

Self-leadership in the gig economy: The well-being of gig workers

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Abstract

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>As digital and social media applications have risen, there are growing opportunities for people who want to work flexibly doing gigs. The thesis explores how important self-leadership is for improving the well-being of gig workers and how organizations can support their learning of self-leadership skills. Based on a review of existing literature on self-leadership, the gig economy, and Malow's hierarchy of needs, the theoretical framework is developed. Empirical research is conducted through interviews with five gig workers, who share their experiences with self-leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The study finds that all interviewees have implemented self-leadership in some context, but working alone and having less social contact are the biggest challenges for gig workers. These challenges may cause negative emotions, anxiety, stress, and mental health issues. Organizations can create a supportive and inclusive work environment to improve gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction. Society can also promote policies and regulations that recognize the unique challenges that gig workers face.</p> <p>Overall, this research will contribute to the growing amount of literature about the gig economy, self-leadership, gig workers' well-being providing a foundation for future studies in the area. The findings highlight the importance of self-leadership for gig workers' well-being and the need for supportive work environments and policies to promote their health.</p>		
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

During the 21st century, the world is witnessing the transformative effects of the fourth industrial revolution. The revolution is characterized by the widespread adoption of digital technologies and artificial intelligence. It has paved the way for a new form of employment: the gig economy. The emerging sector is driven by the rise of digital and social media applications, which offer workers unprecedented opportunities for flexible and location-independent work. (Alexandra 2019.) Gig work is becoming increasingly popular, and more people in Europe and the United States are joining the gig economy. Estimates suggest that up to 30% of the working-age population currently engage in such work. (Khalid 2018.) However, despite the increasing number of gig workers, the absence of social security and retirement benefits is a significant drawback of the current gig market, resulting in adverse well-being consequences. (Gusai et al. 2022.) The well-being of gig workers has implications beyond the individual level and can have a broader impact on society if not adequately addressed (Alexandra 2019).

The thesis aims to explore how self-leadership can enhance the well-being of gig workers during their work lives. The adoption of self-leadership strategies has the potential to significantly improve the job satisfaction, motivation, and self-efficacy levels of gig workers. Through an examination of the advantages of self-leadership, this thesis could contribute to the expanding literature on enhancing the well-being of gig workers. The thesis presents valuable insights into the challenges and needs of gig workers. Based on face-to-face semi-structured interviews with five individuals in the gig economy. By incorporating self-leadership strategies and training programs, organizations can facilitate the learning and development of gig workers, ultimately leading to improved job satisfaction and organizational performance. Through the thesis, organizations could gain a deeper understanding of the needs and demands of gig workers and provide more effective support.

The author's interest in self-leadership grew out of her expertise in leadership management, which led her to question whether traditional top-down leadership methods were appropriate for the unique demands of gig work. The unique features of gig work, such as remote communication and limited face-to-face interaction with leaders and colleagues, require a novel approach to leadership. This led to a focus on self-leadership and its potential to improve the well-being of gig workers.

Moreover, lack of focus on self-leadership skills in organizations highlights a missed opportunity to acknowledge the critical role that self-leadership plays in the gig economy.

Despite the rapid growth of gig online platforms and its associated business models, there is a limited amount of literature examining the well-being of gig workers in the gig economy. (Arnoldi & Dirksen 2021.) By emphasizing the importance of self-leadership, the thesis provides guidance for enhancing gig workers' well-being and potentially enhancing organizational success. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Furthermore, the author believes that gig workers' well-being is a global issue. By emphasizing the significance of self-leadership skills for both gig workers and organizations, this thesis can offer valuable insights that have the potential to enhance the quality of life for gig workers and improve organizational performance. The author hopes that the thesis will spark more research and discussion on the well-being of gig workers and encourage organizations to prioritize self-leadership development for their employees. (Alexandra 2019.)

1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions, and Limitations

Research Objectives

A research objective is a clear and concise statement that outlines the specific goals and aims of a study, guiding the research process from start to finish, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. (Ryan 2022).

This thesis aims to enhance the well-being of gig workers by identifying self-leadership strategies that they can adopt, as well as effective organizational strategies. The research objectives focus on examining the significance of self-leadership skills for gig workers, identifying potential benefits for workers and organizations, and promoting a healthy and sustainable gig economy that benefits the whole society.

Research questions

Research questions provide the direction and focus for the study, guiding the research process from data collection to conclusion development. They are essential in defining the scope and purpose of the thesis and in determining what the study aims to achieve. (McCombes 2021.)

The main research question is:

How to improve gig workers' well-being during their working lives?

To enable a more in-depth investigation of the main research question, the thesis has been divided into the following sub-questions:

What specific self-leadership strategies can gig workers adopt to improve their well-being?

What are the effective strategies that organizations can implement to enhance gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction?

Research Limitations

Simon & Goes (2013) suggest that limitations refer to factors that are beyond the researcher's control and can restrict the study's scope, thereby influencing the research results and conclusions that can be drawn. Every study has limitations, and this research is no exception. Three specific limitations are identified in this thesis.

Firstly, the author's definition of gig workers is limited to those who provide services through online platforms and only includes five professions (teachers, delivery drivers, kitchen assistants, translators, and kindergarten nurses), which may not be representative of gig workers in other professions.

Secondly, the small sample size (five interviewees) and focus on new gig workers who have worked for less than two years limits the generalizability of the findings, as experienced gig workers with better self-leadership skills may have been excluded. Additionally, the thesis does not focus on gig workers on specific platforms or in specific countries due to the wide variety of platforms available and limited research resources.

Finally, the gig economy is growing fast, so the thesis only represents the current gig work situation and may not account for changes or developments in the gig economy in the future.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The thesis is grounded in the theoretical framework of self-leadership and its related theories. Chapter two delves into self-leadership with three main parts: the first explaining self-leadership theory and its core qualities; the second exploring the concept of gig economy and the challenges gig workers are faced; and the third introducing Maslow's hierarchy of needs and its relation to self-leadership.

Chapter three centers on exploring three key self-leadership strategies that offer solutions to the research question. These strategies are the primary focus of the study and are analyzed through interviews with gig workers.

1.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection Methods

Research Approach

There are two primary research approaches, deductive and inductive, that a researcher can choose from. The decision between these two approaches is based on how the researcher intends to use theory in the thesis and the overall research goals.

Inductive research approach adopted to gather information when there is limited or no prior literature on a topic. This is because there is no established theory to validate. While the conclusions derived from an inductive method cannot be entirely proven, they can still be challenged or invalidated. (Streefkerk 2023a.) The deductive research approach is adopted when formulating a conclusion. It involves a process that starts with an idea or theory, followed by observations, and ends with the formulation of a conclusion. The conclusions drawn through deduction are considered to be highly reliable and bulletproof, as long as no errors are made during the process. This is because deductions are logically guaranteed to be true, provided that the premises are accurate, and the reasoning is sound. (Miessler 2020.)

The deductive and inductive research approaches differ fundamentally. In deductive research, a hypothesis is formulated first, and observation is used to test it. Conversely, in inductive research, observation is conducted first, and theory formation follows. (Miessler 2020.) Figure 1 illustrates the differentiation.

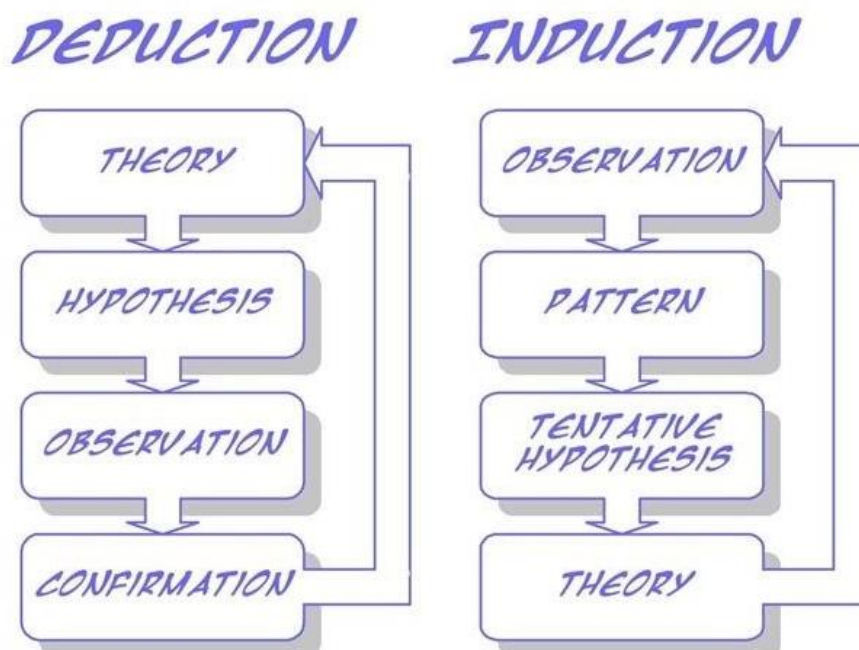


Figure 1 Deductive vs Inductive Research Approach (Miessler 2020)

In the thesis, a deductive approach is used to investigate how self-leadership can help gig workers improve their well-being. The self-leadership theory already exists, and a hypothesis is formulated that self-leadership could enhance the well-being of gig workers. The hypothesis is then tested through interviews with gig workers. The results of the interviews are analysed to determine whether they confirm or refute the hypothesis, and to what extent the self-leadership theory applies to the context of gig work.

Research Methodology

The methodology chapter is a critical component of any research paper, thesis, or dissertation, as it presents the methods used to collect and analyse data, providing readers with the means to evaluate the credibility and validity of the research. (McCombes & George 2023.) Quantitative and qualitative research are the two primary research methodologies, with quantitative research relying on numerical data and statistical analysis, while qualitative research focuses on language and interpretation. Both approaches are crucial in gaining diverse insights and knowledge. (Streefkerk 2023b.)

Quantitative research uses numbers and graphs to confirm theories and establish generalizable facts. It employs methods such as experiments, numerical observations, and surveys with closed-ended questions. (Streefkerk 2023b.) However, it may not reveal the underlying meanings of complex social phenomena, particularly in the study of humanistic variables where greater depth is necessary. (Amaratunga et al. 2002, according to Ragab & Arisha 2018, 7.)

Qualitative research is conducted using words and aims to understand concepts, thoughts, or experiences, providing in-depth insights on complex topics. Common methods include open-ended interviews, word-based tests, and literature reviews. (Streefkerk 2023b.) Kothari (2004) defines qualitative research as an approach that focuses on exploring and understanding subjective experiences and perceptions, using non-numerical data such as interviews, observations, and documents. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the underlying motives and desires of participants. Table 1 presents a comparison between qualitative and quantitative research methods, highlighting their main differences.

Table 1. Qualitative vs Quantitative Research, Types of Empirical Research (River Campus Libraries 2023)

	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain an understanding of underlying reasons or motivations. • Uncover trends or provide insights into the setting of a problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantify data and generalize results from a sample from the population of interest. • Measure the incidence of a particular occurrence, view or opinion in a chosen sample.
Sample	Usually a small number of non-representative cases. Subjects can be chosen deliberately to test a particular theoretical premise.	Usually a large number of subjects who are randomly selected and represent the population of interest.
Data Analysis	Non-statistical; data cannot be expressed as a number.	Statistical; data can be expressed as a number.
Example	Temperature: "cold" Height: "tall"	Temperature: 9° Fahrenheit Height: 6'8"

Triangulation is a research technique that involves using multiple independent measures to increase the confidence and comprehensiveness of the results. A combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate the same phenomenon can result in a triangulation approach, which can enrich the depth and breadth of the inquiry. This approach helps researchers avoid complications and limitations associated with using a single method. (Heale & Forbes 2013.)

