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Master of Public Policy

# Compliance In the Platform Economy

A study of App-Based gig workers and their  
social security bottlenecks in India

August 2023

Graduate School of Public Administration

Seoul National University

Public Policy Major

Gandi Mahathi

# **Compliance in the Platform Economy**

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## Abstract

Over the past decade, there has been a significant proliferation of gig workers in the platform economy in India and around the world. This growth can be attributed to technological advancements in communication technology and the rising popularity of e-commerce, which have provided a conducive environment for the gig workers in the platform model to thrive. However, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the expansion of gig workers in the and platform economy over the past two years. The demand for contactless delivery of goods and services, as well as the need for flexible staffing, has led to a substantial increase in the utilization of gig and platform workers. Nevertheless, the gig worker in the platform economy landscape faces a significant challenge due to the absence of traditional employer–employee relationships. This gap has resulted in the exclusion of gig workers from the majority of labor compliance. Consequently, these workers lack job security, social security benefits, and access to occupational safety and health measures irrespective of gender. This research aims to delve into the analysis of employment relations with App–Based gig workers in the platform economy and their social security compliances, while shedding light on the unfortunate lives of these workers, deprived off any protection under the existing labor laws.

Keywords: Gig workers, Platform Economy, Compliance

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# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The platform economy in India has experienced significant growth, with a large number of freelancers and gig workers actively engaging in platform-based work across various sectors such as Transportation , food delivery, and home services. This expansion of gig workers within India's platform economy can be attributed to factors such as the widespread adoption of digital technology, an increasing demand for flexible work arrangements, and the need for additional income. The focus of this research revolves around the work arrangements of App-Based gig workers in India. Its aim is to examine the dynamics of employer–employee relations in App-Based gig work within the platform economy and address the inherent ambiguity associated with this context. Consequently, the study investigates the working conditions and employment terms in gig work within the platform economy from the perspective of employment relations. It becomes evident that the work arrangement in gig work deliberately avoids establishing a clear-cut employer–employee relationship, with the primary objective being to deny workers the recognition and legal entitlements granted to them under labor laws. This research adopts a triangulation methodology, with the primary data source consisting of phenomenological qualitative research that focuses on the lived experiences of App-Based gig workers in transportation, food delivery, and home services platforms. The secondary data source includes information extracted from the archives of NITI Ayog, a policy think tank of the Government of India, as well as the Social Security Code of 2020 and existing literature, ensuring the reliability of the study.

## 1.1 Background of the study

According to the Economic Survey of India, the estimated count of gig and platform workers in India stood at 7.7 million in 2020, constituting approximately 18 percent of the total unorganized working population (Ministry of Finance, (2020)).

The size of this workforce is projected to grow approximately 23.5 million by 2029–30. A significant emerging trend is the rapid growth of both high-skilled location-based platform workers, and low skilled online web-based platform workers.

The gig workers in the platform economy introduces distinct features to the employer–employee dynamic, setting it apart from traditional employment arrangements. These features include independent operators, flexibility, platform control, task-based work, and the non-existence of unionization.

Gig workers are frequently categorized as independent operators instead of employees, resulting in a lack of comparable benefits and protections offered to traditional employees. They have to handle their own taxes, health insurance, and other benefits. The nature of gig work emphasizes flexibility, allowing workers to choose when and how they work (Joyce, 2020). While this flexibility can be advantageous for individuals seeking to balance work with other responsibilities, it can also introduce income uncertainty and instability. Gig workers typically rely on platforms that dictate the terms of their employment, including pay rates, job availability, and the authority to terminate workers for various reasons. Gig work is often project or task-oriented rather than ongoing employment, enabling workers to take on multiple projects from different employers or platforms. However, this also means that income can be unpredictable (Acquier, 2017). The non-existence of unions among gig workers makes it challenging for them to negotiate for improved wages, benefits, and working conditions.

In the gig work, the employer–employee relationship is characterized by increased flexibility but also increased uncertainty and lack of traditional employment benefits and protections. The gig workers in the platform economy in India encounters various challenges, notably the absence of social protections for workers who are typically classified as independent operators or contractors instead of employees. Consequently, they are not entitled to essential benefits like minimum wage, paid leave, and health insurance. Moreover, gig work can be unpredictable and inconsistent, leading to low pay and limited job security for workers.

Despite difficulties, numerous gig workers in the platform economy of India have effectively utilized these opportunities to enhance their financial circumstances and attain greater autonomy in their work. Prominent platforms like Ola, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Urban Company have played a significant role in enabling millions of individuals to generate income within the platform economy.

