

Exploring Gig Economy Participation as a Pathway to Formal Entrepreneurship and Business Sustainability

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Abstract

The expansion of the gig economy has changed traditional employment structures by giving people chances to do flexible, self-employment and entrepreneurship jobs. There have not been many studies that have explored the ways through which the gig economy helps to transform gigs into successful entrepreneurial ventures. The current study will look at the effects of gig economy experience and skills on entrepreneurship readiness and sustainable venture creation. The research method used here was that of a quantitative cross-sectional research design. Survey data of 350 gig workers working via different digital platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Urban Company was collected. A structured questionnaire was formulated for the purpose of collecting data on the basis of the five-point Likert scale. The structural equation modeling technique was used through SmartPLS and AMOS. These results indicate that gig experience ($\beta = 0.381$, $p < 0.001$), skill development ($\beta = 0.417$, $p < 0.001$), and customer network strength ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$) increase entrepreneurial readiness. Also, entrepreneurial readiness positively affects formal business formation ($\beta = 0.532$, $p < 0.001$), which significantly leads to business sustainability ($\beta = 0.486$, $p < 0.001$). Mediation analysis supports that entrepreneurial readiness is an essential mediator that helps in the effect of gig-related capabilities on formal venture creation. In addition, the results of the moderation analysis indicate that financing availability moderates the effect of entrepreneurial readiness on formal business formation ($\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.01$). This paper finds that involvement in the gig economy can be used as an entrepreneur's route through which the individual is able to gain skills and market competence necessary for setting up businesses. The results expand the field of entrepreneurship in terms of providing evidence of how experiences from the gig economy may lead to sustainable venture development.

Keywords

Gig Economy, Formal Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Readiness, Business Sustainability, Digital Labor Platforms, Business Creation, Entrepreneurial Development.

1. Introduction

Rapid growth in the digital economy has changed the employment systems, leading to the development of the gig economy as a way through which income can be earned and labor provided. With the emergence of digital platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Freelancer, people can offer their services on a flexible and task basis. This has been made possible by advances in technology, internet access, and a preference for flexibility among workers (Grinevich et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2015). Therefore, the gig economy is part of the modern economy and plays a role in creating employment and innovating the workforce.

In addition to being a substitute employment framework, the gig economy is increasingly seen as a means through which one can become an entrepreneur. For starters, gig workers do some of the things that entrepreneurs do, such as client management, service marketing, pricing of their services, and even maintaining customer relationships (Shaiwalini & Patnaik, 2025). In doing all of this, a person gains skills, knowledge about

the industry, and connections that can help them move from being an independent contractor to owning a business.

Despite the increasing popularity of gig work, few studies have been conducted regarding how the engagement in gig economy leads to entrepreneurial intentions and the formation of formal businesses. Additionally, there is a lack of information on the extent to which the entrepreneurship ventures created as a result of gig work are capable of sustaining themselves. The above information gap is not only pertinent to policymakers and entrepreneurship scholars but also to platform providers who seek to promote sustainable business ventures and economic growth through gig work. As a result, this study seeks to highlight the relationship between gig economy, entrepreneurial readiness, creation of formal businesses and business sustainability.

Research Objectives

- To study the correlation between involvement in the gig economy and entrepreneurial intentions.
- To study the determinants that lead to the move from gigging to entrepreneurship.
- To analyze the effect of gig work on business sustainability.
- To analyze the influence of entrepreneurial readiness on starting a business venture.
- To give recommendations on how to help gig workers create sustainable businesses.

Research Questions

- RQ1: Does gig economy participation increase entrepreneurial readiness?
- RQ2: What factors encourage gig workers to establish formal businesses?
- RQ3: How does gig work experience influence business sustainability?
- RQ4: What role does entrepreneurial readiness play in the transition from gig work to entrepreneurship?
- RQ5: How can policymakers and platform providers support sustainable entrepreneurship among gig workers?

Hypotheses

- H1: Gig work experience positively influences entrepreneurial readiness.
- H2: Skill development gained through gig work positively influences entrepreneurial readiness.
- H3: Customer network strength developed through gig work positively influences entrepreneurial readiness.
- H4: Entrepreneurial readiness positively influences formal business creation.
- H5: Formal business creation positively influences business sustainability.

