

Article

Navigating the Saudi Gig Economy: The Role of Human Resource Practices in Enhancing Job Satisfaction and Career Sustainability

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Abstract: In the dynamic context of the global gig economy and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, this study offers a novel examination of the impact of HR practices on gig workers' job satisfaction and career sustainability in Saudi Arabia. Setting itself apart from prior research, it explores the uncharted interplay between HR practices and career longevity in the Saudi gig economy. Utilizing data from 344 gig workers, the study uncovers the intermediary role of job satisfaction in connecting HR practices to career sustainability, a dimension scarcely investigated before. It further assesses the often-assumed significant effects of demographic factors such as age and gender, revealing an unexpected, non-significant moderating impact. This research finds a strong positive correlation between effective HR practices, job satisfaction, and career endurance, highlighting the transformative power of HR strategies in the Saudi gig sector. These findings are vital for policymakers and practitioners focusing on Vision 2030 goals, underscoring the need for sophisticated HR strategies tailored to the unique Saudi gig environment. By bridging a critical knowledge gap and offering actionable insights, this study contributes significantly to the academic discourse on HR dynamics in gig economies and provides a foundation for future HR policy developments.

Keywords: HR practices; job satisfaction; career sustainability; global gig economy; demographic factors



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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the emergence of gig work has profoundly reshaped the global employment landscape. For instance, US freelancers generated over USD 1.2 trillion in 2020 alone [1]. This trend is not exclusive to industrialized nations. In India, the gig economy accounts for over 30% of its non-agricultural labor force, contributing 1.25% to its GDP [2]. Similarly, the gig economy in Saudi Arabia, with platforms like Haraj and Mrsool that are gaining prominence, is projected to reach a valuation of around USD 2.7 trillion by 2025 [3]. These platforms, ranging from e-commerce marketplaces to ride-sharing services, exemplify gig labor's focus on individual tasks and flexible structure [4]. Gig labor, characterized by its focus on individual tasks and flexible structure, has individuals engaging in discrete activities for businesses not as permanent employees but via explicit contractual agreements [5,6]. The move away from conventional jobs symbolizes a significant shift, with regions having unique socio-cultural norms, like Saudi Arabia, experiencing this transition intensely.

Gandini [7] provides critical insights into the unique dynamics of digital platforms in the gig economy. The utilization of labor process theory (LPT) provides insight into the manner in which these platforms convert labor power into a commodity, namely by means of the facilitation of worker supply and the fulfillment of customer demand for gigs [8]. According to Gandini [7], digital platforms fulfill two distinct functions in the gig economy: acting as market intermediaries and assuming the position of "shadow employers". This

dual role has a profound influence on the characteristics of labor within this sector. This particular viewpoint plays a vital role in comprehending the functioning of gig labor within the distinctive socio-cultural and economic context of Saudi Arabia, hence matching with the objectives of the nation's Vision 2030 initiative.

Gig labor in Saudi Arabia is consistent with the nation's Vision 2030 objectives. This strategic vision prioritizes equal opportunities for everyone, revamps the education system to match market needs, and acknowledges the pivotal role of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in driving economic growth [9–11]. Gig labor promotes economic diversification, broadens job opportunities, and encourages creativity and entrepreneurship, aligning with Vision 2030's core objectives.

While the gig economy shows potential in specific sectors in Saudi Arabia, such as healthcare and entrepreneurship [12–14], a holistic understanding is still evolving. The existing literature offers a mixed view, praising gig labor's independence but also highlighting challenges, including job security and mental well-being concerns [15–18]. Notably, there's a bias in studies, often concentrating on digital or traditional aspects of gig employment. A complete analysis requires integrating both elements, especially within Saudi Arabia's unique environment.

Satisfaction among gig workers is critical for several reasons. Firstly, satisfied workers are more likely to remain engaged and committed, contributing positively to the platform's overall performance and reputation [19]. Secondly, worker satisfaction can directly impact career sustainability, as gig workers who feel valued and supported are more likely to continue in their roles [20]. Finally, understanding and enhancing gig worker satisfaction aligns with broader economic and social goals [21], particularly within the evolving context of Saudi Arabia's gig economy.

This study aims to unpack the intricate relationship between HR practices on gig platforms and the sustainability of gig-careers in Saudi Arabia's evolving economy. Based on four assumptions, the first hypothesis sought to ascertain how much platform HR practices affect gig career sustainability. The study also explored the link between HR practices and worker job satisfaction and whether job satisfaction acts as a mediator between HR practices and career sustainability. Moreover, the research probed the intricate effects of demographics, such as age, gender, education, and job type, on the interplay between HR practices and career longevity. By capturing the varied experiences of Saudi Arabia's gig workers, the study aims to offer insights to shape future HR strategies and policies.

Our research aims to fill specific gaps in this domain. For instance, Chin et al. [22] emphasized the importance of social networks for professional success, but our study suggests that HR practices have a more immediate influence on career sustainability in the Saudi context. We also diverge from Williams et al. [23], who highlighted autonomy and flexibility in the UK gig economy by focusing on the direct correlation between organizational support and work satisfaction in Saudi Arabia. This resonates more with findings from China by Wu and Zhou [24]. In exploring job satisfaction as a mediator, our study aligns with Liu et al. [25] but adds complexity by examining its role in the unique socio-cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia, which may differ from global trends. Our research also challenges common assumptions about the moderating effects of age, gender, educational level, and job type on HR practices and career sustainability, providing a perspective tailored to the developing gig economy, as suggested by Frenken et al. [26].

To guide our readers, we begin with a robust literature review, followed by an in-depth account of our methodology. Subsequent sections present our findings, delve into comprehensive discussions, and probe our study's ramifications. We then address the limitations and propose directions for future research. In summary, we encapsulate our contributions and their implications within the framework of Saudi Arabia's gig economy. Our research, through this structure, strives to offer profound insights, challenge prevalent beliefs, and set the stage for future gig economy studies.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

2.1. Gig Works

The term “gig work” has gained significant attention in recent years, referring to a form of employment characterized by flexibility and a task-oriented nature [5,6]. It revolves around the completion of discrete “gigs” or individual tasks, with all aspects of the work contracts defined by the specific task, including its duration, mode of delivery, and compensation [16,27]. In the Saudi Arabian context, gig work enables individuals to work independently on specific gigs or tasks offered by organizations without formal employment mechanisms but relying on contractual agreements [13,14,28]. Cropanzano et al. [29] highlight how gig work alters the traditional psychological contract, affecting job security and necessitating adaptations such as job crafting and identity management. Gig workers experience diverse responses to their employment status influenced by whether gig work is their primary or supplementary income source [27].