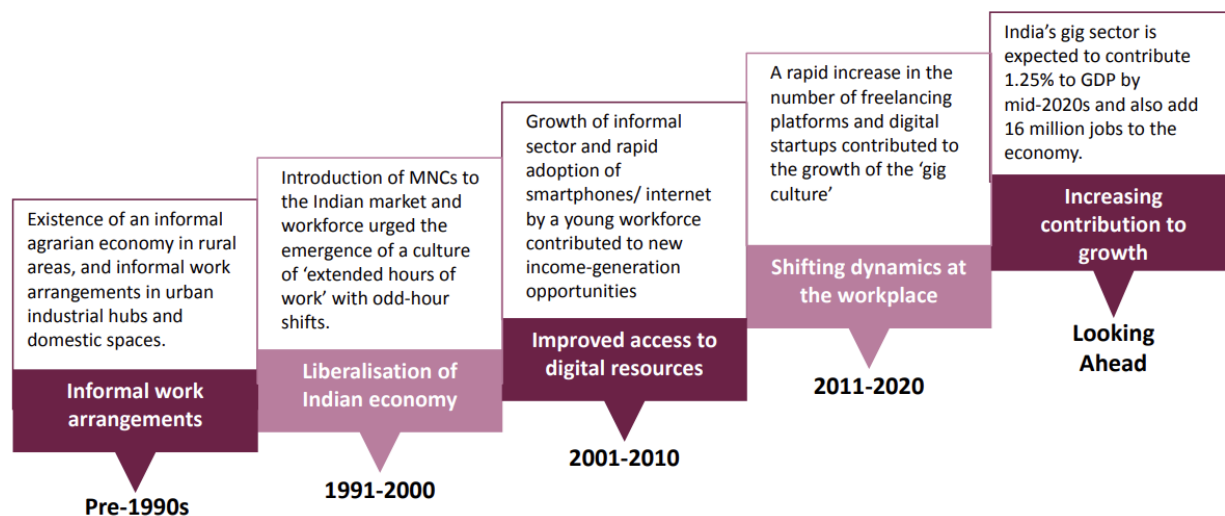
In general, the gig workers in the platform economy in India is projected to expand further as an increasing number of individuals pursue flexible work options and digital technology progresses (NITI Aayog, 2022). Nevertheless, it is crucial to address the obstacles encountered by these workers, such as the provision of social protections, job security, and equitable compensation. By doing this ensures that gig and platform workers can fully capitalize on the opportunities offered by this economy.

## 1.2 Evolution of Gig Economy in India

The paradigm shift in contemporary work practices is prominently exemplified by the emergence of the gig-work model, which signifies a departure from conventional employer-employee arrangements. The gig economy has experienced rapid expansion and is anticipated to sustain a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 17% until 2024. Projections indicate that this economic framework possesses the capacity to employ approximately 90 million individuals within India's non-farm sector, thereby contributing around 1.25% to the nation's GDP (IBEF, 2022). The exponential growth and widespread appeal of the gig economy can be attributed to a multifaceted array of factors that exert influence on the behaviors of three pivotal stakeholders: consumers, workers, and businesses.

To begin with, India possesses a substantial demographic advantage, with its youthful workforce seeking greater flexibility and autonomy in their working arrangements, mirroring global trends. This desire for increased agency over work style is facilitated by the growing prevalence of digitization in India. A significant portion of the

population, particularly in urban areas, is now demanding and accessing web or App-Based services (BCG, 2021). Particularly, the number of internet users in the country has surged from 384 million in 2017 to 622 million in 2021, and this figure is projected to surpass 900 million by 2025. Among these users, over 45% engage in online transactions and 28% partake in online shopping (Jha, 2019). The advent of digitization has not only created a demand for these services but has also propelled the proliferation of a "platform culture," characterized by a multitude of digital platform-based companies and marketplace players entering the gig economy. The favorable conditions for growth in platform-based gig work in India include low operational costs, technology-driven onboarding processes, and an evolving regulatory landscape (Kulkarni & Ghosh, 2021).



*Figure 1 Evolution of Gig Economy in India*

On the contrary, the gig economy has attracted a significant number of service providers, estimated to be over eight million at present, who are categorized as independent contractors rather than traditional employees in formal positions. These workers are afforded flexibility and autonomy in their working methods. Our research emphasizes that the allure of potentially higher earnings compared to their previous jobs, coupled with the increased flexibility, motivates individuals to join the gig

economy, with over 90% relying on it as their primary source of income.<sup>7</sup> This reliance on gig work was further reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic, as India's unemployment rate skyrocketed from around 9% in March 2020 to over 23% in April 2020.<sup>8</sup> The study also reveals that approximately one-third of platform gig workers joined these platforms after April 2020, largely due to a lack of job opportunities in the market and the relatively low barriers to entry in terms of required skills (KPMG, 2021).

The exponential growth of the gig economy and the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have presented both platforms and workers with a multitude of opportunities and challenges. To comprehensively investigate these aspects in the research, this study with the aim of understanding the compliances in the platform economy particularly App-Based gig workers and their social security bottlenecks in India.

### 1.3 Existing Labor Law in India

The employer-employee relationship with App based gig work in platform model is a highly disputed concept. Employers, often referred to as aggregators, are reluctant to take on the responsibilities associated with being an employer. Gig workers are treated as independent contractors who choose to engage in work voluntarily. However, in reality, the terms of work and service conditions are dictated by these so-called 'aggregators'. The existing labor laws generally do not apply to gig and platform workers.

In the recently implemented set of four labor codes, gig workers are specifically mentioned only in the Social Security Code 2020. According to this code, gig workers are classified as unorganized workers and are required to register themselves through self-declaration. The central government has introduced social security schemes for gig and platform workers under the Social Security Code 2020. However, the newly formulated Industrial Relations Code 2020 does not consider gig and platform workers

as workmen. Additionally, the Code on Wages 2019 does not address gig workers, thereby denying them legal rights pertaining to minimum wage. As the number of gig workers continues to rise, excluding them from the employer–employee relationship raises significant concerns regarding legal and rights violations.

