

The Future of Gig Work in Malaysia: a Path Forward with Amo Theory

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Abstract

The rapid growth of the gig economy has altered the dynamics of work, challenging traditional Human Resource Management practices that were designed for permanent employees. This study aims to bridge this gap by applying the Ability Motivation Opportunity (AMO) theory to examine how HRM practices can be adapted to enhance the performance and well-being of gig workers in Malaysia. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 31 gig workers from different states of Peninsular Malaysia, this research explores the application HRM practices within the context of the gig economy. The findings reveal that five HRM practices are implemented either directly or indirectly. Those practices are integrated into the AMO framework; Ability is influenced by the nature of gig work, which typically does not require high skill levels; Motivation is shaped by the flexibility of gig work and the financial incentives it offers; and Opportunity is limited by the decentralized structure of gig employment, where workers do not belong to a single company. Theoretically, the research expands the AMO theory to the gig economy and highlights the need for a tailored HRM approach for gig workers. Practically, the findings of this research offer critical insights for developing countries such as Malaysia, where the gig economy remains unevenly regulated and socially fragmented. By enhancing inclusivity and efficiency within gig work systems, this study highlights the gig works' potential to drive income generation, reduce unemployment, and support broader socio-economic development goals. This is likely to catalyze sustainable and equitable growth in emerging economies.

Keywords: Gig Economy; Decent Work; Workforce Development; Inclusivity; Malaysia