"Identity in a Gig Economy", Does Learning Agility Matter?

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Abstract

In the modern world, with a transforming labour market and rise of the Gig Economy, individuals are unable to experience the same sense of collective professional identity as the workmates in any organization. Criteria of classification of professions based on norms, values and certifications have changed (Wilensky, 1964). The term 'profession' is increasingly being used as an adjective (Caza, Creary, 2016). The objective of the present study is to examine the process of construction of professional identity over organizational identity by independent workers and understand the impact of learning agility on professional identity while engaging in the Gig Economy. The present research first developed propositions. Then, with primary data from 226 respondents the hypotheses were tested using regression analysis. The results indicated that learning agility positively impacts individual relevance and both are significant predictors of professional identity. The implication for gig workers is to develop learning agility for career sustenance.

Keywords : Gig Economy, Identity, Learning Agility, Occupation, Profession, Skill ,Work

Disciplines : Industrial and Organizational Psychology | Organizational Behaviour and Theory

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"Identity in a Gig Economy", Does Learning Agility Matter?

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1. Introduction

A growing number of people are turning away from traditional employment models and opting for freelance work. Independent workers are now estimated to be about 34% of the workforce and expected to be 43% by the year 2020 (Gillespie, 2017). A broader range of occupations and industries are increasingly leveraging freelance work arrangements. The new generation (Gen Y) of workers prefer flexible and diversified work as against routine 9 to 5 Jobs. Automation and Lean organization structures are pushing more people to turn to freelancing out of necessity, on account of reduced number of jobs offering permanent employment. Whatever the impetus for freelancing is, it is undeniable that this mode of work is rapidly growing alongside the advent of digital freelance marketplaces. Individuals are increasingly shaping their careers with these avenues by working on a task-by-task basis for different employers concurrently. This trend has been termed the "gig economy." (Ai Group, 2016)

2.   Review of Literature

2.1 Digital Propagation of the Gig Economy

Whether it is logo design, promotional videos or information on astrology, people have been using Google for over two decades to help organize the infinite data found on the internet. With the technological advancements of the past decade, these services are found not only at the local marketplace but also in the global marketplace — a workplace of freelancing. Fiverr.com is a platform that brings freelance workers and clients together (Green, 2018). Specifically, it is a marketplace where digital technology service providers working in the gig economy create a professional brand identity and conduct business (Kaufman, 2015). Collaborative consumption of talent did not exist on the scale it does today due to the Internet. Ten years ago, it was unimaginable to think that you could acquire services from someone online. Now, there are platforms such as Etsy, Fiverr, and others enabling just that. The concept of collaborative consumption has grown leaps and bounds. "In 2014, PricewaterhouseCoopers found that the global sharing economy has produced $15 billion in total revenue and could produce up to $335 billion by 2025" (Duverge, 2016). Freelancer.com, Upwork.com are popular freelance platforms connecting several million freelance professionals with jobs from across different parts of the world. If senior executives recognize the value of steering in the gig economy, they have a good chance for sustenance amidst fierce competition. With more players like Amazon and eBay offering competing digital platforms to connect independent workers with clients the global marketplace for gig work is bound to flourish. 2014-15 state of contingent workforce report discovered that 92% companies thought non-traditional talent strategy had a positive effect. By 2025, McKinsey's supply-side analysis shows that online talent platforms could increase global GDP by up to $2.7 trillion and surge employment by 72 million full-time equivalent jobs. As per the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution, CNBC stated that in the last 20 years, the number of independent workers who operate often through apps, has gone up by about 27 percent more than full time employed personnel.

