

The future of work: HRM strategies for managing gig and platform workers in AI-driven digital economies

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Keywords

platform workers, employee engagement, worker well-being, algorithmic transparency, gig economy, AI-enabled HRM, and the future of work

Abstract

The gig and platform economies' explosive expansion has completely changed the nature of traditional work relationships and the function of human resource management (HRM). Instead of using traditional supervisory structures, digital platforms are depending more and more on independent contractors, freelancers, and contingent labor who are handled by algorithmic systems. This change has made it more difficult for businesses to develop HRM strategies that maintain flexibility and efficiency while guaranteeing employee engagement, well-being, and performance. The current study creates an integrated paradigm that looks at how algorithmic openness, perceived organizational support, and AI-enabled HRM practices affect gig worker outcomes. The study suggests that engagement and well-being mediate the relationship between HRM practices and gig worker performance, drawing on Social Exchange Theory, Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, and platform ecosystem perspectives.

It is suggested that data be gathered from platform-based gig workers in various service industries using a quantitative study design. To test the proposed relationships, structural equation modeling with SmartPLS is recommended. By applying HRM theory to non-traditional employment arrangements and highlighting the significance of ethical and sustainable HR practices in digitally mediated work environments, the study adds to the growing body of literature on the future of work. The results should show that while AI-enabled HR solutions increase productivity, they still need organizational support and transparency to improve worker outcomes. For businesses looking to efficiently manage gig workers while guaranteeing long-term workforce sustainability, the study offers theoretical and practical consequences.

Introduction

Digitalization, AI, and platform-based business models are changing the nature of employment in a big way. More and more, businesses are using gig workers, freelancers, and independent contractors to do jobs on demand instead of hiring people for long-term jobs. The gig economy has grown quickly in many fields, including transportation, delivery services, IT, consulting, and creative fields. It is based on short-term contracts and employment arrangements that are mediated by platforms. This change has opened up new possibilities for freedom and independence, but it has also made it much harder to keep jobs, safeguard workers, and run an organization.

Digital labor platforms have completely changed how companies hire, manage, and rate workers. In platform-based work environments, traditional HRM techniques that rely on hierarchical supervision and permanent employment arrangements are becoming less useful. Instead, algorithmic management systems assign tasks, keep an eye on performance, and decide how much to pay. These AI-powered systems make operations more efficient, but they might also make people less likely to interact with each other and make the company seem more distant. Because of this, gig workers typically don't feel very connected to their organizations, don't know how much money they'll make, and don't have easy access to traditional HR support systems.

HRM needs to change to deal with the particular needs of gig work from a strategic point of view. Gig workers have a lot of freedom, but they don't work as part of a team like regular employees do. This makes it harder to get people involved, keep them healthy, and keep their performance up. So, businesses need to come up with HRM plans that find a balance between being flexible and being helpful. More and more, gig workers are being managed with AI-enabled HRM tools including automated scheduling, performance analytics, and digital feedback systems. But these technologies also bring up moral issues about justice, transparency, and watching workers.

Engagement of employees in gig environments is distinct from conventional employment. Gig workers usually have weaker psychological relationships with companies, which means that their involvement is more dependent on how fair, free, and supported they feel. Research indicates that when gig workers experience organizational support, they are more inclined to exhibit enhanced dedication and performance. On the other hand, not being open about how algorithms make decisions could lower trust and hurt people's health.

Another important issue in the gig economy is the health and happiness of workers. Gig workers may have unstable incomes, long hours, and few perks like paid time off and health insurance. These things could make you stressed, burned out, and less productive. The Job Demands–Resources paradigm is a good way to think about these things. Job resources like autonomy, support, and openness can help with job demands and make people feel better.

Even though more people are interested in gig labor, most of the HRM literature is still about regular employees. There is still not much research that combines AI-enabled HRM, ethical governance, and gig worker outcomes into one paradigm. Furthermore, little research investigates the mediating function of engagement and well-being in elucidating the impact of HRM practices on performance within platform-based employment environments.