Gig workers, therefore, do not hold the legal status of “regular” employees within a specific organization, nor do they identify as insider members of such organizations [16,26,29]. This emerging psychological contract between gig workers and organizations demands a reevaluation of traditional HR practices, as noted by Davidson et al. [30], who emphasize the role of gig workers as frontline service providers impacting customer satisfaction.

The literature has increasingly explored the potential of gig work in specific sectors in Saudi Arabia, particularly healthcare and entrepreneurship. Scholars such as AL-Dossary [28] and Alanzi [13] have emphasized the gig economy’s potential within the healthcare sector, highlighting its ability to address challenges faced by the nursing workforce and facilitate the outsourcing of various online activities. Alanzi [14] further expands on the gig infrastructure, categorizing it into three areas of service: gig workers, clients, and intermediaries. In terms of entrepreneurship, Al-Mamary [31] asserts that gig work, as a significant aspect of entrepreneurship, plays a pivotal role in shaping a country’s economic landscape. This perspective aligns with Saudi Arabia’s 2030 Vision, which aims to provide opportunities for all, establish an education system that meets labor market demands [9,10], and increase the contribution of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to the national economy [11,32].

While gig work is often praised for its flexibility and independence, it is important to acknowledge that the literature also highlights significant challenges faced by gig workers. These challenges include viability concerns, organizational issues, identity-related complexities, relational dynamics, emotional strain, and uncertainty surrounding career progression [15–18,29]. Davidson et al. [30] and Cropanzano et al. [29] provide further insights into these challenges, emphasizing the role of psychological contracts, worker adaptations, and the impact on organizational job design and commitment in the gig economy. Additionally, studies have pointed out problems such as overqualification and inadequate working hours [27,33]. These challenges underscore the necessity for further research and policy development to ensure that the growth of the gig economy in Saudi Arabia is accompanied by appropriate support and protections for gig workers.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks and Models

The examination of theoretical frameworks and models pertaining to the achievement of professional goals and long-term viability, specifically within the realm of gig workers, uncovers highly intricate and diverse terrain. The existing body of literature offers a diverse array of theories, approaches, and discoveries that enhance our comprehension of this subject matter.

The studies conducted by Chin et al. [22] and Li et al. [34] examine the intricacies of career success. Chin et al. [22] primarily investigate the significance of social capital, while Li et al. [34] specifically explore the impact of organizational support. Chin et al. [22] underscore the significance of social networks and interpersonal connections in the context of achieving professional success. In contrast, Li et al. [34] draw attention to the pivotal function of organizational support in influencing career outcomes. Rajendran et al. [35]

provide additional support for these ideas by examining the psychological determinants that impact one's job success, with a particular focus on the significance of self-efficacy and motivation. The confluence of these investigations highlights the intricate and diverse character of professional achievement, wherein social, organizational, and psychological elements interact. Nevertheless, the implementation of these theoretical frameworks in the context of gig workers poses distinct and specific obstacles. The influence of the gig economy on career success was examined by Spurk et al. [36] and Felix et al. [37], who emphasize the absence of conventional organizational support and the significance of individual agency.

The existing body of research pertaining to sustainability models encompasses a wide array of views. Raitano and Subioli [38] investigate the significance of lifelong learning in maintaining career sustainability, with a particular focus on the ongoing enhancement of skills. The study conducted by Lo Presti et al. [39] places emphasis on the significance of achieving a work–life balance, while the research conducted by Herrmann et al. [40] delves into the topic of environmental sustainability in relation to various career paths. These works collectively underscore the diverse and intricate aspects of sustainability, which include personal, professional, and environmental elements. Martini et al. [41] examine the utilization of these models in the context of gig workers, shedding light on the precariousness inherent in gig labor and the resultant obstacles to long-term career viability. The viewpoint presented is also supported by the research conducted by Banerjee et al. [42], wherein they investigate the negative impact on wages experienced by temporary employees with advanced education. This study challenges the prevailing belief that temporary employment is advantageous for those with high skill levels. These findings offer a significant perspective that challenges the existing body of knowledge on sustainability, highlighting the distinct obstacles encountered by those engaged in gig jobs.

The existing body of literature pertaining to theoretical frameworks and models concerning professional success and sustainability is characterized by its extensive and intricate nature. The conventional models place significant emphasis on the significance of social capital, organizational support, and psychological factors in determining career success. However, the distinct characteristics of the gig economy present a challenge to these frameworks, as they underscore the crucial role of individual agencies and the absence of conventional support structures [22,34,36,37]. Similarly, the sustainability literature emphasizes lifelong learning, work–life balance, and environmental considerations, but the precarious nature of gig work presents unique challenges to these models [38–42]. The distinct characteristics of gig work need a reassessment and adjustment of existing frameworks, emphasizing the importance of additional research to construct comprehensive models that effectively capture the intricacies of the contemporary work environment. The presence of both agreement and disagreement across sources contributes to the enhancement of our comprehension while also indicating areas of deficiency and potential avenues for further investigation, particularly in relation to the career prospects of gig workers.

2.3. Gig Work and HRM Practices in Saudi Arabia

The gig economy has been gaining traction globally, and Saudi Arabia is no exception. However, despite the burgeoning significance of this economic model, there is a conspicuous scarcity of research on the gig economy within the Saudi context. Alamoudi et al. [43] offer a comprehensive overview of the gig economy in Saudi Arabia, underscoring its potential benefits, such as increased flexibility and autonomy for workers. Nevertheless, they also delineate the challenges associated with gig work, such as job insecurity and the absence of benefits typically associated with traditional employment. This perspective is mirrored by AL-Dossary [12], who, in a study on the feasibility of applying the gig economy framework in the nursing profession, posited that the potential benefits of flexibility and independence may outweigh the drawbacks of inconsistent incomes and a lack of benefits for many nursing professionals. Intriguingly, AL-Dossary [28] also discovered that the gig economy could bolster the increase of the female workforce in the nursing profession,

aligning with the objectives of Vision 2030 and Saudization. This finding is particularly salient given the cultural and societal context of Saudi Arabia, where augmenting female participation in the workforce is a key objective.

Alshahrani [44] provides a unique perspective on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on workplace dynamics in Saudi Arabia, with a particular focus on the shift towards more flexible work arrangements. The study found that the pandemic-induced shift to remote work had a significant impact on employees, including changes in workload, blurred boundaries between work and personal life, and the socioeconomic divide. Despite these challenges, many interviewees felt that the flexible work arrangements brought positive changes to their lives, with some even reporting increased productivity and efficiency while working remotely.

Alanzi [13,14] explored the potential of integrating the gig economy into the Saudi Arabian healthcare system. They identify several prospects associated with the use of the gig economy in the healthcare system, such as regional development, the availability of high-demand and specialized skill sets, improved access to healthcare services, and effective healthcare service management. However, both studies underscore the need for further research in this area, particularly in designing and developing policy regulations for gig economy adoption in healthcare.