In the thesis, qualitative methods were utilized to investigate the topic of improving gig workers' well-being through learning self-leadership. Five interviews were conducted to explore the challenges that gig workers face and how they employ self-leadership in their lives. The data was collected through open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). As stated by Kothari (2004), qualitative research focuses on qualitative phenomena and aims to uncover underlying motives and desires through in-depth interviews.

Data Collection Methods

Data can be classified into two main types: primary and secondary. Primary data is collected through methods that are suitable for addressing the specific research problem, such as surveys, interviews, observations, and unstructured diaries. On the other hand, secondary data are qualitative in nature, and can be found in databases containing transcripts, documents, or audio and video recordings of studied objects. Some qualitative researchers also make their data available for secondary analysis. (Hox & Boeije 2005.)

The thesis will incorporate both primary and secondary data. The theoretical framework of the thesis will draw upon secondary sources, such as an in-depth review of academic literature, journals, books, and other relevant materials. The theoretical framework will then be tested through five in-depth interviews with gig workers in various roles across different gig work platforms. The insights gained from the interviews will serve as primary data and will be used to complement and enrich the theoretical understanding of gig workers' well-being and their adoption of self-leadership practices.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis comprises five chapters, with the introduction presented in Chapter One. This chapter provides an overview of the study by presenting background information, research objectives, limitations, and questions. It also provides an overview of the organization of the thesis, including the theoretical framework, methodology, and data collection methods that will be utilized. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief summary of the remaining chapters.

Chapter two of the thesis covers self-leadership, the gig economy and challenges faced by gig workers, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs and its connection with self-leadership. Chapter three builds on the theoretical framework by exploring the three self-leadership strategies identified as solutions to the research question.

Chapter four is the empirical research and data analysis section, where the theory presented in the theoretical framework is tested. This chapter includes data acquisition and data analysis.

The fifth chapter of the thesis address the research questions and evaluate the validity and reliability of the study. This chapter as well as provides suggestions for future studies, presents the conclusion and recommendations, and includes a self-evaluation of the research.

The final chapter of the thesis, chapter six, provides a summary of the entire study, highlighting the main findings and conclusions.

The thesis structure is summarized in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Thesis structure

2 Self-Leadership

2.1 Defining Self-Leadership

Self-leadership and leadership refer to guiding oneself and others towards achieving goals through certain actions and behaviours (Neck et al. 2020). Self-leadership is widely regarded as the basis and fundamental requirement for all forms of leadership. The term was initially introduced by Manz (1986) and refers to individuals taking action to live their lives effectively. Essentially, self-leadership involves individuals exerting influence on themselves (Neck et al. 2020). However, this definition is broad and does not offer a detailed explanation of how to execute it. The definition of self-leadership highlights two crucial elements: the ability to lead oneself and the capacity for self-influence.

Self-Influence

Self-leadership involves a set of techniques and approaches that individuals employ to direct and regulate their own actions, thoughts, and emotions. (Manz & Sims, 2001.) It involves actively managing and monitoring one's internal processes to achieve desired goals. (Uzman & Maya 2019.) Self-leadership is often linked to theories of self-regulation and social cognitive processes, encompassing various dimensions, including cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects.

Manz (1986) suggests that a valid form of self-influence involves taking action in the environment to prompt it to influence or control one's behaviour in a way that aligns with personal goals. This means that individuals with self-influence should be able to effectively take actions by their own means in various situations. Self-management and self-leadership are related but distinct concepts. Self-management refers to managing one's own behaviours and actions, while self-leadership involves influencing oneself to achieve a desired outcome. Self-leadership goes beyond self-management in that it involves taking proactive steps to direct oneself toward a goal, rather than simply reacting to external circumstances. (Manz 1986.)

Therefore, self-leadership is the theoretical support for all actions when individuals lead themselves to a specific goal, whether big or small. (Neck 2006.) In essence, self-leadership enables individuals to effectively manage and influence themselves towards their desired outcomes. (Neck & Houghton 2006.)

Lead Oneself

The field of leadership has introduced the concept of self-leadership, which highlights the significance of leading oneself before leading others. (Uzman & Maya 2019.) Successful

leadership of others is impossible without first leading oneself in the desired direction. (Siggins 2022.) Bryant (2016) defines self-leadership as the ability to have a clear understanding of one's identity, capabilities, and direction, and to use this understanding to influence one's communication, emotions, and behaviours in order to achieve personal goals. Self-leadership can be applied at both individual and organizational levels, with individual self-leadership serving as a powerful tool for personal growth, and organizational self-leadership representing a unique form of leadership or followership that emphasizes self-direction and autonomy. (Manz & Sims 2001.) A leader who is skilled in self-leadership can inspire and influence followers to develop their own self-leadership abilities. This creates a strong foundation of self-leadership within the organization, leading to motivated and dynamic contributions from followers. (Neck 2006.) The spread of self-leadership throughout an organization or family can help everyone involved reach their full potential, resulting in increased productivity and success. (Siggins 2022.)

Understanding self-leadership can assist individuals and organizations in achieving their goals more efficiently and effectively. Self-leadership exists everywhere, as many people unknowingly use it to manage and discipline their lives every day. One's position does not determine their ability to lead oneself; rather, it is a matter of mindset. In fact, everyone is their own self-leader in some capacity. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

2.2 Five Core Qualities of Self-Leadership

Franko (2018) suggests that individuals and organizations can acquire self-leadership skills through effective training, which should be based on the five core qualities of self-leadership. These qualities serve as a foundation for developing and practicing self-leadership skills. Franko provides detailed insights into these qualities, helping individuals and organizations to develop comprehensive self-leadership training plans.

Enthusiasm For Learning

Developing personal skills constantly and being passionate to learn new things is the basic step to becoming a self-leader. Sharing knowledge and new things with people surrounding you would make you become a welcome person and easy for you to attract someone who is also a learning enthusiast. In common sense, we all know that too much negative thinking may increase the risk of depression. Depression is deeply harmful to human mental health. (Franko 2018.)

Goals for Life and Business

Setting up goals is critical for personal and professional life. Self-leadership requires people to take one step further by monitoring goals and correcting the goal direction when needed. A goals board can help people visualize what they need to do to achieve their goals and monitor the goals process. (Franko 2018.)

Willingness to Let Go

As human beings, our energy and time are limited every day. Self-leadership teaches people how to delegate their energy. Delete these meaningless tasks out of habit from the to-do list. Ignore ineffective tasks and share inefficient tasks with colleagues to allow you to devote more energy to some more important tasks. (Franko 2018.)

Plans and Schedules

Effective time management is one of the key self-leadership strategies that can help individuals achieve their goals and improve their performance. Developing and adhering to plans and schedules can help individuals prioritize their tasks and use their time efficiently, which can ultimately lead to better outcomes. By managing their time effectively, individuals can also reduce stress, increase productivity, and enhance their overall well-being. (Franko 2018.)

Focus and Discipline

Focusing one thing at a time and completing it well is the basic requirement for focus. Be a self-leader, selecting what you need to focus on and tuning out the rest for a set amount of time. The best result is to get the work done nicely and has the best performances. (Franko 2018.)

2.3 The Learnable Skill of Self-Leadership

Extensive research conducted by Manz and Sims (2001) suggests that effective self-leadership is a learned skill, rather than a trait that is only inherent to those who are naturally self-motivated or self-directed. According to their findings, everyone practices some form of self-leadership, but not everyone is an effective self-leader.

Furthermore, self-leadership is relevant to individuals at all levels of an organization, including managers and non-managers. Self-leadership training is a helpful process that enables personal growth through seeking one's full potential, setting, and fulfilling goals, and ultimately developing self-leadership skills as a natural part of one's behaviour.

2.4 The Importance of Self-Leadership

Self-leadership and leadership have distinct differences in their scope and focus. While self-leadership involves an individual's internal guidance of their own decisions, leadership extends beyond the individual to impact the decisions, thoughts, and actions of others. (Manz & Houghton 2020.) The absence of leadership in an organization can lead to chaos and a lack of direction and support for employees, while an excessive amount of leadership may result in a complex structure and guidance that can cause employees to feel lost in the work procedure. Thus, self-leadership serves as a solution to strike a balance in this regard. (Neck et al. 2020.)

Individual Leadership

Individual leadership refers to the ability of an individual to lead and influence themselves towards achieving their goals. It involves taking ownership of one's actions, emotions, and thoughts, and using self-influence, self-awareness, self-regulation strategies to improve personal and professional outcomes. (Bryant and Kazan 2013.)

One of the key components of individual leadership is self-awareness. It involves understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and goals, and using that knowledge to guide decision-making and actions. Self-awareness enables individuals to identify areas where they need to improve and develop a plan to achieve their goals. (Houghton & Neck 2006.)

Another important aspect of individual leadership is self-regulation. It involves managing one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to achieve personal and professional goals. Self-regulation is critical for overcoming obstacles, staying focused, and persevering through challenges. (Houghton & Neck 2006.) Bandura (1994) pointed out that self-leadership is not intended to replace traditional self-regulation practices, but rather to complement them.

Self-motivation is also a key component of individual leadership. It involves setting goals, creating a plan to achieve those goals, and maintaining the drive and energy to see the plan through to completion. Self-motivation is important for maintaining a positive attitude and overcoming setbacks and failures. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Organizational Leadership

On the one hand, organizations may opt to rent capital equipment and labor for short periods to increase worker productivity during the rental period and significantly reduce the fixed costs of the company. (Veljanovski 2015.) However, when it comes to increasing worker productivity, it is essential to pay attention to their health status. In China, there is

an adage that health is the capital of success. Workers' mental health, such as enjoyment and happiness, can significantly impact their job performance. Employees are more likely to demonstrate commitment towards the development of their organization if they believe that their employer provides them with job security, takes care of their physical and mental health, and offers them a suitable level of autonomy to accomplish their tasks effectively. (Chunyan et al. 2022.)

On the other hand, virtual leadership differs from traditional leadership, according to Professor Gordon (2014). Various types of information processes impact individuals differently. In traditional leadership, workers can receive information face-to-face, with nonverbal cues, tone of voice, and body language helping them understand leaders' orders. However, virtual communication only goes through phone, email, or computer systems, reducing leaders' impact on workers. If workers have difficulty with their issues or struggle to understand messages, it requires more effort to find leaders and resolve problems. (Gordon 2014.) Therefore, new forms of management are necessary for organizations. organizational leadership is a critical aspect of any successful organization. It involves developing a clear vision, creating strategies, and implementing plans that align with the organization's mission and objectives.

2.5 Gig Economy

Defining Gig Economy

The gig economy, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service (2022), is a system where individuals can earn money by providing on-demand work, services, or goods, often facilitated by digital platforms like websites or apps. Gig economy offers flexible work opportunities in areas such as food delivery, couriering, transport and manual labor. (Wood et al. 2019.) The emergence of digital platform-based businesses has transformed the way goods and services are consumed, providing a strategic response to intense price competition. (Roy-Mukherjee and Harrison 2020.) In recent years, working for digital platform companies has become a new trend, including Uber, Wolt, Foodora and many others. More and more people join the gig economy. The growth of this form of employment can be attributed to various factors, including the rapid progress of technological innovations, the need for remote work, and the impact of the pandemic.