Seven distinct parts comprise the structure of this paper. Section II provides an overview of the existing literature on gig economy and entrepreneurial development. Section III outlines the theoretical framework that uses Human Capital Theory, Entrepreneurial Event Theory, and Resource-Based View. Section IV introduces the methodology used in this quantitative study. Section V includes the results. Section VI deals with implications, whereas Section VII concludes the paper.

2. Literature Review

The fast expansion of the gig economy has been studied extensively because of the possible impact that it has on employment and entrepreneurship (Duggan et al., 2022). Digital labor platforms offer people flexible working options as well as acquiring skills, a network, and knowledge of the markets that would contribute to their entrepreneurship (Curtis & Lehner, 2019). In a past study, it was argued that the gig economy acts as an innovation trigger for allowing people to try out their business ideas and develop entrepreneurial skills (Chaudhary & Niroula, 2024; Gerwe & Silva, 2020). Moreover, in another study, it was mentioned that the gig

economy offers young people useful routes to entrepreneurship through skill development and exposure to various market opportunities (Gao & Zhu, 2026; Malik et al., 2021). The research also indicates that entrepreneurial career transition often comes about as a result of gig economy experience, especially in cases where people feel more confident and knowledgeable in the industry (Attia et al., 2025).

Several research articles indicate the entrepreneurial aspect of the gig economy. Gig workers have been described as micro-entrepreneurs managing their clients, pricing strategies, and services on their own (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Healy et al., 2017). It is worth mentioning that the participation of individuals in the gig or sharing economy may act as a stepping stone towards venture creation (Bogatyreva et al., 2023). The same research indicated that gig workers typically exhibit entrepreneurial capabilities and self-management skills typical of business owners (Barratt et al., 2020; Alrawadieh & Alrawadieh, 2018). In addition, the study found that the presence of entrepreneurial ecosystems and gig economy behaviors fosters venture creation, especially on the part of emerging entrepreneurs (Mouazen & Hernández-Lara, 2023; Henry et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, some doubts exist about the sustainability of entrepreneurship formed out of gig work. The precariousness of gig labor, which is conducted via platforms, can create obstacles to further business development (MacDonald & Giazitzoglu, 2019; Montgomery & Baglioni, 2021). Nevertheless, it was stated that there are ways to counteract such issues (Asfahani et al., 2023).

As a whole, the literature review demonstrates that gig work may contribute to the development of entrepreneurship; however, there is little research on how gig-acquired skills and assets affect the process of starting a company. This is where the basis for the current study comes from.

3. Theoretical Foundation

This research is based on three different theoretical concepts, namely Human Capital Theory, Entrepreneurial Event Theory, and Resource Based View (RBV), to discuss how involvement in the gig economy could lead to formal entrepreneurship.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory proposes that people acquire knowledge and skills that make them productive and economically efficient. In the context of the gig economy, the skills possessed by gig workers include customer relationship management, digital marketing, problem-solving, time management, financial planning, and service delivery. Owing to the constant interaction with customers, gig workers can gain business knowledge that cannot be learned in the conventional workforce. The development of these skills helps the gig workers become more entrepreneurial and capable of spotting and managing business opportunities.

Entrepreneurial Event Theory

Entrepreneurial event theory offers insights into the factors that determine individual behavior in setting up entrepreneurial firms in response to certain events or situations that arise. The three main factors considered by this theory include perceptions of desirability, feasibility, and readiness to act on entrepreneurial opportunity. Gig economy workers encounter situations such as unstable earnings, an increase in consumer demand, professional autonomy, or even opportunities within the market that compel them to organize themselves as entrepreneurial enterprises. These events can act as entrepreneurial triggers for gig workers.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View highlights that sustainable competitive advantage is possible through resources that are valuable, rare, and non-imitable. The gig workers end up gaining entrepreneurial resources that are useful to them like skills, knowledge of the industry, customers, reputation, and market knowledge. These resources can be tapped to form and build formal firms. As per the RBV approach, the resources from the gig economy become strategic resources that help in the efficiency and sustainability of the business. Entrepreneurs will then

get a competitive advantage and will be able to compete in dynamic environments. The above theories provide good theoretical framework to study the connection between the gig economy and entrepreneurship.