2.2 The Joys and Challenges of independent work arrangements

Contingent workforce Conference held in Sydney on 22-23 Sep 2015 examined the benefits of engaging contingent workforce as labour cost reduction, rapid hiring of new skills, matching labour to growth and peak periods, improve employee selection, production, quality, avoiding worker burnout and high-quality outsourcing. Studies have shown co-working spaces have doubled each year globally since 2006, indicating the surge in number

of independent workers and increased leverage of this talent model in the world economy. According to Torpey and Hogan (2016), gigs are more likely to originate in some professions as against others because work that involves a single job, like writing a business plan, is perhaps more suitable for this type of work. Furthermore, any occupation in which workers may be employed for on-demand jobs has the potential to be a gig employment arrangement. According to the global consulting firm McKinsey, approximately 20 million gig workers do the work because they are unable to find better pay or jobs elsewhere (Gillespie, 2017). On one end of the spectrum, accomplished experts with an entrepreneurial mindset win in the gig economy by moving from good jobs to great work. On the other end, retail and service workers doing low-skill, low-wage jobs can also gain in the gig economy. Zeynep Ton, an adjunct associate professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management, refers to such jobs as "bad jobs" because they are paid poorly, have no control on schedules and offer no job security or benefits. He says the wages of these workers are festering or deteriorating, and their jobs are constantly under the risk of being automated. In the gig economy these people get to exercise more control in their working lives. They can control when and how much they work . In addition, (Mulcahy, 2017) showed the gig economy's bad sides: "The Gig Economy is an economy of work, but our labour policies only offer benefits and protections to employees who work in traditional jobs" (p. 11). Unfortunately, Bad jobs are the obstinate curse of our economy and our civilization and are unlikely to vanish from the society in the near future. But with the gig economy they get an opportunity move towards more promising quality of work. Amongst the prime beneficiaries of the gig economy are employees who have been stuck on the limitations of our traditional jobs' economy. Parents who want to stay at home to care for their children, people who have retired from regular jobs, students pursuing their education , and people with disabilities now have the choice to work as much as they want with the flexibility of time & place that suits them the best, in order to earn income, develop new skills, or follow a passion. Because it is now so much easier to work and earn income from home, part-time, and on a flexible schedule, the gig economy can provide choice, dignity, and a measure of financial control and opportunity to workers who previously had little of those things. Workers who have got displaced from their organizations get another opportunity to restart work in the Gig Economy. However, corporate workers whose skills are common, commoditized, or less in demand are bound to face challenges keeping themselves relevant for the world of work. They are unlikely to find good work if they lose their jobs. Gallup reports that over 70% of workers aren't engaged in their jobs, and many other studies reveal high levels of stress and dissatisfaction among employees. The gig economy offers a much-needed substitute model of work that can complement for being a full-time employee in a full-time job. The proliferation of new opportunities in the gig economy to choose how, how much, where, and when to work is one big win for

all (Harvard Business Review, 2016). Companies are opting to use a consultant versus paying someone for full-time employment with benefits. The billing rates of High-Tech workers when are engaged contractually even with a premium pricing is lower than when they are employed full-time. Contractual engagement eliminates the fringe benefits, overheads and other hidden costs. Large corporates like Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Truelancer, Colgate-Palmolive are successfully leveraging Gig workforce. A 2016 Deloitte survey revealed that the top three challenges executives cited regarding the freelance economy were legal or regulatory uncertainty (20 per cent),contingent workers unreceptive to corporate culture (18 per cent), and a lack of understanding among leadership (18 per cent).

2.3 Survival in the Gig Economy

Who qualifies to enter the gig economy? Workers with specialized skills, deep expertise, or in-demand experience are the ones who win in this economy (Mulcahy, 2016). Freelance work is driven by relationships that gig workers build with their contacts from different projects done in the past. Referring and introducing is a common practice amongst gig workers. With co-working spaces such in person networking has further gone up. Work is being disaggregated from jobs and reorganized into a variety of alternative arrangements, such as consulting projects, freelance assignments, and contract opportunities (Green, 2018). Looking at the rate at with Gig Economy is growing, it is essential to examine the competencies that are crucial for success of independent workers. People who prefer stability and methodical approach will struggle doing independent work. While on the other hand, people who look for autonomy and flexibility are likely to enjoy this model of working. A Gig worker lives in ambiguity. They're often thrown into new circumstances, and to survive, they have to endlessly acclimatize to different organizations, different jobs, and different managers. They are required to balance various projects at once, manage competing timelines, and carefully consider their bandwidth before taking on additional work. Unlike traditional full-time employees, freelance workers' success has a high dependence on their ability to build new relationships quickly and efficiently. Effective communication with respect to expectations of the job, probing for clarity and regular check-ins with the client enhances productivity in independent work situations. Essentially, gig workers are expected to be self-reliant and figure out things on their own. This article builds on the existing research conducted in the space of Gig Economy and Professional Identity to examine the fundamental challenges associated with identification for independent workers. It further argues on the importance of learning agility to deal with some of these challenges.

