

ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING
GAPS FOR DELIVERY GIG WORKERS IN CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU: A RESPONSE TO
THE GROWING GIG ECONOMY

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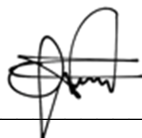
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ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING
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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the effect of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs on delivery workers' job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service. Theoretical frameworks of EI and Self-Determination Theory guided the main research through advancing the understanding of socio-emotional issues using stress management, empathy, and self-regulation skills. The literature review offers a rigorous critique of the Western countries' gig economy growth and, at the same time, exposes the specific issues of delivery staff, such as gender-specific vulnerabilities and no informal emotional support. The gap in existing studies largely relates to the knowledge of the role that EI and SEL models play in the development of workers' well-being and thus the need for specific practitioner-oriented interventions. The mixed-methods research design was employed in the present study, comprising quantitative surveys and qualitative content analysis. To evaluate the dimensions of job satisfaction, stress, and emotional resilience, the quantitative data were gathered from a sample of 100 delivery workers and 200 consumers in Chennai, which were then subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Qualitative insights were generated through the systematic content analysis of six secondary research papers selected for focusing on the gig economy worker experiences, emotional strains, and service performance. The findings showed that emotional intelligence, especially self-regulation and empathy, was positively linked to better job satisfaction and stronger coping skills among the delivery workers. The customers also identified emotionally intelligent workers as being the ones with high-quality service and good communication. Besides, the content analysis corroborated these results, indicating the emotional difficulties and the absence of a support structure throughout the industry. The study concludes that embedding mobile-first, context-sensitive EI and SEL learning programs into delivery

platforms can foster psychosocial well-being and operational sustainability. These findings highlight the need for policy and platform-level reforms that prioritize emotional development alongside efficiency metrics.

Keywords: Gig Economy, Emotional Intelligence, Social-Emotional Learning, Delivery Partners, Gig Workers, Chennai.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background.....	4
1.3 Research Problem.....	9
1.4 Purpose of Research.....	9
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	10
1.6 Research Questions.....	11
1.7 Definition of Key Terms.....	12
1.8 Chapter Summary.....	12
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Inclusion Criteria / Documentation.....	14
2.3 Theoretical framework.....	16
2.4 Growth of the Gig Economy and Delivery Partners.....	23
2.5 Role of Delivery Partners.....	26
2.6 Challenges Faced by Delivery Partners.....	27
2.7 Gender Dimensions.....	35
2.8 Historical and Philosophical Roots of Emotional Intelligence and SEL..	36
2.9 Neuroscientific and Biological Correlates of EI and Stress.....	38
2.10 Presence and Lack of EI and SEL Training.....	40
2.11 Consumer Perceptions and Interdependence.....	46
2.12 Future of Gig Work and Automation.....	55
2.13 Literature Gap.....	57
2.14 Summary.....	58
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	60
3.1 Overview of the Research Problem.....	60
3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs.....	60
3.3 Research Purpose and Questions.....	61
3.4 Research Design.....	62
3.5 Population and Sample.....	63
3.6 Participant Selection.....	64
3.7 Instrumentation.....	64
3.8 Data Collection Procedures.....	65
3.9 Data Analysis.....	65
3.10 Ethical Assurances.....	66
3.11 Research Design Limitations.....	67
3.12 Conclusion.....	67
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	68
4.1 Introduction.....	68
4.2 Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis.....	68
4.3 Quantitative Findings: Survey Analysis.....	74
4.4 Chapter Summary.....	93
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	95
5.1 Introduction.....	95

5.2	<i>Discussion of Findings</i>	95
5.3	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	117
CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		118
6.1	<i>Summary</i>	118
6.2	<i>Implications</i>	119
6.3	<i>Recommendations</i>	122
6.4	<i>Conclusion</i>	124
REFERENCES		125
APPENDIX A: SURVEY COVER LETTER		146
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT.....		147

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Summary of the Nature and Sources of References.....	15
Table 4.1 Thematic coding table.....	68
Table 4.2 Highest Level of Education Attained.....	77
Table 4.3 Primary Language.....	78
Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics.....	80
Table 4.5 Correlation Statistics.....	82
Table 4.6 Analysis of Variance.....	83
Table 4.7 Regression Statistics.....	84
Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics.....	85
Table 4.9 Analysis of Variance.....	86
Table 4.10 Regression Statistics.....	87
Table 4.11 Correlation Statistics.....	88
Table 4.12 Ways in Which Emotional Intelligence Impact Job Performance.....	90
Table 4.13 Poor Ratings.....	91
Table 4.14 Difficult Customer Interactions.....	92
Table 4.15 Key Elements of Social-Learning Programs.....	93

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Estimates of Gig Workforce in India.....	5
Figure 2.1 Goleman’s EI Framework.....	20
Figure 2.2 Self-Determination Theory	22
Figure 2.3 Trends in Delivery Workers' Earnings.....	31
Figure 2.4 Challenges Facing Delivery Workers in India.....	32
Figure 2.5 Six Seconds Model of Emotional Intelligence.....	44
Figure 2.6 Frequency of Purchase.....	48
Figure 4.1 Customers' Gender Distribution.....	75
Figure 4.2 Customers' Age Distribution.....	76
Figure 4.3 Customers' Marital Status.....	76
Figure 4.4 Employment Status.....	78

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The gig economy has been a major driver of change in the world of work, shaking up the employment model that has lasted for centuries. According to Gussek and Wiesche (2023), gig work, which has the features of flexibility, short-term nature, and independence, allows businesses and workers to reap the benefits of an on-demand labor pool. Besides that, Gussek and Wiesche (2023) mentioned that gig work offers the same opportunities by giving the flexibility of short-term and independent working arrangements to both individuals and businesses to leverage an on-demand labor force. According to Ray (2024), the Indian gig economy has a large share of delivery services, and the rise of this service has taken place mainly through Swiggy, Zomato, Uber Eats, and Amazon. Mohan (2024) has elaborated on the discussion by presenting the huge demand for food, grocery, and parcel deliveries and how all this is being serviced with the help of gig workers, especially in cases of the mentioned platforms. While this growth provides a plethora of job opportunities, the delivery partners who are the frontline of the gig economy are suffering from a lot of challenges (Duggan et al., 2022).

Moreover, the very nature of gig work makes it insecure and devoid of the job security that comes with the more traditional forms of employment. Although traditional jobs generally provide a range of benefits that include healthcare, paid leave, and even pension plans, gig workers are frequently denied these minimum-security rights (Graham et al., 2018). The lack of fringe benefits and income unpredictability, according to Myhill, Richards, and Sang (2023), makes the workers more vulnerable to financial risks; therefore, their mental health is adversely affected. Flexibility, however, is marketed to be one of the key advantages of platforms, which might attract workers wanting to earn temporarily or in addition to their main income (Allon,

Cohen, and Sinchaisri, 2023). Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) point out that this kind of flexibility is often accompanied by the loss of financial security and the work-life balance. Identifying these issues is an important step in coming up with effective solutions that will not only help improve the well-being of the gig workers but also their sustainability in the industry since they are a part of this rapidly growing sector.

In Chennai, especially Tamil Nadu, delivery personnel experience a lot of difficulties besides just labor. Among these challenges are financial unpredictability, very low incomes and even no income at times, irregular working hours, low job security, and stress coming from the interaction with customers as well as dealing with urban traffic (Drishtiias, 2024). The very competitive nature of the gig platforms often is a work environment full of pressure where cashier ratings and delivery speed become the main sources for determining one's income (MacDonald and Giazitzoglou, 2019). The workers are to deal with the demands of getting around the busy streets of Chennai (Devendran and Lakshmanan, 2019), among other things, which include complaints from the customers and could lead to being emotionally drained and not satisfied with the job. Emotional Intelligence and Socio-Emotional Learning frameworks introduced by Goleman (1995), widely accepted in corporate and educational sectors, are keeping the above-mentioned problems at bay, but mainly not in the gig work scenarios like delivery (George, 2024). It is crucial to note that the professional development of EI and SEL skills, such as stress management, empathy, and self-regulation, has led to better employee well-being and higher job and customer satisfaction and engagement (Ginsberg, 2020; Graham et al., 2018). Hence, there is an urgent need to assess such programs regarding their feasibility and effectiveness in the gig economy.

This study tries to fill this knowledge gap by examining the role of EI and SEL in enhancing the well-being condition and job satisfaction of gig delivery workers in Chennai.

In this research, the authors aimed to explore the effect of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) on the well-being and satisfaction of gig delivery workers in Chennai. Effective handling of stress, good customer relations, and high job satisfaction are positive outcomes associated with the implementation of EI and SEL programs for the workers, as suggested by Pereira et al. (2024). The rising trend of the gig economy has been linked to the change in the labor market's demand and technology advancements, especially in cities like Chennai, where the delivery services have become part of the lifestyle. As per the data presented by Darmastuti et al. (2023), the gig economy globally was worth around US\$355 billion in 2021, and the amount is foreseen to rise to US\$1864.16 billion by 2031. Notably, India is one of the leading countries in the case of the gig economy's global expansion; it is estimated that, in 2030, there will be around 23.5 million workers in the food and grocery delivery sector, and the expansion of companies like Dunzo will create millions of jobs (Yao et al., 2021). One possible predictor of the extent to which EI and SEL-based interventions will be appropriate is the degree to which these workforce dynamics are in line with the skills required for sustainable participation in such employment contexts. Thus, it is Chennai's inquisitive setting that has given rise to a gig economy and high-paced nature of work that makes this research necessary for not only the theoretical body of knowledge but also the practical aspect of helping the gig workers. The integration of the programs with EI and SEL into the gig work fulfills two functions: to improve the well-being of the workers and build a more sustainable model of the gig economy operations based on the emotional and psychological needs of the workers.

1.2 Background

Historical background of gig work in Chennai

Chennai emerges as the region of focus for this research, as it not only embodies the critical changes of India's platform economy but also brings to light the local governments and the workers' ways of dealing with the changes. The city's economy, backed by the manufacturing of automobiles, IT, and the emergence of a large middle class, provided both the infrastructure and the demand that lured the platform companies to the urban center (Times of India, 2024). Between 2014 and 2016, ride-hailing services, namely Ola and Uber, started their operations in Chennai, thereby local transport was revolutionized, and hundreds of cabs and auto-rickshaws were attracted to the platform-based employment (Vaitheesvaran, 2016). The very first usage of digital services paved the way for the future gig sectors like food delivery, courier service, and home use of platforms, thus marking Chennai as one of the central hubs of the gig economy in India.

The shift in the city's informal labor markets towards platform forms of employment has been highlighted by the transformation. Geetha's (2024) investigation revealed that many of those who were dependent on informal day labor took gig jobs because of the low entry barriers and flexibility in earning opportunities. Still, workers had to face considerable difficulties, such as changing incomes, health risks, and no exposure to formal labor rights protection (Geetha, 2024). Therefore, the city government has started to recognize the gig workers as a separate category of the workforce: the Greater Chennai Corporation commissioned its first air-conditioned mobile lounge for delivery riders with resting and hydration supply units in 2025, and the Tamil Nadu government set up a welfare board for platform-based gig workers, though participation is still limited (Times of India, 2025). These developments signify that Chennai is

not merely following the Indian path from informal to platform work, but also offering itself as a testing ground for urban policy approaches that mitigate the vulnerabilities of gig labor.

The development of the gig economy has been tracked due to the changes in the labor market needs and development of technologies, especially in the city of Chennai, which is largely urban, and the delivery services have become almost essential to the life of the individual. Darmastuti et al. (2023) point out that it is estimated that the gig economy will reach the value of US\$1864.16 billion in 2031 and be estimated to reach the value of US\$355 billion in 2021. This is basically the same trend in India, whereby a similar trend will see the country employ a great number of workers through food and grocery delivery, namely Swiggy and Zomato; Dunzo has also spread its tentacles and, as such, has employed a great number of workers (Figure 1). Figure 1.1. reflects the estimated gig-workforce in India.

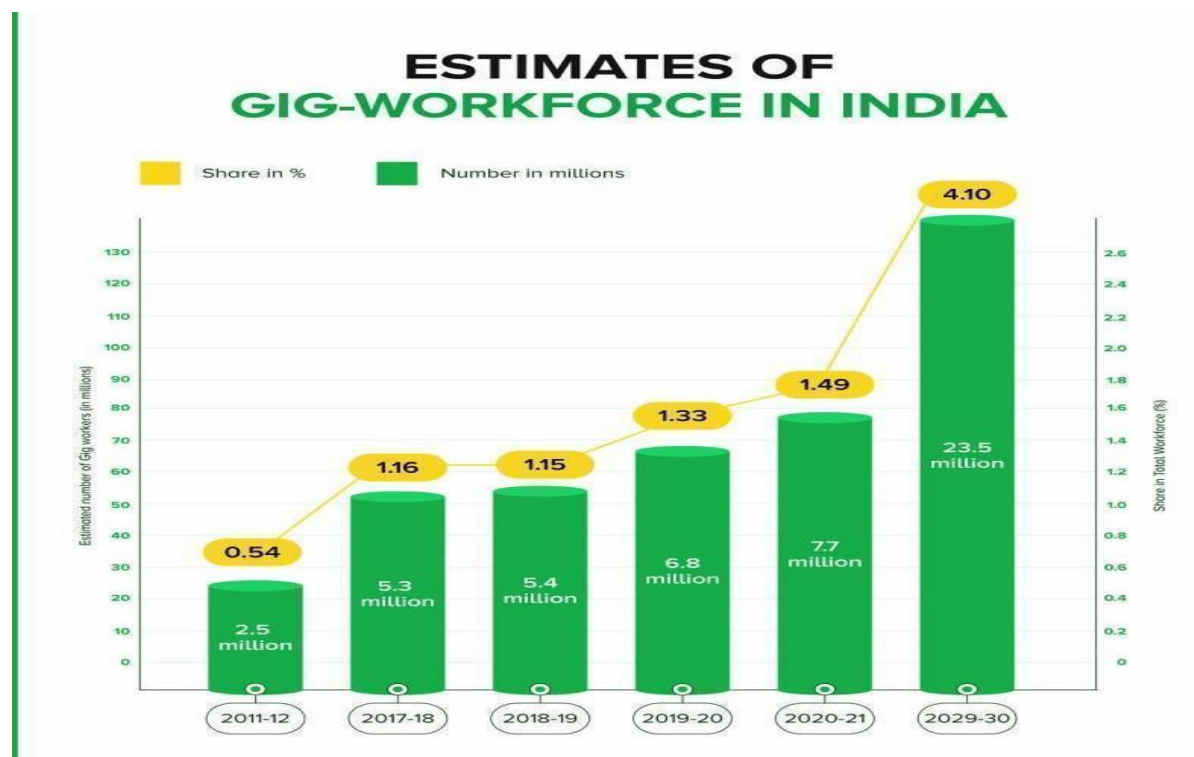


Figure 1.1:

Estimates of the Gig workforce in India (Fintech, 2024)

However, despite the gig economy's claims to offer employment opportunities, the nature of gig work is precarious in general. Among all, delivery workers face a lot of challenges regarding income instability, job insecurity, and limited availability of employee benefits related to health insurance and retirement plans (Behl et al., 2021; Ravenelle, Kowalski, and Janko, 2021). For example, recent estimates by the International Labor Organization (2023) show that barely half of all gig workers have coverage under any health insurance, and less than a third have protection for work-related injury or disability, indicating how far short the social protection systems of this global leader fall from expectation. Such a shortfall in cover creates great vulnerabilities among such workers.

The government of India has attempted to fill in these gaps with the introduction of the Code on Social Security in 2020, for the first time legally defining 'gig workers' and promising the provision of accident insurance, life and disability cover, and health and maternity benefits specifically for gig and platform workers (Bhattacharyya and Jha, 2021). But these provisions are not yet fully implemented, leaving many workers without the protections they desperately need (Press Information Bureau, 2024). This is supported by estimates from the NITI Aayog (2022) report, which predicts that the gig workforce in India will increase from 7.7 million in 2020 to 23.5 million by 2029-30, accounting for 4.1% of the total workforce.

Moreover, delivery personnel have to bear the effects of extremely long hours at work. On a daily basis, they typically work more than 12 hours and also have to face the pressure of consumer ratings that have a direct connection to their income (Ghosh, Ramachandran, and Zaidi, 2021). The study of NITI Aayog and several industry specialists has revealed that the ratings system does put heavy weight, both psychologically and economically, on the workers to keep up the quality of service and avoid economic hardships (Business Today, 2023). During

summertime, the temperatures in Chennai can reach about 40°C, and the workers operate under the scorching sun without getting proper breaks for cooling, which leads them to suffer from various health disorders like dehydration and heat exhaustion (New Indian Express, 2024). Recently, it has been estimated that around 45% of delivery personnel in Chennai have experienced heat-related conditions in the hot months (Ramakrishnan, 2024). Nevertheless, this is made worse by the long hours of work since 67% of gig workers have reported chronic fatigue and burnout (Bérastégui, 2021). Notably, as Hussain (2023) states, the lack of organized emotional support or training programs for the delivery workers in Chennai makes these situations more difficult. Thus, all these factors together lead the delivery workers to feel highly stressed and emotionally drained.

EI/SEL in other contexts

The aspects of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) have been utilized and are reported to bring about measurable benefits in various industries. The Lim, Rho, and Yang (2024) meta-analysis of 213 SEL programs in the educational sector illustrates this by showing that students participating in SEL programs of the highest quality have a better academic performance, improved classroom behavior, and also gain in social and emotional aspects. In the same way, Melnick, Cook-Harvey, and Darling-Hammond (2017) state that if SEL is well-implemented in schools, it not only brings about self-management and peer relations development in students but also positive ripple effects for educators' emotional climate and resilience. These studies indicate how the integration of SEL in schooling is important for the early development of emotional skills, which then affects future readiness for employment and interpersonal skills. Nevertheless, Deitz, Lahmann, and Thompson (2021) caution that SEL research is often context-bound, short in duration, or uses self-reported measures; hence, causal

relations and long-term impact are uncertain. Therefore, even though SEL is promising in schools, generalizing its effect on adult gig workers is to be done with caution.

In the same manner, EI training has been implemented in healthcare environments to improve clinician-patient communication, decrease burnout, and enhance the quality of care. Lim, Rho, and Yang (2024) conducted a meta-analysis of 17 longitudinal trials and concluded that emotional intelligence interventions positively increase the emotional intelligence of healthcare professionals and better workplace behaviors. Galanis et al. (2024) have an analogous view, as they state that the emotional intelligence of nurses is positively related to the quality of patient care perceived by the patients, thus implying a connection between emotional competencies and clinical performance. These studies provide an insight into how structured EI intervention can be made a part of the professional setting to not only help staff but also provide better service outcomes. Nevertheless, Gong and Jiao (2019) contend that a significant number of EI interventions do not have adequate controls, are short-lived, and may exaggerate the size of effects. Therefore, even though EI/SEL has been successfully used in education and healthcare, it is startling that it has not been applied in the gig economy, which has left platform workers without the emotional support that the conventional professions usually provide.

Essentially, the implementation of effective emotional and psychological support systems is paramount. Even though industries like corporate and education have begun to use EI and SEL as methods to foster performance and well-being (Wood, 2020), there are still no such initiatives in the gig economy. This research aims to create and apply effective EI and SEL programs for the delivery personnel with the objectives of building up emotional resilience, increasing job satisfaction, and lowering stress.

1.3 *Research Problem*

A significant problem that gig workers face in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, is the lack of job security and income stability, which in turn results in no access to healthcare coverage, compensated time off, and retirement benefits (Rasheed, Sati, and Bano, 2022). Even though the gig workers are playing a vital role in the economy, their emotional well-being or skill building that could help them cope with these challenges have hardly been noticed (Rasheed, Sati, and Bano, 2022). While most of the literature on gig work has focused on the operational and financial perspectives, research on the emotional and psychological aspects is limited. This, according to Malik, Visvizi, and Skrzek-Lubasińska (2021), would lead to a massive research gap with respect to the same aspect. Lack of sufficiently developed EI and SEL programs, especially for gig economy delivery workers, will have a negative consequence in terms of occupational burnout, job dissatisfaction, and high labor turnover (Extremera, Sánchez-Álvarez, and Rey, 2020). This research advances the high-resolution understanding of those challenges and outlines potential remedies for accomplishing better worker well-being and job performance by establishing those remedies that can be put in place. The “purpose of the research is to develop a basic knowledge of these challenges and suggest some of the solutions which might help in the enhancement of worker well-being and improvement of job performance.”

1.4 *Purpose of Research*

The purpose of this mixed-method study is to get a better understanding of how EI and SEL programs amongst delivery gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, may contribute to their job satisfaction and emotional resilience, and improve customer service skills, addressing their emotional and psychological challenges. Emotional intelligence is associated with experiencing job satisfaction and well-being, especially in jobs that involve direct customer contact, as supported by Li et al. (2021), Sandroto and Fransiska (2021), and Knežević et al. (2021). Based

on these facts, in this study, an attempt will be made to identify the most relevant EI and SEL competencies, such as stress management, empathy, and emotional regulation, among delivery workers and provide some recommendations on including them in the practical training of the competencies.

The research will further assess how these programs impact the customers and the company's performance through their satisfaction. Previous studies have pointed to the fact that service employees with higher EI skills are more likely to produce an even happier and more loyal customer base for the company (Prentice et al., 2022). Therefore, the present study proposes that the enhancement of emotional delivery workers' competence would mirror the quality of their interactions with customers positively, thus turning them into more satisfied and loyal customers. Consequently, this research will contribute to the establishment of a less stressful and more supportive gig economy, where the well-being of the worker is placed along with business performance as the main concern.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant theoretical and practical importance. Theoretically, it contributes to the still-growing literature in the gig economy by placing specific focus on the emotional and psychological well-being of gig workers – a relatively unexplored area. This is, however, a call to broaden the debate to include how emotional and psychological challenges are faced by these workers, especially in delivery sectors, as much of the existing research has focused on financial and operational aspects of gig work. Research evidence has demonstrated that algorithmic control, for example, through customer ratings and real-time tracking in gig work, leads to increased stress and reduced autonomy (Wood et al., 2019; Cameron, 2020); thus, there is a need for emotional support frameworks for these workers. The study is very much

needed, as it tries to contribute a framework based on specially designed EI and SEL programs that can later be used in other gig economy contexts, thus widening the research scope.