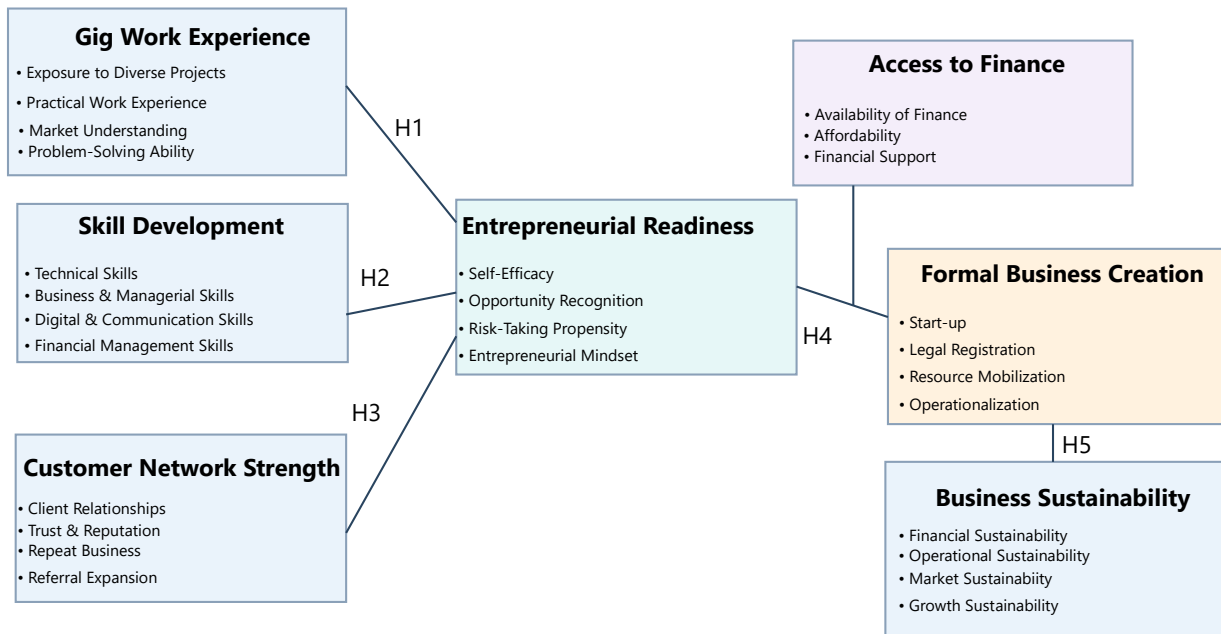


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of the Gig-to-Entrepreneurship pathway

Fig. 1 represents the structural equation modeling concept of the research in the form of the path from gig work to long term business sustainability. The model shows how three basic factors, including experience in gig work, skills development, and network of customers influence the entrepreneurial readiness of a person (H1, H2, H3). This entrepreneurial readiness is the key link on the way to establishing the firm (H4), which is enhanced by financial access as a key moderator. Finally, the model identifies that the establishment of the firm leads to business sustainability (H5).

4. Research Methodology

Research Design

The research utilizes a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between involvement in the gig economy, entrepreneurial readiness, formation of a formal business, and business sustainability. A quantitative methodology is most suited in this case since it allows for the systematic gathering and analysis of numerical data to find relationships between various variables. The cross-sectional design is appropriate in helping gather data at one point in time from the respondents concerning their perceptions about the relationship in question.

Population

The target population is made up of persons who currently participate in gigging using digital labor platforms. The digital labor platforms allow people to participate in their chosen gig in areas such as transport, delivery, freelancing, and home service sectors. Potential respondents are identified from popular platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Urban Company. The selected platforms will give diverse aspects of gigging work, thus offering a holistic view of the impact that gigging has on entrepreneurship.

Sampling Technique

Sampling strategy is done using the stratified purposive sampling strategy, which will ensure representation from various segments of gig workers. To begin with, the population is stratified into strata depending on the kind of platform where the respondents get engaged in gig work. These include the following: freelancing,

transportation, delivery, and professionals. Afterwards, the respondents are selected purposively from each of the strata depending on their engagement in gig work.

