

## Mobile Learning to Develop Gig Economy skills: An Approach for Empowering Refugees in Arab countries

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### Abstract

The number of refugees is constantly increasing due to the various crises facing the world. The study sought to present some suggestions that enhance mobile learning in developing skills of gig economy as an approach for empowering refugees. The gig economy refers to the nature of temporary jobs that often use digital technology to connect clients and workers. It is a modern trend in work and economic activity, driven by several factors, most notably the flexibility of human resources and workers to move, the increasing rates of remote work, and its development via digital platforms. To achieve this aim, the study used a descriptive approach and was divided into three sections: the theoretical framework of the gig economy as an approach to refugee empowerment; the importance of mobile learning in developing gig economy skills to empower refugees; and concluded with the results and suggestions section.

The study reached several results, most notably: economic empowerment contributes to resilience and improved livelihoods for both refugees and host communities; digital job opportunities encompassed by the gig economy can reshape refugees' access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods; mobile learning provides unprecedented opportunities to improve national economies and is viewed as an enabler for achieving sustainable development.

Furthermore, it presented several suggestions, such as: creating a conducive environment for investing refugees' potential and empower them economically to achieve their integration; equipping this environment with all the requirements of mobile learning for promoting the gig economy so as to overcome barriers to accessing employment.

**Keywords:** Mobile learning; Gig economy; Refugee empowerment.

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## **Introduction**

Access to education is a fundamental human right, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It provides livelihood and economic inclusion opportunities for refugees and migrants, enabling them to fully participate in society. It is also the primary means through which refugees and migrants can lift themselves out of poverty, and live fulfilling lives. It is also a means to the full realization of other human rights.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has called on the international community to take its responsibility towards refugees and intensify efforts to alleviate their suffering and provide protection to those in need, benefiting refugees and asylum seekers. This issue represents one of the world's most pressing problems. Wars, disasters, and economic and political problems have caused an increase in the number of asylum seekers, posing a major challenge for both developed and developing countries.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that as of the end of June 2024, there were an estimated 122.6 million people forcibly displaced from their homes (including 43.7 million refugees) around the world due to persecution, conflicts, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order. This represents an increase of 5% (or 5.3 million people) compared to the end of 2023. For more than 12 years, the number of forcibly displaced people has continued to rise. By the end of June 2024, one in every 67 people worldwide was forcibly displaced. That's nearly double the figure of one in every 114 people a decade ago. The majority of forcibly displaced people—87 percent—live in low- or middle-income countries. Based on UNHCR estimates, the number of people forced to flee is likely to have increased since June 2024, unless there are rapid positive developments in one or more of the major displacement situations (UNHCR, 2024).

Ignoring refugee education is a waste of significant human capital. Administrative procedures, such as lack of data or uncoordinated bureaucratic systems, often hinder refugee education. However, investing in refugee education can enhance economic growth not only in host countries, but also in their own countries (UNESCO, 2019).

Communication technology has taken the lead over other sciences. With the widespread use of portable devices such as cell phones, personal digital assistants (PDA), smart phones, and laptops equipped with various wireless and wired communication technologies, a new concept has emerged: the Mobile Learning System. This refers to the use of portable devices in the teaching and learning processes. It is linked to e-learning and is known as (mobile learning).

Mobile learning expands educational opportunities for individuals. It is a practical translation of the philosophy of distance education. It provides educational opportunities for learners in various scientific, educational, economic, industrial, commercial, and other fields. It also enables the development of individual capabilities and provides solutions to many important issues in the field of education and learning.

Accordingly, mobile learning becomes a technological humanitarian model that ensures that refugees and displaced persons have access to quality, equitable, and inclusive education as well as lifelong learning opportunities through digital mobile technologies. Mobile learning plays a key role in informal learning for refugees, and their access to digital mobile technologies, so it contributes to their frequent use of these tools, potentially making them a source of support for education delivery, management services, and refugee support (UNESCO, 2018).

The gig economy refers to the nature of temporary jobs that often use digital technology to connect clients and workers. It is a modern trend in work and economic activity driven by several factors, most notably the flexibility of human resources and workers, and the increasing rates and development of remote work via digital platforms (Schanz, 2022).

The "gig economy" has steadily increased in advanced economies as work becomes easier to divide into discrete blocks, and is expected to continue as short-term contracts become easier to arrange. This requires policymakers to adopt laws and regulations that allow companies and workers to engage in labor relationships that enhance efficiency, as freelance work via gig economy platforms has become a phenomenon attracting increasing attention. It has become common in many sectors, including transportation and delivery. Application-based technology platforms are also replacing humans as intermediaries, quickly and easily connecting consumers and producers, allowing individuals to perform a variety of tasks for others, entirely on demand and in real time. On the other hand, people are increasingly attracted to this non-traditional sector of work, either to supplement their current income or simply because they are unable to find traditional full-time jobs with a steady salary. Given the importance of the gig economy in enabling refugees to build a better future, this study attempts to empower them and positively adapt to life's changes, leveraging the opportunities mobile learning provides to achieve this.

### **Problem Statement and Study Questions:**

The continued increase in the number of internally displaced persons, refugees, and asylum seekers reflects the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the need for a global response to provide assistance and long-term solutions for affected people. More than 108.4 million people worldwide have been displaced from their homes, 34.6 million of whom are identified as refugees, 41% of whom are minors under the age of 18. Many individuals face obstacles in accessing basic entitlements such as education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and the right to move freely. One in 74 people worldwide has been forced to leave their homes due to conflict or persecution. (UNHCR, 2023).