Practically, the study offers potential benefits for gig workers, delivery platforms, and consumers. Gig workers are likely to improve (in terms of better emotional resilience, reduced stress, and greater job satisfaction) as a result of the sort of EI and SEL programs that have been developed and implemented. Previous research results have shown that emotional resilience, which can be cultivated within service workers, can aid in the development of more effective coping mechanisms and increased job satisfaction (Kašpárková et al., 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford, and Wrzesniewski, 2019). The study would inform the delivery platforms what the impact of developing the emotional competence of the workforce would be on higher customer service, higher customer satisfaction, and therefore higher customer loyalty.

Finally, it promises better interaction with the delivery worker for the customers, entailing a more positive service experience. The findings from this study can also start to be used to develop policies that apply to gig economy workers regarding their well-being and supporting systems. Previous works by Bunjak, Černe, and Popovič (2021) and Cropanzano et al. (2023) show that recognizing emotional impact carries different importance in understanding what is at stake in gig work, and in the context of building effective policies that would lead to better quality jobs without causing burnout.

1.6 Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1. How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai?

RQ2. How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers?

RQ3. What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu?

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

- *Emotional Intelligence (EI)*: The capacity to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions while also effectively responding to the emotions of others (Buşu, 2020).
- *Gig economy*: A labor market characterized by short-term contracts or freelance work, as opposed to permanent jobs (Ahmad, 2021; Roy and Shrivastava, 2020).
- *Gig Workers*: Gig workers are individuals who engage in short-term, task-oriented employment, often facilitated by digital platforms (Singh, 2024a).
- *Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL)*. An educational framework designed to help individuals develop essential social and emotional competencies (Váradi, 2022; Boyd-McMillan and DeMarinis, 2020).

1.8 Chapter Summary

The groundwork for the study is secured by this introductory chapter, which points out emotional and psychological issues of gig workers in Chennai's delivery services as matters of concern. The swift growth of the gig economy, especially in delivery services, has brought about serious issues that directly impact on the workers' job satisfaction and total wellness. Hence, this study intends to create a program for EI and SEL that meets the specific needs of the workers in question, thereby solving the problems and providing the workers' welfare as well as businesses' productivity, a two-dimensional gain. The upcoming sections will elaborate on the literature review and the methodology for the study in a more detailed manner.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 *Introduction*

The literature on the socio-emotional challenges of delivery gig workers in Chennai will be the focus of this section, with a focus on EI and SEL as the enabling frameworks.

Consequently, the literature review will reinforce the academic foundation through which this research relates EI and SEL interventions to stress, emotional fatigue, and satisfaction deficits that are typical of gig work environments as solutions. The review is organized in accordance with the primary thematic sections and opens with a contextual description of the gig economy, which highlights the phenomenal growth and the peculiar forces that have evolved in the delivery sector of India. Besides, the theory discussions will focus on EI and SEL, taking along with them the deep dive into the ways these concepts can be used to create the that of workers like resiliency, empathy, and stress management. Furthermore, the gender aspect in the gig economy will be brought up in order to reveal the challenges that are only faced by female gig workers. The review also integrates the current literature's gaps and asserts that the SEL and EI programs designed for the gig economy are closely interconnected with the welfare enhancement of delivery workers in Chennai. This approach provides a full view of the major research works and simultaneously establishes a solid grounding for the research proposal. Moreover, the review sheds light on the health-related issues of delivery partners attending them including fatigue to physical exhaustion. The analysis also investigates the customer side, and it shows that the proper handling of the employees' coping strategies has a favorable effect on customer satisfaction, which in turn leads to better business performance.

2.2 *Inclusion Criteria / Documentation*

The paper employed a narrative literature review approach. As stated by Juntunen and Lehenkari (2021), narrative reviews should not strictly develop research questions based on scientific grounds but rather provide a broad overview or synthesis of existing materials that have been studied to a large extent. Such a method is, therefore, appropriate for investigating phenomena that vary widely, such as the integration of emotional intelligence within the gig economy, where a variety of diverse viewpoints and results help build a thorough understanding of the subject.

The first phase of the search involved using PubMed, employing Boolean operators with the keyword's "gig" and "economy." The inclusion criteria were studies published within the past five years, written in English, and available as free full texts. The articles gathered have been used in the discussion below. Ninety percent of the articles were sourced using Google and the Google Scholar search engine. A Google Scholar search was conducted using phrases such as "emotional intelligence and gig economy" and "gig work India." One of the reasons for the selection of this platform is that it opens up possibilities for full-text access on a large scale and, at the same time, it influences the decision-making process by indexing scholarly articles over a long duration, which is very important for taking in a wide range of literature covering interdisciplinary fields (Gusenbauer, 2019).

While using Google Scholar's large database, it became possible to locate other studies within the last five years that had a major impact on literature. As this was a narrative review, the wide range that included different methodologies and sets of findings led to the making of a very dense synthesis concerning the influence of emotional intelligence on the results of gig economy workers. The range of issues discussed was very broad, covering the psychological impacts of

gig work as well as the economic outcomes, and looked at how these factors are connected to a wider socio-economic trend. This perspective enabled the in-depth examination of how emotional training programs can be applied concretely to foster job satisfaction, resilience, and overall well-being among gig workers. Table 2.1. described the nature and sources of references.

Table 2. 1:

Summary of the Nature and Sources of References

Authur(s)	Nature of references	Sources
Allon, Cohen, and Sinchaisri (2023).	Behavioral and economic drivers of gig economy workers.	<i>Manufacturing & Service Operations Management,</i>
Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020)	Role of emotional resilience in addressing challenges faced by gig workers.	<i>Emotions and Society</i>
Yao, Weden, Emerlyn, Zhu, and Kraut (2021)	Impact of peer support and collective action on emotional resilience and mental health challenges in gig workers.	<i>Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction</i>
Graham, Lehdonvirta, and Wood (2020)	Socio-economic and emotional challenges faced by gig workers.	<i>The Future of Work in the Global South</i>
George (2024)	Enhancing emotional resilience and addressing	<i>Partners Universal Innovative Research Publication</i>

	socio-economic gaps among gig workers.	
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Behl, Sheorey, Jain, Chavan, Jajodia, and Zhang (2021)	Enhancing motivation, job satisfaction, and retention of gig workers	<i>Australian Journal of Information Systems</i>
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2.3 *Theoretical framework*

2.3.1 *Emotional Intelligence (EI) Theory*

The current study draws greatly from the Emotional Intelligence theory. Essentially, the term emotional intelligence gained popularity from fields such as psychology, education, and organizational behavior and became a keystone competency in today's workplace. Over the last 30 years, scholars have shown a growing interest in the part played by emotions in rational thinking and decision making and have proposed new theories of intelligence (MacCann et al., 2020). As mentioned by Lozano-Pena et al. (2021), the definition of EI is grounded in earlier efforts to understand and measure social intelligence and to describe appropriate social conduct. Other theorists, for instance, Gardner and Sternberg, showed the attempt to explain social intelligence further by calling for a broader perspective in defining and understanding general intelligence (Suzuki et al., 2024). Further, Brown (2024) asserts that EI gained widespread recognition in the 1990s, popularized by Goleman's (1995) best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, among other popular publications. Goleman's story generated interest not only in the construct but also in the concept of the construct as that which can be applied to the understanding of people and their behavior, as well as the differences between them. Goleman's narrative provoked widespread interest in the construct and the

possibilities of the construct to play a role in explaining human behavior and individual differences. Nevertheless, the growing interest in EI was soon followed by criticism for the lack of scientific proof behind its assertions (Varvatsoulas, 2023). The absence of strong evidence at the time led to more studies being conducted, which eventually helped to further develop EI's conceptual and empirical bases.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability to identify, comprehend, and control one's feelings as well as those of others (Singh, Prabhakar, and Kiran, 2022). The delivery workers who frequently face stressful situations and having to interact more with customers would need the basic EI elements of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Goleman (1995) considers these traits necessary for stress reduction and better interpersonal relations that, in turn, increase both self- and work effectiveness. Likewise, Wen, Huang, and Hou (2019) prove that EI positively influences job performance, especially in the so-called emotionally demanding positions, such as customer service jobs.

A recent report by Arora, Kiran, and Kumar (2024) has come to the conclusion that, in the fast-paced work environments of the gig economy, emotional intelligence is becoming more and more recognized as a decisive factor in coping with the stresses of customer-facing jobs. Similarly, Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2020) imply that the connection between EI and job performance is mediated by other factors. Thus, it is plausible that EI may not be necessary in jobs with little or no emotions involved at all. Therefore, this perspective is that even though EI is advantageous, it holds different value in various working environments. In addition, Kamassi et al.'s (2020) study reveals that employees who have high EI are in a better position to manage the emotional part of their work, hence reducing burnout and enhancing service delivery.

However, Rasool et al. (2021) explain that organizational support and job design are also vital determinants of employee well-being and performance. Nevertheless, the present study has implications for the EI theory in terms of addressing the training and support needs of delivery workers. Increasing emotional intelligence can lead to increased job satisfaction, better coping mechanisms, and effective communication at the workplace. However, Cerely, Semenets-Orlova et al (2021) have said that the success of EI developmental programs is founded in practices and the culture of the organization. Hence, although EI is an important factor, it is imperative to consider other factors, for example, support from the organisation, in order to enhance the performance and the health of the employees.

A greater understanding of the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) provides clarity on the individual competencies that allow gig workers to function in unstable and stressful environments. As explained by Lu et al. 2022, it is the ability that makes them capable of surmounting personal and professional adversities under dynamic and stressful situations, which is typical in gig work environments where precarious conditions are present. According to Hattingh (2023), in the aspect of EI, there are components of self-awareness and self-regulation that, in this case, will be able to effectively help gig workers manage or control their emotional responses and the integrity of science, respectively, with minimum stress.

Another significant component of EI would be motivation, which is thought to be a sustaining act that allows gig workers to work towards their goals despite difficulties and loss of employment, as mentioned by Crayne and Brawley Newlin (2024). Equally important are empathy and sophisticated social skills in smoothing interactions and negotiations with clients and colleagues, and, thus, of paramount importance for the maintenance and development of professional networks (Antonopoulou, 2024). The effects are not emphasized by critics;

however, the recommendation varies because, despite the idea that EI could positively influence and boost performance and job satisfaction, a set of personal predispositions and various organizations of the gig work combine to make the recommendation different (Graham et al. 2018). It should be mentioned that these researchers, such as Pekaar et al. (2020), have already voiced the view that the assumptions about the applicability of EI to any work environment are a naive approach to the fact that there is a distinct sense of emotional dynamics in the workplace environment. Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) also state that such an intense focus on emotional competencies has its risks in that it is likely to render EI as the sole predictor of workplace success and rule out other significant external factors, including economic trends and market competition.

However, despite all these criticisms, it is difficult to overestimate the role of EI in the process of solving personal and professional challenges faced by dug hook workers (Guan, 2023). This ultimately calls for a need to embed EI training into gig work platforms. Results from such training are expected to enhance individual psychosocial qualities, including resilience and adaptability, while improving service delivery and customer satisfaction – factors traditionally associated with success in the gig economy. Figure 2.1 shows Goleman's EI Framework.

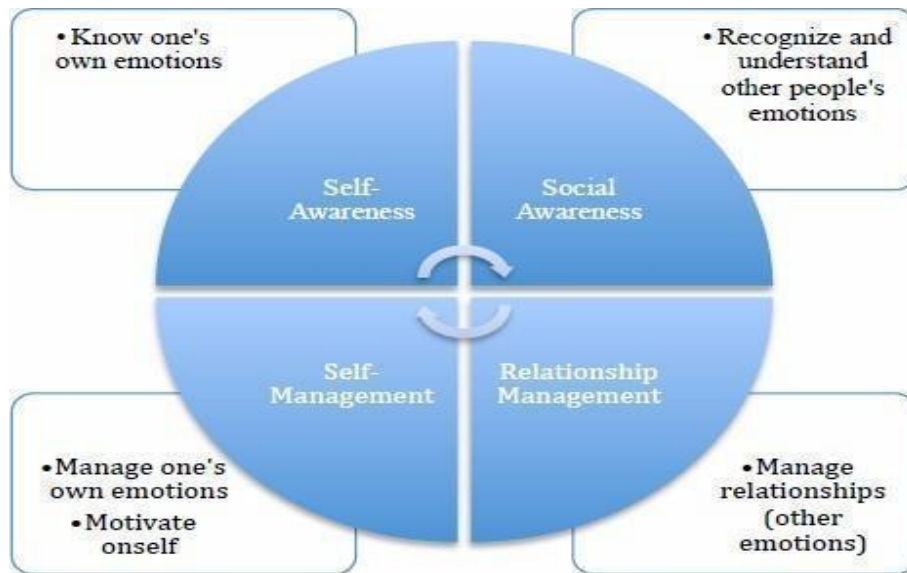


Figure 2. 1:

Goleman's EI Framework (Hauer, Quan, and Liang, 2021).

2.3.2 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

The framework will also be drawn on SDT. Originally proposed to study human motivation, SDT was detailed by Ryan and Deci (2000) with regard to three innate psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Figure 2.2) – which, if satisfied, foster intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being. Self-Determination Theory has become a very significant theory in the area of human motivation and well-being. It does not consider motivation as a single dimension like most traditional and contemporary theories, which mainly see it as a continuum where people have either more or less motivation. On the other hand, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) takes a differentiated way out (Ryan and Deci, 2024). SDT makes it clear that the different kinds of motivation are going to be the main factor determining human performance, engagement, or even vitality and psychological well-being. Human beings need intrinsic psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness to be fulfilled to be motivated and enjoy psychological well-being.

Ryan and Deci (2000) affirm that the optimal functioning of individuals is directly tied to the satisfaction of these basic needs, hence leading to improved satisfaction and engagement. According to Gagné et al. (2022), autonomy-supportive environments are those that are conducive to the development of intrinsic motivation and allow employees to feel in control of their positions. Shin et al. (2019), on the contrary, state that when a job is accompanied by high extrinsic challenges (for instance, low pay or job insecurity), it would not prove very effective to increase intrinsic motivators like autonomy without the help of structural change. This stands out as a caveat that granting employee freedom may not then be adequate to consolidate its positive impact unless complemented with an overhaul of the relevant system.

Another principle of SDT is competence. It takes into consideration every aspect of workers' capacity to deal with difficulties as well as to fulfill their targets (Compare et al., 2024). As argued by Al Karim (2019), the lack of competence can be attributed to untrained and underdeveloped workers. In a similar opinion, Khemraj et al. (2023) propose that skill-building endeavors need to be going on not just to improve job performance but also to mitigate stress at the same time. Maslach and Leiter (2022), however, indicated that the sole concentration on competence might create feelings of isolation or being overworked for the employees if the areas of relatedness or autonomy are completely neglected. Hence, a balanced approach should be used to boost competency while the workers are offered a conducive environment.

The third aspect of SDT that is relevant to the delivery job is the requirement of relatedness, as the work is often done in isolation and consists of monotony. Poulsen and Poulsen (2018) point out that relatedness builds emotional strength and brings about employee satisfaction. Furthermore, Firmansyah and Rosmansyah (2024) put forward that peer network creation or team-building activities can be effective in breaking down the barriers of isolation.

On the other hand, Kurian and Bindu Madhavi (2024) point out that the relatedness measures taken might not be enough when it comes to counteracting the widespread systemic problems in the gig economy. This indicates that relatedness efforts should be integrated with broader reforms to have a greater impact. Collectively, autonomy, competence, and relatedness model can serve as a tool to comprehensively identify the psychosocial requirements of delivery workers. The harnessing of the benefits of intrinsic motivation is, of course, dependent on the structural and organizational factors being considered.

SDT has the foremost priority to meet the needs of employees for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the view of Ryan and Deci (2000), these are necessary elements that help develop the motivation and commitment of the employees. Gig platforms can give freedom to the workers by allowing them to choose their work hours, help in developing the workers by organizing training sessions, and finally, create a strong bond among the workers by arranging social events. Ryan and Deci (2000) also claim that gig work is a space where the EI and SDT frameworks work together to satisfy the psychological needs of the workers and thus decrease the attrition rates among gig workers.

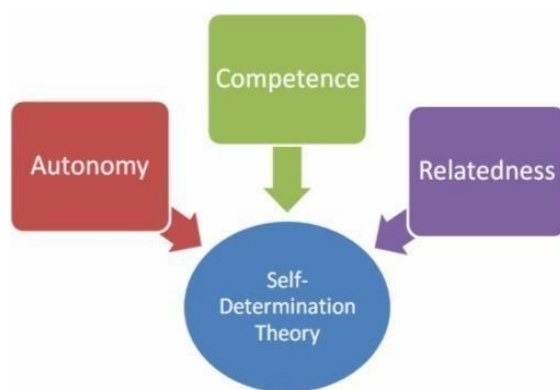


Figure 2. 2:

Self-Determination Theory (Looti, 2022)

Application of these theories will not only increase the emotional and psychological well-being of the workers but will also have a positive impact on the level of service and productivity in the gig economy. This holistic approach to worker welfare, as observed by Consten (2023), is what keeps the workforce both strong and effective, which is an important consideration as the gig economy expands.

2.4 *Growth of the Gig Economy and Delivery Partners*

The gig economy has undergone a rapid global expansion in recent years, predominantly fueled by technological innovations and market changes. Uber, Deliveroo, and TaskRabbit not only provide flexible working schedules for gig workers but also cater to the needs of customers all over the world with their services (Gökkoca, 2022; Vallas, 2019). Banik and Padalkar (2021) further confirm the same by noting that India's gig economy has been growing very rapidly, particularly in metropolitan areas, where the digital platforms have been generating millions of jobs. Organizations like Zomato have not only embraced this trend but also developed massive delivery infrastructures that are almost entirely dependent on gig workers (typically referred to as delivery partners) to satisfy the surging consumer demand (Chintala, 2023).

Recently, Swiggy has introduced its ultra-fast “Bolt” 10-minute food delivery service to match the rapid transformation and intensification of the demands in the gig economy. It will deliver fast food made in restaurants that are within a 2-kilometer radius and will engage technology and smooth logistics to rise up to the consumers' demand for speed and convenience (Swiggy, 2024). The company assures us that delivery partners will not be penalized or rewarded based on delivery times, but still, this brings more logistical complexities, and so the delivery partners are under more pressure to manage rapid service expectations. This step is consistent with Swiggy's larger plan to grow its quick commerce segment, which is being financed by investments in bigger warehouses and better infrastructure (Manikandan and Suresh, 2024).

These changes are not only an example of the increasing demands on delivery partners but also a reason for the implementation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs so that employees get the necessary skills to handle stress, take care of difficult customer interactions, and adjust to the fast service cycles.

The gig economy in India has experienced significant growth both in terms of the number of workers and the value of the sector. Currently, between 8 and 18 million people are engaged in the industry, and the growth trend is likely to continue with the prediction of reaching a staggering 90 million jobs by 2030 (International Labor Organization, 2024). As per Statista (2023), Tamil Nadu has seen 2.2 million more gig workers recently, mainly due to e-commerce and consumer demand for fast delivery services. The report by NITI Aayog, published in 2022, forecasted that gig labor would reach 23.5 million in 2029. But every prediction is hooked with a set of challenges: like no social security benefits, income instability and high operational costs are some of the issues reported as well (Jafar, Unnimaya, and Malaiarasan, 2024). The gig economy, even with the flexibility and numerous job openings, still poses several challenges.

Wang, Li, and Coutts (2022) revealed that the gig workers usually experience a cycle of job insecurity, lack of benefits, and insufficient protection, which renders them financially unstable and becomes a source of mental distress. On the contrary, Bhuvaneswari et al. (2024) posit that the gig economy is a liberating force for the economically weak in Chennai and other places where the options are nearly non-existent. The contrasted perspectives clearly delineate the duality of the gig economy in its various avatars: one side being economic independence, the other being precarious working conditions with the resulting psychological impacts, thus making it all the more necessary to have specially designed interventions to attain a balance between these oscillating dynamics.

Due to the rising popularity of the gig economy, the delivery service is now one of the most important aspects of what should be considered the modern metropolis. Ahmed et al. (2024) indicate that the delivery workers play a critical role in the relationship between the business and the consumers to offer their services and products effectively. On the same note, Schaller (2021) states that the options that the delivery services provide cannot be compared, particularly when one is residing in a highly populated area. However, as Popan (2024) posits, the resulting heavy workload on the delivery workers obstructs the use of such services, which will also entail unrealistic expectations and pressure. This means that their role at work is not always considered as important as they are.

Gig platforms have also expanded following the increase in demand for delivery services, which has led to the creation of millions of jobs. Allon, Cohen, and Sinchaisri (2023) observe that gig work gives anyone who merely needs to make some extra cash or thinks that he/she should keep searching for other jobs a chance to do so. In addition, gig work is also not employment. Asfahani, Alsobahi, and Dahlan (2023) argue that it has been proposed to enhance motivation and job satisfaction. However, according to Wynn and Paz-Fuchs (2019) and Philip (2024), one way in which such flexibility may be described is the destabilization, because workers are likely to feel the instability of the income and lack of social security. In this regard, the two-sidedness of the gig work, its potential, and risks are substantiated.

Accordingly, the role of delivery partners in Chennai is very significant. Iyengar and Venkatesh (2024) agree with that assertion, as they indicate the exponential growth of big food delivery platforms like Swiggy and Zomato within the city. While these provide great avenues for seeking and finding jobs, they also raise much concern over issues of worker wellbeing (Hassan and Pandey, 2023). Amazon's increased network of delivery services, which has fast-

tracked gig economy dominance in Chennai, has done precious little for workers' support systems (Sankar and Mydeen, 2024). Such rapid growth has, however, raced way ahead of the building up of adequate support systems for workers, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and poor mental health (Scheiber, 2023). Thus, gig work well-being through the use of E.I. and SEL programs is the major concern, mainly for the delivery partners.

2.5 *Role of Delivery Partners*

Delivery workers are critical to the success of gig-based operations, acting as the key connectors between firms and clients (Lin et al., 2023). According to Parwez and Ranjan (2021), Swiggy and other similar companies rely largely on the delivery staff to meet the ever-increasing demand for quick deliveries, thus highlighting their necessity for uninterrupted operations in the gig economy. Behl et al. (2021) agree, pointing out that the timely and dependable service provided by the delivery workers is a major reason for the gig platforms' success, which in turn attracts and keeps customers. On the contrary, MacDonald and Giazitzoglou (2019) contend that delivery workers who are indispensable have been denied their due share in terms of pay. A majority of them are suffering from a lack of job security and have unstable incomes as a result. Ramakrishna, the leader of the Tamil delivery staff union, mentions that the payments for delivery have gone down from ₹35 per order a few years back to ₹20 currently, with a considerable portion going to the companies and no direct communication for the workers with the management for their concerns (Ramakrishnan, 2024).