Challenges in Gig Workers' Well-Being

When people think of the gig economy, they tend to think of it as flexible and in control, but it's not the whole picture of it. (Ben et al. 2022.) It is true that flexible working hours are a significant advantage of gig work for both employees and gig workers. Gig workers are

able to schedule their work according to their own availability, which allows them to better balance their work and personal life. Especially, gig workers who need to be devoted more energy to the family and taking care of children or elders. Flexible working hours provide a possibility for work and family harmonization. (Jackson & Fransman 2018.) Some of them enjoy the flexibility of working hours which is why they join the gig army. But many others have passively embraced this model of work. The reasons are varied. For example, some people must take jobs that are not formal jobs because of the limitation of their financial ability; Some are too old to find a formal job and their pensions cannot cope with the rising prices; Many others are in the job-hunting stage and must do odd jobs to maintain their current standard of living. (Ben et al. 2022.)

Furthermore, in the gig economy, digital platform companies act as a link between gig workers and gig employees. Digital platform companies, such as Uber, DoorDash, gained prominence in the 2010s. Digital platform companies do not employ their workforce instead of helping business organizations to hire workforce. (Ben et al. 2022.) This kind of business model helps digital platform companies avoid many potential risks, but it greatly harms the interests of gig workers. Ben et al. (2022) noted that differentiating between an employee and an independent contractor has major implications for job security, tax responsibilities, and eligibility for employee benefits and protections. According to Vallas and Schor (2020), gig workers are deprived of long-standing protections like minimum wage, retirement income, health insurance, and worker compensation, which leads them to assume risks that were previously taken care of by employers and the state. As a result, gig workers experience low job satisfaction in their working lives.

Moreover, the difficulty lies in the fact that even though companies try to persuade their workers that they will be taken care of, only 50% of the 123 gig platforms offer personal protective equipment and some compensation if they become sick. Despite this, workers claim that they do not receive these benefits. The gig workforce is online-based and dispersed, making it challenging for them to establish a collective voice, and traditional trade unions do not have effective strategies to mobilize them. (Fairwork Foundation 2020.)

As we can see from above, many factors affect gig workers' well-being. The author believes that the government should promulgate new laws and regulations on the classification and recognition of gig workers. Organizations should cooperate with the government to give gig workers more rights and protection. Mental health issues and job satisfaction need to be solved urgently. In short, some problems can be solved by improving the abilities of gig workers themselves, but others must be addressed by the whole society. In the

end, self-leadership cannot drag them out of the unfavourable situation, but it can help them organize their working life better, thereby enhancing their well-being.

2.6 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Defining Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The structure of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is illustrated in Figure 3

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Explained



Figure 3: Malow's Hierarchy of Needs (Green et al. 2016)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory proposes that human needs can be categorized into five levels: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, lower-level needs must be satisfied before higher level needs can be pursued, creating a hierarchical structure. These needs range from basic necessities such as food and water to more abstract concepts such as personal growth and fulfillment. (Green et al. 2016.) Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) stated that human motivation is based on the desire for personal growth and fulfillment, and self-actualization is achieved by those who have fulfilled their potential.

Self-Actualization

One of the highest levels in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualization, which refers to the achievement of one's full potential and the development of one's abilities and appreciation for life. However, Maslow believed that not all individuals are capable of achieving self-actualization. (McLeod 2022.)

During the early 20th century, physician Kurt Goldstein introduced the concept of self-actualization as the ultimate goal of every organism, which was later adopted by Abraham Maslow and included in his hierarchy of needs. This goal is not only existing in human beings but also plants and animals. Self-actualization is an inborn goal that pushes organisms to actualize it. When people talk about goals, it's natural to think about the future. But in Goldstein's opinion, self-actualization is a manifestation of an organism's actual potential in a given environment. (Perera 2020.)

Perera (2020) notes that Carl Rogers viewed self-actualization as a continuous journey of self-discovery and development through introspection. Rogers believed that a fully functioning person accepts themselves and actively works to enhance their personal growth and become the best version of themselves.

Maslow and Goldstein share a common view that self-actualization is a process of achieving one's potential. However, while Goldstein proposed this concept for all organisms, Maslow limited it to human beings. Maslow also suggested that fulfilling lower-order needs, such as physiological and safety needs, is necessary before higher-order needs, including self-actualization, can be addressed. (Maslow 1943.)

Maslow's perspective on self-actualization aligned with a positive view of human nature, where individuals strive to achieve their full potential through a desire for self-fulfillment and actualizing their potential. (Green et al. 2016.)

The relationship between self-leadership and Self-actualization

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs proposes that individuals have five levels of needs and self-actualization is the highest-level needs. Self-actualization refers to the need to reach one's full potential, to become the best version of oneself. Self-leadership is leading oneself towards specific goals. Self-actualization is self-lead individuals to the ultimate goal. They are common in seeking potential, personal growth and self-fulfillment. (Perera 2020.)

In terms of leadership, self-actualization plays an important role in effective leadership. Leaders who have reached a state of self-actualization are more likely to have a clear sense of purpose, a strong sense of self-awareness, and a deep understanding of their own values and beliefs. This can enable them to inspire employees to pursue their own goals and lead the teams in a more efficient way. (Perera 2020.)

Furthermore, self-actualized leaders tend to be more creative, innovative, and adaptable, which can be valuable traits in a rapidly changing business environment. They are also more likely to focus on long-term goals and to prioritize the development and growth of

their team members, which can contribute to a positive and productive work culture. (Green et al. 2016.)

Overall, self-actualization and leadership are complex and multifaceted. While self-actualization is not a prerequisite for effective leadership, it can certainly be a valuable asset for leaders looking to achieve their goals and inspire their teams. (Green et al. 2016.)

3 Self-Leadership Strategies

3.1 Defining Self-Leadership Strategies

Self-leadership is a critical aspect of personal development that aims to enhance an individual's effectiveness by utilizing various behavioural and cognitive techniques. These techniques are typically grouped into three categories: behaviour-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and constructive thought pattern strategies. (Neck & Manz 2006.)

3.2 Behaviour-Focused Strategies

Behaviour-focused strategies aim to modify an individual's behaviours to increase their self-awareness, motivation, and ability to achieve desired outcomes. While these outcomes may not always be pleasant, they are necessary for success. For instance, some tasks at work are mandatory but unpleasant. In such instances, when faced with situations where unproductive behaviours hinder progress, individuals can turn to behaviour-focused strategies to replace with productive patterns. (Houghton et al. 2012.) Behaviour-focused strategies involve self-cueing, self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, and self-punishment and are aimed at facilitating self-management of behaviour. By developing and sharpening self-awareness, individuals can more effectively manage their own behaviour. Moreover, the establishment of specific and ambitious objectives can exert a profound influence on an individual's overall performance. (Houghton & Neck 2006.)

Self-Observation

Self-observation is a key component of self-awareness. It is the first step towards identifying behaviours that need to be changed, eliminated, or strengthened. It helps individuals become aware of ineffective and unproductive behaviours as they occur. Keeping a record of the frequency, duration, and context of these behaviours can provide valuable insights into what needs to change and how to go about making those changes. (Neck & Manz 2006.)

Studies have shown that employees with high levels of self-awareness tend to perform better in their roles. (Franko 2018.) For example, a sales manager who is dissatisfied with the store's performance could use self-observation to identify non-productive behaviours, such as informal conversations or excessive break times. By observing and analyzing these behaviours, the manager can identify potential solutions to the issue. (Manz & Sims 2001).

Through self-observation, individuals can gain self-awareness and evaluate their own behaviours, which can help them identify areas for improvement and opportunities for growth. (Mahoney & Arnkoff 1979.)

Self-Goal Setting

Effective self-leadership requires individuals to set specific and challenging goals for themselves that are also achievable, as research has shown that this can be a powerful motivator for improving performance. (Neck & Manz 2006.) Goals can be long-term career objectives or short-term daily tasks, such as replying to a certain number of emails or earning a master's degree. Setting goals gives individuals direction and helps establish priorities, making it a crucial component of successful self-leadership. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

By setting goals, individuals can create a clear roadmap for achieving their desired outcomes. Individuals should ensure that their goals are specific and achievable. This framework helps ensure that goals are realistic and achievable, while also providing a clear timeline for achieving them. Moreover, individuals should periodically review and adjust their goals as needed to ensure they remain aligned with their changing priorities and circumstances. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Overall, a self-goal setting is a powerful tool for enhancing self-awareness. By setting specific, challenging and achievable goals, individuals can stay focused and overcome obstacles in order to enhance their performances and achievements. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Self-Reward

Self-reward is a powerful strategy for reinforcing desired behaviors and incentivizing goal attainment. It involves recognizing and celebrating one's achievements by providing oneself with tangible or intangible rewards. (Stewart et al. 2011.) Tangible rewards may include buying oneself a gift or treating oneself to a fancy meal, while intangible rewards may include self-praise or mental congratulation. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Self-reward is particularly useful for motivating oneself to engage in difficult or unpleasant tasks, as it helps to counterbalance the effort and discomfort associated with these activities. Moreover, self-reward can significantly impact one's motivation and future choices, as individuals tend to evaluate their current work based on the rewards they received from previous work. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

To use self-reward effectively, it is crucial to set clear goals and establish specific criteria for earning rewards to ensure that they are meaningful and motivating. According to Manz

and Sims (2001), self-reward is a powerful strategy that individuals can use to stay motivated and focused on achieving their objectives. Rewards are effective in motivating individuals to engage in difficult or unpleasant tasks and make progress towards their goals.

Self-Punishment

Self-punishment, also known as self-criticism, is a type of self-influence strategy but in a negative way. It can be used to reshape undesirable behaviours. It is worth mentioning that overusing self-criticism can have adverse effects on an individual's performance and should be employed judiciously. (Neck 2006.) Because self-punishment can create feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety that may hinder motivation and productivity. Additionally, in one of Manz and Sims' (2001) books, they pointed out that self-punishment is generally not very effective, as it is based on negative reinforcement, which can lead to negative outcomes.

Additionally, it is worth to note that self-punishment is a cognitive approach that can be used to reshape undesirable behaviours. However, excessive self-criticism and guilt can harm an individual's self-confidence and self-esteem, potentially leading to mental health issues like depression. It is crucial to find a balance between self-punishment and self-forgiveness in order to maintain a healthy self-image. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

The self-corrective feedback proposition, which is based on a positive mindset, offers a better alternative to self-punishment. The approach encourages individuals to learn from their mistakes and to focus their energy on feeling good about their accomplishments. By acknowledging their mistakes, individuals can use them as an opportunity to improve and grow, while also boosting their self-esteem and self-confidence. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Overall, while self-punishment can be an effective way to modify undesirable behaviours, excessive use of the strategy can have negative consequences. Therefore, it is essential to balance self-punishment with self-forgiveness and cultivate a positive mindset that fosters learning from mistakes and celebrating accomplishments. (Manz 1986.)