Alqudah [45] and Al Kuwaiti et al. [46] further emphasize the role of the gig economy in healthcare, allowing doctors and nurses from various regions to collaborate with hospitals that require medical professionals on a short-term, freelance basis. This approach expands operations into the world of telemedicine and virtual doctor visits, suggesting a potential direction for the future of healthcare in Saudi Arabia.

However, a common gap identified across all the studies is the lack of specific details on the HRM practices used in the gig economy. None of the studies explores the effects of these practices on gig workers in terms of job satisfaction, job security, work–life balance, earning potential, or other relevant outcomes. This represents a significant gap in the literature that future research could address.

2.4. Career Sustainability

The intricate dialogue surrounding career sustainability has been robustly addressed within the literature, extending across multiple employment paradigms from conventional careers to the burgeoning gig economy [47,48]. The diversity of perspectives yields a complex yet enlightening portrayal of career sustainability, underscoring the multifaceted nature of these constructs and the dynamic interplay of various determinants, such as individual traits, societal contexts, job satisfaction, skill acquisition, and work–life balance [49–53]. These themes, while complex, paint a rich picture of the challenges and opportunities associated with contemporary careers.

Substantial discourse has revolved around the exploration of career success through the lens of individual attributes and dispositions [54–57]. Mello et al. [56], for example, proffered an individual-centric model, positing career success as largely contingent upon elements of personality, skills, and personal values. This perspective was substantiated by Benson et al. [57], who underscored the pivotal role of self-efficacy and proactive personality in the manifestation of career success. However, this individualistic view has been contested by researchers like Choi and Kim [58], who advocate for the crucial inclusion of social contexts, including mentorship, in the examination of career success.

In tandem with these analyses, the concept of “career sustainability” emerged as a vital aspect of long-term career success. Career sustainability, as defined by Rigotti et al. [59], is the ability to uphold a satisfactory career longitudinally, emphasizing the dynamic and temporal dimensions of career success. This conceptualization is further advanced by Briscoe et al.’s [60] development of the Dual Aspect Importance and Achievement Career Success Scale (DAIA-CSS), which evaluates subjective career success across a spectrum of seven dimensions. Extensions to this discourse, such as the introduction of resourcefulness by Chin et al. [22] as a component of a sustainable career and De Vos et al.’s [61]

proposition of health, happiness, and productivity as integral indicators of a sustainable career, underscore the significance of individual adaptability and a holistic approach in the sustainment of a career.

In stark contrast to conventional career models, the gig economy offers distinct elements that enrich the discourse on career sustainability [47]. Research efforts by Wang and Gao [62], Gori and Topino [63], and Zaman et al. [64] illuminate the central role of job satisfaction, skill development, and work–life balance in determining gig workers' career trajectories. However, these potential advantages of gig work are juxtaposed with the precariousness of job insecurity, the dissolution of work–life boundaries, and the consequent stress-related outcomes [64,65]. Felix et al. [37] and Chin et al. [22] further complexify this landscape by spotlighting the interplay between gig workers' preferences for autonomy or security and its ensuing impact on their well-being and career outcomes.

The overarching synthesis of the literature unravels the dynamic and multifaceted conception of career sustainability, with individual and contextual factors wielding significant influence. While there is an academic consensus on the cardinality of these factors, the literature also illuminates notable points of contention, specifically concerning the relative weighting of individual versus contextual determinants and the efficacy of quantitative versus qualitative assessments [66]. This complexity is further compounded by exogenous factors such as the economic climate, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unique challenges introduced by gig work [16,36,67].

Hypothesis 1. *For Saudi gig workers, platforms' HR practices contribute to their career sustainability.*

Hypothesis 2. *Platforms' HRM practices will relate to job satisfaction.*

2.5. Mediator: Job Satisfaction

The evolution of the gig economy, typified by its transient, often technology-mediated employment contracts, has necessitated a rigorous examination of the pivotal role of job satisfaction as a mediator in comprehending the lived experiences of gig workers. The study conducted by Liu et al. [25] emphasized the importance of perceived organizational support and its direct relationship with job satisfaction among those working in the gig economy. This viewpoint aligns with the research conducted by Mousa and Chaouali [68], which explores the role of job satisfaction as an intermediate factor in the relationship between perceived support and turnover intentions. Nevertheless, there is a subtle divergence that arises when examining their works. Liu et al. [25] extensively discussed the direct connection, but Mousa and Chaouali [68] delved into the complexities, suggesting that job satisfaction might potentially operate as a mitigating element in reducing high turnover rates within the gig economy.

The significance of HR paradigms in influencing work satisfaction was emphasized by both Wiener et al. [69] and Pereira et al. [70]. The study conducted by Wiener et al. [69] focused on examining the effectiveness of HR initiatives in enhancing work satisfaction and reducing turnover tendencies. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Myhill et al. [71], who emphasized the crucial importance of strong HR frameworks in fostering job satisfaction among gig workers. On the other hand, Bunjak et al. [72] presented an alternative viewpoint, arguing that although HR tactics have a significant role, personal factors such as resilience and flexibility are of utmost importance in influencing the trajectory of work satisfaction in the gig economy.

The recurring themes in academic conversations revolve around the instrumental roles of leadership and organizational culture in molding the lives of gig workers [21,29,64]. Thomas and Baddipudi [21] provided a comprehensive analysis of the intricate relationship between leadership, corporate culture, and work happiness, with a specific focus on the rapidly expanding gig economy in India. The conceptual framework presented in Thomas and Baddipudi's [21] study is supported by the findings of Cropanzano et al. [29], who highlighted the significant impact of leadership on enhancing job satisfaction and

loyalty among gig workers. However, Zaman et al. [64] presented a unique perspective by combining self-determination theory and job features to explain the sense of happiness linked to gig labor. They suggested that both internal and external motivating factors play mediating roles.

The study conducted by Seema et al. [73] examined the commonality of freelance work in the IT industry, with a particular emphasis on the role of organizational allegiance in the relationship between work satisfaction and freelance work tendencies. This viewpoint provides a detailed examination of the complex difficulties and potential opportunities associated with gig employment within distinct sectors.

In amalgamating the extant literature, it becomes palpable that while there exists a scholarly consensus on the centrality of job satisfaction and perceived support as mediators in the gig economy, the determinants shaping these mediators exhibit heterogeneity. The interplay of HR paradigms, leadership modalities, organizational ethos, and individualistic factors collectively sculpts the experiences of gig workers. Nevertheless, given the intended application of this literature review for a study situated in Saudi Arabia, it becomes imperative to cognize and integrate the region-specific cultural, socio-economic, and contextual nuances when extrapolating these findings.