Chaisse and Banik (2021) also maintain that gig workers, including delivery agents, are generally unceasingly out of the formal employment system; thus, the isolation from society through non-employment leaves them very vulnerable to sudden loss of income, and they have no access to benefits that might include healthcare coverage or a retirement savings plan.

Rasheed, Sati, and Bano (2022) comment that the delivery job is very demanding and it entails long hours and strict deadlines, which ultimately results in the delivery staff being subjected to a lot of psychological stress. Petriglieri, Ashford, and Wrzesniewski (2019) describe that the personnel interactions add to the emotional burden, since the delivery workers very often have no specific training in conflict resolution or managing personal feelings; hence, they are not equipped with the skills necessary to deal with the customers in a positive manner. Maintaining positive customer interactions is crucial, as a single negative review or complaint can directly impact their earnings.

2.6 Challenges Faced by Delivery Partners

2.6.1 Physical and emotional challenges

Notably, delivery personnel have to deal with a lot of physical and psychological challenges in their lives because of the nature of their work. One of the major problems for delivery workers in Tamil Nadu is the long and constant exposure to the very hot sun. For example, in Chennai, temperatures would sometimes go up to more than 40°C (104°F) during the summer, making it very dangerous for workers to be outdoors (New Indian Express, 2024). A study done by the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union through Sana (2024) indicated that 70% of gig workers experienced health issues due to heat exposure, such as feeling dizzy, dehydration, and heatstroke. The workers' health problems not only reduce their productivity but also cause serious health risks in the long run. Along with that, the extreme temperatures are unbearable for the workers, plus the long hours they have.

The majority of delivery personnel, especially those who depend on the number of their deliveries for pay, work the whole day, even sometimes during the hottest afternoon hours (Tasnim, 2024). They work for 10 to 12 hours a day with hardly any relief from the heat (New

Indian Express, 2024). A study done by the union reported that less than 40% of the workforce got treated for heat-related issues, and those who did receive treatment were not reimbursed (Survey Report, 2024). The situation highlighted is that only a few companies provide comprehensive medical insurance to their workers or to those who deal with heat-related issues. According to James (2019), the physical burden on workers is aggravated by the incessant demand to meet deadlines, especially in the crowded parts of the city. Buncaras et al. (2022) further claim that insufficient breaks and downtime can result in chronic tiredness and other health problems in the long run.

The physical health risks associated with delivery work are equally pressing. Vijayasankari, Indra, and Kalpana (2020) state that traffic-congested areas are risky to work in, as workers are likely to be involved in accidents and injuries since most of the time they are on the wrong side of the road while talking on their mobile phones. According to the Telangana gig workers union, heat also leads to dehydration and heat complications such as heatstroke and heat edema (Sana, 2024). Furthermore, Zulkifly (2023) stresses that the physical stress of moving around with heavy deliveries for long durations worsens musculoskeletal diseases, including back and neck pain. On the contrary, Davies (2022) explains that these hazards are not unique to gig workers and are well-known in labor-intensive industries. Nevertheless, due to the absence of protection measures in the gig economy, these workers are at higher risk.

Moreover, the physically demanding nature of some tasks is not the only risk. The sedentary lifestyle that certain professions force upon workers is also likely to be a health risk. Bérastégui (2021) points out that one of the delivery workers' main problems is inactivity, which happens during the waiting for an order, and that this may cause tiredness and even heart problems. Asadullah (2024) supports this view by saying that mixing up shifts affects workout

and eating habits, thus leading to bad health in the case of these workers. Still, Singh et al. (2024a) describe that the nature of sedentary work and unstructured schedules is not only limited to delivery personnel but also is a normal practice in most industries. This implies that maybe radical societal changes, instead of changes limited to the workplace, may be necessary to tackle these problems. Last et al. (2022) also indicate that workers usually do not have the time or money to take care of themselves; thus, a cycle of deterioration is created.

Further, delivery workers are under considerable psychological pressure. Income variability is given as the principal reason for emotional discomfort by Wang, Li, and Coutts (2022) who consider that income variability is a major source of emotional strain for gig workers, who typically earn per task rather than through a fixed salary, thus making their earnings unpredictable and subject to demand fluctuations (Hafeez, Gupta, and Sprajcer, 2022). Parwez and Ranjan (2021) also claim that the labor market's lack of formal protections makes gig workers susceptible to economic hardships, thus intensifying anxiety and distress. The strain of emotions is further accentuated by the fact that the delivery person has to achieve a specific customer rating, as one bad rating can really affect the income of the seller or even cause job loss (Chan, 2022). Nevertheless, some scholars consider gig work flexibility as a positive factor that helps in the reduction of stress (Lehdonvirta, 2018).

2.6.2 Mental health and burnout

The gig economy delivery workers are facing mental health problems due to stressful work conditions. Wood et al. (2019) suggest that stress and burnout follow long working hours and delivery stresses, especially for those managing several orders at the same time. Moreover, the inability to keep up with customers' expectations pushes the workers deeper into anxiety and emotional exhaustion, as observed by Lang et al. (2023). Additionally, Liu, Guo, and Fu (2022)

state that although workplace stress is a major contributor, the absence of job security and mental health resources makes the situation even worse, thereby indicating a systemic failure to take care of the most basic needs of the workers. In Chennai, a 2023 survey conducted by local advocacy groups found that more than 65% of delivery workers experienced high stress levels because of the unrealistic delivery deadlines (Sana, 2024).

Nevertheless, according to Maguire (2024), there are people who find a way to deliver their best under pressure, so they see the stress of work as an opportunity to acquire the skills of managing time and building confidence. While this view recognizes the diversity of stress, it ignores the main structural factors that most affect the precarious workers and turn mental health issues into common phenomena in the gig economy. Nevertheless, Anwar and Graham (2021) argue that these erratic demand fluctuations, along with high-performance pressure, are the major factors preventing companies from enjoying the positive aspects of such jobs. Subsequently, delivery partners find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of physical and mental fatigue, lacking proper mental health support, and with limited resources all over the gig economy. To be more exact, delivery workers have to confront both physical and mental health issues as a result of their strenuous labor. Thus, there arises the necessity of providing specific and proper interventions that will mitigate the health risks related to gig work.

The delivery workers are usually subjected to work in extremely stressful conditions. According to Bérastégui (2021), one of the factors leading to the constantly high stress levels among the gig economy workers, especially among the delivery workers, is the stringency of the deadlines, the sudden changes in the workloads, and the bad conditions of work. The job insecurity and imbalance between work and life caused by the unpredictability of the gig economy further stress the workers (Parwez and Ranjan, 2021). Moreover, they typically do not

receive any paid leave or health care, which causes burnout among workers, as pointed out by Behl et. al. (2021). Maslach and Schaufeli (2018) assert that the primary manifestations of burnout are emotional exhaustion and lack of personal achievement, which is the case for delivery workers who often work the whole day and are under pressure both from the customers and the algorithms (Zhang, Cheung, and Huang, 2022). Another researcher points out that the gig economy workers often have to work for long hours with very few breaks and that this causes both physical and mental exhaustion, which is the result of a lack of resources to cope with the job demands (Christie and Ward, 2019).

Salman (2021) points out that the food delivery workers in India are subject to discussion and emphasizes that their salaries have been cut significantly in the past few years. A situation also reflected in the case of Swiggy, where the laborers mentioned that their minimum remuneration for a delivery decreased from INR 35 to about INR 20, as shown in Figure 2.3 below. Nevertheless, they still had to incur the cost of petrol and other variable costs that eventually brought their salary down to about INR 15 or less, which in most cases would amount to INR 4,000 per week.

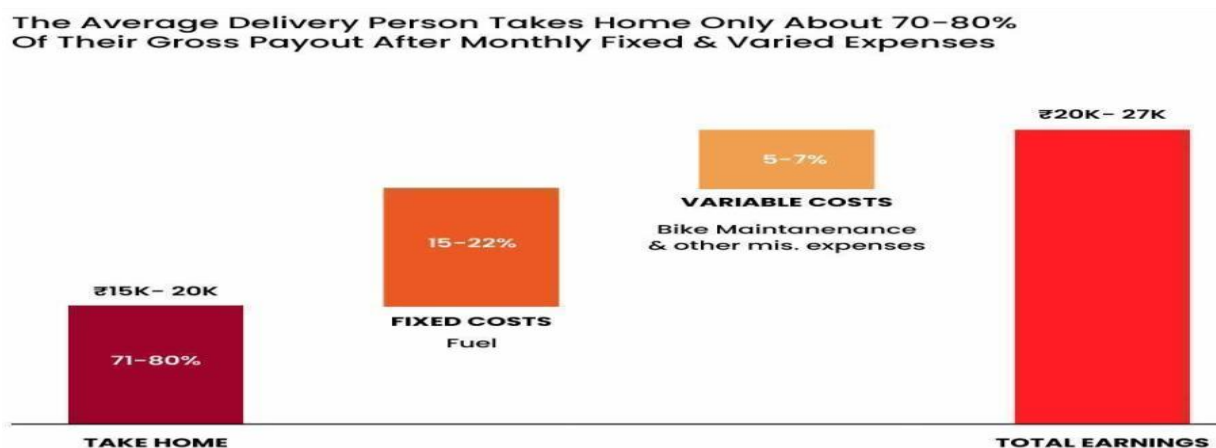


Figure 2. 3:

Trends in Delivery Workers' Earnings and Operational Costs in India by Salman (2021).

As a consequence of the low wages, a lot of workers tend to work more than usual to cover their basic expenses, which in turn will make them exhausted and stressed financially. Also, many workers find it difficult to cope with the expenses of the household because their income is not stable. Fintech (2024) makes the point that delivery workers in India have a monthly income that ranges between ₹10,000 and ₹15,000 on average. This amount, according to the survey of Fintech (2024), represented in Figure 2.4 below, is not sufficient to cover the increasing urban living expenses such as rent, food, and utilities. Such financial pressures make workers take longer shifts or do two jobs at a time, leading to more stress physically and mentally.

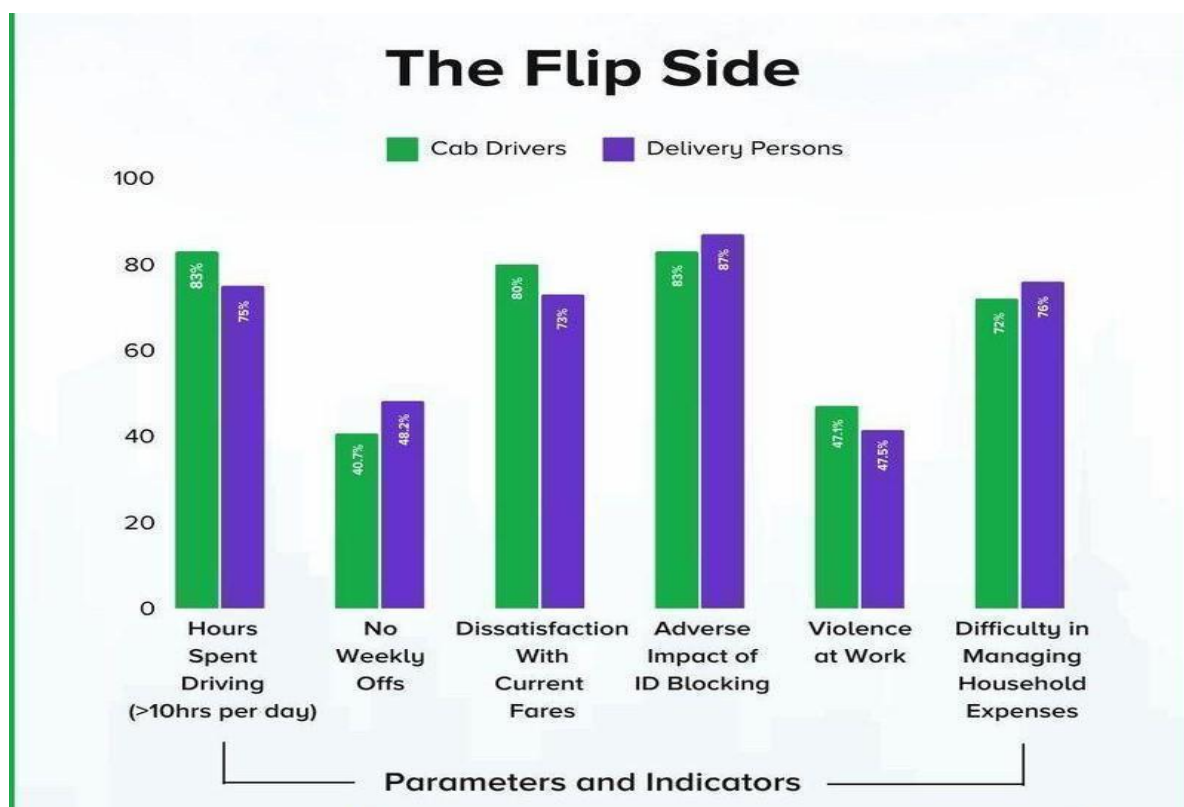


Figure 2. 4:

Challenges facing delivery workers in India (Fintech, 2024).

Moreover, as noted by Chiu Palupi and Zhu (2022), gig workers are primarily not provided with a Human Resource department or the support of the institution for stress relief measures aimed at employees, which is mainly connected to work. Glavin, Bierman, and Schieman (2021) note that a major part of the workforce is left isolated because there are no such structures made for support, and they do not have almost any place to go regarding mental health. Hence, this situation results in burning out as the people involved are not capable of coping with the demands of the job in terms of both physical and emotional aspects.

Notably, exponential growth in the gig economy has caused critical disruptions to occur in the labor market, creating flexible job opportunities, especially in delivery services. On the other hand, these conditions have contributed to significant psychological burdens for gig workers. Most of the couriers experience excessively long working hours, high quotas for delivery, and irregular earning conditions, due to which their burnout and other mental health disorders are reported, such as depression. Lin (2022) depicts that the inability to balance the job demand and personal adjustability exposes the delivery workers to occupational stress, the source of which is the heightened interpersonal sensitivity and hostility that is not a characteristic feature of the job. As Salman (2021) states, algorithmic management exposes such employees, thus exposing them to increased stress. The algorithm gives very stringent deadlines that the workers shall comply with, and punishes them in the case of late delivery, which may be caused by factors the workers themselves cannot control, like the huge traffic congestion or the unfavorable conditions around.

Additionally, Fintech (2024) adds that algorithmic penalties for failure to hit performance targets or reject deliveries erode worker morale and earnings, creating self-reinforcing feedback loops of stress and frustration. All of this is exacerbated by the fast delivery demands and often

by the algorithmic management that pressures the workers for maximum productivity, which in turn takes a toll on their mental health. A research study conducted by Wu, Li, and Liu (2022) investigated the interplay of job demands, resources, mindfulness, and burnout for delivery workers. It reported that a significant increase in burnout level is very likely if the job demands go up and the resources stay the same (Wu, Li, and Liu, 2022). Mindfulness practices have been particularly helpful in mitigating these impacts by enabling the workers to cope with stress and, at the same time, improving their emotional regulation.

The financial insecurity of delivery workers only makes their mental health issues worse. The World Health Organization (2024) cites poor working conditions as one of the major causes of mental health problems, including jobs that are characterized by high workloads and insecurity. In 2019, approximately 15% of the working population had a mental illness; major depression and anxiety disorders were estimated to cause a loss of about 12 billion days of work per year and cost the global economy an estimated US\$1 trillion in productivity annually (World Health Organization, 2024).

Another major contributing factor to burnout among delivery workers is social isolation. While most traditional work roles offer the opportunity to interact frequently with colleagues, gig work can be an unusually solitary occupation at times, one that provides very minimal social support for the worker. It has been identified from a recent survey conducted by Bengaluru (2023) that in India, 99% of delivery and cab workers suffer from mental health issues due to poor work culture and a lack of support. Isolation, added to gig work pressures, contributes significantly to the mental and emotional toll taken from such workers. According to Fintech (2024), the non-unionization nature of gig workers further makes them most vulnerable since,

without a collective voice, they do not have standing to negotiate or bargain for better working conditions or benefits.

2.7 *Gender Dimensions*

Essentially, the gig work dimensions of gender provide the necessary insights into the specific experiences that underpin women workers in several challenges and inequalities across various sub-regions. More recently, Ghosh, Ramachandran, and Zaidi (2021), focusing on India, illustrated how female gig workers are hired under precarious situations without social security benefits, a condition that puts them at risk of falling into financial unsustainability and loss of protection. These women, as Krishnan (2023) points out, in most instances, have to undergo confrontation with social norms and even the kind of desirable action that the family can present that places them in morning shifts or in some inconsequential and low-income work under the gig economy. This makes them comparatively poor and have little to accumulate a self-sufficient career, and it is a vicious cycle of austerity and minimal opportunities. The acquisition of E.I. skills can assist such workers to use some strategies, which are linked to stress coping, multifaceted socialization, and stress resilience development in the face of such special requests that emerge in such an uneasy workplace.

Similarly, while studying gendered issues in the United States, Ma and Yoon (2022) have also linked such research with harassment issues faced by gig-working women. Most of them revert to “delay and deflect” strategies to avoid the risk of harassment. This points to one side of the lack of categorical support mechanisms across gig platforms. This strategy testifies to a greater problem: that no channels exist to report harassment, let alone an unsafe working environment, without putting their job security or earnings in jeopardy. As Sarker et al. (2024a)

assert, gig workers in Bangladesh emphasize flexibility for balancing family responsibilities; however, they have sacrificed earnings due to limited access to gigs that are paid at a higher rate.

The regional research points out the difficulties experienced by female gig workers over different socio-economic and cultural scenarios: the flexibility they enjoy usually implies less financial security. Patwal (2022) argues that the issues mentioned above are crying for gender-sensitive training and policy intervention. The combination of safety measures, gender-sensitive training, and social security will not only make the transition to empowerment for women gig workers smoother but will also help get rid of some of the challenges they face because of their roles.

2.8 *Historical and Philosophical Roots of Emotional Intelligence and SEL*

The historical and philosophical foundations of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) can be traced back even further than Goleman's framework of the 1990s, since early psychology considered the regulation of feelings as an issue of primary importance in both learning and social interaction. Praditsang (2016) states that social intelligence was a new and different type of human intelligence, set aside from academic skills, which later received acknowledgment as the interpersonal and adaptable parts of EI. Similarly, Dhani and Sharma (2016) contend that this initial conceptualization was the backbone of their emotional intelligence model, which laid emphasis on emotional perception, understanding, and management skills. All these statements imply that emotions, at least implicitly, have always been considered as the very factor that could lead to the extinction or survival of humankind in the long run. In another related study, Cong-Lem (2023) further expounded how Vygotsky's sociocultural theory sees the learning process as social, with the emotional context being the cradle of cognitive development. The emphasis of SEL on social interaction and self-regulation resonates with the notion that emotional processes have a direct impact on cognitive

development. Nevertheless, Martínez-Priego et al. (2024) still maintain that the early psychological theories of emotional regulation were not methodologically accurate since they were based on normative assumptions about what was considered appropriate behavior instead of using empirical measures. Although this critique is valid, it overlooks the fact that these early contributions provided the conceptual scaffolding necessary to ground the later integration of EI and SEL into structured frameworks. The contrast between early descriptive theories and later empirically grounded models thus characterizes a developmental trajectory in which historical psychology enriched and legitimized contemporary educational practice.

It is through philosophical traditions that the foundation of EI and SEL is further strengthened, as they disclose that emotional regulation problems have always been part of the discussion and not simply the up-to-date constructs of morality, character, and learning. For example, Aristotle acknowledged in his *Rhetoric* the power of ethos and pathos as the main factors of persuasion and civilized life and the control of emotions as a sign of moral character (Zhuang, 2023). Furthermore, Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Williams (2025) argue that affectivity should be regarded as intrinsic to both experiential learning and social interaction. These two viewpoints, notably, indicate that emotional competencies are not only personal but also societal and moral, thus affecting the well-being of the whole society rather than only individual performance. The two views further suggest that EI and SEL may be seen as the modern equivalents of the ancient virtues of human flourishing and civic duty. However, as Allen and Clough (2015) point out, the transfer of philosophical ideals to modern psychological constructs might lead to the overlapping of the normative ends with the empirically quantifiable results, which can shorten the scientific validity of SEL programs. Yet, this criticism does not adequately portray the role of philosophy as an expanding factor for EI and SEL, since it still reminds the

scholars and the practitioners that these models are not just technical tools but are rather ethical projects whose scope includes character and citizenship. The comparison of these philosophical foundations with modern psychological paradigms shows clearly that while philosophy provides concepts that are timeless in the fields of ethics, virtue, and social responsibility, psychology offers the tools and the data that are necessary for treating such concepts in practice. Thus, when combined, they establish a more solid and pragmatic foundation for both emotional intelligence and socio-emotional learning.

2.9 *Neuroscientific and Biological Correlates of EI and Stress*

Neuroscientific research on Emotional Intelligence (EI) continues to reveal that emotional skills are not just abstract traits but are rather associated with actual changes in brain function, stress physiology, and neuroplasticity. Eden et al. (2015) found that better functional connectivity between the prefrontal cortex and amygdala predicts more proficient negative affect regulation, which can be seen as a neurobiological route where EI traits are manifested. Similarly, Bereboth and Sommer (2021) also point towards this interplay in a different experiment, asserting that the top-down regulation of amygdala inactivity through prefrontal cortex regions lessens stress susceptibility. The findings agree that the integration of regulative pathways is what forms the basis for emotional resilience. On the other hand, Zapata et al. (2021) contend that the physiological basis of EI is more intimately linked to the calibration of the stress system than to the brain networks, as their research correlates high EI levels with reduced cortisol and α -amylase stress reactions. Regardless of the different standpoints regarding the dominance of either brain connectivity or hormonal regulation as the primary pathway, both avenues of research prove that EI is associated with the biological processes that can be quantified and are still capable of reducing stress. Hence, the collaboration of neuroscience and psychophysiology has determined that emotional intelligence is biologically based on neural and

hormonal systems, thereby establishing it as a scientifically validated type of resilience that can be developed through training.