This leads to formulation of following proposition

Proposition #1 : In Gig Economy workers associate more to their own occupational identity than organizational identity.

2.4 Working for multiple organizations leads to emphasis on occupational identity

What does it mean, and what does it take, to keep a work identity alive? Research on identity work—the efforts people make to attain, hold on to, repair, or give up identities (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003)—has burgeoned over the past few decades. Researchers have explored identity work in organizational contexts which are considered to have robust cultures, close-fitting communities, and firm rules (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, Rockmann, and Kaufmann, 2006; Reid, 2015), viewing how people attempt to fit into challenging roles without losing their individuality (Brewer, 1991; Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep, 2006). With the surge in the Gig Economy, however, more people are expected to work outside such fixed contexts, as self-governing workers loosely connected to organizations or selling directly to the market (Ashford, George, and Blatt, 2007; Cappelli and Keller, 2013). Having long regarded organizations and roles within them as the main referents for and hosts of people's efforts to define themselves, researchers have observed that when people lack strong attachments to an organization, it is problematic to attain and sustain a stable work identity (Sennett, 1998; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Constructing work identities is particularly difficult for independent workers operating outside of organizations and established professions, who lack the reference of codified roles. It is a world of work in which ''workplace'' is not characterized by the office building or factory floor (Barley, 2016). Gig workers lack the secure memberships and foreseeable futures which are considered essential to building a stable work identity (Sennett, 1998; Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley, 2008). There is no inclusion edge past which their identity is granted (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) and no collective endorsement (Bartel and Dutton, 2001; DeRue and Ashford, 2010) by a larger entity. Freelance workers function in weak situations (Mischel, 1973) with uncertain expectations about appropriate behaviours. Individuals build a work-based self-concept which is as an amalgamation of organizational, occupational, and other identities. This is referred as individual Work Identity and it marks the roles people assume and the way they behave when carrying out their work, the degree to which affiliation in organizational and occupational groups enhances their distinction and status. Work identity concept

depends on how people see their work and whether they pursue a traditional or a boundaryless career strategy (Walsh, 2008). Finding the right job that fitted them give sense of meaning, positive self-image and security to people.(Dobrow, 2006; Torrey and Duffy, 2012; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Identity can ''be thought of as an equilibrium resulting from making sense of attraction to and repulsion from one or more referents'' (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016: 120). Which means, identity is an expression of the willingness to be or not to be associated with someone. Independent workers seek to secure some mode of stability by doubling their efforts to construct own work identity. (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016).People appropriate, negotiate, or acquiesce to identities to fulfil fundamental needs for uncertainty reduction (Hogg and Terry, 2000), belonging (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), and autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 1985). People also resist and, on occasion, seek to relinquish identities because of the restrictions they impose (Collinson, 2003), because of events that cast those identities in a negative light (Petriglieri, 2015), or in pursuit of states of flow, ecstasy, and bliss that require surpassing the boundaries of the self(Baumeister,1998). building own professional identity instead of perceptions of oneness with a single, particular reference group. Complex professional identity structures enable professionals to adapt easily to different work situations. Building on Linville's work, Roccas and Brewer (2002) define social identity complexity as the extent to which individuals see their multiple identities as comparable in terms of prototypic features and/or overlapping. All individuals conceptualize themselves in multiple and sometimes even conflicting ways and organize their affinity groups in differently (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Stryer and Serpe, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). For example, when an individual enters into a new work assignment with a fresh client, while continuing to participate in an old one, they may see both organizations defining their work identity, at least for a period of time. Gig Workers labour in insecure arrangements, have little organizational identification, have high autonomy, and/or view work as an avenue of self-expression. This description captures a growing segment of employees for whom organizations are less significant as sources of (Administrative Science Quarterly 64, 2019) identification and who tie their work identities to more-proximal and reliable anchors, such as their occupational work and abilities (Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley, 2008).