Hypothesis 3. *Among Saudi gig workers, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between platforms' HR practices and career sustainability.*

2.6. Moderators: Demographics Factors

The experiences of gig workers are significantly influenced by demographic characteristics, which include age, gender, nationality, and educational achievement [25,30,69,74]. The study conducted by Liu et al. [25] emphasized the importance of age and gender in influencing job satisfaction and organizational commitment among individuals in the gig industry. Wiener et al. [69] proposed that younger gig workers may exhibit more adaptation to the fluctuations inherent in the gig economy, in contrast to their older counterparts, who may place a higher emphasis on professional stability. Nevertheless, Veldsman and van der Merwe [74] presented an alternative perspective, arguing that internal motivating factors may outweigh demographic determinants in the determination of work satisfaction. The debate is enhanced by the contribution of Davidson et al. [30], who proposed that in a culturally varied context such as Saudi Arabia, nationality plays a significant role as a moderator due to the presence of cultural and regulatory differences.

The categorization of gig employment, which may be divided into digital platforms (such as online platforms) and physical domains (such as ride-sharing services), plays a crucial role as a moderator [75–79]. Agarwal et al. [75] delineated this division, highlighting the unique difficulties and prospects associated with each. According to Philip and Davis [76], there is a notable difference in job satisfaction and stress levels among digital gig workers, particularly those who demonstrate strong work volition on platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), as compared to their counterparts in the physical gig sector. Manelkar et al. [77] provide more insight into this perspective, emphasizing the distinctive difficulties inherent in digital gig employment, including the lack of physical interactions. In contrast, Sharma and Bray et al. [78] as well as Sharma and Mishra et al. [79], provide a more comprehensive viewpoint, asserting that although the inherent characteristics of gig labor undoubtedly have influence, broader elements like organizational support may moderate its effects.

The existing body of literature, while illuminating, has noticeable gaps and inconsistencies. For example, the significance of age and gender as influential factors [25,69] is sometimes eclipsed by the priority given to intrinsic motivation [74]. Moreover, it is evident that there exists a noticeable bias in the scholarly literature towards either digital or physical gig labor, frequently neglecting the other form [75,76]. One notable deficiency in the existing body of research is the lack of studies that are specifically designed for certain

geographical contexts, such as Saudi Arabia. This region possesses a distinct socio-cultural and legislative framework that sets it apart from other areas.

Hypothesis 4. *For Saudi gig workers, the relationship between HR practices and career sustainability is influenced by demographic factors.*

Based on the hypotheses that have been described, the research model proposed is shown in Figure 1.

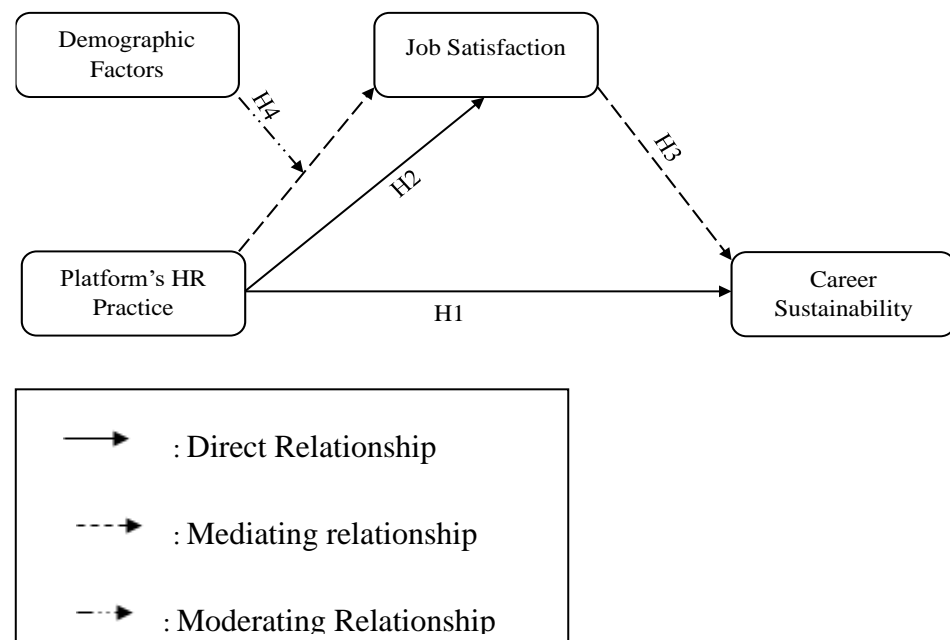


Figure 1. The theoretical model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and Data Collection Procedure

The study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board of the principal investigator's university. Participants for this research were exclusively recruited from Saudi Arabia to neutralize the potential impact of country-specific variations. A total of 500 gig workers were approached offline using a convenience sampling method. The primary instrument for data collection was a self-administered survey, originally written in English. To ensure both the accuracy and cultural relevance of the scales, they were translated into Arabic and subsequently back-translated into English, following the guidelines by Brislin [80]. Moreover, the translated items were piloted among randomly selected gig workers [81]. Their feedback proved invaluable for making minor alterations to some items, increasing the number of fact-based queries as recommended by Chang et al. [82], and refining certain questions for clarity, consistent with Lindell and Whitney [83].

Data collection occurred in September 2023. Each gig worker was invited to share their perspectives on HR practices within their platforms, their levels of job satisfaction, and their views on career sustainability. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they took part in the survey. Of the initial sample, 344 responses were validated, yielding a response rate of 68.8%. Demographically, the majority were male (53.5%), aged between 18 and 25 years (75.6%), held a bachelor's degree (57.6%), and primarily worked in marketing, business, and logistic services (34.9%). A comprehensive demographic distribution can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics.

Variable	Characteristic	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	184	53.5
	Female	160	46.5
Age	18–25	260	75.6
	26–35	26	7.6
	36–45	56	16.3
	45+	2	6
Educational Level	High school	76	22.1
	Diploma	26	7.6
	Bachelor	198	57.6
	Master	28	8.1
	Ph.D	16	4.7
Job Type	IT and Design	56	16.3
	Media and Communications	92	26.7
	Marketing, Business, and Logistic Services	120	34.9
	Literary Arts	24	7.0
	Research and Analysis	22	6.4
	Other Specialized Services	30	8.7

N = 344.

3.2. Survey Measures and Constructs

Our survey extended beyond the collection of basic demographic details and job classifications. It probed further to evaluate three pivotal constructs shaping the gig economy: the platform's HR practices, job satisfaction, and career sustainability.

