

The Effect of Gig Workers' Perceived Occupational Stigma on the Turnover Intention

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Abstract. With the rapid advancement of digital technology and the gig economy, the amount of gig workers, represented by takeaway riders and taxi drivers, has been increasing. Meanwhile, the flexibility of the “entry and exit” principle has led gig workers a highly mobile group. However, the gig workers represented by takeaway riders are also subject to increasingly serious social prejudice and criticism, and face enormous human capital challenges. To foster sustainable growth of the gig economy, this paper conducted a questionnaire survey on 276 gig workers. Based on the findings: ① Perceived occupational stigma of gig workers positively affects their turnover intention. ② The occupational identity of gig workers mediates the association between the perceived occupational stigma and the turnover intention. ③ The mediating role of occupational identity is moderated by the perceived job significance, but not by the sense of self-efficacy.

Keywords: gig economy; perceived occupational stigma; turnover intention; occupational identity.

1. Introduction

Employment is the most basic livelihood, related to the vital interests of the people and the high-quality development of the country. The application and popularity of many digital platforms have given rise to many new forms of flexible employment posts, and the gig economy has emerged and risen rapidly around the world (Zheng, 2025). As an emerging economic model, the gig economy refers to the mode of employment in which the demand side releases its demands through the Internet platform, and the workers are employed in a non-standard way based on certain digital skills (Cai and Lv, 2023). According to the statistics of China Development Report on Flexible Employment (2022), as of 2021, flexible employment in China has expanded into 800 billion, and more than 60% of enterprises have adopted flexible employment. In the broad space for development, the gig economy has injected new vitality into the labour market, which has aroused heated debates from all walks of life around the world.

The gig economy characterised by flexible working time, place and modes has attracted a large number of gig workers, such as delivery man. However, negative news, such as “the death of a passenger in an online car-hailing” and “frequent conflicts between delivery man and customers”, have led to a general negative perception of gig workers in public. Gig workers are suffering from increasing social prejudice and criticism, facing huge human capital challenges (Wei et al., 2022). It is estimated that the average employment time of takeaway riders is less than one year, and the average turnover rate is more than 60% (Zhan and Li, 2022). It can be seen that gig workers are troubled with high mobility, short employment duration and high demission rate internally, while facing serious occupational stigma externally. How to reduce the brain drain of this group is a major problem that needs to be solved urgently (Chen et al., 2024).

Considering the impact of vocational stigma on tendency to leave, existing studies have demonstrated a positive association between occupational stigma perception and workers' job burnout and job stress (Miao and Guo, 2024; Chen, 2024). Some studies focusing on social workers have demonstrated the effect of family factors in the correlation between job-related stigma and the resignation tendency (Zhang et al., 2024). However, few studies have directly focused on the occupational stigma in the group of gig workers spawned by the emerging economic model. A study found that higher platform algorithm transparency facilitates gig workers' sense of organisational support (Ding, 2025). Based on Internet platform algorithms, perceptions of

procedural fairness and relative deprivation partially explain the negative relationship between occupational stigma perception and tendency to move (Wei et al., 2022), suggesting that other mediating factors may exist from other theoretical perspectives. In summary, this paper concentrates on the occupational stigma and turnover of flexible workforce, explores the mechanisms by which the perceived occupational stigma of gig workers affects their turnover intention, and explores the unique roles of psychological factors including occupational identity, perceived job significance, and self-efficacy in the relationship between perceived occupational stigma and turnover intention.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1 Occupational stigma and turnover intention

The concept of occupational stigma was first proposed by American sociologist Hughes (1958), who used the term “dirty work” to refer to tasks or jobs that may be considered distasteful or shameful. Occupational stigma can be categorized into three types: physical stigma, social stigma and moral stigma (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). On this basis, Li et al. (2023) defined occupational stigma as the stigmatization of the job as a result of negative labels attached to it that does not meet the standards of decent work from the public’s perspective. Perceived occupational stigma, which is closely related to occupational stigma, is the degree to which practitioners perceive that public holds a stigmatised view of their job (Pinel and Paulin, 2005).