The evidence from neural and hormonal studies, together with findings from the autonomic system, emphasizes the role of vagal tone and recovery in clarifying the stress-buffering function of emotional intelligence, particularly in such risky occupations as gig work. Mather and Thayer (2018) state that higher vagal tone, measured by heart-rate variability (HRV), is an indicator of greater flexibility in regulation and quicker recovery from stress. In the same way, An et al. (2020) back this up by demonstrating that vagally mediated HRV rebound after acute stress is a consistent indicator of resilience. The studies support the notion that parasympathetic regulation serves as a biological basis for EI. Nonetheless, Blank (2019) argues that the interpretation of vagal tone as a direct indicator of emotional competence may lead to the mixing of physiological resilience with other socioeconomic-emotional skills, making EI measurement more complicated. On the other hand, applying these insights to gig economy contexts shows practical significance: courier and ride-hailing drivers suffer from stress due to algorithmic ratings, long working hours, and unpredictable incomes, which are known to raise cortisol levels and hinder autonomic recovery (Hafeez, Gupta, and Sprajcer, 2022). Through the combination of EI and SEL interventions, such as cognitive reappraisal training and HRV biofeedback, the platform workers could upgrade the prefrontal–amygdala regulation, stabilize the cortisol responses, and enhance the vagal tone, thus promoting resilience to the unique stressors of gig labor.

2.10 Presence and Lack of EI and SEL Training

2.10.1 Current presence of EI and SEL training

Corporate Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are mainly intended for white-collar workers, as they put a premium on the competencies of leadership and management. Goleman (1995) has demonstrated that such activities give rise to the development of communication skills, being able to cope with stress, and being motivated, which in turn leads to better work performance. Likewise, Extremera et al. (2018) heightens the awareness that EI programs in structured environments translate into less stressed employees and higher engagement. However, as pointed out by Egesi (2022), the gig economy involves a transient and informal nature that often leaves delivery workers behind and deprived of these benefits. This discrepancy makes it evident that the traditional EI frameworks are still not suitable for delivery roles, as the existing solutions provided are inadequate.

Swiggy and Zomato have made preliminary efforts to provide EI-related training for delivery workers in Tamil Nadu. The Economic Times (2024) revealed that Zomato has partnered with the Hospitality Training Institute of India and has trained 5,200 delivery partners in 10 cities in hospitality and service delivery. This training provides them with the basic requirements of customer relations, professionalism, and service delivery to create a good impression for the customers and the delivery partners (Economic Times, 2024). In a similar vein, Abrar (2024) reveals that at the beginning of September 2024, Swiggy announced the new “Project Next” initiative, whereby delivery partners would be provided with training to improve their skills and transition from the traditional “blue-collar” delivery workers to white-collar employees.

According to Zhang (2024), such measures can reduce the psychological burden of customer contact and enhance service quality. In addition, the study by Prasetyo et al. (2019) has

positive implications for stress-management programs, improving job satisfaction for service workers. Nevertheless, such initiatives are scarce and superficial, according to Extremera et al. (2018), since the training does not cover the multifaceted emotional experiences of delivery work, including working hours, job insecurity, and stress. In other words, even though EI and SEL programs are available, their integration into the gig economy is still quite poor. Most of the existing strategies do not consider some of the specific issues affecting delivery workers, such as solitude, irregular employment, and physical stress. This is a gap that calls for unique, extensive training that closes the gap between conventional corporate training and the real world of delivery work. These gaps can be bridged by moving the focus toward evidence-based, implementable, and culturally sensitive EI and SEL programs.

2.10.2 The gap in EI and SEL training

Due to the fact that the gig economy is an extension of the informal economy, there is no proper human resource management that can address the gaps in emotional intelligence and socio-emotional learning training. In their study, Johnston and Land-Kazlauskas (2018) identified a lack of institutional support that leads to burnout and high employee turnover in delivery workers. Similarly, Hafeez, Gupta, and Sprajcer (2022) explain that the lack of social support increases job turnover and has a negative implication on employees' health. However, Bérastégui (2021) has noted that, while emotional support is crucial, it must be accompanied by systemic reforms, and that support should include such structural changes as equitable compensation and stable employment to treat the problem. This, therefore, implies that the training conducted may not necessarily address all the challenges that the gig workers face.

Delivery workers operate in a stressful environment, yet they rarely have opportunities to attend training that can help them manage their psychological issues. According to the World

Health Organization (2022), targeted activities, like SEL workshops, help to reduce stress and enhance the level of emotional resilience. Kurdi, Alshurideh, and Alnaser (2020) are in agreement with the idea that further development of the workers' self-regulation will lead to higher service quality and job satisfaction. However, Myhill, Richards, and Sang (2023) argue that such programs would probably not produce sustained effects as workers may slide back into their pre-intervention level of performance unless their new behavior is maintained. But they suggest that EI and SEL training should be among other, more long-term solutions.

The application of Structured Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) has been found to have a tremendous impact across various settings across the world. One of the instances is the RULER model of emotional literacy that Yale University has developed, which contains various tools, one of which is the Mood Meter. This tool aids individuals in recognizing the manner in which they might be able to control their emotions (Henry, 2023). In a similar vein, the Smiling Mind app has mindfulness methods in its portfolio, where the users will be taught in an interactive manner to raise their emotional intelligence (Hwang, Ha, and Kim, 2021). It is worth mentioning that the tools mentioned above are not only very common but also very easy to get, thus they are ideal for gig workers. However, Laskar (2023) points out that the heavy reliance on digital platforms can be a disadvantage in areas with low digital literacy or unstable internet connectivity, which is the situation in some regions of India. This highlights the need for hybrid models that combine the digital and the physical elements.

Moreover, gamified learning platforms are now being recognized as powerful means to foster emotional skills. It was found by Alturkey Pink (2024) that gamification leads to much more active participation and learning, which are very crucial since the workers are stressed out, as in the case with delivery services. In the same way, Landers and Marin (2021) advocate for

the use of interactive training to enhance intrinsic motivation, which will, in turn, lead to the better application of SEL practices. Nonetheless, Gkintoni et al. (2024) argue that gamified instruments might make the learning of emotional skills too easy, thus perhaps cutting down the power of these skills on a long-term basis. Consequently, it implies that while gamification remains a good strategy, it has to be supplemented with more sophisticated and pertinent training.

In addition to digital tools, global educational institutions have integrated EI and SEL into formal training programs. For instance, Harvard's executive programs focus on enhancing leadership through EI (Sellers, 2024). On the contrary, Six Seconds provides certifications tailored to workplace applications. It utilizes the "*Know Yourself, Choose Yourself, Give Yourself*" (Figure 2.5) framework, which promotes self-awareness, intentionality, and purpose-driven actions (Six Seconds, 2024). These frameworks demonstrate the value of structured interventions in improving emotional competencies. However, Broughton et al. (2018) argue that such programs are often inaccessible to gig workers due to cost and logistical barriers, underscoring the need for affordable and culturally relevant adaptations.



Figure 2.5:

Six Seconds model of emotional intelligence (Six Seconds, 2024)

2.10.3 Limited support mechanisms

The structure of the gig economy is rather dispersed, and this means that delivery workers have very limited access to more formal support. Arnoldi, Bosua, and Dirksen (2021) explain that many gig platforms are mostly concerned with the optimization of work and provide limited assistance in cases of illness or injury. Moreover, Budhwar et al. (2023) argued that since there are no HR departments specifically in the gig economy, workers are left with very little or no support at all. Instead, Mishra (2024) affirms that some gig platforms have developed policies that can raise the standard of living of their workers, as is the case with Swiggy's "Built Around You." Nevertheless, such measures are not very consistent and fail to address some fundamental

issues, such as unemployment and poor health among workers. This means that the current support systems are inadequate to support workers in decentralized positions.

There is a cultural stigma that has been associated with mental health, and this worsens the problems of delivery workers. Lynch, Long, and Moorhead (2018) indicated that mental health support is perceived as a form of vulnerability at the workplace, and therefore, people do not report it. In a similar manner, Robinson et al. (2019) also point out that society still has a negative perception towards mental health, thus making it quite hard to address the matter, leaving the onus on the employees to deal with stress and burnout on their own. On the other hand, Wang, Li, and Coutts (2022) support the argument that the absence of mental health care services in gig platforms is a more critical question than the prejudice that surrounds mental illnesses, especially because workers in various countries cannot afford medical treatment. Importantly, this means that although destigmatisation is important, modification of gig work environments is required to ensure easy access and utilization of mental health interventions.

The fragmented nature of work in the gig economy makes it very difficult to develop a cohesive approach to health and wellness. Rodriguez, Sarraju, and Turakhia (2022) observed that even as centralized systems are important for the protection of well-being, which is evident in traditional workplaces, gig platforms do not offer the same support mechanisms. In the same way, Alanezi and Alanzi (2020) encourage the use of comprehensive wellness approaches that address the specific needs of the gig workers, including shifts and work-from-home arrangements. However, Johnston and Land-Kazlauskas (2018) admit that such programs are valuable, but often it is hard to introduce them into platforms with low margins due to logistical and financial concerns. This suggests that there are innovative and cost-effective solutions to the problems arising from the nature of the gig economy.

2.10.4 The need for solutions

To avoid and manage emotional and psychological issues affecting the delivery workers, there is a need for the development of EI and SEL programs. Goleman (1995) has identified the EI theory, which asserts that EI programs increase people's emotional toughness by offering methods of self-regulation and managing other people's moods in practical work, primarily when working under stress, or in pressure situations, including those that involve important people. In addition, Yoder et al. (2020) opine that SEL is especially helpful in assisting employees in stress coping in the workplace. But, according to Aldin (2021), although these programs are useful, they are not very helpful when there are systemic issues like low-paying jobs and job insecurity. From this, it can be concluded that even though EI and SEL programs are helpful, they cannot be realized independently and have to be integrated with other structural improvements.

It is also important, however, to design such programs to meet the requirements of delivery work. From the analysis of Ghai (2024), a culturally responsive approach means that the information given to the workers relates to their culture and their experiences. In the same way, Pereira et al. (2024) have pointed out that useful formats such as mobile applications and tools are suitable for reaching out to gig workers who are based in geographically dispersed locations. However, Durand et al. (2022) revealed that the use of digital platforms may be detrimental to workers with poor technological knowledge or those who do not own technology. This suggests that a combination of digital and face-to-face approaches may be the most effective for maximizing coverage and effects.

2.11 Consumer Perceptions and Interdependence

2.11.1 Consumer dependence on delivery platforms

With their high efficiency and user-friendliness, delivery platforms have turned out to be the core part of urban people's daily lives, and the number of users is constantly increasing. As

Jacobe (2020) points out, the flourishing of food and e-commerce delivery platforms has resulted in a major consumption pattern change, thus the making of expectations for quick delivery. Jain (2024) argues in the same vein that urban customers have come to see delivery services as necessities since they are able to expect speed, precision, and quality as their basic features. The Indian market has been focused on the 15-minute delivery window, as Jain (2024) notes, with the Q-commerce leaders having Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart, and Zepto setting the pace in delivering new product categories to match the changing needs of consumers. Some companies are already providing their customers with products in 15-20 minutes, while others have surpassed them by fulfilling the orders in 8-10 minutes. This is a clear indication of the shift in buying habits of Indian customers. According to the latest survey, 75% of habitual online grocery shoppers pointed out that they have been increasing their spontaneous purchases for the past six months, while 53% of customers order more than five times a month on quick commerce platforms, as illustrated in Figure 2.6 below (Jain, 2024). Conversely, Gong and Zhang (2024) suggest that such dependence is probably going to be a factor in the rise of over-expecting consumers. However, it is the intersection of innovation, technology, and instant gratification that has been the driving force behind the evolution of the grocery delivery market in India.



Figure 2.6:

Frequency of Purchase (Jain, 2024)

The delays or errors in the delivery tend to let the consumers' high expectations turn into dissatisfaction and the disconnect between the consumers and the delivery staff becomes greater. Chan (2022) is of the opinion that if there is open communication about the delivery time and potential issues, then consumer irritation will be lessened, and the workers will be viewed more kindly. In the same line, Cortellazzo and Vaska (2024) claim that the delivery personnel's coaching in social interaction will, each time, make them not only able to control consumer expectations but also self-assured in doing so. On the other side, Vu and Nguyen (2024) argue that the issue is structural, embracing, among others, poor supply chain management or software that does not work. Thus, apart from the delivery worker training, the platforms should also fix their operations' defects.

The increased consumer reliance on delivery platforms has also heightened their social and economic pressure on workers. According to Nguyen (2019), because of the fast delivery expectations, the workers are forced to put in extra hours, and this leads to fatigue and stress.

Hsieh et al. (2023), similarly, argue that the gig economy's competitive model impels these platforms to be more consumer-oriented at the cost of being less worker-oriented. However, while consumer expectations are a driving force, workers' well-being should not be compromised, suggesting that platforms can implement policies to protect workers while meeting consumer demands.

2.11.2 Challenges in consumer-worker interactions

Delayed deliveries are a common source of frustration for consumers and a significant stressor for delivery workers. Most delays are normally caused by traffic congestion, unpredictable weather, and inefficiencies in logistics, as noted by Tadić et al. (2023). Bhat et al. (2021) agree that such delays erode consumer trust in the delivery platforms and further pressure the workers to perform within the high-demand timelines. However, Shojaeinasab et al. (2022) remind us that delay factors are sometimes outside the power of a single worker to rectify and therefore must become matters of systemic improvement regarding better routing algorithms and operation planning and not be attributed merely to worker blame. Thus, the platforms must offer ways to decrease the wait in order to improve understanding by the consumer about the workers and to bridge the gap.

It is worth noting that the wrong orders and the unprofessional way of communication between staff and customers only increase the problems between them. Antonetti, Crisafulli, and Maklan (2021) state that one of the major reasons for a company's bad image is confusion between workers at the restaurants or warehouses, which often results in wrong orders sent to customers. Similarly, Rosenmayer et al. (2018) argue that poor communication skills among workers can escalate conflicts, particularly when dealing with dissatisfied customers. Conversely, Rakhra et al. (2022) contend that the burden should not fall entirely on workers, as

inadequate training and a lack of technological tools to verify orders contribute significantly to these issues. This means that correcting such mistakes involves both the training of workers and the enhancement of the technological aspects of the platform.

The emotional toll on workers from managing high-pressure interactions is substantial. Simillidou et al. (2020) observed that aside from verbal abuse, unreasonable demands from customers also contribute to the pressure delivery workers are experiencing. In their study, Lang et al. (2023) agree that these contacts may lead to burnout if the workers are not emotionally ready for such situations. On the contrary, Grewal, Kopalle, and Hulland (2024) are very dismissive of the idea that platforms must bear some responsibility through a campaign to change the consumer's attitude through tolerance messages. This underlines the potential of shared accountability in further enhancing the consumer-worker relationship.

2.11.3 Benefits of EI and SEL for consumer satisfaction

Equipping delivery workers with Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills significantly enhances customer interactions. Khosravi Rezvani and Ashkanasy (2020) identified that the EI competencies that pertain to emotional self-control and empathy assist the employees in conflict management, hence minimizing the adverse experiences among customers. Similarly, Gimbert et al. (2023) have postulated that SEL aids in enhancing interpersonal interaction and relationships, as well as tackling trust and customer satisfaction. However, Wood et al. (2019) have a counterview to this on the grounds that although some of these are important, there are systematic factors like logistics that are major determinants of customer satisfaction, and solutions to such problems require individualistic or structural alterations.

Strong emotional regulation and empathy also help employees de-escalate a conflict with the other party and make it a win-win situation. According to Bucher et al. (2020), employees who have undergone SEL training are more capable of handling complaints in a composed and professional manner, even in the face of pressure from unhappy customers. Allon, Cohen, and Sinchaisri (2023) argue that the positives of customer retention will be the ultimate advantage of the platform if the customer service response is turned around from being negative to positive ones. On the other hand, Robinson et al. (2019) put forward a paradoxical argument that the emotional labor, if not properly supported, would be too much for the worker, thereby making the use of EI and SEL ineffective. This is an issue that raises a dilemma of how to keep both the workers and the customers satisfied at the same time.

In addition, customer loyalty can be increased through the use of EI and SEL training since it creates positive interactions between the staff and the customers. Robinson et al. (2019) suggest that, as a result of feeling emotionally competent, the staff are more willing to engage with the customers on a deeper level, thereby forming a bond that leads to repeat purchases. Furthermore, Jacobo (2020) maintains that the employees trained in emotional intelligence are the reason for the company's positive image, as the customers who are satisfied with the service will most probably inform others about the platform. However, presenting a different perspective, Lynch, Long, and Moorhead (2018) point out that such training will only bring positive results if it is part of a broader organizational strategy that encompasses operational efficiency and employee support.

2.11.4 The broader impact on business performance

Emotionally skilled employees contribute significantly to better service ecosystems, being more efficient and harmonious at the same time. Singh et al. (2024b) note that the EI

workers with the self-regulation and empathy traits are great at resolving conflicts with one another; therefore, the disputes in the workplace would be fewer and the operation would be smoother. Furthermore, Petriglieri, Ashford, and Wrzesniewski (2019) assert that emotionally intelligent employees are more adaptable, which is a requirement in the dynamic gig economy. On the other hand, Bhat et al. (2021) maintained that EI positively influences the operational coordination problem, but it still requires the provision of appropriate systemic support, such as fair work shifts, realistic aspirations, and standards, to realize its full potential. This underscores the dual approach strategy of focusing on both the worker and the workflow system.

Workers' well-being improvements also lead to less turnover and minimal operational disruptions. For instance, Durand et al. (2022) claim that workers with emotional intelligence are more adaptable, and hence, their job satisfaction is very high, their burnout is very low, and consequently, their turnover is very low. In the same way, Pereira et al. (2024) point out that the lower the turnover rate, the lower the costs of recruitment and training, thus contributing to the overall efficiency of the organization. On the other hand, Lang et al. (2023) contend that emotional competencies should be complemented by other measures since workers often leave their jobs for reasons that are beyond their control, such as low wages and job insecurity. It is worth noting that while EI interventions are successful, it is through tackling larger economic issues that a long-term workforce of skilled and committed employees can come to the surface.

Workers with emotional intelligence will also ensure that customers are satisfied; thus, the company's brand will be trusted and its profits will grow. Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) note that employees with high emotional intelligence deliver excellent customer service, which results in positive experiences and, consequently, repeat customers. Kuhn, Meijerink, and Keegan (2021) are on the same wavelength and maintain that an attractive platform is the result

of the emotional competencies of the workers, which also means gaining new customers and therefore the assurance of continued growth. Nevertheless, Alturkey (2024) cautions that focusing on customer satisfaction at the expense of worker wellbeing may create a scenario where workers are mistreated, which may also lead to poor performance of the business in the long run. Therefore, it is necessary to consider customer initiatives and worker support as two sides of the same coin, and this is the true challenge.

2.11.5 Economic and Productivity Implications of EI/SEL

Research on emotional intelligence (EI) and social and emotional learning (SEL) is increasing, and it highlights the significance of these two concepts not only in the personal well-being area but also in the areas of economic productivity and organizational performance. According to a study performed by Sony and Mekoth (2016), employees with high EI show better performance, leadership, and adaptability, which lead to increased productivity, thus benefiting the company. Vashisht, Singh, and Sharma (2018) in another extensive study pointed out that the gain of EI develops the quality of communication, collaboration, and conflict management, leading to a direct rise in organizational efficiency and a decrease in the expensive stress in the workplace. Similarly, Evans-Uzosike et al. (2024) have found that the EI training program in a project team improved the team working and reduced project delays. This indicates that emotional skills training has quantifiable returns on investment (ROI). On the other hand, Joseph et al. (2015) claimed that the predictive validity of EI predicting job performance might be overemphasized without proper methodological controls, pointing out that personality and cognitive ability account for a significant part of the same variance. However, subsequent meta-analyses by MacCann et al. (2020) refute this by demonstrating that EI still has incremental validity when factoring personality and IQ, particularly in work requiring emotional labor and

collaboration. In sum, these findings suggest that EI and SEL are linked to measurable economic performance, such as lower absenteeism, more cheerful workers, and increased productivity. The growing number of organizations that are facing turbulent and complex business environments may consider the development of EI as not just a human resource practice but rather a financial necessity.

The significant economic benefits of emotional intelligence (EI) and social and emotional learning (SEL) are widely recognized in traditional workplaces, although their potential impact in the gig economy has yet to be researched and measured. According to Subramaniam (2020), emotionally intelligent employees can manage client relationships in a more competent manner that eventually leads to better quality of service and customer retention. These outcomes can already have a considerable impact on the reputation and income of a platform. In this connection, Gameiro and Ferreira (2024) consider EI interventions as a way to foster resilience and engagement; hence, burnout and turnover will be lessened, which are, in turn, critical factors impacting productivity and cost-effectiveness. The two studies converge on the point that EI is a vital support to the worker's performance when the emotional strain is high. On the other hand, a challenge raised by Gray (2021) claims that the economic justification of EI training becomes less clear in the case of gig platforms, where workers are labelled as independent contractors, as such platforms might not expect a direct return from the investment in the emotional capabilities of the workers. Nonetheless, this perspective does not consider evidence which suggests that emotional regulation increases customer satisfaction ratings which, in turn, affect the algorithmic visibility and the earning capacity of both workers and platforms (Austin, 2021). Moreover, the recent economic studies on workplace wellness, like those by Helliwell et al. (2020), highlight that wellness and performance are mutually reinforcing and

therefore neglecting EI in the gig economy could result in decreased long-term productivity and retention. Therefore, although corporations are progressively incorporating EI training into leadership and team development initiatives, gig platforms are not yet ready to appreciate their economic capacity. The measurement of the ROI of EI and SEL within such decentralized settings is an important frontier of organizational research and platform design, with the potential to balance well-being with sustainable productivity.

2.12 Future of Gig Work and Automation

The fast-expanding automation and the presence of artificial intelligence (AI) are completely changing the nature, worth, and even security of gig work. It is candidly forcing a reconsideration of which human attributes will be essential in the future labor market. FORCELLI (2024) reports that the more algorithms take over, whether it be cognitive or manual tasks, the more workers' strengths will be based on the very human capabilities like empathy, collaboration, and ethical decision-making. Similar to this, Van der Zande (2019) states that emotional and social intelligence are the least likely to get replaced by machines because they still do not possess the capability to handle complicated human relations or engage in emotional ones. On the contrary, they will still be seen as the main factors of employability. However, Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) warn that even when emotional intelligence becomes a competitive advantage, machines will still be in a position to de-skill workers, as they will be embedding emotional labor into algorithmic management, cutting back on true autonomy. Their reasoning implies that emotional skills will be more of a commodity than something developed, which is in line with the views of labor theorists that, with the introduction of automation, managerial control tends to increase. Evidence from Parker and Grote (2022) points out, nonetheless, that companies that purposely train their employees in emotional and social skills will end up with a more robust staff that can cope better with the disruption of technology.