This leads to formulating the following proposition:

Proposition #2 : Building Occupational Work Identity requires Learning Agility

2.5 Survival in Gig Economy is more predictable through Learning Agility

While all workers need to seek out opportunities to develop new skills, independent workers may find it harder to ensure they do not stagnate in doing the same type of work. Employees of large companies may benefit from on-the-job learning, training, and opportunities for career advancement, but independent workers may have to seek out training on their own. Organizations avoid hiring freelancers for tasks they have not done before. This makes it difficult for gig workers to build new career muscles. While gig workers free themselves from the constraints of the corporate world, but a new range of challenges are placed on them. Each independent worker is essentially a self-contained small business—and running that business may demand new skills that are not in their natural wheelhouse. The challenge of continually acquiring new business to stay productive requires gig workers to be marketing savvy. It is also important for independent workers to consider diversifying their income streams so they are not totally reliant on one client who can cut them loose at any time. It takes administrative skill and foresight to prepare for peaks and valleys in earnings, to perform all tax and legal compliance, and to manage accounting. Independent earners also have to take an aggressive approach toward saving for retirement on their own if they hope to supplement social security plans, and they must act as their own investment managers. It is increasingly important for all workers—whether independent or traditional—to map out their own career trajectories, looking for their own new opportunities and taking charge of developing their own skills along the way. Those who are independent will need to be even more proactive in gaining the new skills, experiences, and credentials that will serve them along the way. (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016)

Experience can be a masterful teacher. Yet, experience is a complicated thing. In any given experience, some people learn, other people, in that same experience, learn nothing or even the wrong lessons. It is the ability to learn from experience that enables some people to outperform and stay relevant in the dynamic world of work. (Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008; Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997). The ability to learn from experience reflects a person's ability to master the changing demands of his or her job (Kolb, 1976) and involves a broad array of individual differences and characteristics. To capture this ability to learn from experience, Lombardo and Eichinger introduced the concept of learning agility, which they defined as the willingness and ability to learn new competencies in order to perform under first-time, tough, or different situations. By their definition, a person who is agile , always succeeds in new and first-time conditions. Agile learners not only get up to speed quickly in a particular experience, but they are also able to drop unsuitable lessons learned as they traverse across experiences. Besides Learning within one experience and ability to connect the dots and draw learning from a

range of experiences also falls within the purview of learning agility. Learning agility therefore is also about unlearning . The term ''agility'' has been associated with speed, nimbleness, ability to think and derive conclusions quickly and intellectual insight (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). It also refers to experiential learning, vicarious learning, speed of learning (i.e., an ability to pick things up quickly) and the ease of movement across ideas (i.e., moving among various ideas or points of view and across situations). Agile learners develop new, more appropriate and innovative ways of doing things than following the set methods (LePine et al., 2000, p. 570) Admitting mistakes, staying congruent with one's values and beliefs and having a learning focus increase the individual's ability to learn from difficult situations. Research in Education have portrayed young children and adults as active learners who grow through lived experience and learn from them (Dewey, 1916; Lewin, 1951; Piaget, 1952). Gig workers enjoy more variety of experiences that they can leverage to build their skills and construct a robust personal work identity (D. SCOTT DERUE, 2012).

This understanding from studies conducted on learning agility, further offer the following sub propositions to examining the relationship between the foundational elements of learning agility and the challenges faced by gig workers for career sustenance.

Proposition 2A: Independent workers need to build the client's confidence by delivering results consistently

 2.6 Results agility and consistent delivery of outcomes

In the absence of organizational backing, Independent workers have to build their own credibility by consistently delivering expected outcomes to their clients. Unlike traditional workers, freelancers do not enjoy the privilege of having a supervisor to mentor or guide them through delivering against assigned tasks. They are required to perform against expectations with minimal to no guidance. In organizations , supervisors and managers provide clarity on goals , manage and motivate the worker , however a freelancer owns all of this responsibility to self. Future work from the same client and word of mouth marketing of the gig work is fully dependent on the confidence the freelancer is able to build with the client by delivering to expectations consistently. The instability and personalization of work lead every gig work to become identity work for the freelancer. Without no direction and support, doing sufficient and the right kind of work, require gig workers to demonstrate ability to achieve

results in toughest conditions. Results Agility has been described as the ability of individuals to achieve results under tough conditions, inspire others to perform beyond normal, and exhibit the sort of presence that builds confidence in others (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002). In order to win the client's confidence and continue doing work in Gig Economy freelancers need to demonstrate Results Agility.