Existing researches demonstrate occupational stigma’s substantial influence on workers’ craftsmanship spirit, turnover intention and psychological health. Zhu et al. (2023) examined its impact on industrial workers’ craftsmanship spirit through cognitive-emotional dual pathways, revealing that vocational stigma diminishes craftsmanship commitment, and this relationship is partially mediated by occupational identity and emotional exhaustion. From the perspective of family, Zhang et al. (2024) found that occupational stigma increased turnover intention under high family involvement, but showed no significant effect when involvement was low. In addition, studies showed that occupational stigma undermined practitioners’ mental health through promoting social avoidance, which can be moderated by caring ethical climate (Chen, 2024).

Labelling Theory suggests that social interactions affect an individual’s self-concept and self-identity. When an individual is negatively labelled, this may lead to devaluation in self-concept and identity, then impeding their behavioral decisions (Murray, 2014). Labelling theory is widely used in sociology to explain the effects of stigma. For example, labelling theory suggests that when students are labelled as “problem students”, that is, after the stigma is created, students gradually internalise these labels into their self-concept. According to the labelling theory, when gig workers suffer from occupational stigma, they may be labelled as “dirty”, “meaningless”, “inferior” and other negative labels. These labels may lead them to feel socially devalued or even internalize negative perception, amplifying their propensity to leave. Therefore, this paper proposes:

H1: Perceived occupational stigma of gig workers has a significant positive impact on their turnover intention.

2.2 The mediating role of occupational identity

Social Identity Theory maintains that individuals construct their self-identity through group membership categorization, which simultaneously fulfills fundamental psychological needs for belongingness and self-esteem (Tajfel, 1978). Holland (1993) emphasises that occupational identity emerges as an outcome of individuals’ self-perception and their interpretation of the occupational environment. When individuals integrate their professional roles into their self-concept, they essentially internalize their occupational identity as a core component of their self-definition. Occupational identity transcends job duties by embracing the values and sense of purpose associated with one’s profession. Work enables self-actualization and social validation, boosting satisfaction and achievement. For gig workers, this identity becomes even more pronounced due to

the inherent uncertainty and fluidity characterizing their employment. Occupational stigma—defined as the societal devaluation of a particular profession—directly undermines an individual's sense of occupational identity (Burke, 2004). Gig worker's occupational identity is often eroded, when they are subjected to negative societal perceptions or external derogatory judgments.

Studies suggest that in traditional employment relationships, employees who sense stigma related to their work are more likely to plan to quit (Zhang and Li, 2017). Similarly, in the development of the digital economy, digital gig worker's perceived occupational stigma has also been found to significantly increase their likelihood of leaving their jobs (Wei, 2022). Occupational stigma perception severely undermines gig workers' sense of occupational security, as it diminishes their work engagement and occupational identity, leading to poorer job performance and ultimately, a diminished sense of work meaningfulness, and purpose. When gig workers experience a decline in occupational identity, they are more likely to develop job dissatisfaction, which in turn heightens their propensity to leave their jobs (Huang et al., 2022). The negative feedback loop reinforces the relationship between stigmatization and withdrawal behaviors, ultimately increasing the risk of turnover.

Collectively, occupational identity acts as a mediator in this process. The adverse effect of occupational stigma on gig workers weakens their professional identification. Therefore, this paper proposes:

H2a: Perceived occupational stigma of gig workers has a significant negative impact on their occupational identity.

H2b: Perceived occupational identity of gig workers has a significant negative impact on their turnover intention.

H2c: Gig workers' occupational identity mediates the impact of occupational stigma on turnover intention.