Therefore, the changing technological landscape is altering the concept of emotional intelligence from being a “soft” quality to being a necessary economic and ethical competency that assures human existence in a future dominated by machines.

The emotional factors of work are gaining more importance with the increasing combination of AI and data-driven management in gig platforms. Kaine and Josserand (2019) assert that the gig workers' ability to manage their emotions directly affects their customer ratings and platform visibility, thus determining their income and future opportunities. Similarly, Rijal (2024) suggests that self-control and resilience in relation to emotions are currently the main survival tactics in the digital piecework economies where the feedback mechanisms are at the same time assessors and sources of stress. The mentioned studies share the view that socio-emotional skills are the mediators of the workers' ability to buffer algorithmic control and precariousness. On the other hand, researchers like Zhang (2024) maintain that the very nature of gig work, characterized by data systems that are hard to decipher and almost no worker agency, makes all the emotional intelligence interventions superficial since no amount of emotional management can offset the lack of fair pay or the unpredictability of contracts. However, Schultz et al.'s (2015) empirical study shows that organizations that create an environment of emotional well-being report greater employee satisfaction and lower turnover, which indicates a productivity increase. While the structural changes are essential, empowering the socio-emotional capabilities of workers is a wise measure that can make the workers more resilient and their mental health better in the environment that is likely to remain unstable for a long time. Notably, emotional intelligence turns into both a survival strategy and a competitive resource in an economy that is becoming increasingly automated and platform based.

Although the economic applicability of EI has been increasingly acknowledged, ethical issues have arisen about whether EI and SEL programs empower workers or simply train them to accept structural inequalities. As Tracy and Redden (2019) demonstrate, when applied to corporate use, emotional management may blur the boundary between authenticity and control, turning emotions into commodities that facilitate organizational productivity instead of individual thriving. In an adjacent critique, Van Doorn (2017) claims that digital capitalism exploits emotional skills by repackaging self-regulation and positivity as moral obligations within precarious work. The authors warn that when EI training is not linked to the main labor rights and protection, it will only serve as a tool for compliance rather than as a means to empower workers. Burdeen (2025) contradicts this viewpoint by holding that the EI training based on ethics can develop self-awareness, empathy, and group power, thus allowing workers to negotiate better conditions and demand more just treatment. It implies that the ethical justification of EI and SEL is context and purpose-dependent: they can either help to build resilience with autonomy or against precarity. The future of gig labor might need to have emotional training and the structural support mixed in one place, where emotional intelligence will be the worker's strength and not the employer's tool.

2.13 Literature Gap

It is worth noting that the application of EI and SEL has predominantly been in traditional corporate and educational environments, except for gig economy delivery workers, who have hardly been studied. The platforms, such as Swiggy and Zomato, that are providing training programs specific to the regions for the workers in Chennai can be considered a start, but academic literature has not yet acknowledged the full impact of these changes. Most of the literature on EI and SEL issues, including Goleman (1995) and Ryan and Deci (2000), is usually based on relatively formalized environments that probably have advanced HR systems.

Nonetheless, those HR systems do not solve the issues that gig workers face, such as the absence of operations at one central point, high-stress work conditions, and a lack of support systems. The intention of the present study is to close that gap by investigating the delivery workers' training in EI and SEL in terms of emotional regulation, communication, and resilience during the difficult conditions of the gig economy. Besides, most EI and SEL interventions have been designed for either white-collar workers or students, with only a few being the case of low-wage frontline workers in high-stress environments being the subject of specific adjustment. The studies by Wood et al. (2019) and Wang, Li, and Coutts (2022) discuss the mental and physical impact on delivery workers, but none of them come up with advice on the practical side of making EI and SEL programs work in the context. This results in a rather unusual research gap regarding the development of emotional and psychological resilience for gig workers as a means to improve their well-being and productivity. On the contrary, while consumer-oriented research focuses on consumer satisfaction and loyalty, no prior work has evaluated how consumer experience and company performance are influenced by increasing the well-being of employees through training in EI and SEL.

2.14 *Summary*

In summary, Chapter 2 has elaborated on the significant challenges that gig economy employees in general face, along with delivery partners in Chennai, within both the frameworks of EI and SEL. This chapter commenced with a discussion on the rapid proliferation of gig economy platforms in India. With this growth, the rise of issues such as income insecurity, lack of benefits, and health risk exposure, which further carry emotional and psychological impacts on the workers, was evident.

This was followed by an analysis of the EI and the SEL frameworks and how they could help build resilience and reduce stress, hence engendering job satisfaction and stability amongst gig workers (Goleman, 1995; Wood, 2020). However, there were contradictions on how far these theoretical frameworks apply. For example, one group of academics effusively praises the role of EI and SEL in every sector, while the other group takes the position that the gig economy's flexibility and independence lessen the necessity for formal support structures (Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock, 2021; Lehdonvirta, 2018).

The accompanying issues related to gender accentuate a necessity for directed SEL programs where female gig workers are especially prone to being even more vulnerable. These uncertainties suggest a significant deficiency in the literature that has been reviewed so far and thus clearly justify the need for a targeted EI and SEL program, specially designed and tailored to be implemented with the gig workers of Chennai, to augment their emotional and mental well-being. The chapter has also discussed the future of gig work in the technological age and the ethical issues that come with it.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

Delivery personnel play a critical role in the gig economy, but they are often overlooked when it comes to addressing their emotional and psychological challenges. The workers commonly encounter job insecurity, stress from customer interactions, and volatile income as some of the major contributors to mental and emotional consumption and job dissatisfaction, which eventually make them leave the job more often than others (Rasheed, Sati, and Bano, 2022). Very little attention is indeed given to their emotional support and skills development despite the high demand for such services. This has been such a huge gap in recognizing the needs of gig workers that the current research is trying to address by exploring some EI and SEL programs which are specifically designed to alleviate the issues and improve both the quality of life and the performance of the workers (Extremera, Sánchez-Álvarez, and Rey, 2020).

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

The research implements Goleman's model of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995) to specify Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) in terms of observable and trainable behaviors that can be applied to gig workers. Emotional regulation, empathy, and communication were among the most important factors that were evaluated using survey items and interview prompts. These were specifically designed for the delivery work contexts in Chennai. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was also applied to the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000) through survey items assessing perceived control, task mastery, and peer connectivity. Theoretical constructs were applied in measuring the

quantitative indicators as well as in exploring the qualitative side of workers' reactions to emotional and structural stressors. By this method of rooting the constructs in the real-life experiences of the gig economy, the study not only guaranteed its validity but also its contextual adaptability. These operational definitions were determinative for the actions taken regarding the design of the instrument, the setting of the coding framework, and the interpretations of the results received from the analysis.

3.3 *Research Purpose and Questions*

This mixed-methods study has a main goal of discovering how emotional intelligence (EI) and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs in the case of gig delivery workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, will lead to better emotional and psychological handling, as well as to improved job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer skills. These programs not only help workers to build their job satisfaction and emotional resilience but also provide them with a chance to voice their psychological challenges. Previous studies have established the significance of EI in the development of job satisfaction and resulting customer relationships, particularly for those jobs involving direct contact with customers (Li et al., 2021; Sandroto and Fransiska, 2021). This paper will further establish key EI and SEL competencies in handling stress, empathy, and emotional control, and will relate these to actionable recommendations on how such skills can be incorporated into practical, functional training programs. The study is guided by the following questions:

RQ1. How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai?

RQ2. How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers?

RQ3. What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu?

In this chapter, the methodological framework is presented, summarizing research design, population, enumeration strategy, ways of data collection, methods of data analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations. In doing so, the study combines both the quantitative and qualitative approaches so that there will be a comprehensive understanding of the problems experienced by the delivery workers and how EI and SEL programs can help to address such issues effectively.

3.4 *Research Design*

The socio-emotional issues of delivery gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, are comprehensively investigated through a mixed-methods design that employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The combination of methods is grounded in the capacity to illustrate measurable trends and delicate workers' experiences, as discussed by Sharma et al. (2023), and, thus, it fits the purpose of the research aimed at developing EI and SEL programs that cater to the specific needs of the workers. The design is organized in such a way that the collection and analysis of data occur at the same time, which then makes it easier to merge the two during the interpretation phase (Almeida, 2018). The method enables the confirmation of the quantitative patterns as well as their growth through the qualitative stories; thus, the study becomes more rigorous and reliable. The researchers, therefore, combine the results obtained through different methods and thus not only get a wide view of the problems associated with the delivery workers but also get good ideas for the efficient interventions (Palinkas, Mendon, and Hamilton 2019). Thus, the divide between the theoretical comprehension and the practical implementation with respect to the local demands of the gig economy laborers will be closed.

3.5 *Population and Sample*

The study seeks to gain insights from two different groups: gig delivery workers and consumers living in Chennai. The research has targeted the workers as one of the main stakeholders, especially those working for companies like Swiggy and Zomato. Gig workers are known to experience extremely high levels of job insecurity, stress, and emotional exhaustion (Christie and Ward, 2018). It makes sense that the consumers, who are the final receivers of the delivery service, become significant indicators of the experiences and expectations from the studies on customer interaction, which are crucial to understanding the success of SEL programs (Story et al., 2020).

The number of workers in Chennai who can be considered delivery workers is more than 700, which makes this city a hub for gig economy platforms. The future number of customers is estimated to be around 346.6 million users by the year 2028 (Expert Market Research, 2024). It is estimated that 80% of the people living in the metropolitan area of Chennai prefer to order food online (Kandavel, 2021). The Chennai consumers can be referred to as a population that has a perfect demographic mix regarding age, gender, and income (Indeed.com, 2024). This is an ideal population for the study since it represents the major players in the delivery ecosystem of this region; hence, both the workers' and consumers' points of view have been covered in the comprehensive analysis.

In this research, the stratified random sampling technique was applied to make sure that delivery workers and consumers are represented well. This method also allowed the division of the participants according to different demographic factors such as age, gender, and location, which in turn gave a better insight into diverse experiences. The quantitative part is collected by distributing questionnaires among 100 delivery workers and 200 consumers drawn from the sample using already validated tools for measuring job satisfaction, stress, and emotional

resilience, among others. Along with this, a qualitative component of content analysis will be there as support. For consumers, the sample would consist of a similar distribution across such formats. This relies on the statistical power for quantitative analysis and thematic saturation for qualitative analysis as suggested by Fofana, Bazeley, and Regnault (2020). Support for recruitment will come from gig platforms, online consumer forums, and community outreach initiatives working together.

3.6 *Participant Selection*

The selection of participants was accomplished through purposive sampling by directly contacting and recruiting active gig workers in Chennai through community-based methods. Purposive sampling was selected because it enables the researcher to intentionally select participants who have certain experiential knowledge that is relevant to the study's main concern of emotional regulation and customer interaction in gig work (Dahal et al., 2024). The researcher had contacted local delivery hubs and had been a part of informal WhatsApp groups that worked across the delivery hubs to coordinate deliveries with each other and to learn about updates from the platform itself. Selection criteria consisted of: Individuals currently engaged in the delivery work for a minimum of 6 months for adequate exposure to customer interactions and stress experiences associated with the job. To ensure the diversity of experience, the study included, on a deliberate basis, participants from different neighbourhoods living in Chennai, different delivery platforms, and male and female workers. This approach meant that a broad capturing of views could be achieved amongst different working conditions and demographic variants.

3.7 *Instrumentation*

The researcher employed two significant tools in the data collection: a structured survey and a framework of content analysis. A survey is preferred as it allows for the collection of large amounts of data, standardised and from different groups of respondents, efficiently. Surveys

were designed specifically for two target groups, delivery gig workers and customers, based on established emotional intelligence and socio-emotional learning constructs. The structured survey consisted of Likert-scale items that were based on validated measures for Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), respectively. The constructs that were assessed in this survey included emotional regulation, empathy, motivation, autonomy, and relatedness. Items were adapted to the gig work environment in Chennai to increase cultural and occupational relevance. For instance, delivery workers would be asked to evaluate their ability to handle stress, answer customer complaints, and control emotions during peak delivery periods. For customers, the delivery service's emotional responsiveness, interactions, and satisfaction perceptions were the main areas of focus in the survey. Additionally, a content analysis guide was developed for the analysis of secondary data sources. The validity of the instrument was additionally reinforced by literature cross-referencing and expert feedback which was directed towards the aspects of clarity and construct alignment.

3.8 *Data Collection Procedures*

The researcher relied on two primary methods for gathering data: (a) surveys containing both delivery personnel and customers, and (b) a secondary data content analysis. The entire data collection procedure occurred in two distinct but interconnected phases. The first phase was the quantitative data, which was gathered, and then the main trends were recognized. Quantitative data were accumulated through surveys focused on stress levels, job satisfaction, and emotional resilience. Besides these, both Likert-scale items and demographic questions were used to obtain subjective and objective data, respectively.

3.9 *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were subjected to statistical analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which made it possible to count the statistical trends and

discover the relationships with the utmost reliability. SPSS was selected because of its outstanding statistical features, user-friendliness, and capability to carry out complex and sophisticated statistical analyses in social science research, especially when the variables happen to be psychological and behavioral ones (Sarker et al., 2024b). For qualitative data, the content analysis method was used to scrutinize the secondary sources, like company policies, platform training materials, and media reports. The methodology applied by Campbell (2020) for systematic qualitative content analysis guaranteed the rigor of theme extraction and interpretation. The discussion facilitated the merging of results from both methods, as it was a manner of providing a triangulated, total understanding of the impacts of both Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks in the gig work contexts.

3.10 *Ethical Assurances*

Ethical considerations are a part and parcel of this study. Any participant gave adequate information in advance about the aims of doing research, procedures involved, and rights of the participants before giving consent. A survey cover letter (see Appendix A) and an informed consent form (see Appendix B) provide: Purpose of study, Issues associated with confidentiality and voluntary participation. In accord with accepted ethical rules, involvement was totally voluntary, and subjects were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing all data, and records were securely held within password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. Ethical approval was obtained from the responsible institutional review board, according to internationally accepted ethical standards such as the Declaration of Helsinki. Moreover, consideration was paid to vulnerable participants, especially those who indicated very high stress levels. In such situations, subjects were provided with details of the assistance services that were accessible. Due to these actions,

the study was carried out in a morally upright manner, protecting the rights, dignity, and welfare of every participant.

3.11 Research Design Limitations

The study recognizes some limitations that may have affected the interpretation and validity of the results. The first constraint is geographical, as the research has been focused on Chennai. This would have serious implications for the degree to which the results are meaningful for generalization to other regions, commented Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández (2020). A second limitation is the tendency of self-reporting bias (i.e., the tendency for participants' survey responses to be influenced by socially desirable answer choices). This was overcome in several cases through the use of anonymous surveys and the triangulation of findings from multiple data sources. Although a stratified sampling approach was used to increase representativeness across subgroups of critical demographics and professional affiliations, it is possible that some strata were underrepresented in the final sample. This limitation may prevent the generalizability of the results, especially for the subgroup-specific inferences.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has identified the socio-emotional challenges of the gig workers of Chennai through the adopted enactors and interviews in a mixed methodology. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods means the consideration of weight in analysis. The problem of ethical considerations and quality assurance to the quality and trustworthiness of meaningful results relating to the potential of EI and SEL programs on emotional and psychological challenges within the context of a gig economy.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 *Introduction*

This chapter presents the results of a mixed-methods study exploring the emotional and psychological experiences of delivery gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The analysis incorporates both qualitative and quantitative strands to provide a holistic understanding of the role that Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) play in shaping job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance. The qualitative findings were derived from a thematic analysis of six peer-reviewed articles. The quantitative data were gathered through structured surveys administered to 200 consumers and 100 delivery partners. This chapter first presents the emergent themes from the qualitative analysis, followed by statistical results drawn from the survey data.

4.2 *Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis*

Essentially, coding activities were conducted based on research questions. Each set of codes was generated from key concepts and recurring patterns identified in the six selected studies. These codes were then grouped into thematic categories as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4. 1:

Thematic coding table

RQ	Codes	Emergent theme	Description
RQ 1. How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai?	Emotional resilience	Emotional	EI and SEL training improve resilience, job satisfaction, and adaptive capacity under gig pressures.
	Self-regulation	Intelligence as a	
	Emotional	Buffer for Job-	
	competencies	Related Stress	
	Adaptive action		

Emotional labour			
RQ 2. How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers?	Isolation Rating anxiety Poor grades Algorithmic pressure Emotional dissonance Emotional strain Reduced self-worth	The Psychological Strain of Customer Interactions and Rating Systems	Performance metrics and client abuse increase emotional fatigue and psychological vulnerability.
RQ 3. What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu?	Gamified elements Peer empathy AI assistants Emotional needs Platform ethics	Building Effective SEL Programs for Gig Work Environments	SEL initiatives should include gamification, AI-guided learning, and peer support. Ethical safeguards must prevent emotional manipulation and preserve autonomy.

4.2.1 Evaluation of findings from qualitative data

According to Yin (2009), a theme is an idea or a concept that connects several codes through a common motif. Based on the creation of a sufficient number of codes (17), the thematic analysis yielded three dominant themes: (1) Emotional Intelligence as a Buffer for Job-Related Stress, (2) The Psychological Strain of Customer Interactions and Rating Systems, and (3) Building Effective SEL Programs for Gig Work Environments. These themes collectively

portray the lived emotional realities of delivery workers and highlight essential elements needed to support their well-being.

Evaluation of findings for RQ1. *How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai?* The research question one (RQ1) aimed to discover how far the Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs impact the major workplace outcomes, which are the job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance, of the delivery gig workers in Chennai. The evaluation applied content analysis of six qualitative studies that were available for public access, with the purpose of deriving empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these interventions in the area of psychological and emotional problems of the gig workers. The total pieces of evidence for RQ1 resulted in one main theme: *Emotional Intelligence as a Buffer for Job-Related Stress*.

Theme 1: Emotional Intelligence as a Buffer for Job-Related Stress

An important psychological skill for delivery workers is unique to navigating the sentimental volatility and uncertainties that characterize platform-based labor. As Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) argue, when emotional labor replaced cognitive and manual labor on a step-by-step basis, EI became mandatory gig economy competence. Employees who had a higher degree of self-understanding, empathy, and emotional regulation performed better, quicker, and at jobs that required more emotional effort felt happier. Similarly, Behl et al. (2021) established that gamified systems promoting persistence and adaptive action resulted in reduced emotional strength and increased workloads among gig workers when the digital systems reinforced positive emotions in them.

The analysis explains how the design characteristics of the algorithms, such as dynamic rewards, performance badges, and achievement milestones, are applied not to influence the accomplishment of tasks but to stimulate feelings of personal accomplishment and psychological resiliency. The characteristics provide in-house drive and develop an emotional reservoir of coping in situations that are typically filled with uncertain customers and verifying performances. Graham et al. (2018) are, however, not so positive. They further wrote that individual emotional intelligence competencies could, at one stage, become a coping facilitator among their workers, but they argued that there were systemic problems on a large scale that could overcome workers who were otherwise capable of managing their emotions with the help of coping mechanisms. It turned out that the ability of a few employees to be resistant to the emotional stress and other coping skills, including the self-control and adaptive flexibility factor, can help them overcome stress on a short-term basis, but the psychological defenses are not effective when structural issues are involved and are systemic. That is why emotional intelligence training comes in handy, but it is not the complete solution to the systemic roadblocks underlying it. Even with that qualification, though, the research often highlights that emotional self-regulation, and thus adaptability and social skills, can buffer job-originated distress and support working a daily life in jobs for delivery people.

Evaluation of findings for RQ2. *How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers?* RQ2 aimed to explore how customer feedback systems, rating mechanisms, and challenging interpersonal exchanges impact the emotional and psychological well-being of delivery gig workers. Using content evaluation, six peer-reviewed secondary sources were analyzed, which were composed of openly accessible empirical studies about gig worker stress, rating anxiety, and algorithmic control. The

study aimed to reveal the impact of these platform dynamics on mental health outcomes. The total evidence for RQ2 presented one major theme: *The Psychological Strain of Customer Interactions and Rating Systems*.

Theme 2: The Psychological Strain of Customer Interactions and Rating Systems

The literature reviewed showed emotional stress as a main by-product of the clients' interactions and the performance appraisal process. According to Graham et al. (2018), gig workers in countries like India and Nigeria are the most affected ones in terms of psychological stress, which originates from the worries over their professional performance, the setting of high expectations by clients, and the penalization from algorithms. To illustrate, 43% of these workers thought that they could be easily replaced. In addition, 55% stated that they had to do the work under very tight deadlines because of low remuneration and the fear of getting poor ratings. A significant number of employees reported feeling lonely, with 74% of them rarely or never consulting with other gig workers and, as a result, not having group support (Graham et al., 2018). Such situations cause continuous vigilance and emotional tension, as the workers have to be pleasant to both clients and machines at the same time. In the same way, Allon, Cohen, and Sinchaisri (2023) revealed that the workers widely perform "emotional labor" to maintain the clients' good moods even when they receive verbal abuse or experience delays that are not their fault, all because of the fear that a single bad rating would affect their future job opportunities.

Yao et al. (2021) point out that although some employees may resort to emotional distancing or customer de-personalization as ways of coping, those techniques remain short-term and even harmful ones. The gradual process of emotional detachment may cause the person to feel unworthy, suffer from burnout, and lose interest in the job. Besides, these methods often create an internal struggle as the employees try to satisfy the human emotional needs within the

rigid, metrics-based systems. The results indicate without any doubt that it is very necessary to conduct formal interventions for emotional healing, debriefing, and rebuilding of confidence, especially after hard service interactions. All these articles combined show that unmanaged emotional stress caused by the accountability systems of the platform is a reason for the poor mental health of gig workers.

Evaluation of findings for RQ3. *What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu?* The focus of RQ3 was to discover the components of SEL programs, which are both relevant and effective, that could be applied to the delivery gig workers' unique working conditions. The content analysis of six concerted articles led to the examination of experts' discussion about digital learning tools, peer-support systems, and ethical design principles in gig economy interventions. The combined analysis for RQ3 yielded the third dominant theme: *Building Effective SEL Programs for Gig Work Environments.*

Theme 3: Building Effective SEL Programs for Gig Work Environments

A third theme emerging from the analysis is the importance of designing Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs that reflect the unique realities of gig work. Behl et al. (2021) propose that online engagement tools, especially gamification elements such as badges, rewards, and progress bars, can amplify emotional attachment and longevity in training. They found that workers who felt emotionally understood by platform tools were more likely to exhibit beneficial behaviors and persevere in adversity. Interrelatedly, Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) suggest that, vice versa, SEL content is being projected that views emotional labor as a teachable, desirable competence. This argumentative position advances the opinion that as the technical competences continue to be supplanted with the assistance of automation, their

emotional competences should assume the central role in the employability of all industries, including delivery labor.