Many countries around the world - especially the Arab countries - are experiencing a torrent of armed conflicts and disputes, and scope of these conflicts is expanding at an unprecedented rate. There is no doubt that the increasing numbers of refugees in areas of asylum have imposed significant service demands that host countries may be unable to provide. Consequently, the suffering of these countries, as well as of the refugees they host, is exacerbated. This, in turn, raises numerous challenges, most notably that a large number of refugees find themselves without a reliable source of income, in addition to limited livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, non-Arabic speaking refugees face a language barrier, with some lacking access to sustainable education that would contribute to their advancement. In addition, a large segment of refugees rely on humanitarian aid to meet their basic needs and obtain medical, social, and psychological assistance. This aid is often short-term and underfunded, especially as refugee numbers have reached unprecedented levels in recent years. This requires greater seriousness, and states must fulfill their international commitments and cooperate to reduce the phenomenon of asylum, address its causes, and overcome all obstacles that hinder the establishment of an effective international refugee protection system.

Despite the great potential of Arab countries, they face significant challenges. For example, Al-Atrabi's study (2021) identified some of the social, economic, and psychological problems facing refugees in Egyptian society, most notably economic problems, particularly unemployment and weak economic empowerment.

There are some efforts to empower refugees. In 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Egypt provided support through integration and expanding economic empowerment opportunities. The Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees was also launched in 2021 by the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations in Egypt, with the aim of enhancing coordination efforts and mobilizing resources to achieve lasting sustainable development benefits for refugees, asylum seekers, and their host communities, while promoting social integration and strengthening the resilience of host communities. Despite these efforts, the resources of the Ministries of Education, Technical Education, and Higher Education in Egypt have failed to achieve the goals included in the Global Compact on Refugees, due to the difficult economic conditions and the government's plan to modernize and reform education in Egypt (UNHCR, 2023, p. 11).

Funding for refugee education continues to decline. According to the Global Education Monitoring Report, Youth Report 2019, an estimated \$800 million was spent on refugee education in 2016, split equally between humanitarian and development aid. If the international community used only humanitarian aid, the share of education would need to increase tenfold to meet refugees' educational needs. Improving funding for refugee education requires bridging humanitarian and development aid, in line with the commitments made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (UNESCO, 2019).

The ability of refugees to secure livelihoods to support themselves and their families is a critical policy concern for at least two reasons: refugees, particularly women, face significant barriers to accessing the paid labor market, and humanitarian aid, which is often short-term in nature and underfunded. The gig economy can contribute to addressing these problems by expanding opportunities for paid work across national borders and enabling workers to overcome many barriers to participation.

The global refugee crisis requires using new tools in order to develop their skills to enable them to overcome the challenges they face in general. Studies conducted within the World Bank's Private Sector for Refugees (PS4R) initiative show that it is possible to move refugees from receiving humanitarian aid to achieving self-sufficiency and economic inclusion as investment opportunities. This is achieved through new online training that draws on practical experience and research from around the world to illustrate how refugees can support themselves economically and become positive contributors to market dynamics. (World Bank Group, 2022)

UNHCR has strived to ensure and expand opportunities for refugee youth to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to enter the labor market and rebuild their lives. Education remains one of the most important rights that UNHCR advocates for and encourages everyone to defend, helping create a better future for refugees and their host communities. (UNHCR, n.d.)

Many studies have recommended developing refugees' skills, particularly in the field of technology. Loh (2016) emphasized the role of technology in refugees' lives and its impact on their life experiences, as well as its role in facilitating access to aids provided by humanitarian organizations through the use of modern databases. The study demonstrated that countries and

humanitarian organizations invest technology in formulating their policies to confront refugee crises, with a focus on: aid distribution, education, and the private sector.

Al-Bahi's study (2024) drew attention to the growing global refugee crises, which has led to the use of unconventional tools and policies to confront them; including the technological tools that have brought about radical transformations in the global refugee system. Thus, it is possible to emphasize the important role that technology plays in the lives of refugees, as refugees use it for learning, gathering information, communicating, mobilizing, and digitizing their identities. It is also used by international companies and institutions for resettlement, creating new digital identities, investigating human rights violation, and more. While host countries use it to provide essential services to refugees, determine the best immigration policies, monitor and document the various stages of asylum, create biometric databases, and better control borders (Al-Bahi, 2024).

The results of Barber's study (2021) showed that the practices of some stakeholders towards refugees in Canada are taking place in isolated islands, leading to wasted time and money due to uncoordinated services and lack of communication between agencies, with refugees experiencing learning difficulties due to language, as well as difficulty completing vocational training in preparation for independent living.

Hacioglu's study (2018) concluded that education is important for integrating Syrian refugees into Turkish society. The study concluded that there are barriers to this integration, particularly the legal status, and that Turkey needs the support of international institutions to provide educational services to Syrians.

The role of the gig economy is also evident due to its advantages: it represents an alternative safety net for some workers during economic downturns; it allows freedom of choice in the independent labor market due to its flexibility; it is also suitable for those wishing to learn new skills and explore new paths; in addition it has become a platform that connects individuals to new opportunities and invests their untapped skills by bridging the large gap in employment. Moreover, the gig economy enables work to be completed through freelance labor at a low cost instead of hiring full-time workers (N. A., 2021).

Consequently, the current study's problem can be formulated as follows: "Mobile learning can play an important role in developing the gig economy skills, enabling refugees to integrate economically and transform from a burden on their host countries into a source of economic growth. Therefore, the study presents some suggestions that contribute to enhancing this role".