In assessing the platform's HR practices, we designed a set of five items to holistically capture all HR functions relevant to the platform. A representative item from this construct is the following: "The platform offers training resources to improve my skills". To quantify the responses, we employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Notably, the reliability of this scale, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, was an impressively high 0.864 in our sample.

Turning to job satisfaction, we incorporated four statements drawn from the works of Seema et al. [73] and Brayfield and Rothe [84]. An illustrative item from this category is as follows: "Most days I am enthusiastic about my gig work". We again used the 5-point Likert scale to capture responses, with the robustness of this measure underscored by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.888.

Lastly, in exploring career sustainability, we selected three statements from Chin et al. [22]. A sample item reflecting this construct states: "My career as a gig worker offers significant flexibility". We again utilized the 5-point Likert scale for gauging responses, and the internal consistency of this measure, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, stood at 0.815 in our sample.

In our study, we highlighted the reliability of our scales with Cronbach's alpha values, demonstrating impressive internal consistency; the scale for assessing the platform's HR practices, for instance, had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.864. Similarly, the scales for job satisfaction and career sustainability reflected strong reliability with alpha values of 0.815 and 0.888, respectively. These high values, significantly surpassing the 0.7 benchmark, are indicative of the robustness of our factor structure, suggesting that the items within each scale consistently measure the same underlying constructs. Further affirming the reliability of our findings, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS version 29. Additionally, our study design incorporated repeated measurements under varied conditions, a strategy aimed at assessing and enhancing the consistency of our findings over time. Collectively, these rigorous applications of statistical tools and methodological considerations underscore our commitment to producing robust and replicable findings, which are crucial for advancing the understanding of career sustainability in the gig economy.

3.3. Statistical Analyses

In our study, we utilized IBM SPSS version 29 and the PROCESS macros by Hayes [85] for a detailed path analysis, an approach comparable to structural equation modeling (SEM), to unravel the dynamics of career sustainability in gig work. This choice was motivated by their advanced capabilities in handling intricate relationships between variables, both direct and indirect, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of our results. Our path analysis framework rigorously adhered to necessary statistical assumptions, confirmed by Levene's tests for equal variances, with a significance level set below 0.05 to ensure robustness. We incorporated specific measures within the PROCESS macro to address potential sample distribution abnormalities, enhancing the validity of our findings. The paths chosen for analysis were carefully selected to highlight key aspects of career sustainability in the gig economy, driven by a hypothesis-led approach in our model construction, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay of factors influencing career sustainability.

Our primary evaluation examined how platforms' HR practices might influence career sustainability, with job satisfaction serving as a mediator. This pertains to Hypotheses 1 to 3. Subsequently, we integrated demographic characteristics as potential moderators to evaluate their possible role in moderated mediation, in line with Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 3 proposes an indirect effects model, postulating that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between platforms' HR practices and career sustainability. Traditional mediation testing, especially Baron and Kenny's [86] three-step approach, has been criticized for its limitations [87,88]. Contemporary methods, which emphasize the significance testing of indirect effects, also acknowledge the pitfalls of distribution assumptions. Edwards and Lambert [89] underscored these distributional issues, advocating for bootstrap confidence intervals as a reliable approach for significance testing in mediation models. By utilizing PROCESS, we assessed mediation hypotheses with SPSS-specific macros version 29, estimating indirect effects and their corresponding confidence intervals.

Hypothesis 4 suggests that demographic factors influence the relationship between platforms' HR practices and career sustainability. If mediation is substantiated, the magnitude of the effect might vary based on the value of the moderator [85,90]. We conducted bootstrap tests using Hayes' SPSS macro to assess the significance of interaction effects across different moderator levels. Subsequently, we employed ordinary least squares regression to measure conditional indirect effects, verifying their significance via bootstrap confidence intervals.

4. Results

4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

In an effort to delineate the underlying structure of items related to the platform's HR practices, career sustainability, and job satisfaction, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the principal axis factoring method [91,92]. The validity of this EFA was confirmed by a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of 0.843 and further supported by a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2(66) = 2319.844, p < 0.001$). The analysis revealed three primary factors, accounting for 70.723% of the total variance. Notably, the platform's HR practices emerged as the most significant factor, explaining 44.685% of the variance. This was followed by career sustainability and job satisfaction, which accounted for 16.573% and 9.465% of the variance, respectively. Furthermore, as outlined in Table 2, reliability assessments highlighted the consistency of these factors. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the established 0.7 benchmark, underscoring the robustness of this factor structure.

Table 2. Factor loadings of exploratory factor analysis.

Items	Platform's HR Practices	Carrer Sustainability	Job Satisfaction
HR1	0.773		
HR2	0.873		
HR3	0.795		
HR4	0.767		
HR5	0.685		
CS1		0.758	
CS2		0.804	
CS3		0.794	
CS4		0.697	
JS1			0.723
JS2			0.865
JS3			0.871
Reliability Coefficient	0.864	0.815	0.888
Eigenvalue	5.362	1.989	1.136
% of Variance	44.685%	16.573%	9.465%

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS version 29 to assess the adequacy of the proposed model. The ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF) was 3.579, indicating a satisfactory fit for the model. Additional support for the model's fit was provided by the goodness-of-fit indicators, as demonstrated by a GFI value of 0.938 and an AGFI value of 0.883, both nearing the optimal threshold of 1. The baseline comparison measures, including the NFI (0.938), RFI (0.900), IFI (0.954), TLI (0.926), and CFI (0.954), exhibited values close to 1. These results suggest that the default model has a high degree of proficiency in reproducing the observed data, especially when contrasted with the independence model. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was recorded as 0.087, with a 90% confidence interval ranging from 0.072 to 0.102. Although this value is slightly above the recommended threshold of 0.05, it remains below the widely accepted benchmark of 0.10, commonly used to identify probable mismatches. Based on the obtained fit indices, the default model provides a reasonable representation of the observed data.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

To ensure the reliability of our regression coefficients, we conducted multicollinearity tests to examine the inter-correlations among independent variables. Specifically, we evaluated the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics for each predictor in our model. The results indicated that all VIF values were well below the commonly used threshold of 10, with job satisfaction, HR practices of platforms, and gender (the control variable) showing VIF values of 1.337, 1.339, and 1.002, respectively. These low VIF values suggest that multicollinearity is not a concern in our model, affirming the stability and reliability of our regression coefficients. This analysis addresses potential concerns about the influence of multicollinearity on our findings, particularly the relationships between platforms' HR practices, job satisfaction, and career sustainability.

Based on the data presented in Table 3, the correlation analysis offers a thorough understanding of the intricate connections among the HR practices of platforms, career sustainability, and job satisfaction. The HR practices of the platforms registered a mean score of 3.705 with a standard deviation of 0.993. In comparing the two variables, career sustainability and job satisfaction, their mean values stood at 4.297 and 4.097, respectively. The standard deviations for career sustainability and job satisfaction were 0.706 and 0.978, respectively.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for the study variables.