However, Yao et al. (2021) raise the question of the gratuitous application of digital incentives to the same path, thereby making the chance of well-designed gamified SEL systems develop the pseudo-motivation possibility. Their results provide insight into how the algorithmic flattery or tokenized success covers the emotional needs and swindles the workers. Ethical consideration also presents a warning to the concept that business will not revert to the technique of emotional intervention as compensation for a decent working environment, as issued by George (2024). He mentions the fact that SEL programs should be worker-centered, voluntary, and privacy- and autonomy-respectful. Despite this concern, there is consensus among the researchers that SEL schemes sneaked in are tactically designed to no longer rely on emotional regulation but rather to use peer empathy and situational observation as the means of producing substantial emotional stamina. The digital (proposed) capacity of modifying the mobile learning must be lightened, and the SEL programs in the workers' environment should adapt to the irregularities of the workers' schedule and the stressed workers' environment through more modeling.

4.3 *Quantitative Findings: Survey Analysis*

The exploration of the analysis focuses on the statistics that show the connection between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions, and leading outcomes like job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance. Moreover, the study investigates the psychological effects of harsh customer contact and negativity, and to some extent, it explains why SEL programs are created. It is through descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses that the data is uncovered and thus has

given proof of the emotional and occupational experiences of gig economy delivery workers in Chennai.

4.3.1 Demographic findings

Gender Distribution

Figure 4.1 illustrates the gender composition of the customer respondents who participated in the survey. The majority of participants were female, accounting for 59.5%.

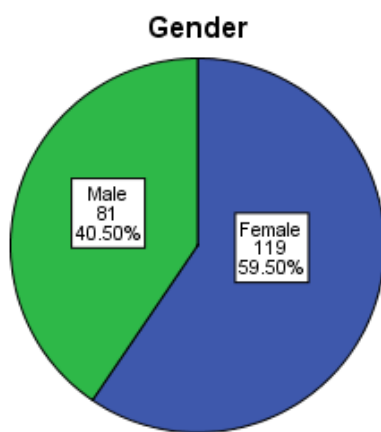


Figure 4. 1:

Customers' gender distribution (Author, 2025).

Age Distribution

According to the survey outcomes, the most significant group of responding customers consisted of individuals aged from 35 to 54 years, who represented 62.5% of the population (n = 125). Notably, the youngest group of 18-24 years and the oldest group above 54 years both had equal proportions of 11%, which is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

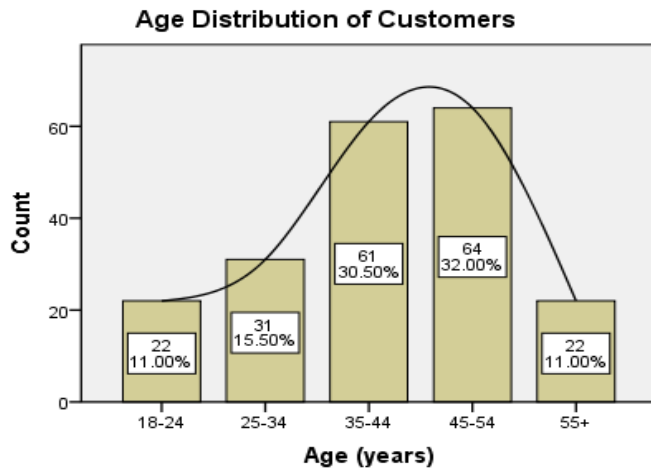


Figure 4. 2:

Customers' age distribution

Marital Status

Analysis of the customer data revealed that a substantial majority of respondents (80%) reported being married. This is displayed in Figure 4.3 below.

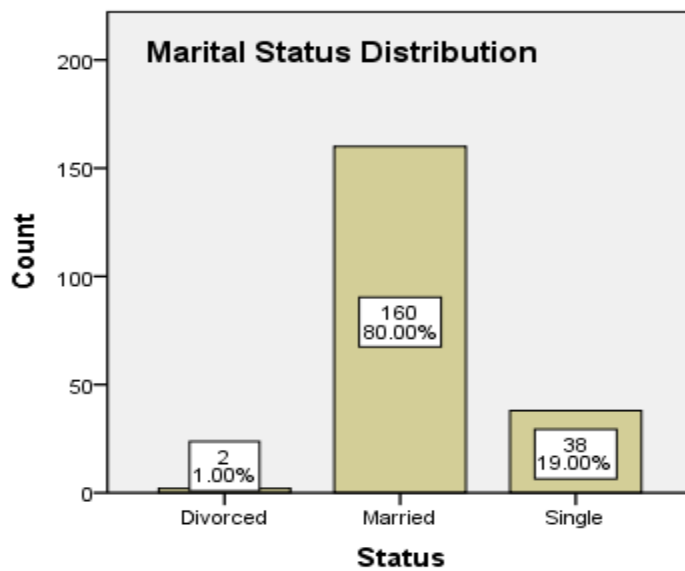


Figure 4. 3:

Customer's marital status

Education Level Distribution

As presented in Table 4.2, a Bachelor's degree was held by 44.5% of customer respondents ($n = 89$), while 25.5% ($n = 51$) were Master's degree holders. It is worth mentioning that only a tiny percentage of respondents (1%, $n = 2$) indicated having a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) qualification or being completely uneducated; thus, it can be concluded that the sample consisted of people with diverse educational backgrounds.

Table 4. 2:

Highest level of education attained (Author, 2025).

	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's degree	89	44.7
CFA	2	1.0
Diploma	5	2.5
ICWAI [inter]	1	.5
Master's degree	51	25.5
No formal education	2	1.0
PhD	40	20.0
Secondary school/high school	10	5.0
Total	200	100.0

Primary Language

Among the customer respondents, Tamil was the majority language, reported by 63% of the participants ($n = 126$). On the other hand, Gujarati was the language reported by one person (0.5%, $n = 1$), which indicates that the group was very linguistically homogeneous. The distributions are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4. 3:

Primary language (Author, 2025).

	Frequency	Percent
English	56	28.0
Gujrati	1	.5
Hindi	8	4.0
Malayalam	3	1.5
Tamil	126	63.0
Telugu	6	3.0
Total	200	100.0

Employment Status

A majority of delivery partners who took part in the study were full-time employees, with only 56 (56%) of them being part-time employees. This is presented in Figure 4.4

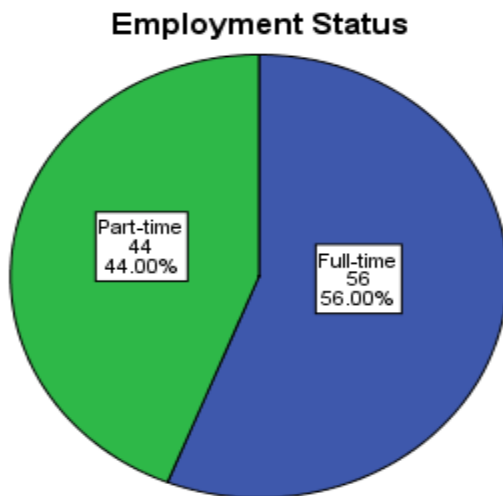


Figure 4. 4:

Employment status of delivery partners (Author, 2025)

4.3.2 Findings: research question results

To achieve a better understanding of how EI and SEL programs among delivery gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, may contribute to their job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service skills while addressing their emotional and psychological challenges, the following specific research questions were designed:

RQ1: How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai?

RQ2. How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers?

RQ3. What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu?

Findings for RQ1. *How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai?* For Research Question 1, structured surveys yielded quantitative data from 100 delivery partners. The three outcome variables considered for the study's results were job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance. The job satisfaction results measured by the overall satisfaction score ($M = 3.82$) suggested the overall satisfaction was moderately high, and the relationships that were positively evaluated were a reduction in the duration of delivery delays and problem-solving tasks, with the latter relationship being statistically significant. Emotional resilience produced significant ANOVA results ($p = 0.034$), which suggested that EI and SEL programs had a role in how the delivery crew was able to remain polite and calm under pressure. There were also areas of customer service performance

that showed improvements, which were reflected in the increased ratings for communication skills, conflict resolution, and the delivery experience's positive impact.

Job satisfaction

Emotional Literacy (EL) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs have influenced the delivery partners' job satisfaction, as described by the descriptive statistics in Table 4.4. The mean job satisfaction score was 3.82 for the 100 participants, with a standard deviation of 0.892 which implies a moderately high level of satisfaction. Initially, the specific impacts of the EL and SEL interventions were subjected to further analysis, which led to the mean values of perceived professionalism enhancement ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 0.492$), communication skills improvement ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.503$), and handling of difficult situations ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 0.492$). The training to develop problem-solving skills had a slightly higher mean of 1.73 ($SD = 0.446$). Moreover, the programs were seen to alleviate stress for customers and delivery partners ($M = 1.42$, $SD = 0.496$), while also making the delivery experience more positive ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.498$). In fact, the programs contributed to a perceived reduction in delivery delays, which was the highest mean score among the outcomes measured ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.435$). Overall, these findings indicate that besides delivering partners' professional functioning, EL and SEL initiatives may also improve workplace satisfaction.

Table 4. 4:

Descriptive statistics (Author, 2025).

	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Level of job satisfaction as a delivery partner	3.82	.892	100
Increase professionalism	1.40	.492	100
Improve communication	1.50	.503	100

Help delivery partners handle difficult situations better	1.40	.492	100
Enhance problem-solving skills	1.73	.446	100
Reduce stress for both customers and delivery partners	1.42	.496	100
Create a more positive delivery experience	1.57	.498	100
Reduce delivery delays	1.75	.435	100

Table 4.5 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients that relate job satisfaction of delivery partners to several outcomes connected with the application of Emotional Literacy (EL) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. The analysis of the data from 100 participants pointed to a weak negative relationship between job satisfaction and the perceived improvement of professionalism ($r = -0.110$, $p = .137$) as well as between job satisfaction and the communication enhancement ($r = -0.068$, $p = .252$); however, both correlations were not statistically significant.

There was a non-significant but slightly positive correlation between job satisfaction and the capacity to handle tough situations ($r = 0.074$, $p = .233$). Moreover, it was found that the development of problem-solving skills negatively correlated with job satisfaction in a statistically significant way ($r = -0.225$, $p = .012$); thus, an opposite connection might be implied needing further investigation. Another result showed a weak positive correlation between job satisfaction and lower stress levels for customers and delivery partners ($r = 0.058$, $p = .288$), as well as a slight association with a more pleasant delivery experience ($r = 0.029$, $p = .046$). The decline in delivery delays, on the other hand, was found to be correlated with job satisfaction to a modest but statistically significant degree ($r = 0.168$, $p = .048$), thereby revealing its importance as a potential contributor to job satisfaction perception.

Table 4. 5:

Correlation statistics (Author, 2025).

		Level of job satisfaction as a delivery partner
Increase professionalism	Pearson Correlation	-.114
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.137
	n	100
Improve communication	Pearson Correlation	-.068
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.252
	n	100
Help delivery partners handle difficult situations better	Pearson Correlation	.074
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.233
	n	100
Enhance problem-solving skills	Pearson Correlation	-.225*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.012
	n	100
Reduce stress for both customers and delivery partners	Pearson Correlation	.058
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.288
	n	100
Create a more positive delivery experience	Pearson Correlation	.029
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.046

	n	100
Reduce delivery delays	Pearson Correlation	.169*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.048
	n	100

The regression analysis yielded a model sum of squares of 8.470 with 7 degrees of freedom, resulting in a mean square value of 1.210. The residual sum of squares was 70.290 across 92 degrees of freedom, producing a mean square error of 0.764. The total sum of squares for the model was calculated as 78.760. The corresponding F-statistics were 1.584, with an associated significance level (p-value) of 0.150, indicating that the overall model did not reach statistical significance at the conventional threshold, as shown in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4. 6:

Analysis of variance (Author, 2025).

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.470	7	1.210	1.584	.150 ^b
	Residual	70.290	92	.764		
	Total	78.760	99			

a. Dependent Variable: level of job satisfaction as a delivery partner

As indicated in Table 4.7, the regression model produced a statistically significant intercept, with a constant coefficient of 3.955 (SE = 0.530), corresponding to a t-value of 7.462 ($p = .000$). Among the predictor variables, some exhibited statistically significant negative associations with job satisfaction: enhancement of problem-solving skills ($B = -0.499$, $SE = 0.215$, $t = -2.318$, $p = .023$). The reduction of delivery delays also emerged as a marginally

significant positive predictor ($B = 0.417$, $SE = 0.216$, $t = 1.928$), although its p-value (.057) slightly exceeded the conventional alpha threshold of 0.05. Other predictors, including perceived increases in professionalism, communication effectiveness, ability to handle difficult situations, stress reduction, and the creation of a more positive delivery experience, did not demonstrate statistically significant relationships with job satisfaction, as their p-values ranged from 0.449 to 0.951.

Table 4. 7:

Regression statistics (Author, 2025).

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.955	.530		7.462	.000
Increase professionalism	-.137	.190	-.076	-.723	.471
Improve communication	-.048	.204	-.027	-.238	.812
Help delivery partners handle difficult situations better	.142	.200	.078	.709	.480
Enhance problem-solving skills	-.499	.215	-.250	-2.318	.023
Reduce stress for both customers and delivery partners	.023	.207	.013	.109	.913
Create a more positive delivery experience	.021	.203	.012	.104	.917
Reduce delivery delays	.417	.216	.203	1.928	.057

a. Dependent Variable: level of job satisfaction as a delivery partner

Emotional Resilience

The descriptive characteristics of the results regarding the impact of Emotional Literacy (EL) programs and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs on emotional resilience among 200 delivery partners are shown in Table 4.8. Rating delivery partners as they appear stressed, yet delivering the cargo professionally displayed the lowest mean value of 2.09 and the standard deviation of 0.809. The average score for increased professionalism was 1.40 (SD = 0.490), while the mean for improvement in communication was 1.48 (SD = 0.501). The mean was 1.41, and the standard deviation was 0.493, in assisting delivery partners to deal with difficult situations better. The improvement in problem-solving tasks registered a shift of 1.68 (SD = 0.470), and the decrease in stress among customers and delivery partners was registered at 1.43 (SD = 0.496). The means ranged between 1.56 and 1.74 with a standard deviation of 0.498 and 0.440, respectively, and the improvement of a more positive delivery experience varied, with the biggest mean of 1.74 (SD = 0.440), indicating a reduction of delivery delays.

Table 4. 8:

Descriptive statistics (Author, 2025).

	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Rating delivery partners when they seem stressed, but still complete the delivery professionally	2.09	.809	200
Increase professionalism	1.40	.490	200
Improve communication	1.48	.501	200
Help delivery partners handle	1.41	.493	200
Enhance problem-solving skills	1.68	.470	200

Reduce stress for both customers and delivery partners	1.43	.496	200
Create a more positive delivery experience	1.56	.498	200
Reduce delivery delays	1.74	.442	200

Table 4.9, containing the results of the ANOVA, shows an analysis of the regression model on the effects of EL and SEL programs on emotional resilience, with the dependent variable as the rating of the delivery partners when they are stressed but finish the delivery professionally. The sum of squares regarding regression demonstrated was 9.789, with the degrees of freedom at 7, making the mean square at 1.398. The remaining sum of squares was 120.591, which had 192 degrees of freedom, and the mean square error was 0.628. The model's total sum of the squares was 130.380. The model produced an F-statistic of 2.272 and a p-value of 0.034.

Table 4. 9:

Analysis of variance (Author, 2025)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.789	7	1.398	2.272	.034 ^b
	Residual	120.591	192	.628		
	Total	130.380	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Rating delivery partners when they seem stressed but still complete the delivery professionally

As presented in Table 4.10, the regression analysis yielded a statistically significant constant term of 1.325 (SE = 0.361), with a t-value of 3.673 and a p-value of 0.000. Among the independent variables, only one predictor, assisting delivery partners in managing difficult

situations, demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect ($B = 0.292$, $SE = 0.129$, $t = 2.269$, $p = .024$). All other predictors did not reach statistical significance. Specifically, the coefficients for increased professionalism ($B = -0.184$, $p = .120$), improved communication ($B = 0.145$, $p = .249$), enhanced problem-solving ($B = 0.051$, $p = .691$), stress reduction for both customers and delivery partners ($B = 0.085$, $p = .515$), creation of a more positive delivery experience ($B = -0.049$, $p = .697$), and reduction in delivery delays ($B = 0.064$, $p = .625$) were all non-significant, indicating limited predictive value within the model.

Table 4. 10:

Regression statistics (Author, 2025).

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.325	.361		3.673	.000
Increase professionalism	-.184	.118	-.111	-1.56	.120
Improve communication	.145	.125	.090	1.156	.249
Help delivery partners handle difficult situations better	.292	.129	.178	2.269	.024
Enhance problem-solving skills	.051	.128	.029	.399	.691
Reduce stress for both customers and delivery partners	.085	.131	.052	.652	.515
Create a more positive delivery experience	-.049	.126	-.030	-.390	.697
Reduce delivery delays	.064	.131	.035	.489	.625

a. Dependent Variable: Rating delivery partners when they seem stressed but still complete the delivery professionally.

The analysis in correlation indicated a considerable positive correlation between helping delivery partners to be more effective in managing challenging situations and their ratings under stress and yet remain professional ($r = .222$, $p < .001$). Additionally, a significant positive correlation was revealed ($r = .153$, $p = .015$) through the reduction of stress on the part of customers and delivery partners. There exist positive but insignificant correlations, as the variables enhance communication ($r = .128$, $p = .035$) and develop a more pleasant experience of delivery ($r = .124$, $p = .040$). Notably, the increase in professionalism was negatively correlated ($r = -.077$, $p = .138$). The improvement of problem-solving skills ($r = .064$, $p = .183$) and the decrease in delivery delays ($r = .053$, $p = .228$) had weak, yet insignificant, positive correlations with the dependent variable.

Table 4. 11:

Correlation statistics (Author, 2025).

Rating delivery partners when they seem stressed but still complete the delivery professionally.		
Increase professionalism	Pearson Correlation	-.077
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.138
	N	200
Improve communication	Pearson Correlation	.128
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.035
	N	200

Help delivery partners handle difficult situations better	Pearson Correlation	.222**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001
	n	200
Enhance problem-solving skills	Pearson Correlation	.064
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.183
	n	200
Reduce stress for both customers and delivery partners	Pearson Correlation	.153*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.015
	n	200
Create a more positive delivery experience	Pearson Correlation	.124
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.040
	n	200
Reduce delivery delays	Pearson Correlation	.053
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.228
	n	200

Customer Service Performance

As shown in Table 4.12, a relatively small proportion of delivery partners affirmed that emotional intelligence (EI) training would enhance their communication with customers (15%), increase job satisfaction (16.5%), improve their ability to manage difficult situations (16.5%), or reduce stress levels (21%). These findings suggest that, at the time of the survey, most

participants remained unconvinced of a definitive link between EI training and improved occupational outcomes.

Table 4. 12:

Ways in which emotional intelligence training would impact job performance (Author, 2025).

	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Improve communication with customers	No	170	85.0
	Yes	30	15.0
Increase job satisfaction	No	167	83.5
	Yes	33	16.5
Improve ability to handle difficult situations	No	167	83.5
	Yes	33	16.5
Reduce stress levels	No	158	79.0
	Yes	42	21.0

Findings for RQ2. How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers? Quantitative data for RQ2 were obtained through survey responses from 100 delivery partners, focusing on two variables: poor ratings and difficult customer interactions. In relation to performance evaluations, a considerable number of workers who received positive feedback still reported consistently high stress levels. A large group of respondents said that feeling stressed was always the case. As for the engagement of customers, there was evidence that a considerable number of participants did not suffer psychologically during the hard exchanges.

Poor Ratings

Essentially, Table 4.13 shows that a large proportion of delivery partners with a “Good” performance rating reported negative feelings, stress in particular, with the number of respondents who said they “Always” felt stressed being 73. One of the most notable findings is that even among the people whose job satisfaction was rated relatively high, stress was still a common complaint, thus illustrating the demanding nature of the job in terms of emotions, no matter what the level of performance quality was perceived to be.

Table 4. 13:

Poor ratings (Author, 2025).

		Frequency of experiencing stress related to customer interactions					Total
		Always	Never	Often	Rarely	Sometimes	
Rating of consumers’ overall experience with delivery partners	Average	2	3	2	3	4	14
	Excellent	2	0	0	4	6	12
	Good	5	4	12	30	21	73
	Poor	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		10	7	14	37	31	100

Difficult Customer Interactions

As presented in Table 4.14, 72 of the delivery partners’ participants had stress while dealing with challenging customer interactions. Most of them indicated that they felt stressed “Sometimes” (n=29) or “Often” (n=24). Only 6 people out of 100 said they had never dealt with stress.

Table 4. 14:

Difficult customer interactions (Author, 2025).

		Frequency of experiencing stress related to customer interactions					Total
		Always	Never	Often	Rarely	Sometimes	
Handling Customer Interactions	No	3	1	7	13	3	27
	Yes	7	6	7	24	29	73
Total		10	7	14	37	32	100

Findings for RQ3. What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu? Quantitative data for RQ3 were drawn from survey items that assessed participants' perceptions of which features and components should be prioritized in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs for gig workers. Findings related to key program elements highlight the importance of practical, emotionally grounded tools that directly support delivery workers' well-being and performance. Stress management emerged as the top priority, followed by effective communication and strategies for coping with difficult situations.

As detailed in Table 4.15, stress management emerged as the most frequently identified priority among respondents (22%) for inclusion in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. This was followed by effective communication (17.5%) and strategies for coping with difficult situations (15.0%). Additionally, emotional regulation and empathy were cited by 13% and 13.5% of respondents, respectively, highlighting a broad recognition of the need for core emotional and interpersonal competencies within SEL frameworks.

Table 4. 15:

Key elements of social-learning programs (Author, 2025).