## 1.4 The Work Model (Uberisation)

The nature of work has undergone significant changes in recent decades, and the rise of the gig workers in the platform economy is a prominent outcome of this transformation. Within this gig work and platform framework, work is assigned and carried out remotely through web technology. It allows work to be distributed across a wider geographical area. For instance, gig work in the platform model include driving for ride–sharing services and delivering food to homes. Digital platforms serve as interactive tools connecting users and service providers.

The gig and platform economy primarily relies on technology and offers flexibility in work organization for both users and service providers (ILO, 2021). The real–time exchange of information is the key factor that enables this model to function. This form of work organization is rapidly gaining popularity and becoming more prevalent across various industries. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as "Uberisation" due to the pioneering role played by Uber in this domain (Nerinckx, 2016).

Digital labor platforms present fresh opportunities for businesses and expand employment options for workers, including individuals who were previously excluded from the labor market. These platforms bring about transformations not only in the structure and processes of enterprises but also, in many instances, in the dynamics between workers and employers (Frenken, K., & Schor, J, 2019).

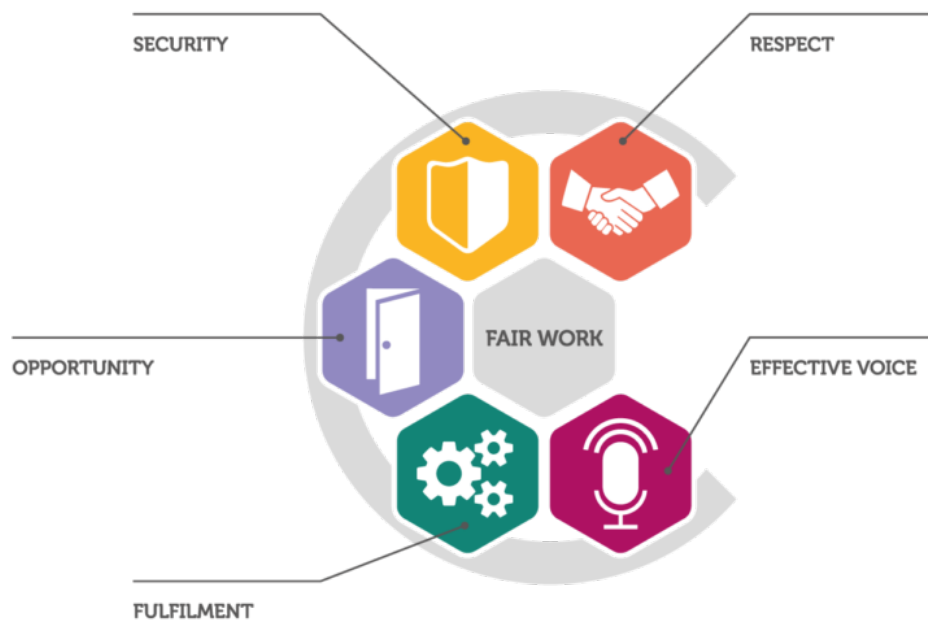
The rise of Uberisation has facilitated increased job availability for a large number of jobseekers. Furthermore, the perceived lack of personal interaction and anonymity associated with this labor model contributed to its success and popularity, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Uberisation utilizes cloud computing and algorithms to structure work organization, allowing for flexibility and convenience in the digital labor market. It brings together service providers and users across different locations and time frames. Consequently, this has given rise to a flexible and innovative approach to work, leading to an upsurge in e-commerce transactions involving both goods and services. Remote working arrangements provided employment opportunities even during the pandemic, enabling those who lost their jobs due to lockdowns to find livelihood options through gig and platform arrangements. Employers were also able to sustain production by utilizing gig and platform channels as an alternative.

However, there are notable challenges associated with this type of work organization. The primary challenge lies in establishing clear employer-employee relationships. Employers often categorize workers as self-employed rather than recognizing them as employees. This allows employers to avoid investing in capital assets and formal engagement with workers. It appears that workers participate voluntarily through the use of apps, while employers maintain control over the work environment through algorithms. Standard payments to workers and investments in capital equipment are typically absent. Workers function as self-employed freelancers, which means they are not entitled to the protections offered by labor laws. There is no guarantee of minimum earnings or consistent availability of work, and workers lack access to social security benefits. Additionally, the absence of collective bargaining and social dialogues further exacerbates the challenges inherent in this type of work arrangement.

In order to address these challenges, government authorities have made attempts to establish a regulatory framework that recognizes and establishes employer-employee relationships within the gig and platform economy. They have introduced elements of

labor law protection, such as measures for occupational safety and health, as well as improved revenue sharing. However, service providers within the platform sector have often resisted these measures and have been reluctant to acknowledge their role as employers. These struggles persist in many countries, including India.

## 1.5 The Fair Work Framework



*Figure 2 Fair Work Framework*

Fair Work India (FWI) was established in 2021 with the goal of promoting "Fair Work" and integrating its principles into India's workplaces and economy (*Fairwork India Ratings 2021*). Fair Work, as defined within the FWI, encompasses effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfillment, and respect. It emphasizes a balance between the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers, generating benefits for individuals, organizations, and society. The FWI comprises five dimensions: effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfillment, and respect. These dimensions align with established notions of job quality and workplace relationships, drawing on national and

international research and identified best practices within each dimension, with a focus on positive outcomes for individuals, organizations, and society.