	M	SD	Platforms' HR Practices	Career Sustainability	Job Satisfaction
Platforms' HR Practices	3.705	0.993			
Career Sustainability	4.297	0.706	0.342 **		
Job Satisfaction	4.097	0.978	0.502 **	0.544 **	
Gender	1.47	0.500	0.038	−0.004	0.007

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is noteworthy that there exists a significant and positive association between the HR practices of platforms and career sustainability. This relationship is evidenced by a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.342$, which is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. This suggests that platforms adopting enhanced human resource strategies tend to bolster the long-term prospects of individual careers. Moreover, the HR practices adopted by platforms showed a pronounced positive correlation with job satisfaction, reflected by a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.502$ ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, career sustainability demonstrated a strong association with job satisfaction, with a statistically significant correlation coefficient of $r = 0.544$ ($p < 0.01$).

4.4. Testing Mediating Effect

To test the proposed Hypotheses (1–3), a mediation analysis was conducted, with the detailed findings presented in Table 4. We posited that platforms' HR practices would significantly contribute to career sustainability. Consistent with this hypothesis, when the mediator (job satisfaction) was excluded, platforms' HR practices emerged as a significant predictor of career sustainability. Results show a coefficient $\beta = 0.243$, $SE = 0.036$, $t(342) = 6.729$, $p < 0.001$. This effect explained 11.7% of the variance in career sustainability ($R^2 = 0.117$), supporting our first hypothesis.

Table 4. Testing mediating effect.

Predictor	Model 1 (JS)		Model 2 (CS)		Model 3 (CS)	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
Constant	2.264	12.811 ***	2.583	17.208 ***	3.396	24.503 ***
PHRP	0.495	10.738 ***	0.066	1.764 *	0.243	6.729 ***
JS			0.359	9.484 ***		
Gender			0.015	−0.234		
R^2	0.252		0.302		0.117	
F	115.302 ***		49.005 ***		45.281 ***	

Note. PHRP: Platforms' HR practices; JS: Job satisfaction; CS: Career sustainability; Model 1 represents the relationship between PHRP and JS; Model 2 depicts the combined effect of PHRP and JS on CS; Model 3 illustrates the overall influence of PHRP on CS without considering the mediator; Coefficient (β) represents the standardized regression weight for each predictor; t-value and F-value are used to determine the statistical significance: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

We hypothesized that the platforms' HR practices would relate to job satisfaction. In alignment with this supposition, results indicate a significant relationship between the platforms' HR practices and job satisfaction, with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.495$, $SE = 0.046$, $t(342) = 10.738$, $p < 0.001$. This model explained a substantial 25.2% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.252$), lending strong support to Hypothesis 2.

The third hypothesis proposed that job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between the platforms' HR practices and career sustainability. In testing this hypothesis, a model incorporating both platforms' HR practices and job satisfaction as predictors of career sustainability was examined. The model accounted for 30.2% of the variance in career sustainability ($R^2 = 0.302$). Within this model, job satisfaction significantly predicted career sustainability, with a coefficient $\beta = 0.359$, $SE = 0.038$, $t(341) = 9.501$, $p < 0.001$. The direct effect of platforms' HR practices on career sustainability, with job satisfaction as a mediator,

was marginally significant ($\beta = 0.066$, $SE = 0.037$, $t(341) = 1.764$, $p = 0.079$). Further analysis, as presented in Table 4, showed a significant indirect effect of platforms' HR practices on career sustainability through job satisfaction. This effect, derived from bootstrap confidence intervals, averaged at $\beta = 0.178$, with a 95% confidence interval spanning from 0.128 to 0.235. These findings, particularly the significant indirect effect, support Hypothesis 3, highlighting the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between the platforms' HR practices and career sustainability.

In response to concerns about potential estimation bias due to correlations among variables, we included gender as a control variable in our regression model. The analysis revealed that gender does not have a significant effect on career sustainability, as indicated by a β of -0.015 and a p -value of 0.815, which suggests that gender does not confound the relationship between the platforms' HR practices and career sustainability.

4.5. Testing Moderating Effect

Table 5 provides the results derived from the utilization of the PROCESS Macro Model 7. This method was employed to probe the intricate interplay of demographic factors as potential moderators in the relationship between platforms' HR practices (PHRP) and career sustainability, in alignment with the aims of Hypothesis 4. Beginning with Model 1, age was examined as a potential moderator. In this analytical context, the interaction term (PHRP*Age) yielded a β coefficient of 0.008. However, a closer examination of the significance levels, represented by a t -value of 0.348, suggests that age may not play a significant moderating role in the relationship between HR practices and career sustainability.

Table 5. Testing moderating effects.

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Constant	3.035	7.654	3.087	7.818	2.843	6.912	3.129	7.776
PHRP	0.378	3.621	0.377	3.611	0.399	3.839	0.396	3.587
Moderator	-0.023	-0.825	-0.078	-1.363	-0.181	-1.382	-0.263	-2.195
PHRP*Moderator	0.008	0.348	0.001	0.045	0.027	0.761	0.024	0.712
R ²	0.322		0.323		0.262		0.321	
F	53.198 ***		52.955 ***		40.159 ***		53.577 ***	

Note. PHRP: Platforms' HR practices; Model 1 uses age as the moderator; Model 2 uses gender as the moderator; Model 3 uses educational level as the moderator; Model 4 uses job type as the moderator; coefficient (β) represents the standardized regression weight for each predictor; t -value and F -value are used to determine the statistical significance. *** $p < 0.001$.

Shifting our analytical focus to Model 2, gender was evaluated as the moderator. The results echoed similar sentiments to those concerning age; the interaction term (PHRP*Gender) revealed a β coefficient of 0.001, and the t -value of 0.045 further emphasized the non-significant moderating role of gender in the relationship in question. The story evolves further in Model 3, where the educational level is highlighted. Here, the interaction term (PHRP*Educational Level) displayed a β coefficient of 0.027. Despite this being somewhat higher compared to the previous models, the accompanying t -value of 0.761 again indicated a non-significant moderating effect by educational level. In Model 4, the analysis pivoted towards job type as the potential moderator. The interaction term (PHRP*Job Type) registered a β coefficient of 0.024. Yet, much like its predecessors, the t -value of 0.712 fell in line with the overarching narrative of limited moderating effects.