Sample Size

The suggested sample size comprises 300-400 respondents and is adequate for SEM and mediation modeling. In accordance with the methodology of multivariate statistical analysis, a sample size in this range provides statistical power, ensures better parameter estimates' accuracy, and reliable hypothesis testing. For this research, 350 respondents will be used as a sample size due to incomplete questionnaires.

Data Collection

Primary data will be gathered by means of a structured online questionnaire that will be distributed among gig workers via online resources and professional and social media groups. The questions in the questionnaire will be based on measurement items tested in previous research on entrepreneurship and the gig economy. A pilot study will be conducted with a few respondents in order to test the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire. Participation in the survey will be anonymous and voluntary.

Measurement Scales

The research adopts a structured questionnaire format that makes use of the five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree," while 5 stands for "Strongly Agree." The constructs and variables are illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: Measurement constructs and items

Construct	Number of Items
Gig Work Experience	5
Skill Development	5
Customer Network Strength	4
Entrepreneurial Readiness	5
Formal Business Creation	4
Business Sustainability	5

These constructs cover all the aspects that will be considered within the proposed conceptual framework and will allow studying direct, indirect, and mediating relationships between them.

Tools for Data Analysis

The data analysis will involve using SmartPLS 4 and AMOS software. This involves different stages, as described below. First, the descriptive statistics are used to describe the respondent's population, using parameters such as mean and standard deviation. Secondly, the reliability of data is tested using measures like Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Thirdly, convergent and discriminant validity of the data is tested using average variance extracted and factor loading. Lastly, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is applied to examine the relationship between variables, while the mediation analysis is used to test the mediating effect of entrepreneurial readiness on the relationship between gig economy experience and business creation and sustainability.

5. Results

Respondent Profile

In total, 350 responses were obtained from individuals who provide gig services on multiple platforms. From the demographic characteristics, it can be seen that 58.3% were males and 41.7% were females. With regard to age, 32.0% fall in the 21-30 years age bracket, 38.6% fall in the age group of 31-40 years, 21.1% belong to the 41-50 years age group, while 8.3% belong to the above 50 years age category. In terms of education, 18.9%

have diplomas, 47.4% have bachelor's degrees, 28.0% have master's degrees, while 5.7% have other educational backgrounds.

For the platform use, the survey participants utilized Upwork (19.4%), Fiverr (15.1%), Uber (17.7%), Swiggy (18.0%), Zomato (14.3%), and Urban Company (15.5%). In respect to the experience of gig service provision, 29.7% have less than two years' experience, 43.1% have experience ranging between two and five years, while 27.2% have more than five years of experience. The above profile suggests that the respondents are.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of key variables (N = 350)

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gig Work Experience	3.98	0.71
Skill Development	4.12	0.68
Customer Network Strength	3.89	0.73
Entrepreneurial Readiness	4.05	0.66
Formal Business Creation	3.76	0.79
Business Sustainability	3.84	0.72

It was found that the overall perceptions were positive for all constructs, as shown in table 2. Skill Development had the highest average score (M=4.12) and shows how the gigs positively impact competency development. On the other hand, Entrepreneurial Readiness had an equally high score (M = 4.05), which is indicative of the fact that gigs help develop entrepreneurial skills.