The first dimension of the FWI, as depicted in Figure 1, revolves around creating a “safe environment” that encourages constructive dialogue and effectively addresses challenges. It seeks to seek out and listen to employee views, allowing them to make a difference (FWI, 2021). Employee voice and participation are widely acknowledged in the job quality literature for enhancing well-being. However, concerns arise regarding the denial of representation and voice for gig workers, particularly due to the long-term decline of trade unions, which calls for further investigation.

Similarly, the second dimension of the FWI, “opportunity for career advancement” , is a common aspect discussed in the broader job quality literature. However, such opportunities seem lacking in the gig economy due to the absence of traditional organizational structures, raising concerns about the quality of gig jobs.

The third dimension of the FWI, "Security," encompasses employment stability, income security, and predictability of work commitments (FWI, 2021). This dimension raises questions about the quality of gig work due to its association with precarious employment.

Moving to the fourth dimension, "Fulfillment", the emphasis is placed on the psychological aspects of jobs and worker autonomy (FWI, 2021). Fulfilling work within the FWI involves opportunities to utilize and develop skills and promotes autonomous working. However, in the context of gig work, the extent to which such work can be considered autonomous and the impact of digital control mechanisms on individual autonomy remains subject to debate. Additionally, the seemingly repetitive nature of task-based gig work raises questions about how it aligns with the broader definition of fulfilling work, highlighting the need for further research on the experiences and perceptions of those engaged in this type of work.

The final dimension of the FWI pertains to “respect at work” , encompassing dignity, social support, and trusting relationships (FWI, 2021). Respect is essential for health, safety, and well-being, reflecting core principles of fair and decent work (ILO, 2017). While respect is often underrepresented in alternative frameworks of job quality, it represents a potential strength of the FWF in providing a more comprehensive understanding of work life in the gig economy.

Although the FWI has been extensively promoted by the Scottish Government as a key aspect of India's labor market strategy to foster a fair work economy (Scottish Government, 2016), its applicability to gig work remains untested. This article aims to contribute to such an assessment by exploring the subjective experiences and perceptions of key dimensions of fair work in relation to gig work. The next sections delves into the literature review and research methodology as a means to investigate fair works and job quality in the gig economy focusing on hospitality, transportation, and food delivery gig workers.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the rise of Information Technology platforms over the past decade, alternative work arrangements have gained popularity, shifting away from traditional 9 to 5 jobs. Following the 2008 financial crisis, a new wave of workers emerged, engaging in non-conventional employment. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the gig workers engaging with platform economy or sharing economy, where individuals utilize online platforms such as Ola, Uber, Swiggy, and Airbnb to secure short-term jobs with clients (Devinatz, 2020).

The number of people participating in the gig work has substantially increased, consequently driving the demand for co-working spaces. These spaces provide a communal setting for freelancers to work on their individual projects. As more individuals recognize the advantages of working independently, the gig work is expected to have a lasting impact on the traditional job structure. There are two categories of work in this context: one involves App-Based transactions with local delivery, such as an Amazon delivery person, requiring physical presence, and the other involves both App-Based transactions and delivery, exemplified by freelance software programmers.

Apart from fostering greater workforce participation, freelancing also enhances productivity. This type of gig work in the platform economy job structure offers several benefits. Hiring a freelancer takes an average of 2.7 days, compared to the traditional recruitment process that typically takes at least 34 days. One significant advantage is that companies gain access to a broader pool of talent worldwide. Modern organizations often require employees with specialized skills, expertise, and exceptional abilities, while workers seek platforms to showcase their talents, making the gig economy an ideal match for both parties.

The gig work has transformed the employer–employee dynamic into a customer–freelancer relationship. Freelancers must please their clients to retain contracts. Gig workers prove beneficial in various sectors, particularly for small and medium–sized enterprises (SMEs) that gain increased access to these workers. Additionally, the platform economy provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities who may face challenges in traditional employment structures, offering digital platforms to work and earn money, which was previously impractical. Moreover, it facilitates matching labor to peak periods, where high customer demand necessitates a greater volume of labor. Furthermore, gig workers contribute to a higher scope of innovation, as compared to permanent workers who may become complacent due to job security, potentially hindering innovation, and productivity.

Research on the quality of remote gig work remains limited, both in terms of the number of studies conducted and the variety of platforms and countries examined. However, income, health, autonomy, power over work habits, hours, and social interaction are significant considerations for gig employees in assessing job quality across different income countries. A major challenge in this context is low pay, resulting in a high ratio of unpaid work to paid labor and a scarcity of available work (Graham et al., 2020). It is worth noting that 70 percent of Australians under the age of 34 express interest in utilizing online portals to find jobs (Ferns & Russell, 2016).

While gig workers have the freedom to choose their work location, they often find themselves working from home, which leads to a lack of social interaction and long, irregular working hours. While a small percentage of people earn a significant income through side hustles like renting out on Airbnb, those associated with platforms like Uber lack insurance benefits, compensation policies, and retirement benefits. Some individuals join the gig work due to financial constraints, limiting their ability to be selective about the work they take on. Another challenge with the gig work is that workers may not align with corporate culture and may lack understanding of legal and

regulatory frameworks. The rise of gig employment poses a threat to the traditional system of income security provided through traditional jobs with social insurance.