Self-Cueing

Managing cues can have a significant impact on individuals' constructive activities and can help to reduce or eliminate destructive ones. For example, setting specific times during the workday to make phone calls or using a smiling face as a screensaver to remind oneself to be positive can be effective cues. Organizations can also use positive messages posted on the walls to motivate employees, such as posting a message about effective time management to encourage productivity. In fact, many time-management techniques

developed in recent years have been focused on utilizing cueing strategies to improve productivity and effectiveness. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

In addition, granting individuals the autonomy to structure their work environment according to their preferences can foster a greater sense of motivation and engagement. (Müller & Niessen 2019.) This can include factors such as growing plants in the offices or desk arrangement, which can create a comfortable environment to improve employee satisfaction. Therefore, managing cues in the workplace can be an effective strategy for promoting positive behaviours and increasing overall job satisfaction.

Rehearsal

Rehearsal is a powerful strategy that can help individuals make progress. In our daily lives, we often see examples of how rehearsal and practice can lead to success. For instance, a little girl may practice playing the piano for years before ultimately becoming a champion in a piano competition. Similarly, a recent graduate may rehearse for job interviews and eventually land his desired job offer. These instances demonstrate how rehearsal and practice are effective self-leadership strategies.

Utilizing role-playing exercises is a frequently employed method in training for performance evaluations. Taking a few minutes to rehearse words in your mind before calling clients or presenting a new project to a venture capitalist can help to refine and adjust your performance for greater effectiveness and fewer errors. These appropriate ways of using rehearsal can be attained through self-training or company training. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Overall, practicing or rehearsing a behaviour before executing it can improve individual effectiveness and reduce errors through refinement and corrective adjustments. (Stewart et al. 2011.)

In summary, behaviour-focused strategies can be used to help people develop more effective work habits and behaviours, such as setting clear goals, managing time effectively, and using cues as reminders. By doing so, gig workers can enhance their sense of control and self-efficacy, which can lead to improved well-being and job satisfaction. Additionally, it also can help shaping the work environment by promoting positive behaviours, such as reducing distractions. Moreover, positive reinforcement encourages desired behaviours and consequences to discourage undesired behaviours. These strategies can help gig workers stay on track and maintain focus on their tasks, which can ultimately lead to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

3.3 Natural Reward Strategies

Reward strategies utilize the pleasurable aspects of a task to provide motivation or reward for individuals (Neck 2006). The crucial element of these strategies is to tap into the inherent rewards that come from the work itself. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

3.3.1 Internal Rewards and External Rewards

Two distinct types of natural rewards exist: internal rewards and external rewards. Utilizing both external and internal natural rewards can be a powerful way to increase motivation and engagement with work tasks. External rewards are tangible and easily measurable, such as creating a comfortable and aesthetically pleasing work environment or incorporating enjoyable activities into daily work routines. (Bryant & Kazan 2013.) However, internal rewards are more powerful and enduring, as they stem from a sense of intrinsic motivation. For example, when Steve Jobs returned to Apple as CEO in 1997 after leaving the company for over a decade, he refused the high salary and instead received a token \$1 annual salary. In an interview, he revealed that his motivation to create the best products was not driven by external rewards such as profits or recognition, but rather by his own passion for innovation and the aspiration to create a positive change in the world. The example highlights the power of inner reward, as the external reward cannot move his thoughts, as he enjoys the challenge itself. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

3.3.2 The Power of Natural Rewards

Manz & Sims (2001) identified three basic elements that contribute to the natural rewards of a task: a sense of self-control, purpose, and competence. They are more focused on internal or intrinsic rewards. When these elements are present, individuals tend to feel more motivated and satisfied in their work. These three elements can guide individuals in identifying and building activities in their work (Manz 1986).

Competence

Research has shown that people tend to enjoy what they are capable of doing. The feeling of competence brings them pleasure and satisfaction. Feelings of competence can be reinforced by both internal and external rewards. Internal rewards, such as the satisfaction of achieving one's personal best, can be particularly powerful motivators, even in the absence of external rewards. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

In fact, the feeling of competence itself can be considered as an internal reward, as it contributes to individuals' sense of self-worth and fulfilment. On the other hand, external re-

wards, such as financial incentives, can also be effective in motivating individuals and enhancing their sense of competence. According to Manz and Sims (2001), external rewards like prizes and incentives can help to drive individuals to work harder and strive for greater achievements.

Overall, while both internal and external rewards can enhance feelings of competence, the internal reward of personal satisfaction and achievement should not be underestimated. Additionally, the use of external rewards can be a powerful tool in motivating individuals and promoting a sense of competence, particularly in a work context where tangible incentives are often used to drive productivity and success. (Manz 1986.)

Self-Control

Self-control is a part of human nature. From a young age, self-control is a fundamental aspect of human nature as we learn to regulate our behaviours. The skill continues to develop and mature as we progress through life, helping us to make thoughtful decisions and pursue our goals. As we grow older and become more independent, we strive to take control of our lives and shape our destinies according to our expectations. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Furthermore, People tend to seek out challenges that interest them and expend effort to master them, as this process can be highly rewarding and fulfilling. The pursuit of mastery requires not only self-control but also a growth mindset, as individuals must be willing to embrace failure and learn from their mistakes in order to progress. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Overall, Self-control is not always about making major life decisions; it can also involve finding joy and satisfaction in the small things in life. Personalizing one's workspace, pursuing hobbies, or enjoying nature can all contribute to one's overall well-being and happiness, demonstrating the power of self-control to enhance the quality of lives. (Houghton and Neck 2002.)

Purpose

Many people have a strong desire for purpose and meaning in their lives. Without a sense of purpose, life can seem empty and meaningless. Manz & Sims' book (2001) provides a clear example of this, as Michael Marvin, a successful cigarette salesman, found that despite earning good money, he could not enjoy his work because of ethical concerns. Being aware of the harm caused by cigarettes created a sense of guilt that overshadowed any financial reward he received. The experience demonstrates that our work must align with our values and beliefs to give us a sense of purpose and fulfilment. However, when people discover their feelings of purpose, they become more focused, more motivated, more

engaged with the world. Thus, feelings of purpose give us the energy and inspiration we need to live a life that is truly fulfilling and meaningful. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

To sum up, natural reward strategies can help promote gig workers' well-being by tapping into their intrinsic motivation and supporting their needs for autonomy, competence, and purpose. It is a valuable tool for individuals and organizations seeking to increase motivation, satisfaction, and performance in their work.

3.4 Thought-Focused Strategies

Constructive thought strategies are techniques that help individuals develop functional thinking patterns that support their well-being and success. These approaches encompass the assessment and questioning of illogical thoughts and assumptions, visualizing successful future performance, and encouraging constructive self-talk. (Houghton & Neck 2002.) By using these strategies, individuals can change their habitual thinking patterns and cultivate a more positive mindset. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

One common form of dysfunctional thinking that can affect mental health is irrational beliefs. These beliefs have been shown to contribute to numerous disorders, including depression and anxiety. Those who suffer from depression and anxiety have a tendency to perceive their experiences in a continuous, pessimistic, self-destructive manner because of these deeply ingrained beliefs. (Bridges & Harnish 2010.) To address these beliefs, individuals must first identify and confront them to minimize their impact on their thinking and behaviours.

Additionally, persistently dysfunctional thought patterns can result in adverse consequences such as decreased productivity, anxiety, and depression. Dysfunctional irrational beliefs often underlie these processes, so identifying and altering them can minimize dysfunctional thinking and promote effective cognitive processes. (Houghton et al. 2012.) Engaging in constructive thought strategies can help individuals develop positive and functional thought patterns, leading to increased well-being and success in both personal and professional lives. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Self-efficacy beliefs, which are an important aspect of self-leadership, refer to one's belief in their ability to succeed in a given situation. These beliefs have a positive impact on an individual's thoughts, emotions, motivation, and behaviour. (Bandura 1994.) According to Manz & Sims' (2001) book positive self-efficacy beliefs enhance the likelihood of success, while negative self-efficacy beliefs reduce it.

In addition, constructive thought strategies can also improve gig workers' ability to self-motivate and self-regulate their behaviours. Utilizing positive self-talk and visualization techniques can enhance self-efficacy and enable gig workers to establish a greater sense of authority regarding their work. They can establish and reach objectives, effectively manage their time, and remain attentive to the task at hand in result. In addition, by evaluating and challenging their irrational beliefs and assumptions, gig workers can reduce feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, which are common in gig work due to the unpredictable nature of the work. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

In conclusion, it is crucial for gig workers to adopt constructive thought strategies to cultivate a positive and productive mindset. Given the isolated nature of gig work and the potential lack of social support, developing a strong sense of self-efficacy through positive self-talk and mental imagery is essential for gig workers to effectively self-motivate and self-regulate. This, in turn, can enhance their ability to achieve goals, manage time, and ultimately improve their mental health, well-being, and job satisfaction.

3.5 Gain Self-Leadership Skills for Gig Workers

Gig workers have the opportunity to implement a variety of self-leadership strategies, including those that focus on behaviour, natural rewards, and constructive thoughts. Due to the flexibility and autonomy inherent in gig work, implementing these strategies may be more feasible than in traditional work settings. Gig workers can personalize their approach by selecting the self-leadership techniques that are most effective for them. (Manz & Sims 2001.) There are some tips for gig workers to gain self-leadership skills, according to the self-leadership strategies:

Set Clear Goals

Define what individuals want to achieve in the gig work and break it down into manageable steps. This will help individuals stay focused and motivated.

Practice Time Management

Use scheduling tools to manage time effectively and prioritize the tasks. Set realistic deadlines and stick to them.

Take Breaks

It is important to take regular breaks to recharge and avoid burnout. Use the time to relax and enjoy life.

Seek Feedback

Ask for feedback from managers or colleagues to improve work performance and identify areas for growth.

Learn New Skills

In today's fast-changing world, acquiring new skills is no longer just a matter of personal development, but a necessity for thriving in the job market. Stay up to date with industry trends and develop new skills to remain competitive in the gig economy.

Embrace Changes

Embrace the uncertainty and ambiguity that comes with gig work. Learn to adapt to new situations and be open to new opportunities.

Practice Self-care

Take care of your physical and mental health by eating well, exercising, and developing a hobby.

Overall, developing and supporting self-leadership in gig workers requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account their unique needs and challenges. By implementing these tips, gig workers can develop self-leadership skills that will help them succeed in the gig economy and improve their overall well-being. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

3.6 Gain Self-Leadership Skills for Organizations

One challenge that many organizations face today is how to maintain a high quality of work in the virtual work environment. The gig economy requires quick and adaptable responses throughout the organization due to the fast pace of change. Independent and highly skilled workers, crucial to organization success, demand a kind of leadership that allows for autonomy highly. Traditional top-and-down leadership is no longer suitable as it can be slow and limiting. (Manz & Sims 2001.) Developing and supporting self-leadership in organizations is crucial for fostering a culture of autonomy, accountability, and innovation. To implement self-leadership practices in the workplace, organizations need to provide the necessary resources, training, and support to help employees develop the skills and mindset needed to take ownership of their work. There are some tips for organizations to gain self-leadership skills, according to the self-leadership strategies.

3.6.1 Self-Managed Team

The approach to developing self-leadership in organizations through the use of self-managed teams is effective because it empowers employees to take ownership of their work and develop leadership skills. By allowing employees to make decisions and manage their own work processes, self-managed teams provide opportunities for individuals to develop their problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills. (Contreras et al. 2020.)