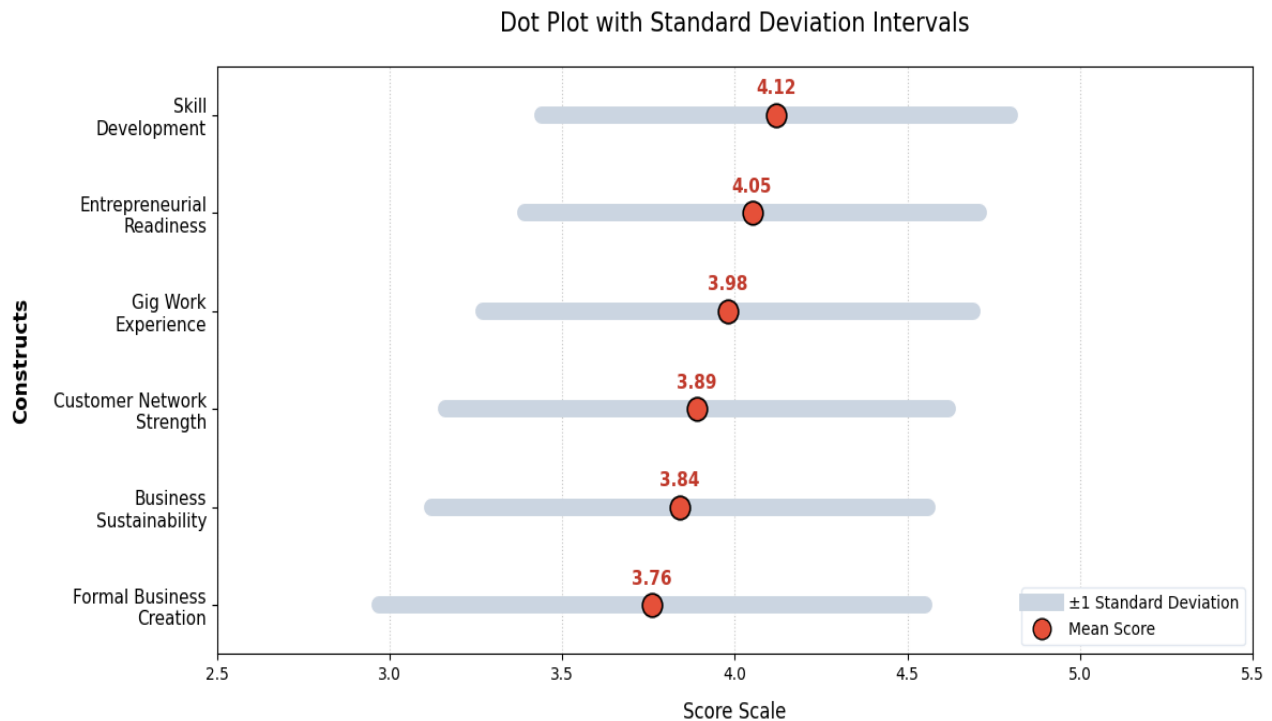


Fig. 2: Dot plot of descriptive statistics for key constructs

Fig. 2 shows that the skill development received the highest mean score in terms of perceptions, whereas the formation of a business entity received the lowest mean score.

Reliability and Validity Results

Table 3: Reliability and convergent validity assessment

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Gig Work Experience	0.864	0.901	0.647
Skill Development	0.887	0.918	0.691
Customer Network Strength	0.845	0.896	0.683
Entrepreneurial Readiness	0.902	0.927	0.717
Formal Business Creation	0.851	0.899	0.689
Business Sustainability	0.893	0.921	0.701

The Cronbach's Alpha (Table 3) of all constructs is more than 0.70; therefore, there is good consistency among all constructs. The Composite Reliability measure is more than 0.80, whereas the AVE measure is more than the minimum value of 0.50. It indicates good convergent validity.

Measurement Model Assessment

Measurement model assessment involves item loading, reliability measures, and validity measures. The item loading values are between 0.742 and 0.912 and are above the threshold value of 0.70. Discriminant validity of the constructs is demonstrated using the Fornell-Larker criterion and HTMT ratio.

Structural Model Results

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Gig Work Experience → Entrepreneurial Readiness	0.381	6.842	<0.001	Supported
H2	Skill Development → Entrepreneurial Readiness	0.417	7.325	<0.001	Supported
H3	Customer Network Strength → Entrepreneurial Readiness	0.298	5.164	<0.001	Supported
H4	Entrepreneurial Readiness → Formal Business Creation	0.532	9.214	<0.001	Supported
H5	Formal Business Creation → Business Sustainability	0.486	8.573	<0.001	Supported

Table 4 show, gig work experience, skill development, and customer network strength contribute to improving entrepreneurial readiness. Entrepreneurial readiness was the most effective predictor of formal business creation, and the relationship between business creation and business sustainability was significant.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation effect of Entrepreneurial Readiness was assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 replications. The indirect effects of Gig Work Experience ($\beta = 0.203$, $p < 0.001$), Skill Development ($\beta = 0.222$, $p < 0.001$), and Customer Network Strength ($\beta = 0.159$, $p < 0.001$) on Formal Business Creation via Entrepreneurial Readiness were found to be significant.

The above findings demonstrate that entrepreneurial readiness acts as a significant mediator by facilitating the transformation of the gains obtained through gig work into entrepreneurial gains. It can thus be concluded that gig workers have higher chances of creating formal businesses if they become more confident, skilled, and ready for entrepreneurship.