Gig workers, in general, have the freedom to market their skills, and some experienced freelancers earn high incomes. However, most gig workers earn less than their similarly educated counterparts in traditional employment, and younger and less educated workers tend to fare worse in different contractual arrangements. Companies hire gig workers to reduce labor costs, particularly in terms of benefits, while gig workers themselves earn less overall, especially when considering the lack of benefits. When businesses increase the hours of contingent and gig workers or when gig workers transition from portfolio development to paid market work, productivity can increase faster during economic upswings than reported employment figures indicate.

A study on Uber drivers in the US revealed that more than 80% of them were already employed before joining Uber, suggesting that gig work is often a supplementary activity used to smooth out fluctuations in primary earnings. Portrayals of gig work as a replacement for traditional employment for the unemployed may be misleading. Those seeking to participate in the gig economy must meet certain standards (e.g., owning a clean, late-model car) and acquire specific skills (e.g., social skills to receive favorable customer ratings). There is no evidence to suggest that these skill and capital requirements are fundamentally different from those needed in traditional employment.

In certain labor markets constrained by geography, discrimination or occupational segregation, certain segments of the population may be excluded from the job market altogether. Discrimination based on factors such as religion, race, or disability can occur, and individuals may be divided into specific market segments based on gender or education level. Digital labor platforms could potentially address some of these dynamics. Firstly, they may reduce prejudice or segregation, and secondly, by

providing anonymity, they may encourage workers to enter their local market while masking characteristics that lead to discrimination. Digital labor has been recognized as a tool for economic development in countries like Nigeria, Malaysia, and the Philippines, helping disadvantaged individuals access more opportunities.

The gig work is a direct result of economic forces such as globalization, outsourcing, and technological advancements. Many workers express dissatisfaction with their current roles, leading to reduced productivity and a lack of innovation. A survey by McKinsey revealed that 37% of global respondents feel their skills are underutilized in their jobs, resulting in a significant loss of productivity. However, the gig workers has also created new and innovative job opportunities. It has bridged the gap between those who have time but no money and those who have money but no time, providing mutual benefits. Online platforms have expanded the options available to workers, allowing them to undertake tasks worldwide based on their interests and comfort. Another important aspect is work–life balance, where gig workers often have greater autonomy and flexibility, leading to a better balance compared to traditional workers.

"The Platform Economy and the Challenges of Informal Work in India" by (Behrendt et al., 2019) examines the rise and expansion of the platform economy in India and its impact on workers in the informal sector. The article highlights the difficulties faced by gig workers in terms of unstable working conditions, inadequate compensation, and a lack of social safeguards. It underscores the need to address these challenges to protect the interests of gig workers and regulate the platform economy effectively. (Surie, 2020) study titled "On–demand platforms and pricing: how platforms can impact the informal urban economy, evidence from Bengaluru, India, Work Organization" explores the digital labor market in India, with a specific focus on the working conditions, wages, and rights of gig workers. The article discusses the challenges associated with regulating the platform economy and proposes policy measures to safeguard the welfare of gig workers. "The Sharing Economy: The end of employment and the rise of crowd–based capitalism" by (Sundararajan, 2017) presents a critical analysis of the gig economy in India. It emphasizes the

precariousness of gig work, low wages, and the lack of social protection for gig workers. The article argues that the gig economy in India contributes to the informalization of work and suggests policy interventions to address the challenges faced by gig workers.

"Job instability, precarity, informality and inequality: labour in the gig economy," investigates the emergence and growth of the gig economy in India and its implications for employment and labor market dynamics (Rani et al., n.d.). It highlights the difficulties in regulating the platform economy and puts forth policy recommendations to safeguard the interests of gig workers. "Digital labor platforms and new forms of flexible work in developing countries: Algorithmic management of work and the workers" by (Rani & Furrer, 2021) provides an overview of the gig economy in India, focusing on the opportunities and challenges presented by the platform economy for gig workers. The article examines the policy implications of the gig economy and suggests measures to address the challenges faced by gig workers. Collectively, these literatures shed light on the emerging gig economy in India and the hardships experienced by gig workers due to unstable work conditions, low compensation, and a lack of social protection. Moreover, they propose policy measures to address these challenges and effectively regulate the platform economy.

## **2.1 Challenges in the Indian platform economy for App-Based Gig workers**

The majority of services provided through the gig work are of short duration, typically lasting only a few minutes. As a result, the connection between a worker and a client is defined by brief contractual arrangements. Companies operating in the platform economy with App-Based gig workers have categorized their workers as independent contractors, partners, or entrepreneurs. Although these organizations present this reclassification as an opportunity for individuals to enjoy freedom and

flexibility in determining their working hours and locations, it fails to accurately represent the imbalanced bargaining power between the platform and the worker. The gig work encompasses a wide range of activities, and consequently, the workers involved in it also exhibit diversity. Similar to other sectors, the socio-economic status of workers plays a crucial role in determining their access to opportunities. Within this context, independent or informal work arrangements have normalized the absence of employment benefits for gig workers. This issue is particularly pronounced for workers located in the Global South, who often engage with one platform at a time without enjoying the benefits associated with traditional employment.