It should be noted that for self-managed teams and self-leadership training programs to be successful, a culture of trust and psychological safety must be present. Studies have shown that building trust is critical to motivating and engaging employees, particularly in a remote work environment. (Michelle et al. 2006.) Therefore, companies should foster a culture that encourages open communication, collaboration, and constructive feedback to promote self-leadership skills at work.

3.6.2 Healthy Environment

Bryant and Kazan (2013) found that companies that foster self-leadership tend to experience increased sales, motivation, and enthusiasm among their employees. Therefore, creating a healthy environment for self-leadership to grow can have financial benefits for organizations.

To create a healthy work environment, communication is the key. Maintaining regular communication with the team and establishing clear guidelines for communication are essential in fostering employee motivation. Virtual leaders, in particular, need to know how to help and provide support by using online devices. To prevent employees from feeling isolated or left out, it is important to establish informal social interactions, such as face-to-face or virtual meetings, and to provide regular feedback. This helps create a sense of connection and promotes a collaborative team environment. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Consider revising the sentence to avoid similarity: Building a cohesive team and supporting its members is a crucial aspect of leadership. Holding regular social interactions can meet the safety, social, and esteem needs of employees, leading to improved motivation and overall well-being. (Contreras et al. 2020; Van Wart et al. 2019.)

Lastly, creating a positive work environment promotes work-life balance, offers flexible work arrangements, and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth. When employees feel supported and valued, they are more likely to take ownership of their work and develop their self-leadership skills. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

3.6.3 Providing Training

Training and coaching programs can be an effective way for organizations to support the development of self-leadership skills in their employees. By providing training and coaching, organizations can teach employees how to set goals, manage their time effectively, and take responsibility for their own performance. Providing opportunities for employee development can enhance their performance and sense of empowerment, resulting in increased job satisfaction and retention. Additionally, when employees feel that their organization is committed to their growth and development, they are more likely to feel valued and that motivated gig workers to perform better. In addition, the author wrote about The Learnable Skill of Self-Leadership in the early chapter in order to give an idea to organizations of what they should expect after they provide the self-leadership training. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

3.6.4 Leadership Support

Leadership also plays a critical role in supporting self-leadership in organizations. Leaders need to model self-leadership behaviours and create a culture that encourages autonomy and experimentation. It includes giving employees the freedom to experiment, take risks, and learn from their mistakes, as well as providing regular feedback and recognition for their achievements. In addition, leaders should provide regular feedback and recognition to encourage employees to continue their growth. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

According to Manz & Sims' (2001) research, Super Leadership involves using everyday conversations to build the confidence of followers and promote self-leadership practices. Leaders should avoid authoritarian language and instead, ask employees to determine their own direction and goals. They should also ask for feedback on mistakes and encourage exploration of alternative solutions when making decisions. Listening to employees is also essential to effective leadership.

Furthermore, leaders use their power in a wise and effective way to support self-leadership in their teams. Rather than using language that centers on direction, instruction, and command, leaders can empower their team members to take ownership of their work by asking questions like "What's next?" or "Where are you headed?" instead of assigning goals. Additionally, instead of criticizing team members for mistakes, leaders can ask what they learned from the situation and encourage them to explore alternative solutions when making decisions. By listening more and criticizing less, leaders can create a culture that encourages autonomy, experimentation, and self-leadership. These behaviors and attitudes help to foster a trusting and supportive relationship between leaders and their team

members, which can lead to better outcomes for both individuals and the organization as a whole. (Chales & Henry 2001.)

When leaders actively support and participate in employees' work, they give them the power to take charge of their workdays. This creates a sense of value and initiative, allowing employees to complete their work effectively without supervision. Empowering employees to lead themselves can also help them cope with remote work challenges and emergencies. Overall, developing self-leadership skills can benefit both organizations and individuals by promoting employee well-being, commitment, effectiveness, and collaboration. (Bryant & Kazan 2013.)

Overall, developing and supporting self-leadership in organizations requires a concerted effort from leaders, managers, and employees. By creating a culture that values autonomy, accountability, and innovation, organizations can empower their employees to take ownership of their work and achieve their goals, leading to improved performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

In conclusion, self-leadership strategies are a set of guidelines and techniques aimed at enhancing individual performance. By applying these strategies, individuals can influence their behaviours, thoughts, and emotions, leading to improved personal and organizational outcomes as suggested by Houghton and DiLiello (2012).

4 Empirical Data and Data Analysis

4.1 Data Acquisition

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research to collect data, either in individual or group interviews. To ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research, a well-constructed semi-structured interview guide should be made. However, conducting effective semi-structured interviews requires a thorough understanding of the research topic, as the interview questions and guide are derived from it. By investing time and effort in creating a robust interview guide, researchers can enhance the quality and reliability of their qualitative data. (Kallio et al. 2016.) Normally, the interviews are conducted once with a time limit between 30 mins to 90 mins. Core questions guide the whole interview, and the follow-up questions to be asked with the aim of giving a better understanding of the core questions. (Jamshed 2014.)

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the study because they provide the flexibility to ask follow-up questions and delve deeper into participants' experiences, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of self-leadership skills in gig work. This approach also enables the researcher to narrow down the topic and gain a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences of interviewees. (George 2022.) The data was collected by interviewing five gig workers from five different professions in one gig workers' discussion group on Facebook. The invitation letter used to recruit participants can be found in Appendix 3. Interviews were conducted via a telecommunications tool, called Microsoft Teams. To enable further examination, the interviews were documented and transcribed word-for-word. The data collected from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to ensure the inclusion of gig workers with recent experience on the gig online platforms. The interviewees were specifically chosen based on their engagement as gig workers for a duration of at least six months, but not exceeding two years. The reason was explained in the instruction chapter that experienced gig workers may have better self-leadership skills through years of exploration, which is not discussed in the thesis. Additionally, to enhance the validity of the thesis, a diversity of occupational types (Teachers, delivery drivers, kitchen assistants, translators, and kindergarten nurses) were covered.

Prepare for Interviews

The interview questions have been divided into 3 categories thematically. By using an online mind-map tool Canva, the interview infographic (Appendix 2) and the interview guide (Appendix 1) were drafted. The interview infographic gave a brief introduction to

what are three self-leadership strategies. This section of the interview guide is crucial. The interview infographic aimed to help create a well-balanced interview guide which is stick to the topic. The interview guide was created as three main parts: background information, self-leadership, and working environment. In the working environment part, the author added some questions concerning the interviewees' well-being to find their health status in the present. The self-leadership skills section aims to discover how interviewees apply self-leadership in their work life. Additionally, the author conducted an interview with an individual who works in an online gig platform as a test run. A test interview could be to make sure the interview questions are clear and understandable. The interview guide was effectively organized, and all questions were designed to serve the research objectives. Following a successful test interview, the main interviews were carried out.

The research participants voluntarily took part in the interviews. They chose their own interview time to avoid work-time conflicts or feeling tired during the interview. Due to all interviewees using English as their work language, English has been chosen as the valid language for the interviews. Five interviews in total were conducted on the 2nd, 4th, 8th, 9th and 10th of December 2022 via Microsoft Teams video calls, as it is the convenient way for both sides. Individual interviews were conducted with each participant, ensuring a one-on-one interaction. In order to maintain anonymity and protect the identities of the interviewees, the results are presented without any personal information in the thesis.

To prevent any confusion and ensure the interviewees provide high-quality answers, the author provided a brief explanation of the basic terminology, definition, and tools of self-leadership at the beginning of each interview. This also helped to differentiate self-leadership from similar terms like shared leadership or self-management. Additionally, an infographic (see Appendix 2) was included to visually explain the author's intention and make it easier for interviewees to understand.

The importance of the infographic has been found in the test interview. The interviewee was not familiar with the self-leadership theory, especially the strategy part. Therefore, it is essential to explain clearly to the interviewees what self-leadership and the tools are. Also, the interviewees can ask questions anytime they need.

Additionally, author obtained consent from the interviewees to record the interviews for the purpose of transcribing them into a written format at a later time. This was done to ensure accurate and complete data collection, as well as to facilitate the analysis process by allowing the author to review the interviews in detail. The interview recordings were destroyed once they were no longer required.

All interviewees were asked identical questions from the interview guide (see Appendix 1). The author clarified some questions in certain interviews to minimize the risk of misunderstanding, and additional questions were asked in some interviews to achieve better answers.

The findings of the research interviews have been presented anonymously, with each interviewee identified by an independent reference of I1, I2, I3, I4, and I5, representing five interviews, respectively. It is noteworthy that none of the interviewees possessed prior work experience as a leader, which may have influenced the implementation of self-leadership at their work compared to those who had leadership experience. The interviews were conducted from 1st to 29th of December 2022.

Background information of interviewees

Providing background information about the interviewees can enhance the validity of the research. Interviewee 1 (I1) had been working as a teacher for one year and nine months and began doing gig work in March 2020. Interviewee 2 (I2) had worked as a delivery driver for three months at the time of the interview, having left his office job six months prior due to personal reasons. Interviewee 3 (I3) had been working as a kitchen assistant for one year and four months since August 2020. This is his first job. Interviewee 4 (I4) worked as a translator for one year and two months, starting in October 2020. She mostly works from home, but occasionally goes to offices if required by employers. Finally, Interviewee 5 (I5) had worked as a kindergarten nurse for six months at the time of the interview, having started in June 2021. It is worth noting that none of the interviewees had attended leadership-related courses or theoretical studies before. Thus, they gained a significant amount of information about leadership and self-leadership through their participation in the study.

4.2 Data Analysis

As required by the objectives of the thesis, a thematic study was conducted on the interviews. The following subchapters will present the interviews outcomes in three themes: The Changing Landscape of Work Life, Implementation of Self-Leadership Skills, and Support from Organizations. Additionally, the author created an infographic to summarize the interviews outcomes, which can be found in figure 4.