2.3 The moderating role of sense of self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, as an individual's belief in his capacity to execute a specific task or reach a set goal, plays the critical role as a moderating variable in in both social psychology and organizational behavior research. Social Cognitive Theory emphasises an individual's sense of self-efficacy as a predominant determinant of behavioural motivation and performance (Bandura, 1986). Gig workers with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to positively evaluate their occupational competence and maintain a high level of career identity even faced with serious occupational stigma. This is because self-efficacy allows them to believe that they are able to overcome the obstacles indicated by the occupational stigma and successfully perform their job tasks, and this belief reduces the adverse effect of the stigma on their self-appraisal.

Occupational Identity Theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) suggests that an individual's career identity is the basis of his occupational behaviour and attitudes. Occupational stigma may reduce occupational identity, thereby increasing the likelihood of leaving the job. However, the intervention of self-efficacy may alter this path. Self-efficacy serves as a moderating variable that attenuates the adverse effect of stigma on occupational identity, and then indirectly reduces the turnover intention. Gig workers with high self-efficacy are able to maintain or enhance their occupational identity even in the face of stigma because they believe that they are able to perform their job duties effectively, which reduces negative perceptions of the occupation and lowers the thoughts of leave. Meanwhile, according to Psychological Contract Theory (Argyris, 1960), there exists an implicitly unwritten, trust-based agreement between the firm and the workers that emphasises the expectations and commitment of both towards each other. Gig workers with high self-efficacy tend to place more emphasis on reaching the psychological contract with their occupation. Even in the face of occupational stigma, they will positively identify with their occupation in order to fulfil their commitment, and thus stick to their job.

In summary, self-efficacy serves both as a direct moderator of the occupational stigma and occupational identity and as an indirect moderator affecting turnover intention through its influence on the mediator occupational identity.

H3a: Self-efficacy of gig workers negatively moderates the relationship between occupational stigma and occupational identity.

H3b: Self-efficacy of gig workers negatively moderates the mediating effect of occupational identity on the relationship between occupational stigma and turnover intention.

2.4 The moderating role of perceived job significance

According to Sense-Making Theory, individuals actively assign meaning to their lives and work, and this perception of meaning can influence their identification and satisfaction with their role (Baumeister, 1991). In the gig economy, perceived job significance is particularly important because it can serve as a psychological resource to help individuals overcome negative external evaluations, such as occupational stigma. For example, when takeaway drivers strongly feel that their work contributes to society (e.g., by providing convenient services and supporting local businesses), this positive perception of job meaning can reduce the adverse effect of occupational stigma. Practitioners may respond to the occupational stigma through recognising that their work plays a critical role in improving others' life quality and well-beings, thereby increasing respect and pride in their work and building positive occupational values and beliefs (Vergne and Durand, 2011). Thus, even when society gives low occupational evaluations, individuals with high perceived job significance can still maintain high occupational identity because their sense of worth is derived more from internal perception than from external evaluations. Combining Social Identity Theory and Cognitive Evaluation Theory, the formation of occupational identity partly relies on how an individual evaluates his or her role in the occupation and the extent to which that role fits with the self-concept (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Occupational stigma may weaken occupational identity and thus increase turnover intention, but the inclusion of perceived job significance provides an additional moderating mechanism for this process.

Social Identity Theory explains how individuals define themselves through the identity of the group they belong to (Tajfel and Turner, 2000). When work is stigmatised, high level of perceived job significance can strengthen an individual's in-group identity and reduce sensitivity to negative external evaluations, thus maintaining the stability of occupational identity. Moreover, Cognitive Evaluation Theory posits that an individual's emotional and behavioral reactions are mediated by their personal interpretation of events. High job significance perceptions make individuals more likely to view careers as meaningful choices (Kahn, 1990). Even face with occupational stigma, this perception prompts individuals to reevaluate their work situation and to think less about leaving their job. Thus, perceived job significance can serve to alleviate the cognitive tension and to reduce the turnover intention.