Moderation Analysis

Moderating effect of Access to Finance was established through interaction with Entrepreneurial Readiness and Formal Business Creation. Interaction effect was found to be significant ($\beta = 0.174$, $t = 3.486$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that access to finance positively moderates the relation between entrepreneurial readiness and business creation.

These results suggest that even though gig workers are highly ready for entrepreneurship, they can still have difficulties in establishing businesses due to a lack of finance. On the other hand, people who have good access to financing are well equipped to turn entrepreneurial readiness into reality. Thus, financial support systems play an important role in the gig-to-entrepreneurship transition process.

6. Discussion

It is evident from the results that participation in the gig economy provides an excellent learning ground for entrepreneurs since people can learn the necessary skills, manage customers, learn about the markets, and form professional networks. All these abilities play a significant role in the development of entrepreneurial readiness, which has become an essential factor in moving from the gig economy to business creation. The gig economy provides people with the ability to gain confidence, recognize opportunities, and develop operational skills through interaction with customers and the use of digital platforms. Thus, people become ready for entrepreneurship. In addition, the research reveals that entrepreneurial readiness becomes an important tool in transforming experiences of the gig economy into business ventures. Business creation and its sustainability have a positive relationship. People who benefit from experiences in the gig economy will create more sustainable businesses. The prominent role of the availability of financial resources as a moderator further highlights the necessity of financial resources in converting entrepreneurial intentions to entrepreneurial outcomes. Such results corroborate the existing research on Human Capital theory and the Resource-Based View that focuses on the significance of developed competencies and experiences as factors of entrepreneurial success. This research goes beyond existing literature in its focus on how gig employment serves as a platform for developing entrepreneurship. Thus, the obtained results demonstrate empirically that gig employment is not only a temporary form of employment but can serve as a platform for developing entrepreneurship.

Practical Implications

The results provide significant implications for various stakeholders. Policy makers need to come up with policies that support entrepreneurship, business registration, and financial inclusion policies that would assist gig workers in becoming entrepreneurs. Access to low-cost credit, microfinance programs, and funding for startups can eliminate financial challenges and nurture entrepreneurship among these workers. Platform organizations can play an essential role through developing programs that would mentor gig workers and train them on how to manage businesses. The gig workers themselves can benefit from joining business incubator and networking programs to gain access to the information, resources, and relationships that can be helpful for sustainable entrepreneurship development. The educators of entrepreneurship need to develop training models that will merge experience from gigs with learning in entrepreneurship, financial planning, innovation management, and venturing.

7. Conclusion

This research study sought to investigate the concept of gig economy participation in facilitating entrepreneurship and sustainable businesses. The theoretical frameworks used include the Human Capital Theory, Entrepreneurial Event Theory, and the Resource-Based View. The study explored how participation in gig work, skill acquisition, and network strength of the customer base can influence entrepreneurial readiness, business creation, and business sustainability outcomes. From the study results, there is clear empirical proof that the gig economy acts as an enabling platform for developing entrepreneurial skills. Empirical results indicate that experience in gig economy ($\beta = 0.381$, $p < 0.001$), skill acquisition ($\beta = 0.417$, $p < 0.001$), and customer networks ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$) positively and significantly affect entrepreneurial readiness. Among these variables, the effect of skill acquisition is the most pronounced one. Entrepreneurial readiness is found to significantly predict business formation ($\beta = 0.532$, $p < 0.001$), and formal business formation significantly predicts business sustainability ($\beta = 0.486$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, mediation analysis indicates that entrepreneurial readiness acts as an important mediator of the link between gig work experience and entrepreneurship. Moderation analysis shows that financial resources act as a moderator of the relationship

between entrepreneurial readiness and business formation ($\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.01$). Overall, the results reveal that the gig economy is not only an alternative form of employment but also a fertile ground for the development of sustainable entrepreneurship. The results can be highly valuable for policy makers, platform providers, teachers, and entrepreneurs who wish to use the gig economy as a basis for business creation. Further research could involve longitudinal studies to analyze the evolution of entrepreneurship, cross-country comparison, and the impact of new technologies like artificial intelligence on sustainable entrepreneurship in the gig economy.

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