Proposition 2B : Independent workers need to build strong networks and relationships to get new work

2.7 People Agility and building strong relationships

Personal and professional networks are the main source of acquiring new work in the Gig Economy. Hence a gig workers' success has a depends heavily on their ability to build new relationships quickly and efficiently. Communicating effectively with clients to understand expectations and regularly reviewing progress with them enhances productivity of gig workers. Interpersonal relationships and ability to work with diverse group of people has a positive impact on success for gig workers (Ai Group, 2016). Freelance work is driven by relationships that gig workers build with their contacts from different projects done in the past. The independent workers cultivate connections—to routines, places, people, and purpose—that helps them to manage their tensions and sustain their productivity (Petriglieri, 2019). Understanding self and others helps gig workers build constructive relationships. In order to thrive in a world , where they are exposed to a variety of people to interact and work with , gig workers need the ability to maintain calm and resilience. Lombardo & Eichinger said People Agility describes individuals who know themselves well, learn from experience, treat others constructively, and are cool and resilient under the pressures of change. Given the heavy dependence on people connects and relationships with them, in order to stay productive and acquire new work , gig workers need to demonstrate ability to work with a diverse set of people effectively.

Proposition 2C: Independent workers need to adapt to new situations to stay relevant in the Gig Economy

2.8 Change Agility and Continuous learning

Several researchers have discovered that people who derailed from their success journeys within organizations were the ones who were unwilling to change and adapt. These people relied excessively on their narrow set of

skills that they had developed early in their career. While Gig workers enjoy freedom and autonomy of their careers, they are prone to the risks associated with the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity of today's economy. Unlike traditional workers supported by their organizations, gig workers have to deal with these risks and adapt to environmental changes by themselves. In addition, they are regularly pushed into new and ambiguous situations while working which they need to acclimatize with in order to deliver. They need to deal with challenging, stretching, difficult and uncomfortable experiences more often than traditional workers. They need to be resilient and non-defensive to survive. This requires gig workers to consciously come out of their comfort zones, habits and routines and develop the appetite to experiment new ways. They need to be curious and invest in their own skill building to deal with change situations. Success in change situations requires the ability to handle failure with poise and grace. Change Agility describes people who are curious, have a passion for ideas, like to experiment with test cases, and engage in skill-building activities.'' (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2011). (Jackquelene, Lynn , 2007) in there study on employee and organization relationship , have stressed on the importance of the exchange between the employee and organization be valuable for continued relevance of the relationship. In order to keep themselves relevant for their clients in the Gig economy, gig workers need to learn continuously and consciously invest in their skill building.

 # Proposition 2D : Independent workers need an agile mindset to deal with emotions in the Gig Economy

2.9 Mental Agility and psychological safety

Sociologists have portrayed workers outside organizations as largely deprived of alternative communities and shared ideologies that could serve as social defences with the only notable exception being discourses praising the value of self-discovery or self-reliance in the free market (Lane, 2011.) Independent workers tend to work longer hours (Barley and Kunda, 2006), and working conditions intended to free people up often end up easing the interference of work into personal lives. Emotions associated with Gig work have a significant impact on the ability of the gig worker to survive in the game. Psychological safety, in large part, depends on others: when one feels psychologically safe, he or she relies on others who will continue to trust him or her, even if an error arises It describes an interpersonal sense of safety that emerges over a short period of time for a given group of people. The key to reducing anxiety in organizations is based on the psychological fact that it is easier to tolerate anxiety in the presence of sympathetic others than alone. However independent deal with their anxieties by own selves.