In summary, perceived job significance can not only directly mitigate the adverse impact of perceived occupational stigma on professional identity formation, but indirectly inhibit the turnover tendency triggered by perceived occupational stigma through enhancing occupational identity. Therefore, this paper proposes:

H4a: Perceived job significance of gig workers negatively moderates the relationship between occupational stigma and occupational identity.

H4b: Perceived job significance of gig workers negatively moderates the mediating effect of occupational identity on the relationship between occupational stigma and turnover intention.

3. Research Method

3.1 Sample selection and data sources

The data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire in July-August 2024 on Credamo (credamo.com), a professional data collection platform where the sample data have been

validated by international authoritative conferences and peer-reviewed journals. All participants in this study have been strictly registered and identity audited in the sample pool of the platform. The respondents will be paid in varying amounts after completing the questionnaire survey.

A total of 276 questionnaires were collected during this period. More specifically, 53.99% of the valid samples were female and 46.01% were male; 46.65% were aged 26-35 years old, 59.42% possessed a degree below bachelor, and 63.4% were married. The occupations of the samples varied, with 17.75% being takeaway drivers, 22.83% being online car-hailing drivers, and 59.42% working in other types of gigs.

3.2 Measuring tools

The measurement tools employed in this study are all well-established foreign scales, which have been validated to have high reliability by authoritative international management or psychological studies. Unless specified otherwise, the scales utilized were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Occupational stigma was assessed using the modified scale of Shantz and Booth (2014), which is originated from Pinel and Paulin (2005). The scale has 6 questions, e.g. "People may show less respect due to my occupation".

Occupational identity was measured using the Occupational Identity Scale adopted by Wang (2018). The scale has 6 questions, e.g. "I am proud to be in this occupation".

Self-efficacy was assessed using a version of the Self-efficacy Scale translated and developed by psychologists Schwarzer et al. (2002) for the Chinese context. 4 questions are included, e.g. "I think I always try my best to solve the difficulties I encounter at work".

Perceived job significance was assessed using the Work as Meaning Inventory (WAMI) developed by Steger et al. (2012). 4 questions are included in the scale, e.g. "I know that my job conduces to the meaning of my life".

Turnover intention was assessed using the Turnover Intention Scale developed by Mobley (1979). The scale has 4 questions, e.g. "I have thought about resigning".

4. Results

4.1 Common method bias

The questionnaires were completed by practitioners themselves, thus there may exist the problem of common method bias. Firstly, this study takes the following measures for procedural control according to Podsakoff et al. (2003)'s recommendations: (1) In the questionnaire introduction, the voluntary filling, the confidentiality of the data and the academic use of the questionnaire are emphasized. (2) For the questionnaire items, try to weaken the directedness and adopt a neutral formulation to minimise the impact on the respondents' responses. (3) Optimise the ordering of the scales to balance the sequential effect of measurement and reduce the respondents' speculation on the purpose of the study.

Secondly, this study adopts Harman's single-factor method for post hoc test. The results show 5 principal components. The overall variance explanation rate is 73.889%, with the first unrotated factor accounting for 40.64% — below the criterion of 50%, initially indicating that there is no significant problem of common method bias.

4.2 Reliability and validity test

Cronbach' α coefficient was employed to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach' α values of all latent variables were greater than 0.8, showing that the reliability of the scale is good enough for empirical research. The confirmatory factor analysis measurement model was constructed according to Kline et al. (2015). $\chi^2 = 107.939$, $df = 84$, $\chi^2/df = 1.285$, $CFI = 0.976$, $TLI = 0.962$, $GFI = 0.928$, $RMSEA = 0.094$, thus the model has a good fit. The

standardized loadings for all the items are calculated, which are all greater than 0.6, and the z-values all show significance at the $p < 0.001$ level, indicating high reliability of the items. Convergent validity and discriminant validity were used to evaluate the validity of the scales. The combined reliability of the four latent variables ranged from 0.839 to 0.938, which were all greater than the critical value of 0.7. The average variance extracted values ranged between 0.566 and 0.766, which were all exceeded the critical value of 0.5, thereby passed the convergent validity test.