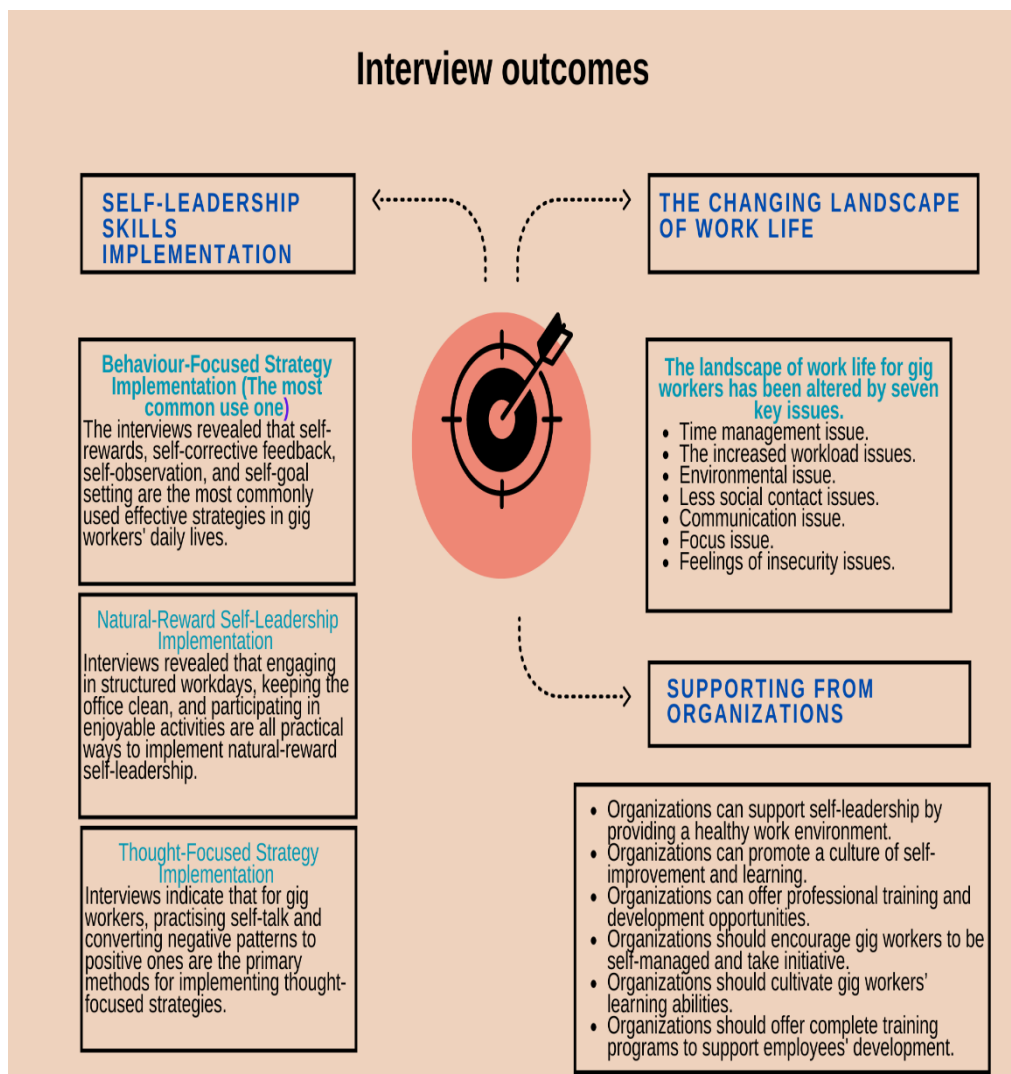


Figure 4: Interviews outcomes

4.2.1 The Changing Landscape of Work Life

Time Management

One potential challenge faced by gig workers is effective time management. Although the flexibility of gig work can be a major benefit, it can also make it challenging for workers to effectively manage their schedules. Unlike regular employees who can follow the schedule set by managers or leaders, gig workers must create their own schedules and take into account various unpredictable factors that can affect their work. Additionally, as gig workers often work independently and have different schedules, they cannot rely on the practices of their colleagues. As I4 mentioned, she needs to use a to-do list and reminder notes to keep track of her tasks, which is a common strategy used by other interviewees

as well. The finding is consistent with the behaviour-focused strategies discussed in the study.

The Increased Workload

Gig workers often face the issue of an increased workload. As gig workers are paid per task or project, the more they work, the more income they generate. However, this can lead to challenges in managing workload and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. For instance, I2 mentioned that he does not set a limit on his working hours and works until he feels tired each day. Similarly, I1 and I3 mentioned that working from home increases their desire to work more, leading to an increase in their weekly working hours from the standard 37.5 hours to 42 hours or more. I3 stated the reason below:

“Before when I worked in the office, it takes me about one hour to drive to the office, and very often take me one and a half hours to go to the office in the morning if there is a traffic jam. So, I could save about 3 hours each day by working at home and I am willing to work longer time to earn more money.”

I1 also mentioned that sometimes there are some pop-up tasks. Because she wants to keep a good relationship with the online job platforms, she would take them even if it happens at weekends. She said that work-life balance is what she needs to pay more attention to since she is a workaholic.

Note that even though gig workers have more autonomy over their work schedule, achieving a life-work balance can still be difficult. The flexibility of gig work means that there may be a temptation to work longer hours or take on more tasks to earn additional income, leading to burnout and negative impacts on physical and mental health. To manage this issue, interviewees suggested practicing self-care, setting specific working hours, and taking breaks regularly. This finding is reflected in the self-awareness, the developing tips for gig Workers, and behaviour-focused self-leadership strategies discussed in this study. Additionally, organizations that hire gig workers should also consider the impact of increased workload on their well-being and take steps to ensure that they are not overburdened with excessive demands.

Environmental Changes

Thirdly, environmental issues. It is important to note that environmental changes can have a significant effect on the physical and mental well-being of gig workers. As described by I4 below, gig work differs from regular office work, and the change in environment can make workers nervous and affect their mental well-being.

“Gig work feels completely different from office work, and it requires paying more attention to changeable work environment compared to work at the office, because you have a stable working environment in the office.”

All five interviewees mentioned the physical and psychological impact of environmental changes. I4 specifically described the struggle of doing gig work and how her mental well-being deteriorated over time. Sjöblom & Mäkikangas (2022) found that certain aspects of novel work environments, such as increased flexibility and autonomy, can potentially enhance employee health and well-being, but may also lead to challenges such as mental overload and stress. The finding highlights the importance of situational awareness, one of the self-leadership strategies, which emphasizes the need to be aware of the environment and adapt to changing situations. By practicing situational awareness, gig workers can better manage their well-being and productivity in various work environments. Organizations that hire gig workers can also play a role in providing supportive and comfortable work environments for gig workers. The finding is consistent with the Healthy environment subcategory discussed in 3.5.2, which is an important factor in self-leadership.

Social Contact

The interviews revealed that changing jobs did not have a significant impact on the financial or physical well-being of the interviewees, but rather had a more pronounced effect on their mental and social well-being. Specifically, I2 reported that working alone and without social contact negatively affected his mental health, resulting in feelings of frustration, decreased self-control, and a sense of purposelessness. Additionally, contact with colleagues is essential for work. All five interviewees also noted that not seeing their colleagues made them feel isolated and decreased the meaningfulness of their work, making it harder to maintain their mental health.

These findings are consistent with both the Nature Rewards and Constructive Thought strategies discussed earlier, as a decrease in these factors can have detrimental effects on the well-being of gig workers. Creating a supportive work environment, encouraging positive self-talk, and providing opportunities for social contact with colleagues are essential in improving the well-being of gig workers. By adopting these measures, organizations can promote self-leadership and enhance the performance of their gig workers and their overall job satisfaction.

Communication

I1 and I4 mentioned that they experienced a decrease in communication with their colleagues or leaders since they started working in the gig economy. In traditional jobs, they would regularly meet with colleagues or managers during coffee breaks or lunchtime.

However, in gig work, they constantly change workplaces and meet new people, making it challenging to build relationships. Furthermore, they rarely see anyone from their online job platform's head offices, and the situation worsened during the pandemic when most of their daily activities moved online. Face-to-face contact became more difficult to fulfil, which resulted in a sense of detachment from their work community and a lack of motivation.

Additionally, five interviewees considered that they still receive support from managers or team leaders, although the forms of support they receive vary. I2 and I4 have rarely met leaders in person. Most of the time, they have Zoom or Microsoft Teams meetings. However, they particularly brought up that their team leaders encourage them all the time to take initiative and support them through phone calls. The other three interviewees still receive face-to-face instructions for their work, but the instructions come from their employers rather than their leaders from the online platform. They described that the employers tend to give more instructions to make sure they do not do anything wrong because of the unfamiliar work environments, but they do not encourage them too much. As I2 and I3 explained that due to the communication format changes, self-talk, self-observation and self-goal setting become essential for their daily work.

However, all interviewees seem to have adapted to the new work environment quickly. They mentioned that they have become accustomed to the new work pattern, and their desire for social contact has declined compared to the beginning of their gig work. The situation highlights the importance of gig workers practicing the five core qualities of self-leadership, especially the focus and discipline parts discussed by Franko (2018).

Stressful workplaces have organizational costs and negative consequences for employees, which can seriously affect an individual's well-being and mental health. Organizational support plays an important role in mitigating these negative effects (Van et al. 2004). These findings can be reflected in 3.5.4 Leadership support and 2.4 The importance of leadership. Organizations employing gig workers should be aware of the communication challenges and take steps to promote regular communication and build relationships with their gig workers. Providing opportunities for social contact and building a supportive work environment can help mitigate the negative effects of decreased communication on gig workers' mental well-being and job satisfaction.

Focus

I1 explained that compared to face-to-face teaching, she needs to put more effort into focusing than teaching at home. I1 stated her focus issue as below:

“Online teaching is challenging for me sometimes, because I just can’t focus to work at home. I did not have this problem when I worked at school. Maybe because home is too cozy and comfortable, I cannot do things efficiently. Sometimes at home, you are just distracted by housework or TV.”

It seems that I1 is having trouble with maintaining focus while teaching online from home. I1 may benefit from implementing self-leadership strategies to help her maintain focus. The behaviour-focused strategies are especially helpful in this case as they focus on changing specific actions and behaviours to achieve desired outcomes, such as creating a designated workspace in her home that is free from distractions, setting specific goals and taking regular breaks. By practicing self-leadership in this way, I1 can improve her ability to focus and enhance her overall productivity and job satisfaction.

Feeling of Insecurity

The issue of insecurity was raised by I2, I3, and I5 who stated that compared to their previous jobs, they now pay additional attention to their well-being, both physically and mentally. They feel that they need to take care of themselves because if they do not work, they do not get paid. The sense of insecurity can lead to increased stress levels, which can negatively impact their well-being.

To address the issue, it may be helpful for them to develop self-leadership strategies, such as setting specific goals for their work and establishing a routine that allows them to manage their workload effectively. Additionally, they could prioritize self-care activities, such as exercise and healthy eating, to promote their overall well-being. By adopting these self-leadership strategies, they may be better equipped to manage the insecurities that come with gig work and improve their overall job satisfaction. Employers can also support gig workers' well-being by providing resources and training related to self-care and stress management.

To sum up, the above issues disturb the fulfil of self-leadership and individuals' mental well-being. Luckily, it can be solved by proper training. All interviewees evaluate that they must imply more self-leadership than before, according to the special feature of gig work. They make clear that coping with all the new changes during the first months was challenging and required a change of thought patterns, it will go smoothly after a while. These elements, such as self-talk. Self-cueing and self-goal setting are used every day in their work and these findings are related to self-leadership strategies, which can be found in section 3 Self-leadership strategies. Keep developing professional skills and being positive are crucial in gig work based on interviewees' experiences.

4.2.2 Self-Leadership Skills Implementation

Behaviour-Focused Strategy Implementation

In the interviews, all participants indicated that they were utilizing all three self-leadership strategies to some extent, although there were variations between participants in terms of which strategies they used most frequently. The most commonly mentioned strategy among the interviewees was the behavior-focused strategy, which was discussed most frequently and was reported to be the strategy that interviewees used most often.

I4 and I5 said that self-rewards are crucial for them after a tough day or stressful task. Self-rewards can help them recover faster from the exhausting day and give them more energy for the new day. They use various types of self-rewards depending on the situation. I1 mentioned that she tends to use self-punishment more often than self-rewards. She attributed this to her upbringing, where her family relied on punishment more than rewards, which has influenced her way of thinking. She admitted being highly critical of her work performance and only rewarding herself when she achieves something significant, such as receiving a certificate or earning a reward. However, self-punishment is generally not effective and can lead to decreased motivation and decreased effectiveness at work. Manz & Sims (2001) suggested that using self-corrective feedback represents a better alternative. Also, being critical towards our performance can cause negative thought patterns (Houghton and Neck 2006), which is harmful to our health. She reinforced that she has tried to be more merciful to herself, but it does take time.