Based on the above, the study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the theoretical framework of the gig economy as an approach for refugee empowerment?
2. What is the importance of mobile learning in developing gig economy skills as an approach for refugee empowerment?
3. What are the suggestions to enhance mobile learning in developing gig economy skills as an approach for refugee empowerment?

### **Study Aims:**

The study aims to achieve the following:

- Conceptualizing the gig economy as an approach for empowering refugees and integrating them economically.

- Identifying the important role that mobile learning can play in developing gig economy skills so as to achieve refugee empowerment.
- Providing some suggestions that contribute to enhancing the role of mobile learning in developing gig economy skills to empower refugees.

### **Study Importance:**

The importance of the current study lies in the following aspects:

- The importance of the topic addressed by the study, as the number of refugees is increasing due to the prevailing political circumstances and unrest, and their significant impact on all aspects of economic, security, political, and social life.
- The importance of the gig economy as a new economic model that seeks to change all unsustainable production methods and consumption patterns, thus contributing to enhancing the efficiency of resource use and providing sustainable job opportunities.
- Highlighting the opportunities to leverage mobile phones and technological tools in the teaching and learning process, which should be of particular interest to students in general and refugees in particular.
- Disseminating the culture of mobile learning and the positive attitudes toward it among refugees and faculty members.
- Reconsidering the concept of permanent work and moving to what is known as temporary work (the gig economy) in line with global transformations and the requirements they impose on governments.
- The results of this study may benefit refugees and their host governments, in terms of their treatment, their right to relief and assistance, their acceptance and integration into society, and efforts to invest in and benefit from them.
- It may open the way for researchers and those interested in studying more approaches of empowering refugees.

### **Study Methodology:**

The study adopted the descriptive approach as it is appropriate for achieving its purposes. It is a theoretical study based on scientific sources available to the researchers, which express the study problem quantitatively and qualitatively as it exists in reality. Therefore, this approach goes beyond describing the problem to analyzing it in light of the information collected, so as to reach appropriate conclusions and suggestions for developing and improving the current state.

### **Study Terminology:**

The study adopted the following terms:

- **Mobile Learning:**

It is operationally defined as: a type of e-learning using portable devices equipped with wireless networks, and the software and services they provide, within a collaborative learning environment that is not limited by time or place, to achieve learning objectives and add more interactivity and flexibility to the educational process, in a manner that is compatible with the circumstances and conditions of adult refugees.

- **Refugee**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as "every person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." In addition to persecution and conflict, natural disasters due to climate change are forcing people to seek refuge in other countries. The severity and frequency of disasters such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and mudslides are increasing" (UN, n.d.).

- **Gig Economy:**

The gig economy is operationally defined as: temporary work obtained by refugees using digital technology via digital platforms according to irregular schedules that depend on fluctuations in demand for services, in exchange for a fee per request.

The study is organized as follows: an introduction, outlining the research problem, aims, importance, methodology and terminology. The literature review consists of two sections. The first section examines the theoretical framework of the gig economy as an approach to refugee empowerment. The second section examines the importance of mobile learning in developing the gig economy skills as an approach for empowering refugees. Then the study concludes with results and suggestions.

## **Literature Review**

The literature review is divided into two sections as follows:

- a. The first section: The theoretical framework of the gig economy as an approach to refugee empowerment
- b. The second section: The importance of mobile learning in developing the gig economy skills as an approach for refugee empowerment.

### **a. The First Section: The Theoretical Framework of the Gig Economy as an Approach to Refugee Empowerment:**

The first section focused on presenting the theoretical framework of the gig economy as an approach to refugee empowerment, in terms of the concept's origins and development, the characteristics of the gig economy, its advantages and disadvantages, its components, its importance for refugee empowerment, the most important challenges facing it, and the most prominent policies necessary for its implementation.

#### **1- Gig Economy: Origin of the Concept**

The concept of a gig refers to a small, two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage used in the past, demonstrating mobility between jobs and the speed of service delivery. Most of the gig economy is based on professions and business that rely on delivering services to consumers. (Mukhopadhyay, 2020).

The "gig" economy (also known as the free market economy, the informal economy, or the temporary labor economy) refers to certain tasks and business that are not subject to traditional labor regulations and rules, such as self-employment, temporary jobs for companies, joint jobs within organizations, and hiring independent workers to carry out short-term commitments and one-time tasks. (Marketing Dictionary, DT)

A gig is a temporary job that doesn't require many working hours, or may end at any time. It usually involves working for the employee rather than for the employer. The term gig

work refers to ways of earning income outside the traditional long-term employer-employee relationship. (Smith, 2019).