4.3 Correlation analysis

The results demonstrate that gig workers' occupational stigma is demonstrably favorably linked with their turnover intention ($r = 0.542$, $p < 0.01$), providing preliminary confirmation of hypothesis H1. Occupational stigma was significantly negatively associated with occupational identity ($r = -0.377$, $p < 0.01$), providing initial support for hypothesis H2a. Occupational identity was significantly negatively correlated to resignation intention ($r = -0.705$, $p < 0.01$), which provided initial support for hypothesis H2b.

The independent samples t-test indicated no statistically significant gender differences in employees' turnover intention ($t = 1.866$, $p = 0.063$). The results of one-way ANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference in job satisfaction across the various age cohorts ($F = 1.771$, $p = 0.136$) and educational backgrounds ($F = 2.340$, $p = 0.074$).

4.4 Hypothesis test

The hypothesis model was tested using the Amos 26.0 procedure with a 95% confidence interval and 5000 bootstrap resampling (Hayes, 2013). Demographic variables were not involved in the analysis due to less association with job satisfaction. The constructed structural equation model was tested for fitness and the data showed that $\chi^2 = 120.876$, $df = 85$, $p < 0.01$, $\chi^2/df = 1.422$, $CFI = 0.958$, $TLI = 0.964$, $RMSEA = 0.042$, which shows adequate correspondence with empirical observations (Wen et al., 2006; Hayes, 2013).

Direct effect test: The study used the maximum likelihood estimation to test the hypotheses and the findings of the direct effect test are revealed in Table 1. It is shown that occupational stigma strongly positively affects the gig workers' turnover intention ($\beta = 0.292$, $t = 5.391$), so hypothesis H1 is true. Occupational stigma significantly negatively affects the occupational identity of gig workers ($\beta = -0.476$, $t = -7.220$), so hypothesis H2a is true. Occupational identity of gig workers significantly negatively affects their turnover intention ($\beta = -0.592$, $t = -9.606$), so hypothesis H2b is true.

Table 1. Direct Effect Test

Hypotheses	X→Y	SD	t	p	β	Result
H1	Occupational stigma → Turnover intention	0.058	5.391	0.000	0.292	True
H2a	Occupational stigma → Occupational identity	0.052	-7.220	0.000	-0.476	True
H2b	Occupational stigma → Turnover intention	0.083	-9.606	0.000	-0.592	True

Mediating effect test: Bootstrap method is used to test whether the occupational identity of gig workers has a mediating effect on the impact of perceived occupational stigma on the demission risk. Repeat sampling is set up for 5,000 times, and the maximum likelihood estimation method is used with a confidence interval of 95% for the correction bias. The mediating effect exists when 0 is not included in the confidence interval. The data are shown in Table 2. The evidence points that the mediating role of occupational stigma on the demission tendency through the occupational identity of gig workers is significant ($\beta = 0.189$), with the confidence interval of (0.030, 0.144). Therefore, the hypothesis H2c is true.

Table 2. Test of Intermediary Effect

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized effect size	Bias-Corrected 95% CI		t	Result
			Lower	Upper		
—	Direct effect	0.275	0.185	0.366	5.961	
H2c	Occupational stigma → Occupational identity → Turnover intention	0.189	0.030	0.144	6.246	Ture
—	Gross effect	0.465	0.362	0.567	8.921	

Moderating effect test: PROCESS 3.3 is used to test the moderating effect of perceived job significance and self-efficacy on the relationship between occupational stigma and occupational identity respectively, and gender, age and education are introduced as control variables. The findings are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

As shown in Table 3, the interaction effect between occupational stigma and self-efficacy on occupational identity is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.076$, $p > 0.05$), so hypothesis H3a is not true.