	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Conflict resolution	No	170	85.0
	Yes	30	15.0
Effective communication	No	165	82.5
	Yes	35	17.5
Empathy and understanding customer perspectives	No	173	86.5
	Yes	27	13.5
Emotional regulation	No	173	87.0
	Yes	26	13.0
Stress management	No	156	78.0
	Yes	44	22.0

4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis was carried out, which allowed a comprehensive examination of the emotional and occupational aspects of gig delivery workers in Chennai. The qualitative approach, which was based on a content analysis of six peer-reviewed studies, came to three main conclusions: emotional intelligence (EI) played a major role in the mitigation of work-related stress, the psychological burden of customer interaction and the solving of rating algorithms, and a need for suitable, ethically designed Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs that are in line with the realities of gig work.

The quantitative findings were derived from the survey conducted among 200 customers and 100 delivery partners, which provided the empirical data regarding the statistical relationships between EI/SEL interventions and the valued workplace outcomes. The application of descriptive statistics methods showed that there existed some job satisfaction scores that were moderately high, and SEL initiatives positively affected such areas as stress reduction, communication improvement, and effective delivery. Regression and correlation analysis also revealed that there were factors like better problem solving, faster delivery, which not only had a strong positive correlation with job satisfaction but also with the emotional aspect of job satisfaction, resilience, though not with the test of statistical significance. The study was concerned about the serious effects of low ratings and about the problematic customer involvement, which helped to establish the assumption that stress is a variable that even highly rated employees share. In addition to this, good stress management, proper communication, and emotional regulation among the people involved were also highly required as components of inclusiveness. The results indicate the need for two approaches. These include the enhancement of emotional capabilities in the workplace through some intervention and the reduction of structural stress that is part of the gig economy, so as to keep the mental health and work sustainability of delivery people.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs' impact on the delivery gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, especially on their emotional well-being and mental health. This study looks at the aforementioned to determine the effects on job satisfaction, emotional resilience, customer service, and the business environment, by making use of both quantitative survey data and qualitative content from six peer-reviewed sources. The chapter centers around three main research questions: How do the tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction and performance among delivery workers? What are the impacts of the low ratings and difficult customer interactions on the mental health of the workers? What elements of the SEL programs are considered to be most critical for these workers? This structure clearly demonstrates that the main focus is on the effectiveness of EI and SEL intervention in the case of platform-mediated gig work.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

Discussion of Findings for Research Question One: How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai?

The results of this research suggest that through Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, effects can be delivered to benefit delivery gig workers with job dissatisfaction by emphasizing the importance of vital psycho-social competences. The current study showed the participants saw success with the EI and SEL programs, attributing success in their ability to handle the stress with other unknown customer interactions, creating professionalism when presented with a stressful situation, as analyzed by analysis of variance

(Reilly and Ladd, 2003, p. 290). These are similar to the findings in the research conducted by Lu et al. (2022) that seemed to suggest that self-regulation helps in ensuring the quality of one's performance in a situation of emotionally charged events.

Moreover, Crayne and Brawley Newlin (2024) argue that self-regulation facilitates adaptive problem-solving, enabling employees to overcome challenges without compromising their service delivery. The evidence to support such a claim is the fact that self-regulation can pave the way for resilience by reducing emotional exhaustion in customer-based work, as espoused in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), whose principles on the subject matter of competence can fortify intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Despite this, Pekaar et al. (2020) point out that being overly concerned with self-regulation could lead to emotional suppression and, therefore, a long-term situation where one's feelings do not agree with his or her thoughts or actions. Moreover, the evidence from the study implies that through self-regulation along with real-life social interactions, the workers might not just be able to cope but also perform much better through the gigs. When taken together, these results indicate that self-regulation is not just a psychological barrier but also an element that enables maintaining professional quality.

In a similar manner, the qualitative evidence derived from the research pointed out that EI practices contribute positively to the emotional factory's construction, which is an essential factor in situations characterized by highly uncertain customer demand and algorithmic supervision. The qualitative results, such as those reported in Becker et al. (2021), stated that game-like features in training, that is, badges and progress, triggered a person's feeling of success that subsequently increased his or her ability to deal with stress. This was further confirmed by the survey results, where ANOVA showed significant changes in the ability to

maintain professionalism under stress when EI and SEL treatments were applied ($p = 0.034$). This concurs with the opinion of Crayne and Brawley Newlin (2024) that the ability to self-regulate during stressful times leads to greater resilience. However, Pekaar et al. (2020) state that excessive reliance on individual adaptability may shift the burden onto the shoulders of the workers, which can serve as a distraction to the responsibility of the employers in establishing helpful work conditions. Despite this critique, the integration of structured resilience-building modules appears to be an effective mechanism for sustaining performance in emotionally taxing gig roles.

Empathy is another trait for developing great customer service and conflict resolution in environments with heavy demands. The research findings in the present study have revealed that while delivery partners who participated in EI and SEL training reported having improved ability to recognize and react to the emotional statements of the customers, the rate of the difficulty situation scale is rated better. These findings connect with those of Li et al. (2021) in suggesting that empathy could give a positive hit to the quality of service directly via building a rapport and trust between employees and customers. Similarly, Sandroto and Fransiska (2021) argue that being empathetic in frontline service jobs would elicit customer satisfaction and foster customer loyalty as workers are able to predict and accommodate the needs of clients. This is also justified according to Ginsberg (2020), who relates empathic engagement to reduced interpersonal tension, therefore, doing good for workers' well-being. Conversely, Yao et al. (2021) warn about the dangers of continuous empathic contact that may result in compassion fatigue, especially in settings where the emotional labor requirement is high. Consequently, the findings of this study show that empathy, when enhanced with organized SEL training and combined with resilience approaches, demonstrates positive effects on customer relations as well as emotional

sustainability. In conclusion, empathy is a relational asset that enhances both service quality and worker morale.

Furthermore, both sets of data suggest that the EI and SEL human factor program can mitigate the negative emotional impact of high job demands, especially in situations involving customer complaints or delivery issues. Graham et al. (2018) and Allon, Cohen, and Sinchaisri (2023) discovered that emotional labor, or the personal control of 'one's emotions to address the demands of the job, was an existing trait of delivery work present in both content analysis studies. These reports were supported by the same research that concluded the perceived decrease in stress levels in customers and partners during delivery, which was made possible by the empathy and self-control that were used as a channel of overcoming the hostile communication without falling into ratings. This contributes to the idea of Ginsberg (2020), who indicates that in the scenario when the ability to manage emotions has been honed, the conflicts may be mitigated and the quality of the experiences a customer is having improved. However, as Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) indicate, it is just momentarily until it reaches the organizational level and drains the resilience that such a program is meant to achieve. This is argued to conclude that in order to become efficient in the long run, EI and SEL must be put in a larger package of support for children and youth in the workplace.

Adaptability is an EI-driven skill that is critical for coping with the ever-changing demands and schedules that are characteristic of gig work. The qualitative synthesis has pointed out that the adaptive capacity, which is the workers' ability to react in a positive way to the changing demands, is strengthened by SEL interventions targeting the non-linear schedules of gig work. These findings are in line with Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020), who indicate adaptability as a vital competence in service contexts that change rapidly. Moreover, Kost,

Fieseler, and Wong (2020) note that the skill of adapting not only helps the developer of the skill but is also the reason why intrinsic motivation is maintained under SDT. The thematic analysis gave further support to this by showing that the game-like training features increased the participants' readiness to cope with the different operational conditions. However, Barratt, Goods, and Veen (2020) assert that without structural autonomy, which is often hindered by algorithmic management, training in adaptability alone may not have a lasting impact. Nevertheless, the current findings indicate that when adaptability is developed through practical, scenario-based learning and is backed by operational flexibility, it plays a major role in both efficiency and job satisfaction. In the end, adaptability is seen as a performance enhancer and a factor of resilience in the gig economy.

Problem-solving ability is regarded as a key factor in the enhancement of both operational efficiency and individual satisfaction in the delivery sector. The current research confirmed that the respondents attributed the increase in their problem-solving ability to EI and SEL programs, yet the regression analysis showed a negative relationship with job satisfaction, which implied that the rise in responsibility without proper support might cause a drop in morale. These results are in line with George (2024), who maintains that the mastery of problem-solving leads to the development of self-efficacy and professional identity. Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2000) in their Self-Determination Theory (SDT) contend that the satisfaction of competence is one factor that leads to intrinsic motivation and commitment to the work. The analysis of themes also revealed that the workers appreciated the organized chances for practice in which they could work out the problems with customers alone. However, Barratt, Goods, and Veen (2020) warn that the acquisition of abilities should go hand in hand with employee empowerment and their access to resources so that the workers do not feel drained. Consequently, the current research

has put forward the conclusion that the combination of problem-solving training and organization support systems can lead to the improvement of operational performance. To put it differently, problem-solving is a double-edged skill; it may raise performance on one side while it may also, on the other hand, cause dissatisfaction if not managed properly.

The incorporation of gamification into SEL methods was mentioned as a significant and innovative element in qualitative literature as well as in the analysis of this study. Behl et al. (2021) discovered that the availability of digital rewards, like badges and performance thresholds, was a factor responsible for increased involvement and retention in training sessions. Likewise, the quantitative results corroborated the same trends, as the participants indicated that their skills in communication, professionalism, and stress management had improved after being involved in the structured interactive learning modules. These findings reinforce Váradi's (2022) claim that gamification, if used ethically, can not only be a great motivator but also an efficient learning tool. Nonetheless, Yao et al. (2021) have pointed out that such rewards might only serve as a temporary distraction from the underlying emotional issues or, in case they are not connected to the proper skill development, even become regarded as a manipulation. On the other hand, the present study provides evidence that when gamification is associated with substantial skills and genuine recognition, it facilitates both engagement and retention of skills. Hence, gamification is seen as a tactical instrument to make SEL programs not only relevant but also interesting in the context of gig work.

Intrinsic motivation, which is developed through emotional intelligence (EI) and social-emotional learning (SEL), is the factor that guarantees consistent commitment to the delivery of high service quality. One of the main implications of the findings is that SEL could be helpful in keeping delivery personnel intrinsically motivated. The literature reviewed, particularly George

(2024), indicates that SEL helps to build the feeling of one's purpose and self-efficacy, which is the result of harmonizing one's values with professional conduct. The quantitative measures in this study showed that improved performance, better problem-solving skills, and higher satisfaction with service delivery all had a positive relationship. These findings support the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) that asserts that the two main sources of motivation are competence and autonomy. However, the regression analysis results of the current research point to a negative relationship between problem-solving abilities and job satisfaction, suggesting that more responsibility without the provision of support staff may lead to a decrease in job satisfaction. This observation is akin to the argument put forward by Barratt, Goods, and Veen (2020), who believe that structural empowerment should be coupled with skill development in order to avoid overworking the personnel. Hence, EI and SEL programs should be planned in such a way as to allocate the problem-solving responsibilities fairly and also to have feedback mechanisms that offer support to the employees.

Another point that the results imply is that the EI and SEL programs can minimize the chances of delivery errors and delays, which will subsequently have a good influence on job and customer satisfaction. The study's observation of a strong positive association between the lessening of delays in delivery and job satisfaction indicates very definite and operational gains of time management and geographical diversity training, which together constitute SEL. These results are in agreement with the point made by Kost, Fieseler, and Wong (2020), who argue that people who are skilled and have little stress at work are using time management efficiently. Likewise, related to this, Allon, Cohen, and Sinchaisri (2023) assert that the reduced stress in meetings when deliveries are well scheduled, especially when multiple deliveries occur in the

time frame, is another main advantage of scheduling accurately. These scenarios initiate the process of systematic improvement in training based on the scenario.

The qualitative analysis has also shown the growth in the provision of training for the employees' ability to notice and handle the logistical problems through scenario-based training. Nevertheless, Barratt, Goods, and Veen (2020) issue a word of caution about the thinking that is designed and run by platforms, which might have prevented any worker from being able to hone such skills. In view of this, the existing literature demonstrates how the dual availability of time management coaching and operational flexibility excels in generating performance and morale gains in the workplace. It is particularly notable that time management is a vital channel through which ability development leads to service reliability.

The design of ethical programs is of paramount importance in making sure that the EI and SEL initiatives truly protect the interests of the employees. The current investigation revealed that the mobile-friendly and modular formatting, which allowed the participants to have control over the situation and kept their privacy, was valued. This is a clear indication of the qualitative concern for ethical securities. The results support the view of George (2024), who asserts that such actions should be geared towards the workers and be voluntary. Simultaneously, Váradi (2022) points out that, along with accessibility, learners' autonomy should be respected if sustainable engagement is to be achieved. The combination of these principles is in line with the SDT's focus on autonomy as a factor of intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Nevertheless, Yao et al. (2021) are of the opinion that emotional interventions should not be resorted to for hiding or overcoming poor working conditions. This study demonstrates that the trust created through ethical design is the primary factor behind the increased participation and

effectiveness. Ultimately, SEL programs that are based on ethical principles are the ones that are most likely to have a long-term impact on the quality of life and productivity of the workers.

Emotional resilience is a powerful trait that allows workers to keep up with the demands of the job even when they are under stress for long periods. The evidence collected during the study showed that the participants of the program were able to maintain their calmness and efficiency even in the busiest times, which was confirmed by the ANOVA results showing enhancement in professionalism under stress. These results are in agreement with Behl et al. (2021), who state that resilience training allows service workers to not only recover but also to stay involved. Moreover, Crayne and Brawley Newlin (2024) argue that resilience acts as a fallback against burnout when it is combined with a sense of control over difficult situations. This view is in line with SDT principles, where the satisfaction of competence and autonomy boosts the ability of individuals to withstand difficulties (Ryan and Deci, 2000). However, Wu, Li, and Liu (2022) warn that the effects of resilience training may dwindle if the job resources are not up to the mark, as the demands are constantly high and the coping ability is low. Hence, the current analysis supports the view that emotional resilience is at its best when accompanied by organizational measures that maintain a good balance between demands and resources. Notably, resilience developed through EI and SEL not only helps gig workers to be emotionally stable but also to provide quality service.

At the center of any company's emotional intelligence customer service training lies the communication competence that can make or break the interaction between the customer and the company. Data from surveys combined with thematic analysis showed that those delivery partners who took part in these programs were rated higher in satisfaction by customers due to their verbal clarity, active listening, and conflict resolution skills. Li et al. (2021) support the

statement with their findings that good communication reduces misunderstandings and increases trust between the two parties. Furthermore, Sandroto and Fransiska (2021) regard communication competence as the main reason behind customer loyalty since it assures continuous good service experiences. Qualitative evidence validated these opinions, noting that structured role-play and scenario-based training helped participants to develop their interpersonal skills in delivery. However, Yao et al. (2021) warn that communication skills may be impaired by external stressors unless they are supported by proper service conditions, such as delivery deadlines. Therefore, research has shown that communication skills reach their full potential when paired with operational policies that provide staff with the time and resources necessary for effective interaction. In the end, improved communication skills not only result in better customer service but also increase the self-worth of gig workers.

Discussion of Findings for Research Question Two: How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers?

Customer feedback mechanisms for delivery workers have become a source of stress. Both types of data, quantitative and qualitative, support the conclusion that the customer feedback systems, especially the rating systems, are the main sources of emotional pressure on gig economy delivery workers. Moreover, survey data point out that even those workers who got good ratings reported high stress levels, which were, however, as high as those from people working in worse-rated places. This paradox clearly indicates that the psychological burden does not only arise from the content of the ratings but from unpredictability, lack of transparency, and perceived inequality of the rating systems, and that was the situation with the survey respondents. The workers' perspectives were moreover reflected in the qualitative findings, especially in Graham et al. (2018), where most gig workers see rating systems as their source of

constant insecurity. Allon, Cohen, and Sinchaisri (2023) likewise emphasize the need to meet customer expectations under the threat of receiving low ratings, which results in workers being involved in emotional labor to their own detriment. While George (2024) suggests that constructive feedback systems could lead to a self-improvement trail, the current findings are more in line with critiques that argue existing rating models are emotionally insensitive and unfair, thus worsening the psychological distress.

Emotional precarity is made worse by the algorithm structures. One of the major issues identified from the data is the situation that emotional precarity is recurrent in platform-based work, and this is caused by the combination of feedback from customers and the control by means of algorithms. On the other hand, the quantitative results show that even those workers who are rated very highly have the same level of emotional strain throughout the whole period. This is in line with the interpretation of Lin (2022) of “anticipatory stress,” which suggests that the feedback is the source of anxiety since the evaluation criteria are not clear. Graham et al. (2018) also mention that a large number of workers think of themselves as being easily replaced, and this leads the workers to always be under pressure to perform more than the required level. One of the ways through which the workers’ perceptions are maintained is through algorithmic monitoring. Griesbach et al. (2019) claim that the monitoring systems serve as punishments, taking away the flexibility of the manager and enforcing through computers that lead to oppression of the workers with no control over their own activities. While George (2024) argues that replacing humans with machines could lead to a situation where everyone is treated equally since machines will not be biased, the existing data still points towards the direction of emotional instability and susceptibility caused using machines instead of the opposite.

Difficult customer interactions further intensify emotional distress by enforcing behavioral compliance through fear of punishment. Hostile or unpredictable customer interactions are identified, through both survey and secondary analysis, as the main cause of emotional fatigue in gig workers. Workers state that they experience more stress during negative customer interactions, even when there were no bad ratings; thus, the psychological impact of such labor is revealed. This is in line with the qualitative analysis, which had established that workers often internalize their emotions in order to keep the performance metrics and avoid rating penalties. Emotional self-censorship is then regarded as a necessity rather than a choice, thereby perpetuating the cycle of stress being internalized. Yao et al. (2021) report that while some workers have learned to cope by ways such as emotional distancing or depersonalization of customers, these methods are usually temporary and can lead to feeling less valued or eventually burning out. Crayne and Brawley Newlin (2024) recommend self-regulation as the means of buffering these impacts; however, the current research shows that such regulation is not effective unless there is accompanying emotional training and structural support. Hence, emotional dissonance does not occur as an isolated reaction but rather as a typical state of platform labor, which increases mental health vulnerabilities.

The psychological risk is increased due to emotional support structures being absent. Emotional isolation is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of gig work, especially in situations where the workers are not allowed to connect with each other and where there is no institutional support for such connections. The survey results indicate that even when the job satisfaction scores are very high, stress levels are still high, which means that psychological distress goes on even when a person enjoys his/her job. In the same way, qualitative evidence has

indicated that 74% of workers have no meaningful peer interaction, which is a contribution towards the evidence of the fragmented and isolating nature of gig labor.

Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) assert that emotional isolation is a major problem in digitally mediated working environments. The lack of an opportunity to debrief from, or to emotionally integrate or assert. These findings support the concern of Lamiani, Sommovigo, and Setti (2019), who argue that if sufficient emotional validation is not coupled with undue institutional recognition, this leads to the chronic repression of negative emotions, which eventually leads to exhaustion (Burnout). In checking that George (2024) suggests that individual reflection can lead to the support of resilience, approaches that involve reflection are limited without supporting structures and emotionally literate leadership at a collective level. Therefore, isolation should be grasped not just as a symptom, but as a systemic predictor of mental health degradation in platform employment.

Coping behaviors expressed among gig-workers-paralysis, behavioral dissociation, performative friendliness, etc., are just temporary and unsustainable in the long term. According to qualitative data by Yao et al. (2021), while these strategies may produce results in the short run, they produce cognitive dissonance and emotional exhaustion as they are not true to you. This is shown by information from a survey that was conducted, which revealed that levels of stress will not decrease, regardless of the feedback on the performance. Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) also argue that chronic emotional dissonance may reduce emotional intelligence and undermine job satisfaction. Conversely, Wood (2020) posits that systematic emotional literacy education can improve the ability to cope with high-stress contexts by providing employees with tools to detect, express, and manage complex emotions. This research supports that viewpoint: without either formal education or emotionally secure places to express one's

feelings, the gig workers choose to hide their stress rather than deal with it. Therefore, coping mechanisms are more of a temporary relief than long-term psychological strategies.

The simultaneous obligation to meet both customer expectations and platform algorithms has led to a highly fear-driven environment of constant accountability. Analysis of qualitative data revealed that more than fifty percent of the employees were compelled to work under the so-called super-tight deadlines to escape the heavy consequences. The feeling of being monitored all the time and stress is also confirmed by the statistics, where even good ratings do not eliminate anxiety. Researchers Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) suggest that certain SEL interventions can offer psychological relief by fostering emotional boundary-setting and stress-recovery skills. However, SEL still does not play a part in the ecosystem of platforms that drain the emotional strength of the workers uncontrollably. Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) suggest that peer-delivered SEL models may be a potentially available and scalable alternative in low-structure settings. Nonetheless, these programs have not been applied in practice in the context of gigs. Thus, psychological strain is not only caused by operational metrics but also by the omnipresent threat of penalization that is built into the very fabric of platform architecture.

The feedback's unpredictability and anonymity in gig work leads to continuous confusion, which is difficult for the worker to manage emotionally. Lin (2022) refers to this issue as anticipatory stress, a situation where the performer worries his/her performance will be poorly rated, regardless of the actual quality of the delivery. The study is consistent with this idea, as it reveals that even those workers who get the highest ratings all the time still experience a lot of stress. Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) argue that such unpredictability results in a state of alertness, which gradually results in mental strain and tiredness. However, George (2024) argues that the use of predictive algorithms can improve the consistency in rating, but there is still a

considerable amount of distrust towards such systems. Lack of transparency in the process of making and applying evaluations leads to feeling excluded and insecure psychologically. Therefore, the unpredictability does not act as a technical problem but rather as a systemic one that undermines emotional well-being.

The results indicate strongly that formal and context-sensitive SEL programs should be developed and implemented in order to reduce the psychological effects of gig work. The qualitative and quantitative datasets reveal the presence of the three major aspects of psychological deterioration, namely burnout, emotional suppression, and disengagement, throughout the population. In their paper, Li et al. (2021) insist on SEL being employed in the workplace as an important method of teaching emotional literacy, stress management, and support in hot-corner occupations. The data gathered supports this view, disclosing that emotionally deprived workers are those who have not been provided with SEL access. Similarly, Seetharaman, Pal, and Hui (2021) and Hattingh (2023) put forward that SEL is still needed if one wants to have a psychologically safe workplace; it is a must, not just an addition. Although George (2024) shares doubts about the feasibility of such initiatives in decentralized gig setups, he also comes up with the idea of mobile or peer-facilitated modules as potential delivery formats. Therefore, SEL frameworks emerge not as supplementary measures but as core infrastructure necessary to address the structural origins of emotional distress in gig work.

Discussion of Findings for Research Question Three: What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu?