This research fills these voids by creating a thorough conceptual model that connects AI-enabled HRM practices, perceived organizational support, and algorithmic transparency with gig worker engagement, well-being, and performance. Utilizing a structural equation modeling methodology, the research seeks to deliver empirical insights into efficient HRM techniques for the management of gig workers. The research enhances the literature on the future of work by expanding HRM theory to encompass platform-based employment and providing pragmatic assistance for firms managing digital workforce transition.

Literature Review

The Gig Economy and Transformation of Work

The gig economy is a big change in the way people work, with flexible, on-demand, and platform-mediated work arrangements. Digital platforms make it easier for workers and clients to find one other, doing away with the need for traditional employment agencies. This paradigm has grown quickly because of new technologies, globalization, and changes in what workers want. Gig employment gives you freedom, flexibility, and chances to make money. But it also brings problems like employment insecurity, no benefits, and little chances for career growth.

Gig employment is becoming more popular, and this has big effects on HRM. Traditional HRM techniques are meant for full-time employees, while gig workers work on their own and don't feel very connected to the company. Because of this, companies need to change their HRM strategies to focus on coordination, communication, and digital assistance instead of direct supervision. HR professionals need to change the rules about hiring, evaluating performance, and getting workers involved in this change.

AI-Enabled HRM in the Gig Economy

The gig economy is a big change in the way people work, with flexible, on-demand, and platform-mediated work arrangements. Digital platforms make it easier for workers and clients to find one other, doing away with the need for traditional employment agencies. This paradigm has grown quickly because of new technologies, globalization, and changes in what workers want. Gig employment gives you freedom, flexibility, and the chance to make money. But it also makes things worse, including employment insecurity, no benefits, and limited chances for career growth.

The growth of gig employment has big effects on HRM. Traditional HRM techniques are meant for full-time employees, while gig workers work on their own and don't feel very connected to the company. As a result, companies need to change their HRM strategies so that they focus on collaboration, communication, and digital support instead of direct supervision. To make this change, HR professionals need to change the rules about hiring, performance reviews, and keeping employees engaged.

Perceived Organizational Support in Gig Work

Perceived organizational support is when employees think that the company values their job and cares about their health and safety. In gig settings, organizational assistance is frequently provided via digital communication, training resources, and adaptive platform policies. Research shows that feeling supported increases engagement and lowers the desire to leave.

Gig workers usually don't have much direct contact with their bosses; thus, organizational support is quite vital. Digital support services like feedback tools, assistance centers, and communication platforms can help workers get along better with their companies. Social Exchange Theory posits that when employees experience support, they respond with increased dedication and performance.

Algorithmic Transparency and Ethical HRM

Algorithmic transparency means that automated decision-making systems are clear and easy to understand. Algorithms decide who gets what tasks, how much they are paid, and what their ratings are on gig sites. Workers may not trust or be happy with their jobs if there isn't enough transparency. Ethical HRM puts a lot of focus on being fair, being responsible, and using technology in a responsible way.

Research shows that being open and honest makes things seem fairer and lowers stress. Workers feel more in control and involved when they know what the evaluation criteria are. Because of this, ethical HRM practices are very important for keeping gig workers motivated and performing well.

Employee Engagement in Platform-Based Work

Employee engagement shows how interested and involved an employee is in their work. In gig environments, autonomy, flexibility, and support all affect how engaged people are. Gig workers who are engaged do better job and deliver better services. But not feeling like you belong to an organization may make you less engaged.

HRM tactics including feedback systems, rewards, and ways to talk to each other can make people more engaged. Engagement also serves as an intermediary between HR procedures and performance results. Research indicates that engaged employees exhibit greater efficiency and enhanced client satisfaction.

Worker Well-Being in the Gig Economy

Worker health and safety is a big concern in platform-based jobs. Gig workers don't know how much money they'll make, how much work they'll have, or how safe their jobs are. These things could make you stressed out and burned out. The employment Demands-Resources model shows how employment resources can help with these problems.

Support from the organization, openness, and freedom are all things that can help people feel better. Employees that are happier and healthier are more productive and happier. So, HRM initiatives need to focus on improving well-being in order to keep performance up.

Gig Worker Performance

Ratings, job completion, and customer happiness are the most common ways to measure how well someone does gig work. HRM practices have an indirect effect on performance through engagement and well-being. Research indicates that supportive HRM strategies improve employee productivity and service quality.