Reviewing the broader landscape painted by the results, the significance of the HR coefficient across all models is compelling, highlighting the robust main effect of platforms' HR practices on career sustainability, irrespective of the demographic context. Among the moderators examined, only job type distinguished itself, showcasing a significant relationship with career sustainability, as affirmed by its β of -0.263 and t -value of -2.195 . In synthesizing the data, the variance explained by the models, as indicated by the R^2 values, ranged from 0.262 to 0.323. Notably, Model 2 stood out with an R^2 value of 0.323, emphasizing its nuanced explanatory power. Additionally, the strength of each model was

evident in their statistically significant F-values, which were consistently below the $p < 0.001$ threshold. Therefore, demographic factors (age, gender, educational level, and job type) appear to exert a limited moderating influence on the relationship between platforms' HR practices and career sustainability. This observation provides Hypothesis 4 with minimal empirical support despite its theoretical resonance.

5. Discussion

The objective of our research was to provide a comprehensive understanding of HR practices across gig platforms and their influence on job satisfaction and career sustainability in the specific context of Saudi Arabia. We ascertained that these HR practices directly influence career sustainability. Gig work, marked by its flexibility and task-oriented nature, has garnered attention globally [5,6], with Saudi Arabia being no exception. The findings of our study align with this viewpoint, suggesting that platforms that implement strong human resources policies have a positive impact on the sustainability of individual careers. In contrast to the emphasis placed by Chin et al. [22] on the importance of social networks for achieving professional success, our study discovered that HR practices exert a more immediate and tangible influence on the long-term sustainability of one's career. Such individual-centric models challenge traditional paradigms of organizational success [36,37].

Our research highlighted the profound relationship between platforms' HR practices and job satisfaction among Saudi gig workers. This aligns with findings by Nelson et al. [93] and, notably, Mousa et al. [94] from Egypt, a nation with socio-cultural similarities to Saudi Arabia, underscoring the global relevance of HR practices. However, our focus on the direct correlation between perceived organizational support and work satisfaction diverges from the findings of Williams et al. [23], who highlighted the importance of autonomy and flexibility within the UK gig economy. Our research suggests that in Saudi Arabia, the impact of HR practices on job satisfaction may be more similar to the findings of Wu and Zhou [24] in China. This difference could be attributed to distinct cultural values and the ongoing gig economy phase in Saudi Arabia.

In the unfolding landscape of the gig economy, job satisfaction's pivotal role as a mediator has been consistently documented. Liu et al. [25] highlighted a direct relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction, suggesting that organizational endorsement significantly influences gig workers' perceptions. This viewpoint aligns closely with our findings, where platforms' HR practices had a considerable indirect effect on career sustainability via job satisfaction. But, while Liu et al. [25] chiefly underscored this direct relationship, Mousa and Chaouali [68] delved deeper, examining job satisfaction as a bridge between perceived support and turnover intentions. In line with our results, the study resonates with these earlier outcomes but also adds a layer of complexity, alluding to the intricate interplay between HR practices, job satisfaction, and career sustainability in the gig domain. While the broad similarities across these studies likely arise from the universal influence of job satisfaction on career outcomes, the subtle differences, especially the multifaceted dynamics noted in our study, might be grounded in the distinct socio-cultural and legislative subtleties of the Saudi Arabian milieu, providing a unique perspective to understand gig workers' experiences.

In our research, age was examined as a possible moderator in the relationship between HR practices and career sustainability among Saudi gig workers. However, the findings indicated the minimal and non-significant moderating effects of age. Liu et al. [25] emphasized age's crucial influence on job satisfaction in the gig sector, while Wiener et al. [69] suggested that younger gig workers might be more receptive to the gig economy's inherent variability, in contrast to older workers who may value professional stability. The divergence between our results and prior research may stem from Saudi Arabia's distinct socio-cultural landscape, where age might interact differently with HR practices and career sustainability due to specific regional dynamics of the Saudi gig economy.

Gender, as assessed in our study, did not exhibit a significant moderating effect on the relationship between HR practices and career sustainability. This is at odds with Liu

et al. [25], who pinpointed gender's role in influencing job satisfaction in the gig sector. The variation in our study's findings could arise from cultural or regional distinctions particular to Saudi Arabia, shaping how gender norms and expectations correlate with HR practices and career sustainability in the gig economy. Davidson et al. [30] further noted that in a culturally diverse setting like Saudi Arabia, nationality, often intertwined with gender norms, holds significance due to cultural and regulatory disparities.

The educational level, when evaluated in our research as a potential moderator, indicated a non-significant moderating effect. Banerjee et al. [42] revealed the wage disadvantages faced by temporary employees with advanced education, challenging the prevalent notion that temporary employment is beneficial for those with higher skills. Although our study did not observe a strong moderating effect of educational level, it is vital to recognize that Saudi Arabia's educational framework, coupled with the nature of available gig jobs, might affect this relationship differently than in other contexts.

Job type can considerably shape a gig worker's experience. Various job types may offer different levels of autonomy, flexibility, and stability, which can subsequently affect perceptions of HR practices and career sustainability. Our research considered job type as a demographic factor, but the findings did not indicate a significant moderating effect in the relationship between HR practices and career sustainability. Agarwal et al. [75] classified gig employment into digital platforms and physical realms, shedding light on the unique challenges and opportunities linked to each. This suggests that the nature of gig jobs in the Saudi context may possess distinct attributes that affect their association with HR practices and career sustainability.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

As we delve into the ramifications of our study, we elucidate several key theoretical implications concerning the evolving landscape of work dynamics:

First, our research provides a nuanced understanding that intricately ties the aspirations of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 to broader shifts in global work dynamics [95]. We examined the role of entrepreneurship in shaping a country's economic landscape, thereby extending the theoretical understanding of how gig work aligns with the objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Notably, our findings resonate with the nation's goals to provide opportunities for all and enhance the contribution of small- and medium-sized enterprises to the national economy. This offers a theoretical foundation for future research in this domain [9–11,32].

Second, our research makes a pivotal theoretical contribution by exploring the intricacies of career success in the gig economy. While Chin et al. [22] underscored the importance of social networks and interpersonal connections and Li et al. [34] emphasized the critical role of organizational support in influencing career outcomes, our study introduces a contrasting perspective. We underscore the lack of conventional organizational support and highlight the importance of individual agency in the gig economy. The results of our research present a divergent viewpoint, suggesting that conventional models of professional success might not be wholly applicable to gig work [96,97]. This difference in findings compared to those of Chin et al. [22] and Li et al. [34] calls for a reassessment of the foundational theoretical frameworks shaping our understanding of this phenomenon, thus enriching the theoretical landscape of gig work studies.