I3 and I5 emphasized the importance of self-observation. I3 noted that since kitchen assistant is his first job, self-observation has been a valuable way for him to gain self-knowledge. I5 mentioned that compared to her previous job, she receives less feedback from managers, causing her to lose track of self-evaluation. Self-observation has helped her take measures to improve her work performance. These points support Mahoney & Arnkoff's (1979) theory that self-observation provides information for self-evaluation and self-knowledge, making it a crucial aspect of self-leadership. Additionally, according to Norris (2018), there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and self-leadership, and effective use of these concepts can lead to improved work effectiveness. The self-goal setting is also an integral part of behaviour-focused strategies. All of them have mentioned goal setting, the difference is some are long-term goals, and some are short-term goals. For example, I4 usually sets goals monthly as shown in the quote below:

“At the beginning of the month, I will put down how many pieces of translation work I want to take for the whole month. Also, put down which part of my

work needs to be improved, such as translation degree of speed or accuracy. I learned this from my boss, it helps me to improve my performance a lot."

Neck et al. (2020) noted that identifying and developing cues can enhance a person's self-efficacy. Self-cueing was commonly mentioned by all interviewees. They all spoke about to-do lists, setting reminders, and alerts. In a traditional work environment, they may have a structured workday with fixed times for breaks and lunch. However, in gig work, there are no colleagues to remind them to take breaks or have lunch, making it easy to skip these important activities without an alert. But the working situations can be various, so people still need to find what is best for themselves. As I2 mentioned, lunchtime is their busiest time for delivering food, so they always have a late lunch. But they set an alarm to remind them to have lunch for the sake of their health. I1 also mentioned that when working from home, they tidy up their office room, as having a tidy home environment helps them focus and boosts their mood for work. These findings are all related to behaviour-focused strategies, which emphasize the importance of identifying and modifying cues to improve self-efficacy.

Natural-Reward Strategy Implementation

Speaking about natural-reward self-leadership strategies, all five interviewees mentioned that they practice them a lot in their daily lives. For example, I4 talked about how she structures her workday. She uses lunchtime and break time to divide her day into three time slots: before lunch, after lunch, and after the coffee break. This allows her to avoid working continuously until late afternoon without taking breaks. Sometimes, when she finishes tasks early, she rewards herself with a long break. Houghton and Neck (2006) explain that constructing workdays in a way that is naturally rewarding for an individual is important. Additionally, Franko (2018) points out that time management is a crucial aspect of self-leadership.

I1 mentioned that she always cleans her office room when working from home, as it keeps her in a good mood. This aligns with the idea presented by Bryant & Kazan (2013) that a pleasant physical location is considered a natural reward for workers.

I4 mentioned that she feels self-control, competence and responsibility when her company refers special translation cases to her. According to Manz & Sims (2001), when a task provides a feeling of competence, purpose, and self-control, it is naturally rewarding for the worker. Additionally, Bryant & Kazan (2013) suggested that incorporating pleasant activities into workdays can serve as a powerful external reward in natural-reward self-leadership strategies.

Thought-Focused Strategy Implementation

I2 talked about using self-talk to help him to help him remember his schedules as a food delivery driver. His work requires precision and speed. He must deliver food to customers while the food is still hot. Sometimes he will pick up a few orders along one street and deliver them together. He would use self-talk to organize the routine and avoid mistakes. Positive self-talk is a typical behaviour of constructive thought-focused strategies, explained by Houghton & Neck (2002).

I1 shared that she tends to be very self-critical when she makes mistakes, and often re-plays her errors in her mind to try and figure out how she could have done better. However, self-critical can lead to negative thought patterns, as she is overly harsh on herself. I1 also noted that she has attempted to be more compassionate towards herself, but thus far, has not seen much progress. Bryant and Kazan (2013) suggest that changing thought patterns is a key part of thought-focused strategies, which aim to turn negative patterns into positive ones. I1's experience highlights the importance of being self-aware and using thought-focused strategies to change negative thought patterns into positive ones.

It's interesting to note that constructive thought-focused strategies were the least mentioned self-leadership strategies among the interviewees, with I3 finding it difficult to find concrete actions to implement the concept. However, he does occasionally utilize these strategies to foster positive thought patterns, as research indicates that having positive beliefs about our ability to perform successfully can increase the likelihood of actually doing so, while negative beliefs can have the opposite effect. (Manz & Sims 2001.)

Finally, the interviewees reported that they needed to imply more self-leadership in their work, especially during the initial months of gig work. All the changes they faced required a change in their thought patterns. It appears that self-leadership strategies are highly beneficial for gig workers in managing their work and personal lives. While each individual has their own unique approach, self-cueing, scheduling, and self-observation appear to be common tools that are utilized. The interviewees emphasized the importance of continuously developing their professional skills, self-leadership skills and maintaining a positive mindset in gig work. Overall, these strategies help gig workers to increase their efficiency and productivity. It seems that gig workers can overcome the stated challenges above by adopting effective self-leadership strategies in order to enhance their mental well-being.

4.2.3 Supporting from Organizations

It is clear that virtual leadership requires a different approach compared to traditional leadership. Encouraging employees to take initiative and be self-managed is crucial in this

environment, as mentioned by I1 and I5. Despite the shift to gig work, both interviewees found it easy to adapt, with most of their daily tasks being similar to their previous work. The main difference lies in the way they communicate with their organizations, with email and phone calls replacing in-person meetings. However, prompt responses from their organizations have helped build trust and security, which are crucial in a virtual work environment. (Contreras et al. 2020.)

I4's experience also highlights the importance of regular communication and feedback in virtual leadership. While she rarely sees her manager in person, weekly video conferences and feedback from the system have helped her feel supported and motivated. Furthermore, her manager's computer skills and willingness to teach her new tricks have helped her improve her work efficiency. Overall, virtual leadership requires building trust, regular communication, and a focus on employee self-management and initiative.

Contrastingly, I3 described that he does not feel enough support from his organization. It takes him two months to adapt to the new environment. He continued to explain as below:

"My organization's leadership is more towards top-down leadership. I feel that they just need someone to do the work, they do not care about who I am, what I am thinking."

This is I3's first job, so we cannot rule out his own reasons, such as suddenly transitioning from a student to a worker, which may require more time for him to adapt than others. However, because of it, leaders should pay more attention to him and provide greater support. As Bryant and Kazan (2013) explain in section 3.5 on the importance of leadership. Self-leadership at the organizational level can have a significant impact on the well-being, commitment, effectiveness, and collaboration of employees. The organization should support personal growth through self-leadership because self-leadership gives employees more confidence and less stress, benefiting both individuals and organizations. (Bryant & Kazan 2013.) Additionally, he also mentioned that he feels like his manager expects him to manage his work with little to no support. From his words, we can see that I3's organization recognizes the importance of self-leadership, but the organization has not figured out how to train employees in self-leadership. As stated in section 3.6 on Gain self-leadership skills for gig workers, organizations should cultivate employees' learning ability, not only in learning techniques to work, but also in working efficiently and gaining valuable experiences.

I2 described that at the beginning of his gig work, he felt stressed, directionless and struggled to manage his workload. However, he received the necessary support from his or-

ganization, and what surprised him the most was the warm-heartedness of his colleagues. Despite never meeting them in person, he felt a strong connection with them through the group chat in the phone app. This finding aligns with the concept of developing self-leadership in organizations, where team members can engage in shared leadership and knowledge creation. (Michelle et al. 2006.) It only took him about two weeks to adapt to the gig work, and his organization encouraged gig workers to take responsibility for their work, which has created a positive effect on their motivation and sense of purpose. These findings can be further supported by the importance of leadership, as discussed in 2.4.

An interesting finding is that, except for I3, all four of the other interviewees spoke about their organizations supporting self-leadership, but none of them was able to provide any training documents specifically related to self-leadership. This suggests that self-leadership is not visibly implemented in the organizations' strategies. As a result, the interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with this and expressed a desire for the organizations to provide a complete training program on self-leadership for them to learn and practice.

In conclusion, the interviews have revealed the vital role of self-leadership in promoting personal and professional development. The interviewees emphasized the significance of self-leadership and expressed a wish for their organizations to provide training programs to enhance this skill. Organizations should support self-leadership by providing a healthy work environment, promoting a culture of self-improvement and learning, and offering professional training and development opportunities.

5 Conclusions, Recommendations, Self-Evaluation

5.1 Answers to Research Questions

The aim of the research is to explore strategies to improve the well-being of gig workers during their working lives. To accomplish the research objective, one primary research question and two subordinate questions were addressed below.

The main research question:

How to improve gig workers' well-being during their working lives?

Answer: Collaboration among gig workers, organizations, and society as a whole is essential for improving the well-being of gig workers. Self-leadership strategies have been identified as a key solution for this collaboration, especially in the context of self-leadership. Gig workers can benefit from mastering self-leadership skills, which can help them work more efficiently and effectively, ultimately enhancing their well-being. Organizations can also play a crucial role in improving gig workers' well-being by offering training and development programs that provide opportunities for personal and professional growth. By investing in their workers' growth and development, companies can improve gig workers' job satisfaction and overall well-being. Furthermore, policymakers could introduce regulations to protect gig workers from challenges, leading to better job satisfaction and overall well-being. By working together, gig workers, organizations, and society can create a more positive and sustainable gig economy that prioritizes the well-being of all its participants.

The sub-questions are the following:

What specific self-leadership strategies can gig workers adopt to improve their well-being?

Answer: Adopting self-leadership strategies can be instrumental in promoting the well-being of gig workers in the gig economy. The three primary types of self-leadership strategies provide specific techniques for managing work and personal life, leading to better overall outcomes. Behavioral-focused strategies involve setting goals, planning, and monitoring progress. Natural reward-focused strategies involve identifying intrinsic rewards that are associated with the work, such as enjoyment or personal fulfillment. Constructive thought-focused strategies involve using positive self-talk and visualization techniques to improve performance and well-being.

In addressing the sub-question, it is important to consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which posits that individuals have basic physiological, and safety needs that must be met before they can focus on higher-level needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In the context of the research, self-leadership strategies are seen as essential to meeting higher-level needs such as self-actualization.

What are the effective strategies that organizations can implement to enhance gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction?

Answer: Organizations can implement various effective strategies to enhance gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction. One key strategy is to offer gig workers training and development programs that provide opportunities for personal and professional growth. This can include access to online courses, mentoring, and coaching. Another strategy is to foster a culture of open communication, collaboration, and constructive feedback to facilitate the development of self-leadership skills in their workforce. Additionally, organizations can offer gig workers benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off, which can improve their financial security and overall well-being. Lastly, organizations can work with policymakers to establish regulations that protect gig workers from challenges such as job insecurity and lack of benefits, which can improve their job satisfaction and overall well-being.

5.2 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility of the thesis, the research was conducted with a rigorous commitment to validity and reliability. The collection of primary data for this study involved conducting online interviews with a diverse group of gig workers, who volunteered to participate and were carefully selected to provide a range of perspectives. All interview questions were based on the concept of self-leadership and its strategies and were designed to minimize personal influence and biases. To supplement the primary data, secondary data was gathered from reputable sources such as books, articles, and journals, which were thoroughly evaluated for their accuracy and relevance to the research questions. The research questions were written in clear and concise English and were specifically formulated to address the main research question and its follow-up questions.