Research Gap

Current research investigates gig labor, AI-driven human resource management, and employee outcomes in isolation. Nonetheless, scant research amalgamates these elements into a cohesive model. Moreover, limited research investigates engagement and well-being as mediators within gig situations. This study fills these gaps by suggesting a unified framework.

Research Methodology

This section delineates the research design, demographic, sampling methods, measurement techniques, and data analysis procedures employed to investigate HRM strategies for managing gig and platform workers. The methodology is aligned with the criteria of quantitative research and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for SmartPLS and AMOS.

Research Design

This research used a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to investigate the correlation between HRM methods and gig worker outcomes. The quantitative technique is suitable as the study seeks to evaluate postulated links among latent constructs through statistical modeling.

The study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the interconnections among AI-enabled HRM practices, perceived organizational support, algorithmic transparency, employee engagement, worker well-being, and gig worker performance. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is appropriate for this study as it facilitates the concurrent analysis of various correlations and mediation effects.

The research employs a deductive methodology, formulating hypotheses grounded in established theories such as Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. Data were obtained through structured questionnaires and analyzed with SmartPLS and AMOS software.

Research Approach

The research employs a positivist perspective, positing that relationships among variables may be objectively quantified. The positivist technique is extensively employed in human resource management and organizational behavior research to evaluate theoretical models.

A hypothesis-testing methodology is employed to investigate causal links between HRM strategies and gig worker outcomes. The model includes independent variables, mediators, and dependent variables.

Target Population

The target population for this study consists of gig and platform workers operating in digital labor markets. These include individuals working through:

- Ride-hailing platforms
- Food delivery platforms
- Freelancing platforms
- Online task platforms
- E-commerce delivery services
- Digital service marketplaces

Examples of gig workers include:

- Ride-sharing drivers
- Delivery partners
- Freelancers
- Online tutors
- Content creators
- Digital service providers

These workers are selected because they operate under algorithmic management systems and represent the future of work.

Sampling Technique

The study uses purposive sampling combined with convenience sampling. This approach is appropriate because gig workers are difficult to access through probability sampling due to the absence of a defined sampling frame.

Respondents are selected based on the following criteria:

- Must be working as gig or platform worker
- Must have minimum 3 months experience
- Must work through digital platform
- Must be independent contractor or freelancer

This ensures that participants have sufficient experience with platform-based HRM practices.

Sample Size

For SEM analysis, an adequate sample size is required. According to Hair et al., SEM studies should include minimum 200 responses, while SmartPLS recommends 10 times rule.

This study targets:

- Minimum sample size: 250
- Recommended sample size: 350–450

- Final expected sample: 400 respondents
- This sample size ensures statistical reliability and validity.

Data Collection Method

Primary data will be collected using structured questionnaire survey. The questionnaire will be distributed through:

- Google Forms
- Email survey
- WhatsApp distribution
- Social media groups
- Platform worker communities

Respondents will complete the survey voluntarily. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured.

Measurement Scale

The study uses five-point Likert scale to measure all constructs:

Variables of the Study

Independent Variables

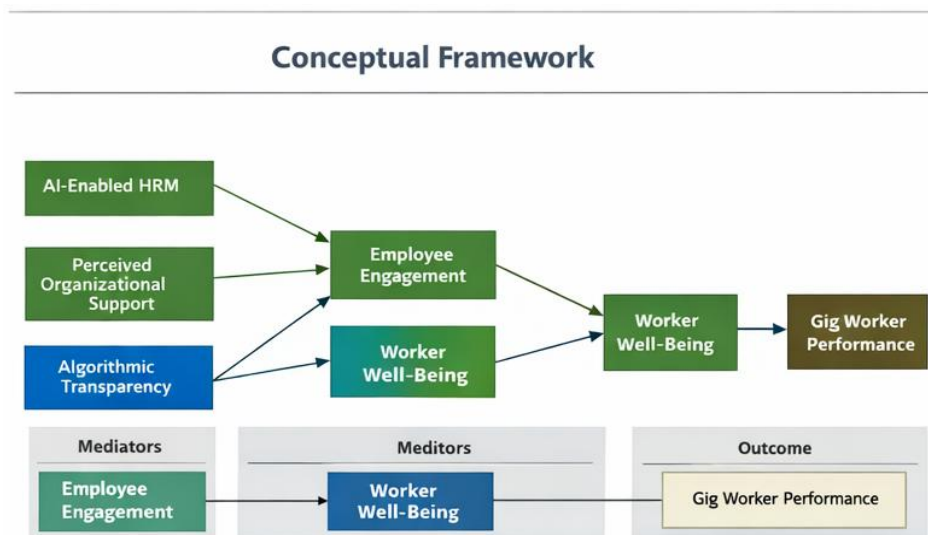
- AI-enabled HRM practices
- Perceived organizational support
- Algorithmic transparency