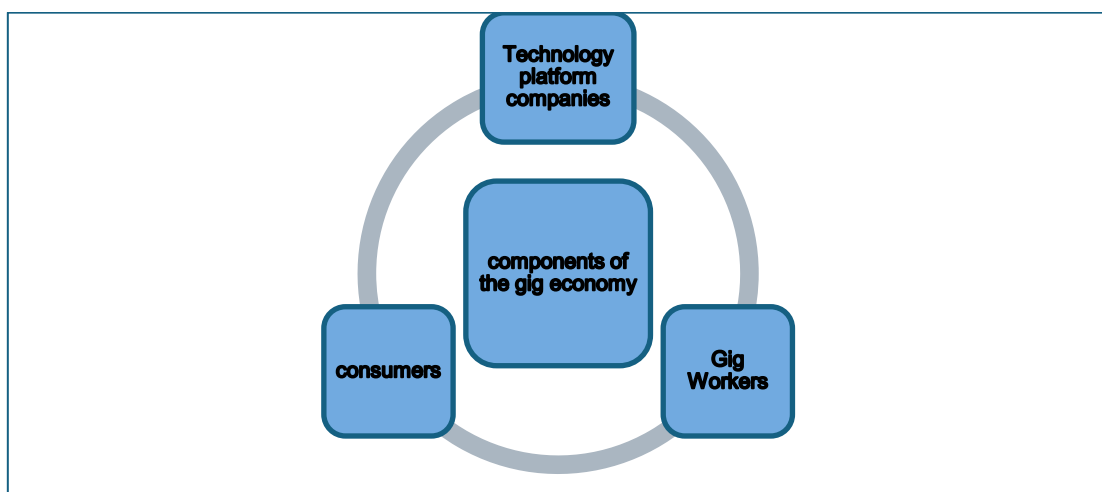
The gig economy previously referred to musicians performing in jazz clubs, bars, and various concert halls. Its current use came about at the height of the financial crisis in early 2009, when unemployed people earned their living through "gig work," or working multiple part-time jobs. However, the gig economy has historically been a labor market characterized by short-term or independent employment relationships that offer flexible working hours. Temporary workers typically work on irregular schedules based on fluctuations in demand for services. Most gig workers are paid on a piece-rate basis, in other words, they are paid per task rather than per hour (Clark, 2021).

Thus, the gig economy is not a new concept, but it is a trend that has seen significant expansion over the past decade. For example, the share of the US workforce in the gig economy increased from 10.1% in 2005 to 15.8% in 2015, and its growth was expected to reach about \$2.7 trillion by 2025. The growth of the temporary workforce over the past decade is due to several factors, most notably the development of new technologies and the difficulty of finding traditional stable jobs. These technologies increase direct transactions between suppliers and consumers, short-term labor contracts, and the ever-increasing cost of fixed labor. For many companies that need less than one full-time person for short-term work and for many workers who value flexibility, this has created a significant surplus. During economic downturns, nontraditional work also serves as an alternative safety net, and is expected to be more common, although policy changes may slow or accelerate this trend (Emilia 2017).

## **2- The Components of the Gig Economy and its Most Important Characteristics**

Gig economy models and applications include: self-employed freelancers, independent contractors, project workers for a specific period or task, and temporary or part-time employment.

**The gig economy consists of three main components:**



**Figure (1) the components of the gig economy.**



The figure was designed after referring to (Janadari, 2020) & (Emilia, 2017):

- Technology platform companies: they are a major force in expanding the gig economy, connecting workers directly to consumers and facilitating quick, temporary job opportunities. Examples include Uber, Airbnb, Lyft, Etsy, and TaskRabbit. Platform companies share common characteristics, such as: facilitating direct transactions between consumers and producers, providing flexible work schedules for temporary workers, and online payments, from which the platforms take a percentage. These companies also offer online profiles and reviews for producers and consumers.
- Gig workers are those who are paid for temporary work, i.e., they work on various jobs or projects, unlike workers who receive a salary or hourly wage and work in a specific job. A temporary worker is self-employed person, performing short-term jobs or contracts for one or more employers. Some may rely on a website or app to help them find or organize temporary work, while others may communicate orally. In this reputation-based work, gig economy workers can range from traditional independent contractors to freelancers and temporary staffing company employees who work set hours per week. The work is divided into tasks that are distributed as needed. Some may use gig work to supplement the income they receive from a traditional job. They can be classified into two categories:
  - Labor providers: These are low-income, less educated workers who depend entirely on temporary work for their livelihood, because they often face difficulty to find other work options, such as: drivers, craftsmen, and delivery workers.
  - Goods providers: These are workers with high income and higher education who do not depend on their income from temporary work. They often have another full-time job; their temporary work provides them with additional income, such as: artists, craftsmen, and clothing merchants.
  - Consumers are those who need a specific service, such as: a ride to their next destination, or the delivery of a specific item. Self-organization and self-motivation are essential requirements for someone who has the initiative to undertake a variety of temporary work, build a good reputation, ensure continuity of orders and thus maintain the flow of work.

### 3- Gig Economy Skills

There are many forms of professions or work that can be classified under the concept of the free enterprise economy or temporary jobs. However, the most common include, for example, those with skills in copywriting, advertising, design, photography, and content development, specialized technical writers, programmers, IT and DevOps specialists, financial advisors, administrative assistants, office and project managers, independent contractors such as professional trainers, teachers, and professionals, and temporary contract workers in the fields of construction, domestic labor, and babysitters. This type of work may be in demand among the unemployed as a result of some losing their full-time jobs.

The negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have caused a recession in various sectors of the economy, and the gig economy has also been affected. 52% of gig workers worldwide have lost their jobs, while working hours have been decreased for approximately 26%; 7% have switched to working from home; 6% have seen their workload change; 4% have more work to do; 3% have been affected for other reasons, and 2% have preferred self-quarantine, according to a survey conducted in March 2020 and published by Statista. The

survey revealed that the financial situation of gig workers and temporary workers has been severely affected, with 51.83% having no income, 16.25% relying on savings after their source of income was cut. The income of approximately 20% of workers decreased, while only 2% increased, and 10% of workers had stable incomes (Schanz, 2022).