In this process they take ownership of ambiguous and problem situations and come up with novel ways of handling them. Gig workers are required to balance various projects at once, manage competing timelines, and carefully consider their bandwidth before taking on additional work. Unlike traditional workers, they lack the safety net of a team, manager or organization while handling complex situations. Mental Agility describes people who can think through problems from a fresh point of view and are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity, and explaining their thinking to others(Lombardo & Eichinger, 2011).

To sum it up, it can be observed that there is a crucial role of Results Agility, People Agility, Change Agility and Mental Agility (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2011) in the survival of Gig workers and sustenance of boundaryless careers.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The objective of the present study is to examine the process of construction of professional identity over organizational identity by independent workers and understand the impact of learning agility on professional identity while engaging in the Gig Economy. In order to establish the empirical relationships between Learning agility, relevance and professional identity the present research first developed propositions. Then, with the help of primary data collected from 226 respondents the hypotheses were tested. An instrument had been designed to measure Learning Agility , Relevance and Professional Identity. The questionnaire contains three scales (Learning Agility , Relevance and Professional Identity) totalling to 27 items in a 4-point Likert scale (1=Never; 4=Always) measuring the latent variables based on earlier studies conducted by Lombardo & Eichinger (2002), Kenneth P. De Meuse, Guangrong Dai, And Victoria V. Swisher(2012), Korn Ferry(2011) , Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008), Lakshmi Ramarajana(2014), Yusuke Tsuchiya(2017), Mohammed Jebril (2008),Yan Chen Xin(2006), Trine Susan Johansen(2017), Nippin Anand(2011), Jackquelene & Lynn (2007). Learning Agility was measured with 12 items with a Cronbach alpha of 0.768. Each item was a statement and the respondents were invited to rate how well the statement described them. For example, one statement to measure learning agility was "I am comfortable to experiment new job assignments". Relevance was measured with 7 items having a Cronbach alpha of 0.854. One statement for example to measure Relevance was "I have got new assignments after acquiring new skill". Professional identity was measured with 8 items example and

had a Cronbach alpha of 0.866. A statement to measure Professional identity for example was "I follow the theoretical and technical advancements in my profession". The questionnaire was automated into an online survey. Response to all questions was made mandatory to avoid missing data. A pilot study was carried out on 35 respondents to confirm the validity of the questionnaire, before data collection. For the data collection, voluntary participants were invited using social media platforms. There were 226 valid samples received. A One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test failed to reject the null hypothesis that the data followed a normal distribution at .05 level significance (variables 1-3, N = 226 each, and p > .05 each). IBM SPSS Version 25 , 64 bit edition was chosen to conduct statistical analysis owing to its popularity with social science research and user friendly interface.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion : **Impact of learning agility on professional identity – An empirical examination**

4.1 Hypothesis testing

In response to the propositions made above , a concept model is proposed, as illustrated in Figure. 1, which presents hypothesised relationships between Learning Agility, Relevance and Professional Identity. Following are the hypothesis to be examined :
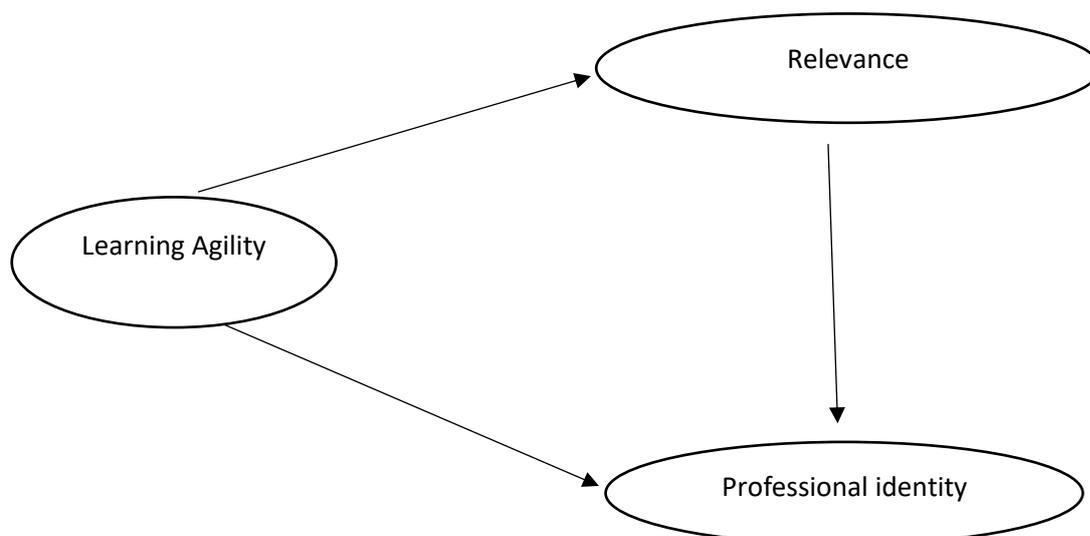
Figure. 1:Theoretical framework to study the influence of Learning Agility on Professional Identity