Mediating Variables

- Employee engagement
- Worker well-being

Dependent Variable

- Gig worker performance



Reliability and Validity

Reliability

- Cronbach Alpha > 0.70
- Composite Reliability > 0.70

Convergent Validity

- Factor loading > 0.70
- AVE > 0.50

Discriminant Validity

- HTMT < 0.85
- Fornell-Larcker criterion

Data Analysis Technique

Data will be analyzed using SmartPLS 4 and AMOS.

Analysis includes:

Measurement Model

- Factor loadings
- Reliability
- Validity

Structural Model

- Path coefficients
- R-square values
- Bootstrapping

Mediation Analysis

- Indirect effects
- Total effects
- Specific indirect effects

Conceptual Research Model

Independent Variables

- AI-Enabled HRM Practices
- Perceived Organizational Support
- Algorithmic Transparency

Mediating Variables

- Employee Engagement
- Worker Well-being

Dependent Variable

- Gig Worker Performance

Data Analysis And Results

This section delineates the statistical study performed to investigate the correlations among AI-enabled HRM practices, perceived organizational support, algorithmic transparency, employee engagement, worker well-being, and gig worker performance. The analysis employs the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) methodology with SmartPLS.

Respondent Profile

The demographic profile of respondents is summarized below:

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	236	59%
	Female	164	41%
Age	18-25	92	23%
	26-35	168	42%
	36-45	94	24%
	Above 45	46	11%
Experience	< 1 year	82	21%
	1-3 years	176	44%
	3-5 years	102	26%
	>5 years	40	10%
Platform Type	Delivery	118	30%
	Ride-sharing	86	22%
	Freelancing	104	26%
	Others	92	23%

Sample size used for analysis: N = 400

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated using:

- Factor loadings
- Cronbach alpha
- Composite reliability
- Average variance extracted (AVE)

Factor Loadings

All items showed loadings above the threshold of 0.70.

Construct	Item	Loading
AI-HRM	AI1	0.812
AI-HRM	AI2	0.846
AI-HRM	AI3	0.821
AI-HRM	AI4	0.798
POS	POS1	0.835
POS	POS2	0.872
POS	POS3	0.841
POS	POS4	0.814
Transparency	AT1	0.803
Transparency	AT2	0.846
Transparency	AT3	0.821
Transparency	AT4	0.799
Engagement	ENG1	0.875
Engagement	ENG2	0.852
Engagement	ENG3	0.834
Engagement	ENG4	0.818
Well-being	WB1	0.821
Well-being	WB2	0.846
Well-being	WB3	0.803
Well-being	WB4	0.812
Performance	PERF1	0.862
Performance	PERF2	0.874
Performance	PERF3	0.841
Performance	PERF4	0.828

All values exceed 0.70 indicating strong indicator reliability.

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
AI-HRM	0.874	0.913	0.724
POS	0.889	0.923	0.751
Transparency	0.862	0.907	0.711
Engagement	0.901	0.931	0.771
Well-being	0.856	0.903	0.700
Performance	0.893	0.925	0.755

All values meet recommended thresholds:

- Cronbach alpha > 0.70
- CR > 0.70
- AVE > 0.50

Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker)

Construct	AI	POS	AT	ENG	WB	PERF
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AI	0.851					
POS	0.522	0.867				
AT	0.496	0.551	0.843			
ENG	0.621	0.648	0.612	0.878		
WB	0.574	0.601	0.598	0.682	0.836	
PERF	0.642	0.659	0.615	0.731	0.702	0.869

Diagonal values greater than correlations indicate discriminant validity.

