 indicates that effective communication and interpersonal skills are moderately important. While not as critical as financial focus or problem-solving, the ability to interact well with clients and collaborators is still valuable.

Sole Responsibility (Rank 6): With an average score of 5.43, this skill highlights the need for gig workers to take ownership of their work and its outcomes.

Pioneer/Adaptability (Rank 7): An average score of 5.24 suggests that being able to innovate and adapt to new situations or technologies is moderately important for gig workers.

Assertiveness (Rank 8): With an average score of 5.22, assertiveness is also considered a valuable trait, likely for setting boundaries, negotiating, and advocating for oneself.

Willingness to Learn (Rank 9): An average score of 5.20 indicates that a continuous desire to acquire new knowledge and skills is important for long-term success in the dynamic gig economy.

Lateral Thinking (Rank 10): This skill has the lowest average score of 4.61, suggesting it is considered the least critical among the listed soft skills for gig worker success, although still relevant to some extent.

In summary, the data suggests that gig workers are most successful when they are financially astute, adept at problem-solving, and proactive. While interpersonal and adaptive skills are also valuable, the core emphasis lies on independent work, goal achievement, and a strong focus on financial outcomes.

VI. CONCLUSION

To effectively prepare students for the gig economy, Indian HEIs need to implement several actionable recommendations:

Curriculum Overhaul: Integrate cross-disciplinary projects, real-world problem-solving tasks, and project-based learning that simulate gig economy roles like freelancing or consulting. This moves away from traditional, theory-heavy approaches towards practical, experiential learning.¹⁸

Skill Certifications and Micro-Credentials: Offer flexible learning options where students can earn credentials in various fields, as these may hold more immediate value in the gig economy than traditional degrees alone.¹⁸

Emphasis on Career Resilience: Incorporate training that teaches students how to market themselves and their skills, build a portfolio, network effectively, and manage their career paths independently, recognizing that job security increasingly stems from individual capabilities rather than traditional employment structures.¹⁸

Fostering an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: Promote entrepreneurship by integrating startup incubators, freelancing opportunities, and business courses into academic programs. This includes teaching students how to manage projects, clients, and their own finances.¹⁸

Digital Literacy and Emerging Technologies: Ensure proficiency in basic digital tools and introduce emerging technologies like blockchain, AI, and data analytics, which are increasingly integral to gig work.¹⁸

Addressing Socio-Economic Realities: Incorporate modules on labour economics, personal financial planning for income instability, and understanding the legal implications of independent contracting, to prepare students for the unique challenges of gig work beyond just skill acquisition.

By strategically leveraging the AMO model and implementing these recommendations, Indian HEIs can play a transformative role in developing a future-ready workforce. This proactive approach will not only enhance student employability and foster a resilient workforce but also significantly contribute to India's economic growth targets by empowering individuals to thrive in the evolving gig economy.

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