The gig economy depends on organizations developing mobile platforms that bring together workers and buyers of their services. These platforms enable companies to request time-bound, profitable tasks from an available worker, in exchange for a fee or commission that the platform usually imposes on the worker or customer. Workers undertake certain “tasks” without any guarantee of further work, and are typically classified as self-employed or independent contractors by gig economy companies (Holts, 2017).

The operating model of gig economy platforms can be divided into:

- Crowdfwork refers to tasks that are assigned and performed online using appropriately skilled “crowd workers” located anywhere in the world.
- On-demand work: On-demand tasks are performed locally, assuming close physical proximity to the service buyer and provider.

According to the World Bank, there are two categories of virtual employment - part-time work and online freelance wor:

- Micro/part-time work: Breaking projects and tasks down into smaller tasks that can be accomplished in seconds or minutes. Microworkers require basic numeracy and literacy skills, such as image tagging, transcription, and data entry.
- Online freelancing is the contracting of professional services to outsourced workers. It often requires higher levels of experience than part-time work and attracts workers with more technical skills. Projects are usually large and implemented over long periods of time (hours, days, or months), such as graphic design, web development, or technical report writing.

The jobs within the gig economy can be divided into three categories that reflect the level of technology required by their work. Based on these categories, virtual jobs can be described as technology-intensive and technology-dependent. Since technology-intensive jobs do not require the use of a computer or smartphone to perform the work, they are not considered virtual jobs:

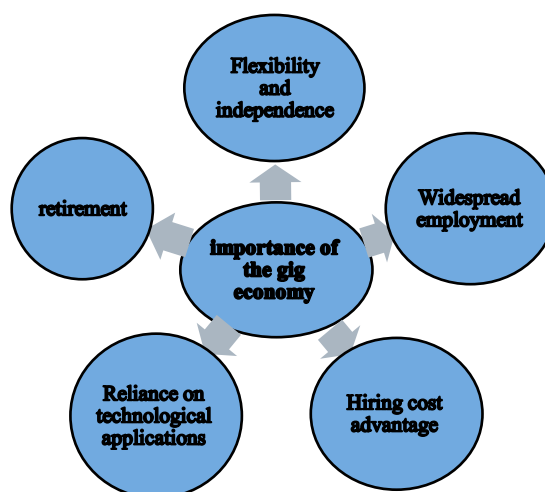
- Web designers require high-level technical skills.
- Technology-based work, which requires intermediate digital skills and uses digital technology to varying degrees.
- Technology-enabled work, which requires basic digital skills and often uses technology as a tool to link supply and demand, such as taxi drivers.

There is a set of technical and soft skills required for workers in virtual jobs and the future of work, which can be summarized into five main skills: teamwork/collaboration, communication, creativity/innovation/imagination, time management, and problem-solving. Individuals need training in technical skills, hard skills, some telephone skills, call center skills, etc., so that they are prepared and able to complete the tasks/jobs they are engaged in, as well as soft skills such as work readiness.

#### 4- Pros and Cons of the Gig Economy

The main reasons companies and individuals turn to freelance labor in the gig economy are flexibility, access to expertise, speed, and cost. However, the application of employee laws and regulations to the temporary work environment isn't only related to their work, but also to their own capital. Furthermore, not classifying gig economy workers as employees in any way absolves employers from any responsibility for providing workers' rights, which increases their costs (Janadari, 2020) (Mukhopadhyay, 2020).

There are several advantages of the gig economy, the most important of which are shown in Figure (2):



**Figure (2) The most important features of the gig economy**

The figure was prepared by the researchers after referring to:  
PAUL OYER Stanford University Graduate School of Business, a. N. (n.d.).

- Flexibility and independence: that is, freedom of choice in the freelance labor market as a result of the flexibility it provides. It is also suitable for those who wish to learn new skills and explore new paths. Furthermore, the gig economy platform offers the opportunity to experience new jobs and shift between multiple roles. Therefore, the gig economy benefits both inexperienced and experienced individuals, as it allows earning additional income other than regular income by engaging in additional work.
- Large-scale employment: This employment has clearly increased as a result of global economic crises, making it an alternative safety net for some workers in times of economic downturns.
- Reliance on technological applications, especially at the lower end of the skill distribution, and with the proliferation of platforms as the gig economy has become a platform that connects individuals to new opportunities and invests their unused skills by bridging the large employment gap.
- Employment cost advantage: The gig economy allows for freelance workers to perform their work at a lower cost than full-time employees. This provides an advantage for companies, reducing human resource costs. Furthermore, it allows workers to obtain jobs that appropriate to their wage preferences.
- It is a potentially good way for many people to facilitate the retirement process.

Despite these advantages, some studies point out several disadvantages and shortcomings (Clark,2021), (Schanz,2022):

- Difficulty of measuring the size of this economy in general.
- It imposes some risks on workers in terms of income fluctuations, anxiety, and poor job security.
- Bias of taxation and labour protection policies toward traditional versus independent work
- Low share of women in the gig economy, and the decline of their wages, despite the high value of flexibility for them.
- Compliance Issues: The gig economy has created job opportunities that do not fall into the traditional category, leading to numerous legal issues and problems, often related to temporary worker rights. This is especially true since the legal definition and contractual agreements of temporary workers differ from one country to another, from one industry to another, and from job to another.
- Career management issues: Temporary workers do not receive adequate support regarding career management and performance management within organizations, as their relationships with the employer are short-term. This may lead to frustrated temporary workers within the economy.
- Lack of training and skills development opportunities: Temporary workers are often not provided with such opportunities within organizations, which may affect their skill level and force them to train and develop themselves at their own expense.
- Competition and Oversupply of Services: As the temporary workforce grows rapidly, competition is also increasing, as supply exceeds demand, leading to lower wages.
- Payment issues: When employers are delay or don't pay the wages of their workers; they often choose the most convenient payment method for them at the expense of the temporary workers. They also deduct various fees from the temporary worker, such as health care fees, etc.
- Lack of business management skills: The gig economy workers are considered independent owners, responsible for their own business from manufacturing to marketing and customer relations as well as finance and accounting. Therefore, they must have a high level of business management skills in all areas related to the business and avoid making mistakes in this regard.