Table 3. Moderating effect of self-efficacy

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	3.814** (7.691)	4.574** (10.722)	4.619** (10.856)
Gender	0.018 (0.144)	-0.151 (-1.373)	-0.135 (-1.236)
Age	0.162* (2.060)	0.159* (2.388)	0.156* (2.355)
Education	-0.076 (-1.438)	-0.098* (-2.184)	-0.096* (-2.134)
Occupational stigma	-0.247** (-6.413)	-0.134** (-3.888)	-0.164** (-4.308)
Self-efficacy		0.577** (10.296)	0.521** (8.152)
Occupational stigma* Self-efficacy			0.076 (1.821)
R ²	0.297	0.498	0.504
F	F = 14.118, p = 0.000	F = 29.265, p = 0.000	F = 26.899, p = 0.000

Dependent variable = Occupational identity, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, t value is in parentheses

As shown in Table 4, there is a significant negative correlation between occupational stigma and occupational identity ($\beta = -0.247$, $p < 0.01$), and a significant positive correlation between the interaction term between perceived occupational stigma and perceived job significance and occupational identity ($\beta = 0,088$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that perceived job significance weakens

the adverse effect of the stigma on occupational identity, and therefore hypothesis H4a is true.

Table 4. Moderating effect of perceived job significance

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	3.814** (7.691)	5.196** (15.572)	5.292** (15.894)
Gender	0.018 (0.144)	-0.116 (-1.377)	-0.115 (-1.378)
Age	0.162* (2.060)	0.086 (1.659)	0.087 (1.707)
Education	-0.076 (-1.438)	-0.069* (-1.974)	-0.073* (-2.112)
Occupational stigma	-0.247** (-6.413)	-0.124** (-4.743)	-0.145** (-5.310)
Perceived job significance		0.860** (18.815)	0.782** (14.078)
Occupational stigma * Perceived job significance			0.088* (2.434)
R ²	0.297	0.699	0.705
F	F (8, 267) = 14.118 p = 0.000	F (9, 266) = 68.474 p = 0.000	F (10, 265) = 63.360, p = 0.000

*Dependent variable = Occupational identity, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, t value is in parentheses*

Moderated mediating effect test: There is no significant moderating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between occupational stigma and occupational identity. Hypothesis H3a is not true, and therefore hypothesis H3b is also not true. This study further tests the mediated moderating effect of perceived job significance (Table 5). The results shows that the moderating effect of perceived job significance in the path of “occupational stigma → occupational identity → turnover intention” is significant ($\beta = 0.309$), with confidence intervals of (0.217, 0.401). Therefore, hypothesis H4b is true.

Table 5 Moderated mediating effect of perceived job significance

	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Low level (-1SD)	0.337	0.084	4.020	0.000	0.173	0.502
Mean	0.309	0.047	6.567	0.000	0.217	0.401
High level (+1SD)	0.280	0.055	5.135	0.000	0.173	0.387

5. Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

Taking gig workers as the research subjects, the study investigates the effect of occupational stigma perception on gig workers’ tendency to move through theoretical derivation and empirical analyses. In addition, it explores the mediating role of occupational identity and moderating role of perceived occupation significance and self-efficacy on this impact mechanism. The conclusions are as follows:

Firstly, this study reveals two pathways through which perceived occupational stigma of gig workers affects their turnover intention. The first one is that gig workers' perceived occupational stigma has a direct beneficial influence on their turnover intention. This path is accordant with past related research on occupational stigma, where numerous studies have identified a strong correlation between vocational stigma and practitioners' turnover intention (Zhang, 2024; Wei, 2022).

Another pathway is through the indirect effect mediated by occupational identity. On the one hand, there exists an adverse association between occupational stigma and occupational identity of gig workers. When gig workers' occupations are negatively evaluated by the society, their occupational identity will be significantly reduced. On the other hand, there exists an adverse association between perceived occupational identity and tendency to leave. The turnover intention of gig workers increases significantly when their occupational identity and satisfaction decreases.