H1 : Learning Agility positively correlates with Relevance for career sustenance

H2 : Learning Agility positively correlates with Professional Identity

H3 : Relevance positively correlates with Professional Identity

4.2 **Measurement model estimation**

Pearson's two tailed test at 0.01 level of significance was used to test the correlations between the variables. From the Table 1 it can be observed that Learning Agility was found to positively correlate with Relevance (correlation coefficient of .348) and Professional Identity (correlation coefficient of .443) at .01 level of significance. In addition , Relevance was also found to positively correlate with Professional Identity (correlation coefficient of .648) at .01 level of significance.

Table 1 Correlation Statistics

	Relevance	Professional Identity
Learning Agility	.348[**]	.443[**]
Relevance		.648[**]

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

From Table 2 , it can be observed that Learning Agility was found to positively correlate with Relevance $(F(1,224)=30.966, p<0.001)$ with its adjusted R Square .118 . Learning Agility was found to be significant predictor of Professional identity$(F(1,224)=54.752,p<.001)$ with Adjusted R Square .193. Relevance in addition was also found to be a significant predictor of Professional Identity $(F(1,224)=162.480,p<.001)$ with Adjusted R square of .418.

Table 2 Structural Path coefficients

Predictor Variable	Dependent Variable	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.	Regression Coefficient	t-value	Adjusted R Square
Learning Agility	Relevance	350.686	30.966	.000	.294***	5.565	.118
Learning Agility	Professional Identity	688.971	54.752	.000	.413***	7.399	.193
Relevance	Professional Identity	1474.662	162.480	.000	.715***	12.747	.418

***p < .001

The findings further strengthen the proposition that by being agile learners, individuals can remain relevant for their clients in the gig economy , which in turn enhances their professional identity and career sustenance in the long run.

4.3 Study Implications and future research scope

 A central assumption by the fundamentalists to learning agility is that it can be developed (D. SCOTT DERUE, 2012)(De Meuse, 2015; Eichinger, Lombardo, & Capretta, 2010; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2011). If it could not, individuals would be born with a specific level of the construct. Gig workers are one-man armies managing, rather leading their business. In the absence of available literature to explore developing learning agility for gig workers , this research builds on the studies conducted on developing learning agility of leaders to draw parallels for gig workers. The primary responsibility for freelancers is to get aware, measure and develop learning agility for their career sustenance. Numerous studies have shown that ability to learn from experience is what differentiates successful executives from unsuccessful ones. Nonetheless, it should be recognized that being reflective, mindful, nimble, and open to change would seem to be desirable personal qualities for all gig workers. Research indicates that individuals who are adaptable and flexible generally perform better than their counterparts. However, it is important to note that "adaptability" and "flexibility"—although components of learning agility— are not the same psychological constructs as learning agility. While within organizations , it is highly probable that not all jobs require the same level of learning agility for incumbents to be successful, in the gig economy the study argues that learning agility is a crucial competency for all jobs.