### **5- The importance of the Gig Economy in Empowering Refugees**

The skills, talents, and experiences that forcibly displaced people carry with them can be valuable economic assets. Among the forcibly displaced are individuals who are poised to become strong employees or entrepreneurs, from factory workers to CEOs. They often provide exceptional leadership. They prefer to be self-sufficient and economically empowered rather than remain unemployed and a burden on their host communities.

The importance of the gig economy for refugees stems from its positive aspects and the opportunities it provides, the most notably of which are the following:

- Although the gig economy may differ in some respects from other forms of informal casual work available to refugees, gig workers appear to appreciate some advantages of platform applications—such as their independent record of work

hours, which mitigates the risk of wage theft and facilitates prompt payment upon achieving a task.

- The gig economy allows refugees to perform group work, which is not tied to a specific location, potentially providing new economic opportunities for skilled and appropriately equipped workers, although it poses challenges related to governance and instability of this work.
- The gig economy also has the potential to overcome barriers that restrict some refugee women's mobility—and thus participation—in the workforce, such as home-based freelancing, which provides livelihood opportunities for women.
- The gig economy can expand opportunities for participation in sectors where these women may already be skilled, such as restaurants or tailoring.

Thus, this section has answered the first question of the study, as it clarified what is meant by the gig economy or temporary work economy, and that it is not a new economic trend, but it has recently become more widespread for various reasons, in which technology played a key role. It also addressed its importance in empowering refugees and transforming them from being a burden on their host communities into human capital and energy that can be invested in ways that benefit themselves and their host communities. This requires them to learn and develop their gig economy skills, and thus the role of mobile learning emerges, which is explained in the following section.

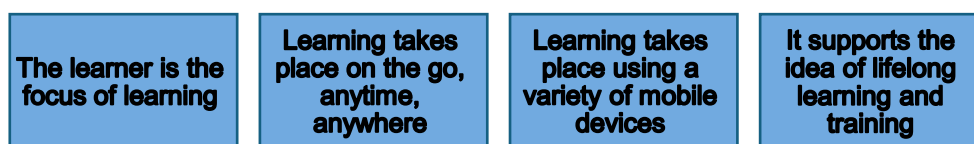
### **The second Section: The Importance of Mobile Learning in Developing Gig Economy Skills as an Approach for Refugee Empowerment**

This section aims to clarify the definition of mobile learning, its characteristics, and the justifications for its use in developing gig economy skills as an approach for refugee empowerment:

#### **1- The Definition and Characteristics of Mobile Learning**

Mobile learning refers to a group of free programs provided by smartphones, , related to education or electronic communication between the teacher and the learner without being restricted by time and place limits. This makes learning easier and faster, and it is considered appropriate to the changing circumstances of the educational process, which have emerged as a result of the spread of portable mobile technology means.

There are many definitions of mobile learning, but they all agree on some basic points, which can be illustrated in the following figure::



**Figure (3) Agreed basic points in mobile learning**

**Mobile learning is defined as:**

- "A form of distance learning and an extension of e-learning, utilizing wireless devices. Teachers can deliver content and monitor their students anywhere and anytime by designing high-quality digital learning objects in educational fields. Students can also engage in learning educational content according to their circumstances and needs" (Abdul Majeed, 2014).
- "The processes of education, interaction, and content delivery that take place outside walls, as learners move in multiple situational environmental contexts, anywhere and at any time, using mobile electronic devices, such as personal digital assistants, handheld and laptop computers, smartphones, cell phones, and any other portable electronic devices" (Khamis, 2022).

It can be said that mobile learning includes at least three dimensions, which are (Al-Aklabi et al., 2018):

- Ubiquity: Mobile devices are present everywhere
- Location: Mobility depends on the location of the device.
- Personalization: where the learner is motivated to actively engage in the learning process.

**Mobile learning follows two patterns or methods, namely:**

- Mobile learning based on electronic information media without the web: This involves viewing programs, media, audio-visual stimuli, and e-learning applications and interacting with them by pre-storing them in advance on a mobile phone or other mobile technology devices, such as an e-book reader, a laptop, or other assistive technology systems (PDAs), or other technologies associated with mobile learning based on e-learning materials.
- Web-based learning: The mobile phone is connected directly to e-learning sites on the Internet, and the learner can interact via audio and video with all colleagues and professors connected to the Internet at the same time in an interactive, wireless educational situation.

**It is characterized by several features, including: (Thursday, 2022):**

- Mobility in physical space: This is one of the most important characteristics of mobile technology devices which refers to freedom and ease of movement, and portability.
- Ease of use: The ease of interaction and communication between parties involved in the educational process, and the easy exchange of files and e-books, as this is done using personal devices that the learner uses personally before participating in the learning process.
- Interaction and sharing: Achieving participation and cooperation that transcends geographical distance between students and their teachers.
- Mobility in the technological space: The availability of high-speed and high-capacity access to audio, video, and other information through existing and accessible services on mobile phones.