Secondly, this study indicates that self-efficacy has no significant moderating impact on the relationship between perceived occupational stigma and identity, nor on the mediating role of occupational identity. Self-efficacy, which reflects individuals' beliefs about their success in accomplishing their goals, is a positive subjective perception of one's own abilities. Gig workers' output exhibits greater sensitivity to this particular influence (Bandura, 1986). However, occupational stigma and occupational identity are more readily affected by external social appraisals (Li et al., 2023), with the nature of strong externality. The process of generating and acting on occupational stigma and occupational identity is less dependent on an individual's subjective feeling, thus the moderating effect of self-efficacy is limited.

Finally, this study pointed that perceived job significance of gig workers negatively moderates the relationship between occupational stigma and occupational identity. The negative impact of occupational stigma on occupational identity is weaker when perceived job significance is higher, and stronger when it is lower. Meanwhile, perceived job significance negatively moderates the mediating role of occupational identity between occupational stigma and turnover intention.

5.2 Theoretical Contribution

The previous studies suggest important theoretical modifications: (1) Clarify the influence of perceived occupational stigma on turnover intention among gig workers. Although many studies have centered on the implications of occupational stigma, the relationship between the two has not yet been clearly investigated in the case of gig workers. (2) The mediating transmission mechanism of occupational identity is verified, which builds an inner bridge for the study of the relationship between occupational stigma and turnover intention among gig workers. (3) Perceived job significance and self-efficacy are first to be introduced into the research framework of the impact of occupational stigma on turnover intention as moderating variables to investigate their roles in this relationship.

5.3 Practical applications

This study offers critical practical insights for reducing perceived occupational stigma and turnover intention among gig workers. Platforms and firms must adopt systematic interventions to counter stigmatization and reshape societal perceptions of the gig economy's value. Three strategies are proposed. Firstly, destigmatize gig work via public campaigns emphasizing its role in labor market flexibility, such as alleviating shortages. Secondly, build professional communities and recognition, for instance, through initiatives like "Top Gig Worker" awards or skill certification — to reinforce professional pride. Encouraging workers to participate in industry development and policy discussions can empower them with professional agency, facilitating a shift from a "temporary job" to a "specialized occupation" identity. Thirdly, create career pathways (e.g., skill-based promotions) to foster long-term plan. Organisations must disrupt the "occupational stigma → turnover intention" pathway, by responding swiftly to stigma incidents — issuing

statements or legal support — to curb public amplification. They should also increase transparency in rules to reduce stigma-inducing practices like algorithmic bias or unfair pay.

Furthermore, the study identifies the critical moderating role of perceived job significance. Consequently, platforms can enhance gig workers' professional identity by strengthening work meaningfulness. The empowering effect of work significance should be strengthened to help gig workers recognize their societal contributions. For instance, platforms could implement "social value visualization" incentive schemes by regularly sharing service impact metrics. Additionally, enterprises should provide psychological resources through establishing mental health support channels to alleviate the psychological scars.

Ultimately, findings underscore the imperative for policy interventions that formally integrate gig employment into statutory labour protection frameworks and establish robust anti-discrimination legal provisions. Collaborative initiatives between government, platforms and media could promote occupational equity, fostering public reappraisal of gig works' societal value and eradicating the roots of stigmatisation.

5.4 Limitiations and future reaesrch trends

There are some constraints and potential extensions in this study: (1) The measurement tools used in the study are all mature scales from abroad. Due to the differences in culture and national conditions among countries, there may be problems such as the lack of sufficient applicability. Future studies can consider more targeted scales that are more suitable for the research subjects, or introduce qualitative research methods to enhance persuasiveness. (2) This study analyses the mechanism taking occupational identity as a mediator. Future research can consider other mediating variables in the path through which perceived occupational stigma influences the propensity to leave among gig workers.

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