Third, our study offers a significant theoretical advancement by categorizing gig employment into two distinct sectors: digital platforms and physical domains. This classification delves deep into the unique challenges and opportunities inherent to each domain. Agarwal et al. [75] had previously delineated this division, emphasizing the specific challenges and prospects associated with each. Philip and Davis [76] further noted a marked difference in job satisfaction and stress levels among digital gig workers. Manelkar et al. [77] shed light on the unique challenges of digital gig employment, like the lack of physical interactions. In contrast, Sharma et al. [78] and Sharma and Mishra et al. [79] offered a broader perspective, suggesting that factors like organizational support

might also influence the experiences of gig workers, irrespective of the nature of gig work. By integrating these insights, our research provides a comprehensive theoretical framework that encapsulates the multifaceted nature of gig employment, thereby advancing academic discourse on the subject.

Finally, by anchoring our study in the Saudi Arabian context, we illuminate broader theoretical implications. Drawing from AL-Dossary [12,28], we emphasize the potential of the gig economy to enhance female participation in professions such as nursing, aligning with the objectives of Vision 2030 and Saudization. Alamoudi [43] highlighted the dual-edged nature of the gig economy, signifying flexibility but also bringing forth challenges like job insecurity. Our research integrates these insights, offering a nuanced theoretical perspective on the multifaceted role of gig employment in Saudi Arabia.

5.2. Practical Implications

Within the context of Saudi Arabia's rapidly growing gig economy [98,99], our research unveils a diverse range of findings with significant implications for various stakeholders. A key area of focus is the relationship between HR practices, job satisfaction, and career sustainability [100]. This relationship underscores the need for platform operators and companies to prioritize efforts to boost employee engagement [101]. By emphasizing regular surveys and feedback mechanisms, platforms can effectively gauge the attitudes and opinions of gig workers, allowing the formulation of HR policies that reflect employee perspectives and cater to their needs.

Moreover, when examining the career aspirations of gig workers, the importance of training and development initiatives is paramount [102]. The benefits extend beyond immediate job satisfaction to pave the way for future advancement opportunities within the gig economy. To cultivate a strong sense of affiliation and respect among gig workers, it is essential for policies to be infused with local cultures, traditions, and values [103]. Collaborating with HR professionals from the local Saudi community can amplify the effectiveness and cultural relevance of these strategies.

Interestingly, our research challenges traditional views on the significance of age, prompting a reevaluation of age-centric strategies. Instead of a narrow approach, there is a pronounced emphasis on promoting inclusion. This aims to foster a diverse, interconnected network where seasoned professionals mentor and assist newcomers, encouraging cross-generational cooperation. This symbiotic relationship not only bridges knowledge gaps but also fosters a positive workplace environment.

Our research underscores the need for a steadfast and impartial stance on gender dynamics in the gig economy. In a time marked by heightened awareness of equality, platforms must ensure that opportunities remain free from gender biases [104]. Regular gender sensitivity training can reinforce this ethos, creating an environment defined by mutual respect and equity. This commitment to fairness also extends to the educational qualifications of gig workers. Even though our study did not flag education as a significant moderating factor, it remains prudent for platforms to align job roles with the educational backgrounds of workers to ensure a compatible fit.

Given the gig economy's diverse job spectrum, each has unique challenges and required skills [105]. Stakeholders must navigate this intricate landscape with a holistic strategy encompassing various job types. Such an approach not only broadens the spectrum of interest but also caters to the varied skills and preferences of employees. In the ever-evolving gig economy, adaptability and flexibility are paramount. To sustain growth, platforms must persistently engage in research and adjust their HR methodologies in response to the gig economy's fluidity.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

In our investigation of gig workers in Saudi Arabia, we identified subtle aspects that enhance our understanding and point to potential avenues for further research. The methodological approach we used was convenience sampling, a practical but potentially

limited strategy that might not fully represent the diverse experiences of all gig workers in the region [106]. This potential bias underscores the need for future studies to employ broader sampling methodologies, such as stratified or random sampling procedures. Moreover, our primary data collection instrument was a meticulously translated self-administered survey, which brings its own challenges [107]. Despite our careful efforts to ensure accuracy, it is essential to recognize that minor translation nuances or cultural interpretations could influence the results. This suggests that future research might benefit from incorporating qualitative methods like in-depth interviews or focus group discussions to deepen our understanding of gig workers' experiences.

Regarding demographics, our data offer significant insights. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that our sample mainly consisted of young male participants with bachelor's degrees. This demographic skew might limit the diversity of experiences reflected in our results. Thus, expanding the demographic range in subsequent studies is paramount to providing a holistic understanding of the gig economy in Saudi Arabia.

In the realm of analytics, we chose our tools carefully, leveraging the robust IBM SPSS version 29 software and the PROCESS macros by Hayes [85]. We undertook rigorous testing to verify various assumptions. Yet, it is pertinent to recognize that given the ever-evolving nature of analytical methods, there is always potential for further refinement [108]. This recognition aligns with the broader view that the gig economy, due to its multifaceted nature, intersects with multiple academic disciplines [109]. While our study centered mostly on economic and HR dimensions, integrating perspectives from sociology, anthropology, and psychology could yield a fuller understanding, especially in the unique socio-cultural context of Saudi Arabia.

A significant limitation of this study is its insufficient examination of how demographic characteristics influence motivations for gig employment. Notably, the survey fails to differentiate between gig workers relying on this type of job as their primary income source and those engaging in it to supplement earnings or support family finances. To bridge this research gap, future studies could focus on these motivational differences, potentially categorizing workers into groups driven by necessity and those driven by opportunity. For example, understanding the varied perspectives of a single parent dependent on gig work compared to a college student using it for extra income could be illuminating. Such an approach would not only reveal how these factors impact perceptions of human resource practices, job satisfaction, and long-term career viability but also provide insights essential for the development of customized HR strategies.

6. Conclusions

This study has elucidated the complex interplay between HR practices, job satisfaction, and career sustainability in the Saudi gig economy. Our investigation reveals a pronounced positive correlation between effective platforms' HR strategies and job satisfaction, highlighting the critical role of tailored HR interventions in the gig sector. Importantly, job satisfaction serves as a pivotal mediator, bridging HR practices and career sustainability and challenging the conventional view of demographic factors as significant moderating variables in this relationship. These insights not only furnish actionable intelligence for policymakers and platform operators, essential for realizing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals, but they also significantly enrich the academic discourse. By delving into an under-explored domain, this research offers a nuanced comprehension of the gig economy's dynamics, emphasizing the distinct socio-cultural fabric of Saudi Arabia. The study's implications extend beyond its immediate findings, beckoning future scholarly pursuits into the long-term impacts of HR practices on gig workers' well-being and professional growth while also advocating for cross-cultural comparative analyses to broaden the global perspective on gig work. Thus, this research stands as a cornerstone in understanding the transformative power of HR practices in the gig economy, marking a substantial stride in both theoretical and practical realms.

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