The purpose of the thesis was to provide valuable insights and recommendations for improving gig workers' well-being, and to contribute to the ongoing discussions on self-leadership in the gig economy. The findings and conclusions presented in the thesis are based on a rigorous analysis of the primary and secondary data and are grounded in established theories and frameworks on self-leadership and well-being. The validity and reli-

ability of the research have been ensured through a systematic and transparent approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

As gig work becomes increasingly prevalent in today's economy, there is an urgent need for research to identify effective strategies for improving the well-being of gig workers. The objective of the thesis was to identify effective tools and skills to enhance the well-being and job satisfaction of gig workers. However, due to the scope of the thesis, certain factors such as cultural and national differences were not considered. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the effectiveness of interventions in different cultural contexts.

Additionally, future research could focus on conducting a comprehensive analysis of specific online job platforms, such as Uber or Wolt, to determine the most effective strategies for improving the well-being of gig workers. Moreover, research with gig workers who have accumulated years of experience in the gig economy could provide valuable insights into how to mitigate the challenges and maximize the benefits of gig work. The research should also take into account the unique characteristics of gig work and how they impact workers' well-being.

Overall, the implications of the research are significant for workers, employers, and policymakers alike. By promoting the well-being of gig workers, we can ensure that these workers are able to thrive in the gig economy and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future of work.

5.4 Conclusions

Research results combined with the self-leadership concept, self-leadership strategies, and the interviews contain five gig workers who implemented self-leadership in their daily life. Because each interviewee possesses a unique background, level of learning ability, and self-leadership skill proficiency, the impact of joining the gig economy on their well-being varies. But there is one point for sure self-leadership is a valid tool to help them cope with daily work and improve their well-being and job satisfaction. Below are the findings the author explored.

The research finds that work alone and less social contact are the biggest problems for gig workers. Communicating less with people may cause anxiety, stress and unpleasant feelings. These negative emotions may cause serious mental issues. Additionally, the research reveals that gig workers tend to take care of themselves more, due to lack of

security in gig work. The findings indicate that self-leadership strategies, including behaviour-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought pattern strategies, can be effective tools for gig workers to enhance their self-management, self-influence and self-efficacy. By adopting these strategies, gig workers can manage their work more effectively, avoid negative influences, and achieve greater control over their work and life.

The research also finds that the role of organizations is crucial in supporting gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction. Organizations can provide gig workers with training and development opportunities, offer greater control and autonomy over their work and life, and create a supportive and inclusive work environment. By empowering gig workers and increasing their engagement in their work, the use of self-leadership can result in better outcomes for both gig workers and their respective organizations. Furthermore, it is important for society to take an active role in promoting the well-being of gig workers. This can involve promoting policies and regulations that recognize the unique challenges that gig workers face. This can include providing new healthcare benefits, retirement savings plans, and unemployment insurance.

In conclusion, the utilization of self-leadership strategies by gig workers has the potential to enhance their well-being and job satisfaction in the gig economy. Through positive self-influence, leading themselves, and accessing training and development opportunities, gig workers can enhance their self-efficacy in order to reach self-actualization. Meanwhile, organizations and society as a whole can also play a crucial role in supporting gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, further research, the following recommendations are proposed for organizations to enhance gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction:

Firstly, develop a self-leadership culture. The study found that different organizations have different levels of implementing self-leadership. In the future, organizations should make self-leadership part of their culture or strategy. This could include providing training and resources to help gig workers develop their self-leadership skills.

Secondly, the traditional "command and control" leadership is no longer suitable for the gig economy. Instead, organizations should adopt a new type of leadership that aligns with the gig economy's unique characteristics. Self-leadership should be a critical component of the new leadership style, as it empowers gig workers to take responsibility for their own actions.

Thirdly, establish clear communication channels. Organizations should establish clear communication channels with gig workers to provide regular feedback and address any concerns or issues that arise. This could include providing regular performance reviews or a channel where gig workers can voice their opinions and feedback.

Fourthly, encourage social interaction. Organizations should encourage social interaction among gig workers to foster a sense of community. This could include organizing social events and team building activities, providing opportunities for gig workers to meet in person, and creating online communities where gig workers can connect and collaborate.

By implementing these recommendations, organizations can create a positive work environment that supports gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction, ultimately improving organizations' performance and gaining profits.

5.6 Self-Evaluation

The author started working on her thesis in May 2022. But due to personal reasons, which included looking after her two kindergarten-aged kids and moving to another city, she had to postpone the process. The author was able to resume work on her thesis in August 2022, and completed the main workload between December 2022 and February 2023. The author worked on the thesis whenever she could find spare time to write, and often found time to work at night. The author's original plan was to complete the thesis by the end of December 2022, but unfortunately, the deadline could not be met. Nonetheless, the author is relieved to have finished the thesis now and not delayed her graduation too much. The topic of the thesis changed a few times in order to narrow down the scope and make it easier to write, with guidance from the thesis teacher. Additionally, the author believes that the gig economy has a promising future, and it is one of the career directions she is considering.

The entire writing process was challenging but also enjoyable. Throughout the process, the author gained a deeper understanding of the topic and related publications knowledge, which was a valuable experience. The author found that conducting meticulous research on existing theoretical materials was crucial to ensuring the quality of the thesis. As a result, significant time was invested in reading relevant literature to identify the necessary aspects to include in the research.

Furthermore, completing the thesis has deepened the author's knowledge of how the human mind works, how self-leadership works, and how even the smallest decisions can affect people's behaviors. These insights provided the author with a clearer picture of how the thesis should be structured.

Additionally, the author hopes that the research will benefit gig workers by helping them to recognize their strengths and the potential benefits of practicing self-leadership in their work. The author also believes that organizations can benefit from the research by recognizing the value of gig workers as intangible assets and taking measures to support and care for them. By doing so, organizations can improve the performance of gig workers and establish long-lasting relationships with them.

Moreover, the whole writing process has not only cultivated the author's academic thinking but also sharpened her mindset to think in a rational and logical way. Finding relevant, current, and trustworthy literature was not an easy task, as self-leadership related to well-being is not the most extensively researched area. Thus, the author faced challenges in ensuring that all the references used in the thesis were reliable and valid.

In addition, the process of finding interviewees proved to be the most challenging and time-consuming aspect of this study. It required a substantial investment of time and effort in reaching out to potential interviewees and coordinating their participation. Additionally, significant effort was put into preparing the interview questions and materials, including an infographic (See Appendix 2) aimed at providing interviewees with a clear understanding of self-leadership and strategies. This preparation was essential to ensure that interviewees had sufficient knowledge to provide insightful and valuable responses.

Despite the challenges, the participation of interviewees proved invaluable to the thesis. Their diverse perspectives and experiences provided valuable insights into the self-leadership strategies adopted by gig workers and helped to enrich the findings of the study. Therefore, the author wishes to express her gratitude to all the interviewees who generously gave their time and shared their insights.

In conclusion, the author is pleased with the thesis process and the results of the research. The findings provide valuable insights into the self-leadership strategies that gig workers can adopt to improve their well-being, as well as the effective strategies that organizations can implement to enhance gig workers' job satisfaction and performance. The author hopes that the thesis will benefit gig workers and organizations by providing practical recommendations for improving the well-being and job satisfaction of gig workers. Additionally, the research contributes to the growing body of literature on the gig economy and self-leadership, providing a foundation for future studies in this area.

Finally, the author would like to express sincere appreciation to the thesis and language teachers for their guidance and encouragement throughout the process. Their support has significant meaning in the successful completion of the thesis.

6 Summary

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate ways to enhance the well-being of gig workers, with a focus on self-leadership strategies and organizational support. The main question is how to improve gig workers' well-being during their working lives. Two sub-questions are explored to help understand the main questions: (1) What specific self-leadership strategies can gig workers adopt to improve their well-being? and (2) What effective strategies can organizations implement to enhance gig workers' well-being and job satisfaction? The answers to these questions are provided in the thesis. The thesis not only offers solutions for gig workers to improve their well-being but also provides insight into how organizations can enhance their training programs and future strategies to benefit both workers and organizations. The author's ultimate goal is to promote a healthy and sustainable gig economy that benefits workers, organizations, and society as a whole.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, using a deductive method. The theoretical sections explore relevant theories related to self-leadership, well-being, and the gig economy. Self-leadership strategies and their implementation are introduced in the second section. The third section covers the empirical research, which consists of primary data collected from five interviews. The questions asked during the interviews closely relate to the self-leadership strategies explored in the theoretical section, and through analysis, the findings are presented in the thesis.

In the conclusion, the research questions are answered, and the validity and reliability of the research are confirmed. Suggestions for further research and self-evaluation are made, and an overall summary of the thesis is provided.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview guide

Interview Guide

Interview questions

Background information



- How many years of professional experience do you have since graduating from university/school?
- How long have you been working as a gig worker, both cumulatively and since your first gig?
- When did you start your gig work, and what initially drew you to this kind of work?
- Have you ever studied self-leadership or leadership principles, either formally or informally?
- Have you ever held a leadership or management role in a previous job? If so, can you describe your experience and when it occurred?

Work environment



- How would you describe your current well-being across various areas, including your professional, social, physical, financial, and mental well-being?
- Compared to regular face-to-face office work, how satisfied are you with the level of support or guidance provided by your organization/company?
- How do you go about developing your skills while working as a gig worker, whether those skills are related to your profession or are more general in nature?
- What motivates you the most in your work and life in general, and how do those motivators drive you to succeed?

Self-leadership



- How would you rate your self-leadership skills, and how have you worked to develop them over time?
- Can you describe some of the concrete ways in which you lead yourself during work time, such as specific routines or practices you use to stay productive and focused?
- When you encounter a challenging or unpleasant task, what reflections or strategies do you use to stay motivated and overcome the difficulty?
- How do you manage your time effectively during work hours, and what tools or techniques do you use to stay on track?
- How do you set and achieve your daily goals, and what strategies do you use to stay focused and motivated?
- Compared to your previous work experiences, do you feel that you are currently using your self-leadership skills more or less frequently? How have you adapted your self-talk, self-cueing, and self-reward strategies to your current work environment?
- How do you feel about the level of support you receive from your organization or leaders? When faced with tasks that you find unmotivating or difficult, how do you approach them and get them done?
- When faced with tasks that you find unmotivating or difficult, how do you approach them and get them done?
- What do you consider the most challenging aspect of gig work, and how do you overcome or address this challenge?



Appendix 3. Invitation letter for thesis interview

Invitation for interviews

Dear gig workers,

My name is Guan Ling and I am a graduate student at LAB university of Applied Sciences, Finland. I am conducting a thesis on self-leadership strategies for gig workers and their impact on job satisfaction and well-being. I am reaching out to you as a potential participant in this study.

As a gig worker, your experiences and insights are valuable in understanding the effectiveness of self-leadership strategies in the gig economy. Your participation will involve a one-on-one interview with me, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes. During the interview, I will ask you about your experiences as a gig worker and the self-leadership strategies you use to manage your work and personal life.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The information you provide will be used only for the purposes of the thesis and will not be shared with any third parties.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please let me know by replying to this comment or contacting me at ling.guan@student.lab.fi. I will provide you with additional information about the study and answer any questions you may have.

Please note that no personal data will be collected during the interview, and all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,
Ling