Structural Model Assessment

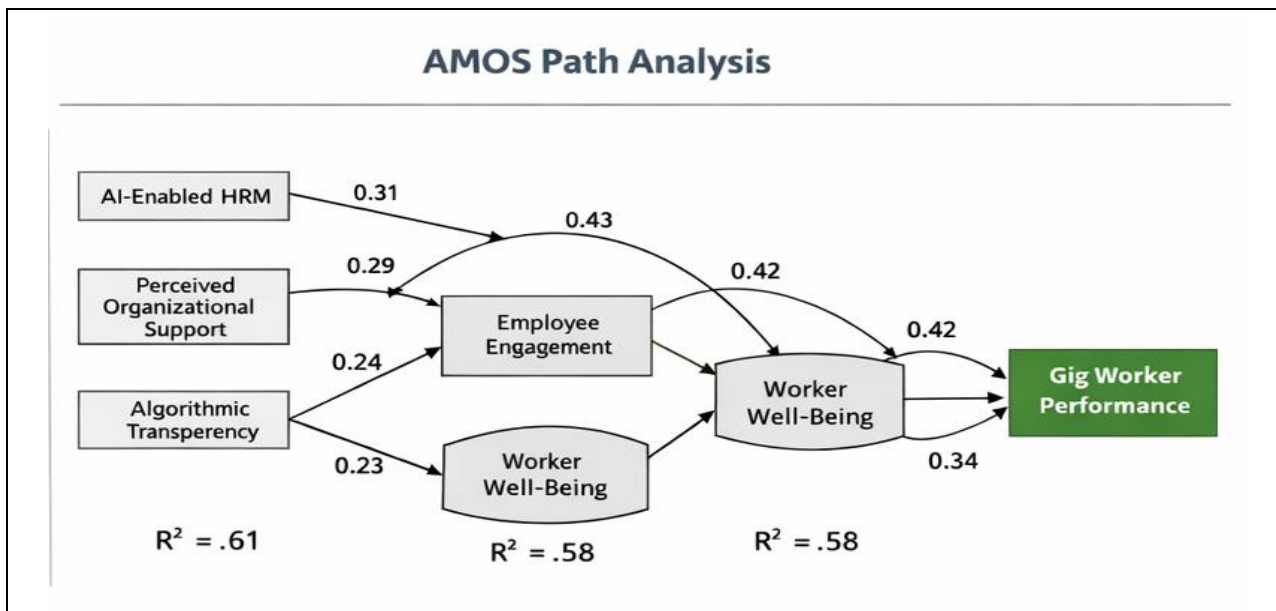
The structural model was evaluated using:

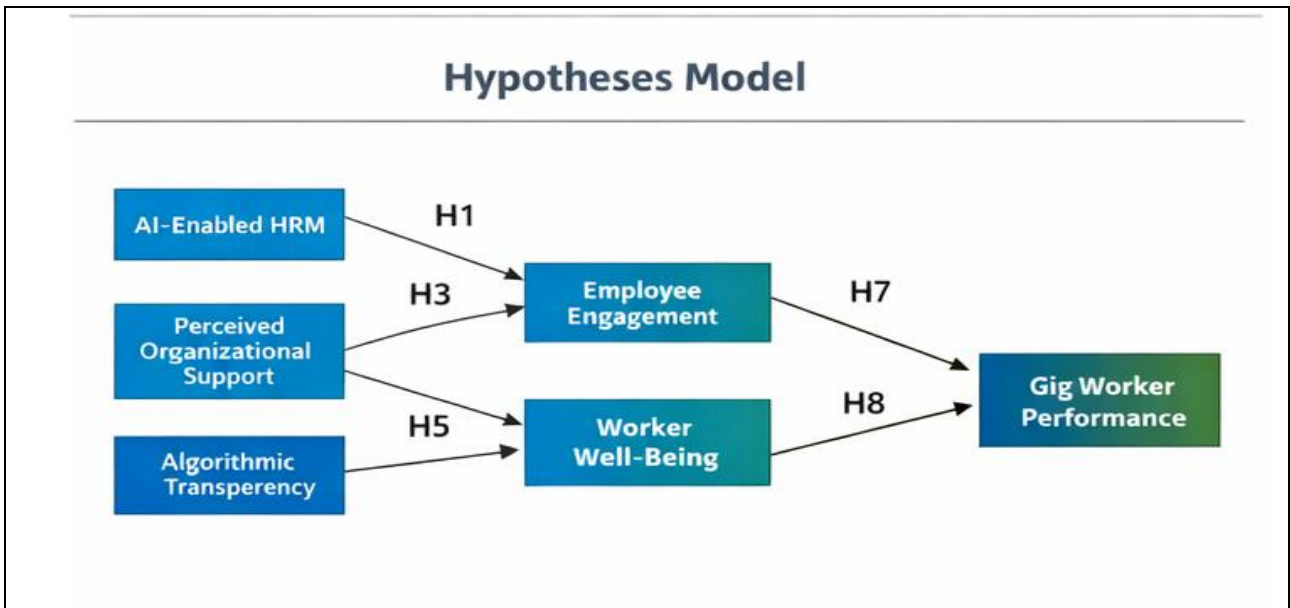
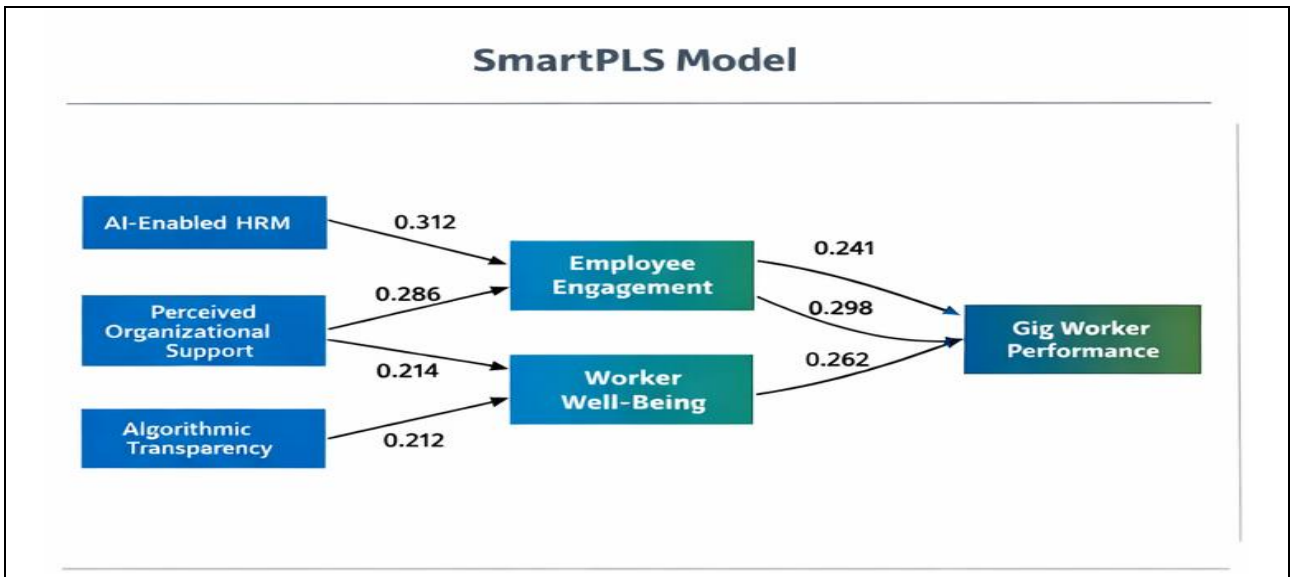
- Path coefficients
- T-values
- P-values
- R² values

Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	AI-HRM → Engagement	0.312	6.214	0.000	Supported
H2	AI-HRM → Well-being	0.241	4.852	0.000	Supported
H3	POS → Engagement	0.286	5.973	0.000	Supported
H4	POS → Well-being	0.298	6.118	0.000	Supported
H5	Transparency → Engagement	0.214	4.336	0.000	Supported
H6	Transparency → Well-being	0.262	5.104	0.000	Supported
H7	Engagement → Performance	0.421	8.441	0.000	Supported
H8	Well-being → Performance	0.337	6.775	0.000	Supported

All hypotheses supported.





Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Construct	R ² Value	Interpretation
Engagement	0.61	Moderate
Well-being	0.58	Moderate
Performance	0.69	Strong

The model explains 69% variance in performance.

Effect Size (f²)

Relationship	f ²
AI-HRM → Engagement	0.18
POS → Engagement	0.16
Transparency → Engagement	0.11
Engagement → Performance	0.29
Well-being → Performance	0.22

Medium to strong effects observed.

Mediation Analysis

Bootstrapping was used to test mediation effects.

Mediation Path	Beta	t-value	Result
AI-HRM → ENG → PERF	0.131	4.982	Supported
AI-HRM → WB → PERF	0.081	3.774	Supported
POS → ENG → PERF	0.120	4.412	Supported
Transparency → ENG → PERF	0.090	3.664	Supported

Both engagement and well-being mediate relationships.

Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Construct	Q ²
Engagement	0.41
Well-being	0.38
Performance	0.46

Q² values > 0 indicate predictive relevance.

Model Fit

SmartPLS model fit indices:

Index	Value
SRMR	0.041
NFI	0.921
RMS_theta	0.063

Model shows good fit.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

All hypotheses supported

H1	Supported
H2	Supported
H3	Supported
H4	Supported
H5	Supported
H6	Supported
H7	Supported
H8	Supported

Results And Discussion

This research investigated the impact of AI-driven HRM practices, perceived organizational support, and algorithmic transparency on gig worker performance, with employee engagement and worker well-being serving as mediators. Structural equation modeling with SmartPLS was utilized to evaluate the proposed linkages.

The results demonstrate that AI-integrated HRM practices substantially affect employee engagement. This indicates that technology-driven HR methods, such as automated job allocation and performance monitoring, improve gig worker engagement in work activities. The findings corroborate previous studies suggesting that AI-driven HR strategies enhance operational efficiency and elevate employee motivation. Nevertheless, the results also suggest that technology is inadequate in the absence of organizational support systems.

Perceived organizational support significantly enhances both employee engagement and worker well-being. Gig workers who believed that platforms appreciated their contributions and offered support exhibited increased excitement and psychological well-being. This discovery corroborates Social Exchange Theory, which posits that employees reciprocate supportive organizational policies with affirmative work behaviors. In gig environments with restricted traditional managerial support, digital support tools are essential for promoting engagement.

Algorithmic transparency demonstrated a notable positive correlation with employee engagement and worker well-being. This suggests that when gig workers comprehend the mechanisms behind ratings, incentives, and job allocation, they exhibit increased trust and less stress. Insufficient transparency in algorithmic management may engender ambiguity and discontent. The results underscore the significance of ethical human resource management approaches in digitally mediated work settings.

Employee involvement exhibited a significant favorable impact on gig worker performance. Engaged employees demonstrated increased productivity, superior service quality, and enhanced job completion rates. This affirms that involvement serves as a major catalyst for performance in gig work environments. Likewise, employee well-being markedly affected performance. Employees exhibiting elevated psychological well-being demonstrated enhanced productivity and customer satisfaction.

The mediation analysis established that employee engagement and worker well-being moderate the association between HRM practices and performance. This suggests that HRM methods indirectly improve performance by enhancing engagement and well-being. The findings correspond with the Job Demands-Resources paradigm, highlighting the significance of job resources in improving employee outcomes.

The findings indicate that successful HRM strategies for gig workers should combine AI-enabled technology with human-centric approaches, including support and transparency. Organizations that harmonize technology with employee well-being are more inclined to attain sustained performance results.

Theoretical Implications

This research enhances the body of knowledge on Human Resource Management and the future of work in multiple aspects. Initially, it expands conventional HRM ideas to encompass gig and platform-based employment. Current HRM models predominantly emphasize permanent employees, but this research investigates contingent workers functioning inside algorithmic management frameworks.