Workers in the platform economy are deprived of various employment benefits, including paid time off, sick leave, pension plans, and maternity leave. They also lack access to income protections such as disability insurance, compensation for work-related injuries, unemployment insurance, and retirement benefits. Moreover, their non-traditional employment status and irregular income streams exclude them from the formal credit market, further exacerbating their financial challenges (Manyika, J., Lund, S., Bughin, J., Robinson, K., Mischke, J., & Mahajan, D, 2016).

While some professions commonly found in the platform economy, such as drivers, domestic workers, delivery agents, beauticians, and makeup artists, have had limited protections under labor laws, findings observe that their status has become even more marginalized due to these new employment relationships and the diminished potential for collective action.

Research conducted on gig workers in India indicates that a majority actively choose to participate in such work as a means to escape fewer desirable alternatives, such as unemployment or low-paying jobs with poor working conditions (Surie, 2020). For women, there is an additional challenge of managing the conflict between work and family responsibilities. Due to the gendered division of household labor, studies have demonstrated that women, particularly new mothers, engage in self-employment opportunities to balance the competing demands of work and non-work obligations

(Sevä & Öun, 2015). Their professional status often remains limited by the domestic responsibilities associated with motherhood, caregiving, and societal expectations of femininity.

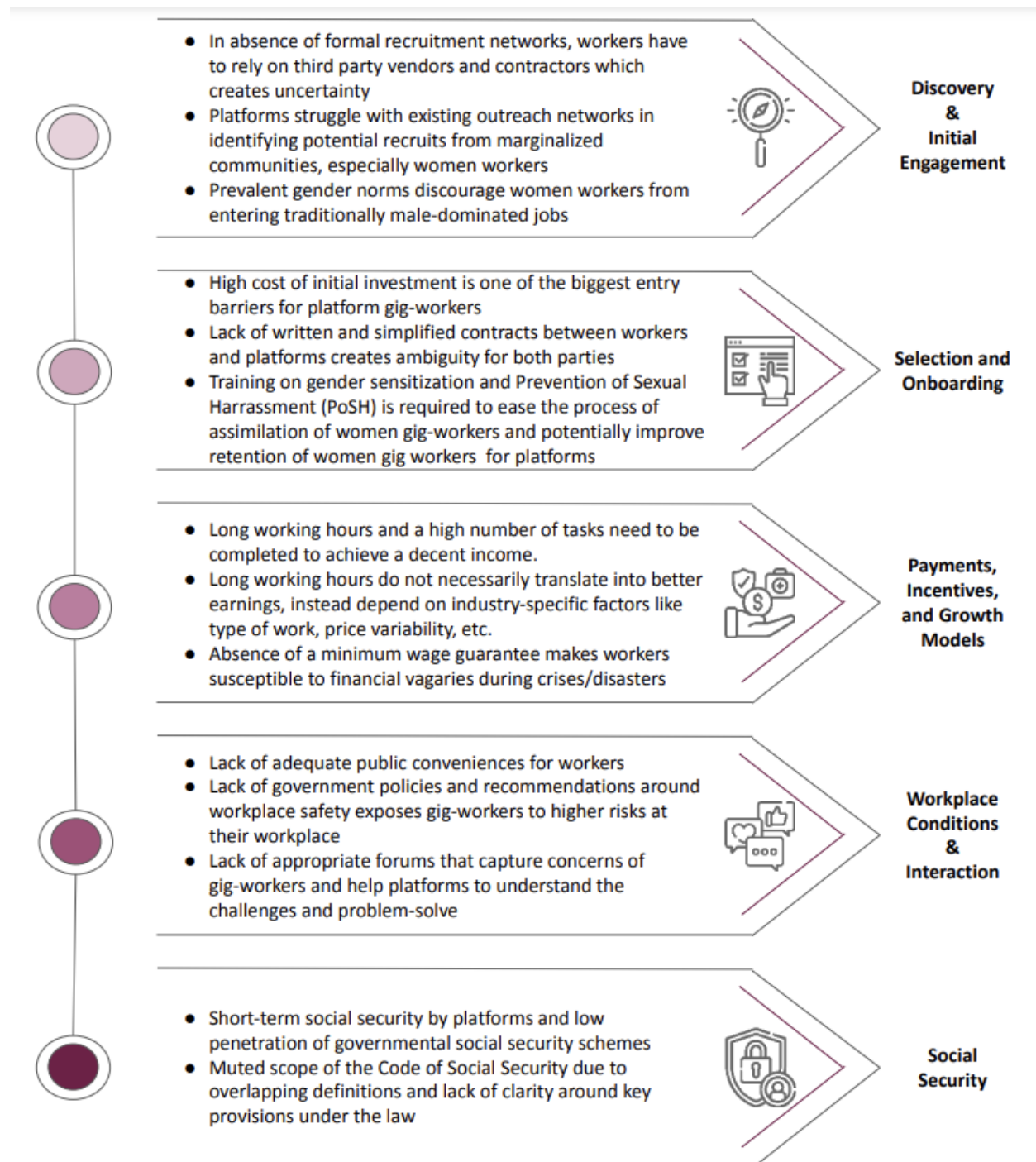


Figure 3 Challenges across different stages of a platform gig-workers life cycle

Source: (BCG, 2021)

Furthermore, the reorganization of work in the gig work places a range of risks and responsibilities on the workers themselves. Flexible employment arrangements impose constraints on workers' personal preferences regarding the social and temporal aspects of their work (James Manyika et al., 2016). As a result of unpredictable work demands and income, "self-employed" workers are compelled to tolerate greater uncertainty in terms of work schedules and the risks associated with performing work in non-traditional spaces (Hardy & Sanders, 2015).