- Global Coverage: Mobile learning devices are available globally, connected to the internet and smart devices, allowing communication and coverage anywhere in the world.
- Accessibility and Availability: Mobile learning is available at all times and in any place, allowing learners to access educational content, communicate with teachers and colleagues, and access rapid support services at any time and place.
- Cost: Most mobile digital devices are less expensive than desktop computers.
- Ease of Portability: The small size of this technology makes it easy to move around.
- Responding to urgent learning needs: Mobile devices can be used in the process of searching via the internet for obtaining information and data so as to enrich a specific topic in the learning process (Al-Mubaridi, Abada, 2020).

## **2- The Justifications for Using Mobile Learning to Develop Gig Economy Skills for Empowering Refugees:**

Education is one of the main ways to empower individuals, create job opportunities, as well as re-engage and positively connect with the community. Mobile learning offers great opportunities for refugees, and for those living in remote areas where structural and environmental challenges hinder the provision of traditional learning patterns. It also allows learning for those who are unable to afford it. In addition, mobile devices are relatively inexpensive, thus providing educational services to refugees wherever they are.

The characteristics of mobile learning technology also contribute to solving a number of the problems refugees face, including mobility and employment. It also helps refugees acquire skills that facilitate their access to employment and help them communicate and participate positively in society, especially the skills required by the gig economy.

Mobile technologies can provide unprecedented opportunities to improve national economies and are seen as an enabling tool for achieving sustainable development (Hanfy, 2016).

The importance of using and activating mobile learning for refugees is due to the fact that they own at least one mobile device of various types at home; and recent studies (Graf 2022) confirm the necessity of benefiting from devices in refugee learning, especially the adults among them, and to confront the huge growth in the number of refugees, and the decline in funding for refugee education, with this category owning various mobile devices, and contributing to overcoming the problems that traditional education suffers from, such as the limited educational opportunities currently and in the future available to segments of society in different regions and geographical barriers, and strict rules for enrollment and acceptance in various educational institutions.

It is therefore essential for countries to put in place measures to develop inclusive, responsive, and resilient education systems that meet the needs of refugees and displaced people of all ages, and to rehabilitate them so as to facilitate the transition to more effective development.

Mobile learning ensures that refugees have access to quality, equitable, and inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities through digital mobile technologies. It plays a key role in informal learning for refugees which is a source of support for education delivery, management services, and refugee support.

Mobile devices can be an effective platform for learning, as the use of integrated methods and technologies in the education system via modern mobile phones helps make refugee learning more interesting and flexible, compared to the traditional education system.

Technology plays an effective role in confronting refugee crises, as it contributes to providing them with the information and resources they need, as well as applications of translation, online learning programs, crisis prediction systems, and machine learning (blockchain) by increasing their access to various services and information. This contributes to strengthening refugees' independence and self-reliance on the one hand, and relieving pressure on host communities and countries on the other hand (Kent, 2019). Poverty is not only related to low income or failure to secure basic needs, but also to the inability to exploit human capabilities. Technology provides a number of opportunities to support refugees by providing information, learning, multiple job opportunities, and others.

On December 17, 2018, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Global Compact on Refugees to identify ways to share responsibility, ensuring that host countries provide public services to refugees; with emphasizing the impossibility of providing a sustainable solution for them without international cooperation. Recognizing the need for non-traditional means to alleviate their humanitarian suffering, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) called for the use of technology to achieve this goal, most notably mobile phones (Culbertson et al., 2019), as well as several tools including: blockchain, electronic applications, social media, drones, and artificial intelligence. However, employing these tools does not guarantee their ability to meet the actual needs of refugees for several reasons, including: digital exclusion, global inequality in access to technology, violations of refugees' privacy, the possibility of hacking their biometrics, and the decline in the volume of investment in innovative financial technology dedicated to refugees, among others (Al-Bahi, 2024).

Based on the above, the second question of the study has been answered as mobile learning, with its various tools, can play a significant role in developing the skills of the gig economy, empowering refugees and integrating them into their host communities since the gig economy relies mainly on the use of technological platforms and techniques. The following section presents some suggestions that may contribute to strengthening this role in an attempt to answer the third question of the study.

### **Results and Suggestions**

This section aims to present the results of the study, as well as to present some suggestions that may contribute to enhancing the role of mobile learning in developing skills upon which the gig economy depends, as an important approach for empowering refugees to be capable and contributing as human capital in the host country, stimulating trade and investment, and even bridging the skills gap, which enhances confidence, self-reliance, and coexistence, and leads to greater social cohesion between the population and refugees. Mobile learning aims to expand the opportunities for refugee youth to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to access the labor market and rebuild their lives with a focus on gig economy skills.



**1- Study Results:**

The study concluded with the following results:

- Economic empowerment contributes to resilience and improved livelihoods for both refugees and host communities.
- The digital work opportunities encompassed by the gig economy can reshape refugees' access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods in often restrictive environments.
- The difficulty of finding stable traditional jobs, and the high costs of fixed labor, for young people in general and refugees in particular, as technology increasingly enables short-term labor contracting (the "gig economy").
- The gig economy is not a new concept, but it is a trend that has seen significant expansion over the past decade. The growth of the gig workforce is due to the development of new technologies that enable direct transactions between providers and consumers.
- People are increasingly drawn to this non-traditional sector of work either to supplement their current income or because they cannot find traditional full-time, salaried jobs.
- Mobile learning has emerged as a major outcome of the proliferation of portable technology due to its small size.
- Mobile learning is suitable for the changing circumstances of the educational process, especially for refugees, as it is no longer confined to a specific place and time.
- Mobile learning offers unprecedented opportunities to improve national economies and is seen as an enabling tool for achieving sustainable development.
- Mobile learning is a true translation of the philosophy of distance education, which is based on expanding the base of educational opportunities for individuals, including refugees, supporting the idea of continuous learning, and reducing the cost of this education.