The findings of this study indicate that several targeted elements within Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are essential for supporting the well-being and service quality of

delivery gig workers. Essentially, amplifying individual capacity to self-regulate emotion is paramount to the psychological demands specific to delivery gig workers. In this study, the participants identified the most critical aspect of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to be the management of stress, suggesting an acute need for delivery workers to support them in managing emotional stress. This finding is supported by several analyses of secondary articles, notably that of Behl et al. (2021), which indicated the possibility of emotionally attuned digital tools enhancing perseverance and mental endurance, as well as improving a user's sense of being understood. Moreover, Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) add to this argument by stating that emotional skills are of prime importance, especially in their ability to handle stressful situations, which is already one of the requirements of the job market, with more and more potential employees shifting from traditional to tech-related skills. These insights align with those of Lu et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of self-regulation as a foundational aspect of emotional intelligence, particularly in fast-paced industries that involve direct customer contact. However, Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) remind us that "Lean[s] on individualized emotional training strategies without institutional protections are to be criticized as these strategies can lead to re-ingrained systemic neglect." Nevertheless, the synthesis of findings underlines the need for inclusion of emotional regulation as a key feature of SEL intervention oriented toward precarious working environments.

Enveloping sophisticated instrumental communication skills, an agreeing expression of confidence and composure to gig-based service interaction, workers could view effective communication as a useful dimension of SEL and had been mapping emotional and reputational risks in dealing with a manifold of customer behaviors. This emphasis is reflective of qualitative results, Behl et al (2021:3), who found that communication support systems built into platform

tools can minimize emotional friction and increasing overall competitiveness. Similarly, Yao et al (2021) found that emotionally intelligent communication during the exchange of services assists in reducing psychological injury, resilience, and de-escalation. These views are measured with Crayne and Brawley Newlin 2024, who found that communication involved with emotional awareness increases job effectiveness and reduces burnout in the service workplace. On the one hand, the point of emotional communication strategy along with the structural reform was also questioned by George (2024), who found that it could be a work superficially on a problem instead of purchasing a working support on the other hand also found. Despite these critiques, though, the majority of the evidence suggests that some form of communication training - ethically stated and in the context of the gig worker's role - is indispensable in preparing them for the emotional volatility inherent in the customer-facing work.

In supporting adaptive coping mechanisms, it is vital to get through the chronic uncertainty and microaggressions found in gig work. The participants' stress on strategies to deal with tough situations denotes a common need for SEL programs that teach practical tools for conflict and emotional distress. This is also reflected in the qualitative analysis, especially in the case of George (2024), who argued for the need for SEL curricula that would deal with real-life problems such as night shifts, unfriendly customers, and unclear algorithms. Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) dived even further by suggesting to treat coping as a forward-looking emotional competency rather than just a survival skill, thus claiming that emotionally literate workers are better positioned to anticipate and mitigate psychological harm. By taking a broader view, Henry (2023) opined that proactive coping models, which allow for situational appraisal and behavioral flexibility, are the most helpful for workers in deregulated labor markets. On the other hand, Pekaar et al. (2020) questioned the idea that coping skills would be enough on their

own, pointing out that without accountability at the platform level, emotional competencies may eventually get stretched too thin. Despite this, the incorporation of coping strategies as part of a wider SEL framework can be very helpful for emotional stability in environments that are unpredictable and risky.

The inclusion of empathy in SEL programming improves the skills of interpersonal communication and the delivery of services in an emotional way that is not exhausting. While empathy was not the most important issue according to the respondents, the qualitative data and also the literature that supports it made it clear that empathy is very important and can be considered a basic socio-emotional skill. Among the secondary articles studied, Yao et al. (2021) pointed out that workers who have an understanding of the customer's feelings and thoughts become less psychologically drained, especially in difficult interaction situations. Behl et al. (2021) have also shown that the design of the platform that allows people to respond empathetically has a positive impact not only on the service quality but also on the customers' and the workers' emotional satisfaction. Pekaar et al. (2020) also support this view, stating that empathy leads to trust in relationships and to a positive self-image of the workers in professions that are hardly recognized by their employers. Still, Ginsberg (2020) cautioned that unlimited empathy, especially in the case of employees having almost no power, might cause emotional burnout rather than be a source of comfort if employees are not adequately supporting themselves. Hence, empathy should not be viewed as an obligation but rather as a skill that, when backed up by SEL infrastructure, plays a significant role in emotional resilience and sustainable service delivery.

It is essential that SEL resources be available for digital use in formats that are compatible with mobile devices, to adapt to the unpredictability of gig work rotations. The

qualitative outcomes, notably, revealed the importance of mobile-first design. Behl et al. (2021) and Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) pointed out that SEL modules must be light, live-streamed by the users themselves, and mobile-friendly because of the non-linear and time-restricted nature of gig jobs. These recommendations were echoed by Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020), who noted that modular digital learning is especially suitable for working with adult learners who function within fragmented systems. Additionally, Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) stated that mobile platforms that are accessible and personalized encourage the use of emotional training content among precariously employed people. Despite these benefits, Yao et al. (2021) have cautioned that performative digital versions may lose the psychological depth of SEL interventions if they are created without substantial content or feedback systems. The immediate challenge, however, is that online SEL materials must be logistically matched to the needs of gig workers while, at the same time, being incredibly relevant and emotionally resonant.

Gamification in SEL programming, on one hand, presents ethical risks, but on the other, it helps capture the positive sides. Data from the qualitative analysis support the application of gamified tools like progress milestones and symbolic rewards, which may impact emotional learning positively if they are done with care (Behl et al., 2021). This position is in agreement with Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021), who indicated that gamification, when linked to real-life behavioral changes, can increase user participation and skill transfer to a higher level. Likewise, Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) have stated that gamification, in the right alignment with adult learning principles, not only helps but also leads to emotional self-reflection and motivation. In contrast, Yao et al. (2021) and George (2024) both point out that bad implementation of gamification might turn authentic emotional growth into mechanical or manipulative interactions, thus possibly losing the trust of the public in SEL projects. Therefore,

while gamification can enhance emotional learning, it should be ethically governed, avoiding tokenism or algorithmic manipulation that detracts from the authenticity of the emotional development process.

SEL program-based peer support systems can facilitate emotional education and solidarity in an informal manner. Peer learning did not emerge as the foremost quantitative category, as the qualitative analysis brings to light its incredible potential. In their study, Yao et al. (2021) highlighted how the naturally developed peer networks among delivery workers provide them with the support of a psychologist, the validation of feelings, and the exchange of practical knowledge. Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) suggested embedding peer learning structures into the design of SEL, which would then lead to mutual mentoring and relational resilience being created. In a broader context, Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) pointed out the strength of communal learning in the case of a lack of formal support, and they measured this by emotional supportive networks' effects on the understanding of feelings and the feeling of belonging. However, George (2024) did not agree and cautioned that the unregulated peer networks might contribute to the spread of misinformation and the case of emotional contagion. Therefore, in order to make SEL work in the gig economy, the peer elements should come with precautions that will promote learning together, but at the same time prevent the infliction of unintended emotional burden.

The decision of SEL to be gender-sensitive is crucial in providing inclusivity and psychological security among female gig employees. Even though the gendered perceptions were not introduced into the disaggregation of the survey, the qualitative data reveal that female employees are experiencing various emotional issues, one of which is the issue of safety, stigma, and role conflict. George (2024) and Ghosh, Ramachandran, and Zaidi (2021) proposed that

issues such as assertiveness, safety, and emotional boundary control are specific and should be addressed in the content of SEL interventions. Such guidelines are aligned with Li et al. (2021), who revealed that emotionally oriented training was viable among women employees, as psychological stressors affect them more. However, Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) not only sounded alarms over the dangers of designing gender-specific modules, but they also threatened the essentialist assumption and infringed on the emotional universality. However, in a subtle and responsive approach to such realization, it is possible to improve the sense of inclusivity and the various emotional demands of gig workforces through gender responsive SEL content better.

It is necessary to incorporate ethical aspects into the SEL design in order to make sure that the programs help gig workers instead of taking advantage of them. In the qualitative analysis, George (2024) critically evaluates the use of emotions as a manipulative tool in intervention, arguing that during the implementation of SEL programs, particularly where no workers are consulted and poor working conditions prevail, coercion may be a consequence. In the meantime, Behl et al. (2021) provided further details, stating that emotionally intelligent design must be transparent, open, and not mandatory for algorithms. It is to this argument that Patulny, Lazarevic, and Smith (2020) have reiterated in the literature, stating that well-being should not be left to emotional self-regulation, but instead be addressed through platform governance. Crayne and Brawley Newlin (2024) provide the answer to this question, indicating that, under the jurisdiction of workers, being ethically informed, SEL can become one of the significant bases of independence and power. As a result, the SEL program to be provided to gig workers is expected to be based on the principles of ethical transparency, participatory development, and a commitment to protecting psychological integrity.

SEL programs cannot serve as a substitute for structural reforms but remain a necessary interim support mechanism. Throughout the research, the most frequently mentioned crucial components of SEL were stress management, emotional control, and coping strategies, highlighting the high emotional cost of gig work when there are no structural safeguards in place. In the qualitative research of secondary sources, similar problems were observed, especially when George (2024) criticized the possible impacts of platform-driven emotional interventions on worker welfare. Duggan et al. (2022) explicitly criticize this issue and further assert that when SEL is disconnected from its background and taken out of the advocacy context, it becomes a depoliticized tool and can be used to camouflage the precariousness of working conditions rather than engage with it. Likewise, Graham et al. (2018) maintain that emotional training should only be considered a complement to the existing structural rights, such as fair wages, worker representation, and platform accountability. This interpretation has a strong connection with the study's quantitative findings that demonstrate a very high level of emotional demands even among actively engaged workers, thereby inferring that the internal regulation has not yet completely taken over the external stressors. On the other hand, Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock (2021) suggest a more pragmatic approach, claiming that the SEL programs, if designed carefully, can provide a psychological resilience scaffold of support in cases where the immediate reforms are not available. The synthesis implies that though SEL programs have significant advantages to offer, their creation and application shall still be in line with a rights-based framework that not only protects but also empowers the workers and, at the same time, acknowledges the platforms' structural responsibilities.

5.3 *Chapter Summary*

Chapter 5 has provided an extensive discussion of the study's findings, where the researcher sought to integrate the present quantitative and qualitative data through a mixed-method approach for a better understanding of the case on the delivery of gig workers from Chennai under the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The chapter follows the pattern set by the three research questions. Firstly, it points to the positive impact of EI and SEL programs on job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and performance in the area of customer service. Qualitative analysis suggested that emotional skills like self-regulation, empathy, and adaptive coping help employees to deal with stress and unavoidable situations. The statistics reveal that the job satisfaction and customer interaction ratings support the training of participants in EI/SEL-based programs. Secondly, the profound psychological cost of the bitter interactions of the customer rating schemes was briefly analyzed in this chapter. It was revealed that algorithmic control, bad ratings, and verbal insults led to emotional depletion, a decrease in self-esteem, and anxiety. The case findings implied the need for workers to have access to institutionalized emotional support. Thirdly, provided a list of components of effective SEL programs, which consists of gamified content of SEL programs, peer support systems, mobile access, and ethics protection against emotional exploitation. The scholars warn about the misconception of elegant but trivial handling of the problem, and are in support of the worker-centered, voluntary, and context-sensitive design. The chapter concludes by pointing that EI and SEL programs provide important emotional tools, but each system, including labor protections and algorithm control, needs to undergo systemic changes.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 *Summary*

The present research was dedicated to identifying and analyzing the emotional and psychological troubles of Chennai, Tamil Nadu's delivery gig workers, and researching the pros and cons of Emotionally Intelligent (EI) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs for the workers' involvement and job satisfaction upliftment in detail. The data consisted of mixed surveys, where 100 delivery workers and 200 customers were used, six secondary studies' content analysis, and a mixed-method approach. The analysis actually combined still proved the story of gig-workers working at vulnerable and emotionally stressful levels, aggravated by the words of customer rating systems, pressures of the algorithms, and lack of organized support structures. Both qualitative and quantitative studies have shown that either an EI or SEL program can become a significant contributor to the enhanced capacity of workers to cope with stress, manage their emotions, and become more effective in situations involving customers, as it is associated with task performance. Such interventions were particularly useful in helping those people with such problems to get better, as well as improving their existing communication skills, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping mechanisms, to the point that consequences of job satisfaction and performance, in fact, improved.

Moreover, the burden of interacting with negative customers and poor ratings has a great psychological effect and makes them feel less appreciated, and the workers have low self-esteem, which has a grave burden of verbal corrections. SEL frameworks that included elements of Peer Support, Gamification, Mobile Accessible Learning, and Ethical Design were particularly successful at driving emotional well-being. However, emotional training was insufficient to address structural problems like job insecurity, low pay, and the absence of

benefits. Therefore, although legal intervention to boost EI and SEL interventions does have some practical utility, the need for wider systemic changes, e.g., for labor protections, transparent rating systems, and institutionalized worker support, is also emphasized in the study. The findings are a contribution of new knowledge into the understudied intersection between gig work and emotional development, and draw attention to how both specific emotional training, as well as policy-level interventions, can support in building a more sustainable, humane gig economy for delivery workers who work in high-stress and low support conditions in urban India.

6.2 *Implications*

The findings of this study present significant implications for gig economy platforms, policymakers, customer service systems, and researchers seeking to enhance the psychosocial well-being of delivery workers through theoretical insight.

Theoretical implications: Theoretically, this research contributes to both Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by providing empirical insights into how emotional and motivational frameworks function within precarious, platform-based employment. The EI theory highlights important competencies like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, which have been shown to be crucial for managing emotionally taxing positions in delivery work. The research found that the workers who were given emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning training showed a rise in emotional resilience, job satisfaction, and a better quality of customer service. The Self-Determination Theory also states that when the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met, there is an increase in intrinsic motivation and general well-being. In this respect, it was found that the SEL programs were helpful in the area of competence through emotional skill-building, autonomy through voluntary participation, and in the area of

relatedness through peer-based learning. These findings extend both theoretical frameworks into the gig economy, confirming that emotionally intelligent, motivationally supportive interventions can enhance performance and well-being even in fragmented and unstable work environments.

Implications for Research Question 1: How can tailored EI and SEL programs improve job satisfaction, emotional resilience, and customer service performance among delivery gig workers in Chennai? Three significant implications of RQ1 were identified based on findings assessment and linked to the delivery platforms, customer service, and policy makers. With regards to the mediums of delivery, the results of this study highlighted that EI and SEL training should pay more attention to practical coping skills and coping with stress than to problem-solving, which may lead to a lower level of satisfaction indirectly. Workers who had been better trained on self-regulation and emotional literacy have reported these findings as opposed to training workers on technical problem-solving under pressure.

Regarding customer service, the outcomes revealed that an organizational message must be added to the interventions to make workers feel the significance of EI in the process of improving customer relations. Platforms that assisted the workers as a basic component of good service, and not soft skills, encouraged them to employ emotional abilities when faced with straining interactions. Finally, the policymakers can also conclude that more adequate training may improve the well-being of the workers and reduce the number of customer complaints, which would make gig work more sustainable. Implementing SEL or EI programs in the workforce policy can improve the platform economy in terms of the quality of services and emotional health.

Implications for Research Question 2: How do poor ratings and difficult customer interactions affect the mental and emotional health of delivery workers? The implications fall

into three categories: platform systems, customer behavior, and policy intervention. In terms of delivery platforms, the findings indicate that algorithmic feedback systems contribute significantly to emotional strain, with workers internalizing poor ratings and experiencing anxiety, reduced self-worth, and emotional exhaustion. Emotional debriefing tools should be embedded into the platforms, and at the same time, the rating systems should be redesigned in such a way that they are more transparent and constructive. The data on customer service revealed that the employees often find themselves in a hostile verbal environment with the customers or have to deal with unrealistic expectations, which result in long-lasting emotional exhaustion. In order to protect the workers from abusive interactions, the platforms should provide support mechanisms that may include digital counseling access or conflict reporting tools. This research highlights the necessity of enacting psychological protection for gig workers by law to the policymakers. Mental health support, fair feedback protocols, and redress systems should be imposed to prevent cumulative emotional harm and to ensure that dignity is maintained at the workplace.

Implications for Research Question 3: What are the specific key elements of Social-Emotional Learning programs that need implementation for delivery service gig workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu? The research results lead to three main implications for delivery platforms, user experience, and governance. In terms of delivery platforms, the findings recommend that gamification, mobile-first design, and short, context-relevant modules be integrated into SEL programs to coincide with gig workers' fragmented schedules. Microlearning with peer support and app-based formats was the most preferred by workers. As for customer care, emotional learning aids that simulate actual conversations were identified as the means to make the users feel more competent in dealing with clients. However, the study

cautioned against the overuse of gamification, as some workers viewed it as superficial. It is necessary for SEL content to be emotionally authentic and not performative. Finally, the policy makers are presented with the results, which recommend establishing standards for digital SEL programs that are not only voluntary but also culturally sensitive and worker centered. The oversight entities may encompass SEL certification within broader frameworks of gig economy quality, thus prompting the adoption of ethical practices by all platforms.

6.3 *Recommendations*

The results of the present research indicate a dire necessity for immediate measures and further academic inquiry into the matter of integration of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in the gig economy. The delivery workers in Chennai not only experience physical hardship but also, on top of that, are subjected to considerable emotional strain, such as the stress that comes from dealing with unfriendly customers, fear of receiving low ratings, and the burden of social isolation that affects them. The investigation reported that EI and SEL programs designed for the specific needs of workers produce quantifiable gains; however, it also showed the necessity of creating practices that are mobile-first, relevant to the local culture, and morally based. Consequently, two types of recommendations are provided: one for practical application and another for future research.

Recommendations for practical application

The current research proposes a first mobile immersive learning scheme that fits with their real-life situations. The psychosocial stressors encompassed emotional pressure linked to sudden customer interactions, algorithmic stress caused by non-transparent rating systems, and constant social isolation. These issues cannot be fixed by fluid training but rather those that are linked to a pragmatic, low-threshold, and ethically grounded intervention that recognizes the structural precarity of platform work without decreasing the emotional presence of a worker, are

issues that can be addressed. The program will be modularized into a series of five modules with a total of 2025 minutes of study time, which will be provided via smartphone or WhatsApp application. The program goals will include (1) self-awareness, (2) stress management techniques, (3) communication skills with customers, (4) depersonalization training of negative ratings, and (5) support circles among peers to reduce isolation. The modules will focus on specific challenges, including how to identify emotions in everyday workplace situations; how to handle stress with brief guided practice; how to become empathetic with simulated customer-service experience through branching; how to re-frame negative ratings through story-based learning; and how to establish community through storytelling and shared experience. Delivery platform will depend on smartphone and WhatsApp access, two-way content (English as well as Tamil), and gamified learning methods (e.g., interactive videos, branching scenarios, audio exercises with guidance). It also includes worker protections that are distinctly worker-centered, including voluntary participation, ethical data use, and content that was created due to the goal of improving well-being, as opposed to manipulating productivity. The anticipated results are multi-level, involving individual, workplace, community, and system levels: enhanced resilience and job satisfaction; enhanced customer relationships and elevated ratings of performance; enhanced peer networks and reduced isolation; and system-level evidence of ethical SEL interventions in the gig economy. This feasible suggestion turns the research findings into a practical, repeatable framework that fits the reality of gig work in Chennai and other places.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the immersive learning program provides a foundation for immediate practice, further research is needed to strengthen the evidence base. Longitudinal studies could evaluate how sustained participation in EI and SEL modules affect worker outcomes such as mental

health, retention, and customer satisfaction over time. Comparative research across platforms (e.g., Swiggy, Zomato, Amazon) could examine how organizational culture influences the adoption and impact of SEL interventions. Additionally, future studies should explore gender-specific experiences in gig work, given that women may encounter distinct emotional and safety-related challenges. Finally, research into policy integration, for example, embedding SEL training into national skilling programs, would help assess the scalability and sustainability of these interventions at a systemic level.

6.4 Conclusion

This study has come up with the required information on how Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) integration can be done in a meaningful manner to support the psychosocial well-being of delivery gig workers in Chennai. The research combined quantitative evidence with a richly qualitative approach and provided evidence of how EI and SEL competencies: Providing emotional resistance. Providing excellent performance of customer service. Insulate the psychological burden of algorithmic dominance and customer face stress. The results of the findings analysis support the congruence between the emotional skills the worker experiences lived on the platform used like a stand, which are essential to make the installation sustainable. This work is grounded within the framework of Emotional Intelligence Theory and the Self-Determination Theory, and is a theoretical and practical contribution toward how we might produce inclusionary interventions in precarious gig economies. The proposed mobile-first immersive learning program is a very tangible step towards reducing an emotional burden and providing peer support to ensure the dignity of informal digital labor. Future research and policy engagement will have to ensure that such solutions are not only scalable but participatory and ethically grounded.

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APPENDIX A:
SURVEY COVER LETTER

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in this research study titled “*Addressing Emotional Intelligence and Socio-Emotional Learning Gaps for Delivery Gig Workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu: A Response to the Growing Gig Economy.*”

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point without consequence. The survey will take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. All responses will remain anonymous and confidential; no identifying information will be collected. Data will be used solely for academic purposes and will contribute to the fulfilment of doctoral requirements at the School of Business and Management.

Your insights are invaluable in helping us understand the challenges faced by gig workers and in shaping potential solutions.

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Sincerely,

Sandhanakumari Arumugam

Doctoral Candidate

Swiss School of Business and Management.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Title of Study: Addressing Emotional Intelligence and Socio-Emotional Learning Gaps for Delivery Gig Workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu: A Response to the Growing Gig Economy.

Researcher: Sandhanakumari Arumugam , Doctoral Candidate, Swiss School of Business and Management.

Please read the following before agreeing to participate:

- **Purpose:** The study explores how Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) can improve the well-being and job satisfaction of delivery gig workers.
 - **Voluntary Participation:** Your involvement is voluntary. You may skip questions or withdraw at any time without penalty.
 - **What You Will Do:** Complete a survey lasting about 15–20 minutes regarding your experiences as a delivery worker.
 - **Risks/Benefits:** Minimal risks. Some questions may be reflective. Benefits include contributing to knowledge that may improve worker support.
 - **Confidentiality:** Responses are anonymous. No personal identifiers will be collected. Data will be stored securely and used only for academic purposes.
 - **Ethical Approval:** Approved by the Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva Institutional Review Board.
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Consent

I have read the information above, understood the study, and voluntarily agree to participate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____