The gig workers in App-Based platforms has given rise to the emergence of mobile workspaces, which expose workers to unfamiliar environments, thereby increasing risks to their personal safety. Furthermore, the lack of clear boundaries between working and non-working time, known as temporal unboundedness, adds to the challenges faced by gig workers (Muralidhar et al., 2019). They are compelled to manage their time differently, often discounting non-working time, such as the duration spent on the app searching for customers or traveling between appointments (Plankey-Videla, N, 2012). As a result, these new forms of work subject workers to various layers of risks and uncertainties, without granting them control over pricing and income levels.

Moreover, the gig workers in App-Based platforms heavily relies on data collection and the aggregation of feedback, including ratings and additional comments provided by consumers. This process is intended to establish and foster trust between workers and consumers. However, while the primary objective of the rating system is to monitor service performance and compliance with company policies, it is also utilized by companies as a means of surveillance over workers. Recent research indicates that the surveillance of low-skilled and marginalized contract workers can give rise to problematic outcomes. For instance, the monitoring of contract street sweepers in certain Indian municipalities through devices known as "Human Efficiency Trackers" has resulted in privacy violations, infringements on data protection, and labor rights violations (Luthra, 2018).

The nature of gig work necessitates the presence of a large and affordable on-demand workforce. However, the transformed dynamics of the employer–employee relationship, along with the socio–economic and gendered positions of the workers, and restructured workspaces can lead to workers becoming trapped in a life of subordination, dependence, and economic instability. This is driven by the exertion of intense and multidimensional control over all aspects of their work. Hence, the present study focuses on the absence of labor rights for App–Based gig workers in the platform economy in India.

## 2.2 Theoretical Underpinning

The process of labor "uberization" involves a form of capitalist accumulation where production responsibilities are shifted onto the worker, leading to a dilution of the worker's identity. Since the 1970s, technology has increasingly been utilized to create a decentralized production environment, aiming to eliminate explicit employer–employee relationships (Harvey, D. (1987)). Consequently, workers are burdened with maintaining the capital equipment themselves, while technology usage, production reorganization, and dispersion become more prevalent. As a result, workers perceive themselves as self–employed.

This process initially began with crowd work and evolved into a valorization process (Howe, 2012), which was further accentuated with advancements in information technology. Work becomes geographically dispersed, and part of the capital asset maintenance is shifted to the worker, who now identifies as self–employed. Unfortunately, this process erodes the workers' identity, leading to a significant decline in the collectivization of the working class. These practices are often referred to by various terms such as the sharing economy, collaborative economy, or on–demand economy.

The popularity of this process gained traction with the launch of Uber in San Francisco in 2008 (Slee, 2017). Uber initially recruited individuals with driving skills who were willing to earn extra income through supplementary jobs. There were potential customers in the city seeking taxi services at their doorstep, appreciating the convenience and flexibility of such services. Uber achieved substantial profits by 2017. This work model gradually extended to other sectors, including the delivery of goods and services and food delivery, heavily relying on information technology and internet connectivity. The progress of technology played a crucial role in enabling this form of work organization (Ming et al., 2021).

From a work organization perspective, Uber set the standard. It shifted the responsibility of owning and maintaining the capital equipment (in this case, the availability and upkeep of cars and peripheral matters) to the driver/operator. Uber merely engaged in revenue sharing with the driver, while all the responsibilities related to capital goods maintenance were left to the driver. Uber appropriated the surplus value generated in the process. Moreover, the driver bears most of the market uncertainty since they are heavily invested in capital goods, with little to no social security or insurance coverage involved.

In order to make their proposition appealing, Uber initially offered benefits to both riders and drivers. As the popularity of Uber services grew, more drivers and users were drawn into the platform, prompting Uber to raise funds from the market to expand its business. However, as Uber solidified its position in the market, the share of revenue for drivers decreased through reduced revenue sharing per kilometer or offered discounts.

Uber also utilized algorithms to psychologically manipulate drivers into continuing their work when they were considering ending their day. Drivers would receive notifications for the next ride just as their current ride was about to end. Even when a driver was about to log off the app, Uber would send messages indicating that they

were close to reaching the day's target and earning incentives. These prompts often convinced drivers to continue working.

Additionally, Uber exerted explicit controls over drivers. Drivers were expected to adhere to certain norms set by Uber, and violations of these norms resulted in penalties and possible suspension. Drivers did not have direct communication with passengers, and fares were determined solely by Uber. The performance of drivers was evaluated by passengers and monitored by Uber, eliminating the need for explicit supervision, and reducing managerial expenses. This work organization system exemplifies the valorization of managerialism within society (Gaulejac, 2007). Consequently, this system undermines Uber's claim that drivers are their own "masters."