**2- Suggestions:**

The study presented the following suggestions:

- Creating a conducive environment to invest in refugees' potential and empower them economically, achieving their integration, equipping this environment with all the requirements of mobile learning and enhancing the gig economy to overcome barriers to access to employment, while adopting a stakeholder group approach to investment, and activating the communication of future policies and programs to address multiple aspects of the gig economy for economic integration.
- Raising awareness of the importance of mobile learning and clarifying its objectives in developing gig economy skills among refugees.
- Developing the necessary plans and policies to leverage mobile learning in educating refugees, particularly in response to their growing numbers and limited financial resources, and to empower them in light of the technological advancements that have made mobile learning a practical reality.
- Promoting a positive culture - one that encourages the rational and purposeful use of mobile phones - by guiding individuals toward optimal usage, enhancing their role in social interaction, and supporting educational and economic empowerment, particularly for refugees.
- Investing in basic ICT infrastructure to facilitate access to mobile phones and internet services for refugees.

- Supporting platforms and education sector professionals that facilitate collaboration between refugees, the wider community, and the civil society to overcome the challenges refugees face in acquiring the various skills required for the gig economy, including basic technical, financial, and business skills, among others - as an engaging alternative to traditional learning methods.
- Supporting platforms and specialists in the education sector that facilitate collaboration between refugees and society as a whole, with its various organizations and the civil sector, so as to overcome the challenges refugees face in acquiring various skills of the gig economy, including basic technical, financial, and commercial skills, as an exciting alternative to traditional learning methods.
- Supporting refugee training in modern technologies and social media through various types of mobile learning, to facilitate potential employment and self-employment opportunities. Such measures can reduce refugees' dependence on aid and help the host country's economy benefit from refugees' potential and skills.
- Providing financial literacy education for refugees, and through media outreach, organizing promotional events to help refugees offer products and services related to their countries of origin.
- Encouraging refugees and other forcibly displaced people living in difficult circumstances to establish businesses and create job opportunities for themselves and others around them, so that they are not a burden on their host communities or passive recipients of humanitarian aid.
- Encouraging responsible corporate engagement with vulnerable groups in society, ensuring that companies consider the specific needs of these groups (for example, digital literacy training) and that the work offered is decent and desirable.
- Reconsidering refugees' ability to work and utilize their skills and talents, by providing them with the opportunity to contribute to their host communities. The digital job opportunities provided by the gig economy can reshape refugees' access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods in often restrictive environments, based on the premise that rebuilding a person's life involves not only finding safe shelter, but also regaining control over his life.
- Enhancing the development of the gig economy skills - particularly platform-based ones - is essential for empowering refugees and displaced people. Access to appropriate work enables them to support their families, preserve their dignity, and build resilience in the face of crises, while also allowing them to shape their future. This can be achieved by engaging refugees in training, education, vocational programs, and support initiatives that deliver a diverse range of gig economy skills through various mobile learning approaches, such as blended learning, online training, and web-based instruction.
- Expanding paid employment opportunities across national borders, allows workers - especially refugees - to overcome many of the constraints that limit their participation in the labor market. This can be achieved by developing the gig economy skills that help secure livelihoods for refugees and address challenges such as limited access to formal employment insufficient humanitarian aids.
- When designing effective interventions to support refugee participation in local markets, it is essential to consider the structure of the market system and the barriers

to refugee integration. Efforts should also guide refugees in engaging with financial service providers and relevant partners to help reduce obstacles to financial inclusion. Limited access to financial services remains a major challenge for most refugees, significantly restricting their ability to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

- Improving the processes of collecting and analyzing socio-economic data and establishing a comprehensive refugee database is essential for informing the design of effective policies and programs. According to UNHCR (2018), such data should include factors such as: years of experience in the labor market (with a minimum of three years), reputation and public image (assessed through social media reviews and stakeholder feedback), databases of employers and job seekers, geographical coverage, communication tools and capabilities (whether diverse or limited), and legal status (e.g., officially registered).
- Providing opportunities to establish refugee associations allowing them to participate in training programs provided by NGOs. These associations may also serve as valuable opportunity for connecting with registered women's groups to support and empower women, promote teamwork across various areas of life, and foster economies of scale in small businesses. Additionally, practitioners can facilitate connections between refugees engaged in gig work and labor unions, enhancing unions' awareness of unique experiences of gig workers enabling them to advocate more effectively on their behalf.
- Encouraging refugees - especially youth - to engage early in the gig economy offers an opportunity to better understand its positive and negative impacts, both on gig workers and the broader labor market. Early participation also allows for proactive measures to address these impacts while there is still time to influence the development of gig technologies and their broader implications.
- Supporting refugee participation in the gig economy requires an enabling policy environment, along with timely and continuous access to information about relevant regulations, opportunities, and risks. Refugees should also be provided with support services such as digital literacy training, legal guidance, and transferable skills to empower them to pursue alternative economic opportunities if they choose.
- Recognizing the professional qualifications and academic certificates held by refugees enables them to continue their education, access job opportunities that align with their skills, pursue ongoing professional development, and integrate more effectively into the labor market.

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