Managing Flexibility: Understanding How Workers in the Gig Economy Manage Multiple Jobs in the Context of Telehealth Platforms

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CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing → Human computer interaction (HCI)**; *Laboratory experiments*; **HCI theory, concepts and models**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: flexible work, heterogeneous agents, contextual responses, work performance and motivation

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1 Introduction

Flexibility in capacity often serves a source of competitive advantage to any system or process. Though without an official figure, there exist many incidences where Uber has charged a surcharge on scheduled rides ahead of time ranging up to 85% of the original fare (WSJ, [5]). Uber explains, the reservation fee is mostly to entice drivers to accept such rides. This is one indicative example of the value in flexibility, both to the platform manager and participating suppliers. Another case for the value of flexible capacity can be found in telemedicine. Sun et al. [9] find evidence that telemedicine adoption across emergency rooms in New York significantly reduced the average patient's length of stay primarily by allowing flexible resource allocation. More cases around the world can be found in Betcheva et al. [2]. Not only is flexibility ideal for the platform, it has both been proven in research and demonstrated in practice that flexible arrangements also benefit the worker or supplier himself.

However, it is not so straightforward how humans react to such flexibility. Flexibility is, in other words, variability and there exist heaps of evidence showing the risk aversion of an average person. Particularly in the gig economy setting, Cameron and Meuris [3] show high pay variability is positively related to turnover in ride-hailing. At the same time, the success story of Uber and alike platforms demonstrate there is some workaround this natural hesitation toward uncertain work arrangements. One lever for Uber is surge pricing; by paying high enough, Uber attracts enough suppliers to fill the demand [8]. It has also been proven in several analytical models that flexible work arrangements also benefit the worker as opposed to a traditional form of employment [6]. Flexibility itself can also hold inherent value to the worker despite its implications of pay variability.

However, there is also the argument of

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Furthermore, there is an additional dimension to consider - the context of work. 2021 Pew Research Survey [1] report that the large majority of gig workers had 2 or more jobs. Additional claims from Doordash, Uber, Lyft on how 90-80% of its riders only work on each platform for 10-20 hours per week support the conjecture that gig workers engage in such tasks as a side endeavor.

Moreover, there are characteristics of gig work that are often distinct from traditional employment - in the characteristic itself or the extent that it is taken to. Namely, algorithmic management [4] and proximity to customer feedback [7] have been shown to impact gig workers significantly.

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