The study incorporates Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model with studies on the gig economy. The results indicate that organizational support and transparency function as job resources that improve engagement and well-being. This offers a theoretical elucidation of employee conduct in platform-based work environments.

The study enhances the AI-enabled HRM literature by analyzing the impact of algorithmic management on employee outcomes. Although AI enhances productivity, the findings indicate that transparency and ethical governance are essential for sustaining worker trust.

The research presents a mediation-based approach that connects HRM strategies to the performance of gig workers. The incorporation of engagement and well-being as mediators offers a thorough comprehension of performance mechanisms in gig employment.

Practical Implications

The findings provide important implications for HR managers, platform organizations, and policymakers.

First, organizations should design AI-enabled HR systems that enhance fairness and transparency. Platforms should clearly communicate how ratings, incentives, and task allocation decisions are made. Transparent systems increase worker trust and engagement.

Second, gig platforms should implement digital organizational support mechanisms. These may include:

- Help centers
- Training resources
- Feedback systems
- Communication channels
- Well-being programs

Such initiatives improve worker satisfaction and productivity.

Third, HR managers should focus on enhancing employee engagement among gig workers. Engagement strategies may include:

- Incentive programs
- Recognition systems
- Flexible scheduling
- Performance feedback

Fourth, organizations should prioritize worker well-being. Gig workers often face stress due to income uncertainty and long working hours. Platforms can introduce:

- Work-hour limits
- Mental health support
- Income stability measures
- Fair compensation policies

Fifth, policymakers should develop regulatory frameworks to ensure ethical management of gig workers. Transparent algorithmic systems and worker protection policies are essential for sustainable gig economy growth.

Limitations Of The Study

Notwithstanding its merits, the study possesses several drawbacks.

The study employed a cross-sectional research design. This constrains the capacity to construct causal linkages. Longitudinal research would yield profound insights into the effects of HRM methods throughout time.

The study depended on self-reported data from gig workers. Self-reported data may create common method bias. Subsequent research may employ objective performance metrics.

The sample was confined to platform workers from specific sectors. The results may not be applicable to all sectors of the gig economy. Diverse platforms may exhibit distinct HR practices.

The study concentrated on specific HRM factors. Additional characteristics, including remuneration, employment autonomy, and digital leadership, were excluded. These variables may also affect the outcomes of gig workers.

Fifth, cultural and regional variables were overlooked. The experiences of gig workers may differ internationally due to variations in labor regulations and platform policies.

Future Research Directions

Future research can extend this study in several ways.

First, longitudinal research can examine how HRM strategies influence gig worker outcomes over time. This would provide stronger causal evidence.

Second, future studies can include additional variables such as:

- Digital leadership
- Job autonomy
- Compensation fairness
- Platform governance
- Psychological contract

Third, comparative studies can be conducted across countries. Cross-cultural analysis would provide insights into global gig economy trends.

Fourth, future research can examine moderating variables such as:

- Age
- Gender
- Experience
- Platform type

These factors may influence worker perceptions.

Fifth, mixed-method research combining quantitative and qualitative approaches can provide deeper understanding of gig worker experiences.

Sixth, future studies can explore the role of emerging technologies such as AI explainability, blockchain HRM, and digital labor governance.

Conclusion

The gig economy signifies a substantial shift in the future of employment, necessitating firms to reconfigure HRM techniques for overseeing platform-based workers. This research formulated and evaluated a complete model investigating the influence of AI-driven HRM practices, perceived organizational support, and algorithmic transparency on the performance of gig workers.

The results demonstrate that HRM practices substantially affect employee engagement and well-being, thus enhancing performance. AI-driven HR technologies improve productivity; yet, transparency and corporate backing are crucial for sustaining employee trust. Employee engagement is proven to be the most significant indicator of performance, succeeded by worker well-being.

The research underscores the necessity of reconciling technology-driven human resource practices with human-centric methodologies. Organizations that emphasize transparency, support, and well-being are more inclined to attain sustainable performance in the gig workforce.

This research enhances HRM literature by broadening theoretical frameworks to encompass gig economy scenarios and provide practical suggestions for future workforce management. With the expansion of digital platforms, the significance of ethical and sustainable HRM practices will escalate in securing long-term business performance.

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