

Association for Information Systems

AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

AMCIS 2021 TREOs

TREO Papers

8-9-2021

Stress and Coping Mechanisms in Gig Work

Miguel D. Jacome Guerrero

California State University Dominguez Hills, mjacomeguerrero1@toromail.csudh.edu

Xuefei (Nancy) Deng

California State University Dominguez Hills, ndeng@csudh.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/treos_amcis2021

Recommended Citation

Jacome Guerrero, Miguel D. and Deng, Xuefei (Nancy), "Stress and Coping Mechanisms in Gig Work" (2021). *AMCIS 2021 TREOs*. 40.

https://aisel.aisnet.org/treos_amcis2021/40

This material is brought to you by the TREO Papers at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in AMCIS 2021 TREOs by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

Stress and Coping Mechanisms in Gig Work

TREO Talk Paper

Miguel Jacome Guerrero

California State University, Dominguez Hills
mjacomeguerrero1@toromail.csudh.edu

Xuefei (Nancy) Deng

California State University, Dominguez Hills
ndeng@csudh.edu

Abstract

Advancements in digital technology have given rise to the creation of digital platforms and the growth of gig work. Gig work is a new form of work based on short-term, contract arrangements through the open marketplaces on digital platforms (Valley, 2000). As a result of the contract-based work arrangement, participants in gig work are more entrepreneurial and individualistic. To be considered gig work, the work must meet the following requirements: platform-related; predominantly microtasks, which are menial, monotonous, and tightly bounded; external contributors are classified by the platforms as independent contractors self-employed status and being evaluated digitally (Howcroft, 2019).

In the gig work environment, workers enjoy a sense of autonomy in making job decisions on a digital platform (Deng and Joshi, 2016), but they are also being managed through a micro-level task control (Howcroft, 2019). Instead of having overall work being observed, gig workers found each function and task being monitored. The relations of the platforms working as intermediaries from a job provider to a job seeker are more like an automated job manager where "some platforms combine automation with humans" (Howcroft, 2019, p. 26). The platforms have created and applied algorithms to manage job listings and work processes. This type of management enables the platforms "to meticulously track workers in an optimized manner over a large scale" (Howcroft, 2019, p. 30). In the gig work environment, this management style pushes workers to become dependent on computer algorithms for work and performance evaluation. In the cases where a worker is underperforming, the platform puts pressure on the worker by "intense supervisory pressure and discipline on the basis of remote covert monitoring of their work" (Wood, 2019, p. 62). In addition to benefits, this new gig work opportunity has also brought problems that should be addressed.

One of the problems that we find necessary to address is gig workers' stress condition and coping mechanism. Stress can be defined as "antecedent conditions within one's job or the organization which require adaptive responses on the part of the employees" (Jex & Beehr, 1991, p. 312). Multiple factors can lead to the gig worker being stressed. Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 141) defined coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." It is necessary to understand the best coping mechanism to generate insights to inform key stakeholders in the gig economy, including workers, platform companies, and client organizations. This study has the potential to help gig workers manage or develop a coping mechanism that helps reduce their emotional and physical stress.

Based on our data analysis, we were able to identify some important characteristics of gig workers. Workers with different levels of participation in crowdwork were found to be associated differently with their financial stress. Financial stress is defined as an individual concern about his/her ability to earn sufficient income to provide for their basic needs. Furthermore, the data analysis shows gig workers cope with stress by using different strategies, including reaching out, escape, or avoidance.

Our next step for this study is to consider additional individual background factors such as gender, age, and financial dependence on gig work platforms. In addition to the qualitative data analysis, we will also use quantitative analysis to understand the behaviors of the gig work participants. Our study will contribute to gig work research by understanding the factors leading to gig work stress and offering insights into the coping mechanisms to help gig workers reduce stress.