In Learning agility ,the learning dimensions cover feedback seeking, information seeking, interpersonal risk-taking, collaborating, performance risk-taking, reflection, and experimenting behaviour. The agility dimensions describe speed and flexibility as important facets of behaviour that influence one's learning agility capacity. Individuals seek to increase their competence and knowledge in a particular task domain out of the genuine desire to learn more.   Recent studies (e.g., Drinka et al., 2016) demonstrated significant associations between learning goal orientation and learning agility, which may support the notion that when one has a mindset intent upon learning when going into a specific task, one behaves in a way that is more learning agile. In a relationship characterized as having a high degree of psychological safety, a subordinate might believe that he or she can propose radical solutions to solve a particular problem. People are likely to behave in ways that reduce their learning when they see the threat of embarrassment. At the same time, Schein (1978) noted that "containment" is important for learning, in which people can express emotionality and tension without a detrimental impact on relationships. Within organizations a manager or leader may have an positive impact on a subordinate's motivation to learn on-the-job. Future research may be able to elucidate the ongoing dynamics of alternative avenues of containment for Gig workers to take risks, experiment and learn continuously. Behaviours that may contribute to psychological safety were defined as honouring confidentiality of discussion and mutually agreeing upon the scope of the engagement performance may also be sub-divided further to include other essential dimensions like complex problem solving and innovation. Some studies point to engaging peer coaches to provide a safe space for building learning agility .Individuals who possess a high level of learning agility engage in behaviours that help them both efficiently execute and thoughtfully learn in unfamiliar contexts DeRue and colleagues (2012) proposed a more comprehensive model of learning agility. Additionally, they asserted that both cognitive and behavioural processes are factors that should be considered.

In the current context of gig economy developing learning agility and building new skills will enable independent workers to construct their personal work or professional identity. They must feel that new habits are possible, that they can learn something new. With the surge of online talent platforms in the gig economy, there is increased transparency about the demand for skills and work opportunities. Agile learners leverage such information to make informed educational choices. As this information reshapes decisions about education and training, the entire skills mix of the economy could align more accurately with the workforce overtime. A recent study conducted in the USA highlights that "Everyone is responsible for their own success" (Harvard Business Review,

2016).While this can also hold true for individuals employed within organizations, it is clearly an imperative for gig workers. As they say, "With great power also comes great responsibility". Gig workers enjoy the power of controlling what, when and how they work and alongside have to take the ownership of building their skills continuously to stay relevant and reap benefits.

Conclusion

The performance of work can range from an intensely personal experience (Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski, 2010) to a routinized and even alienating one (Henson, 1996). For people working outside of organizations, the pendulum swings to the prior as they devote their selves in the performance of work. More so than being at work, they become their work. Such a porous casing between work and self makes it necessary to have personal holding environments to harness the emotional storms that accompany working without the cover of an organizational roof. As more people become unchained from organizations, neither identities nor holding environments are simply lost or found once and for all. Living and struggling well with the anxiety of precariousness becomes more important, and potentially fulfilling, than sustaining the illusion that, if only contained and interpreted well enough, that anxiety will dissipate. Thriving in the gig economy may require cultivating the connections that help one to continue finding and avoid losing one's self. Work identity is a major part of the overall identity of many adults. Yet little research has examined the concept of individual work identity, which influences the way individuals think and act in the context of their work. This study has examined the process by which individuals use membership in multiple work-based social groups to construct their individual work identities. It further argues working with multiple organizations pushes gig workers to associate more with their occupational identity as against organizational identity. It has built up the studies conducted on learning agility to examine the importance of learning agility to deal with challenges of gig economy workers. Specifically, this study considered the relationship of learning agility with boundaryless careers of the gig workers. Finally, it explores the implications of learning agility. The present study has focused on Learning Agility and its relationship with building professional identity of Gig Workers thriving in an independent work economy. In doing so, it links professional identity with personal relevance and learning agility of individuals.

Limitations of the study

Most of the study conducted so far in the subject of gig economy is confined to western countries. Even though close to 40% of the gig work offered globally is in India and as many as 15 million people in India are availing contractual work there is limited literature work that has been done to study gig work, professional identity and learning agility in Indian context. The propositions drawn are based on review of available literature on the subject which is predominantly from the western world. The sample size used for the empirical validation of the propositions is small. The study derives the Learning agility implications by drawing parallels from leadership development, that presumes gig workers as one-man armies and self-proclaimed leaders. Future research shall sharpen the causal relationship including identification of distinctions among the various elements of learning agility. Learning agility can play a pivotal role to help gig workers thrive in the industry. However, it needs to be done correctly.

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