## 2.3 London Supreme Court Verdict

In the gig and platform economy, where employer–employee relationships are often ambiguous, the UK Supreme Court's verdict holds significant importance. Following a lengthy legal battle, the court ruled on February 19, 2021, that Uber was an employer, and its drivers were classified as workers. The legal dispute began in 2016 when Uber drivers approached the court seeking recognition as workers under the existing labor laws in the country. The Supreme Court determined that Uber drivers were indeed workers of the company and entitled to protections under the Employment Rights Act of 1996. This Act grants rights such as minimum wage, paid leave, and other benefits.

The UK Supreme Court's judgment was based on several key factors. It considered that Uber determined the fare, leaving drivers with no influence in the matter. Uber also set the terms and conditions of the contract, which drivers and passengers could only accept. Additionally, a driver's performance rating was given by passengers and monitored by Uber, while Uber retained the authority to terminate contracts with

drivers. Uber oversaw the entire process and had the power to take punitive actions, such as debarring drivers in the case of excessive cancellations.

The Supreme Court concluded that Uber drivers were not self-employed and lacked the ability to set the terms and conditions of their transactions. It was Uber that determined the contract terms. The court recognized that although technology and marketing portrayed Uber drivers as self-employed individuals who had voluntarily joined the platform, a thorough analysis revealed that they were, in reality, workers entitled to the protection of labor laws. The Supreme Court characterized the relationship between Uber and its drivers as one of subordination and dependency. Drivers lacked negotiation opportunities in the organization of production and were perceived as self-employed, but the court saw through this apparent perception and affirmed that drivers should be classified as workers (Moyer–Lee, 2021).

## **2.4 Platform Economy: Gig workers in India**

The number of gig and platform workers in India has been increasing in recent years. According to the Boston Consultancy Group (BCG), there were around 15 million gig and platform workers in India in 2021. These workers are involved in various industries such as software, sharing services, and professional services. Although the total labor force in India is approximately 500 million, gig workers currently make up a small proportion of the total workforce (BCG, 2021). However, their numbers are growing, and they contribute significantly to the creation of new jobs.

The popularity of gig and platform work is expected to continue rising in the coming years due to limited employment opportunities in the formal sector. Many individuals in the labor force are actively seeking jobs but are unable to find them. Gig and platform work offer accessible livelihood opportunities, making them attractive to new

entrants in the labor market. Prior to the pandemic, India was experiencing decent economic growth; however, this growth did not generate enough employment opportunities. The majority of the jobs created during the last two decades were informal, and the gig and platform economies played a significant role in providing these jobs.

BCG projects that the number of gig workers in India will reach 90 million over the next 8 to 10 years. The frontline sectors for gig work are expected to be manufacturing, construction, retail, and transport logistics. According to BCG, the gig economy will include both existing jobs that transition to gig platforms and new jobs created within the economy. The growth in gig work will result from factors such as improved market transparency, increased efficiency in service delivery, lower costs, and growing demand.

## 2.5 Protests: Poor working Condition

The gig workers in the platform economies suffer from poor working conditions and a lack of social security for workers. The organizational structure of these economies prevents the application of employer–employee relations and labor laws. Workers, who are considered self–employed, often end up working long hours without breaks, with no concept of leave or adherence to occupational health and safety measures. Additionally, there are no minimum wages or guaranteed availability of work, as revenue sharing is unilaterally decided by the aggregators (employers).

These circumstances have led to accidents involving Uber and Ola drivers due to overwork, grievances regarding inadequate revenue sharing, and delays in transferring shared revenue. The platform economies lack mechanisms for addressing grievances, and there is a lack of bipartite negotiation and social dialogue. Workers do not have a collective identity as a working class, leading to a lack of true

collectivization. Some assemblies or collectives of gig and platform workers have taken up these issues with the aggregators, resulting in demonstrations across India in recent years.

Examples include Amazon delivery workers going on strike in various cities in March 2021 to protest against reduced commission values, and women workers of Urban Company protesting against new subscription schemes in December 2021. Uber and Ola drivers lost their livelihoods during the COVID-19 lockdowns without receiving compensation. A study by the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) (PUDR, 2021) revealed that for the majority of gig and platform workers, this work was their primary and sole occupation, contrary to the belief that they have alternative livelihood options as freelancers. Available data indicate that revenue sharing by aggregators deteriorated even before the pandemic and worsened further as a result of COVID-19. There is evidence to suggest that the combined earnings of gig and platform workers significantly declined after the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2.6 Why large-scale gig workers are available in India?**

There is a growing number of individuals who choose gig worker under platform economy despite the unfavorable work environment, low returns, and lack of social security and occupational safety measures. This trend can be attributed to the significant shortage of meaningful job opportunities in general. India's occupational distribution has not kept up with the sectoral distribution of national income. As a result, workers transitioning from the primary sector have not been adequately absorbed into the secondary sector. Most of these absorptions have occurred through informal arrangements, leaving a large pool of the labor force without access to meaningful work opportunities. It is within this segment of the population that gig work under the platform economy is becoming increasingly popular.

A closer examination of the sectoral distribution of income reveals that approximately 14 percent of the GDP originates from the primary sector, 25 percent from the industrial sector, and 61 percent from the services sector. This distribution is depicted in Table 1. (Affairs, 2020).

*Table 1 Sectorial distribution of India's GDP at factor cost (2011–12)*

Sector	1960–61	1990–91	2000–01	2010–11	2020–21
Primary	51	33	25	17	14
secondary	18	24	24	24.5	25
Tertiary	31	43	51	58.5	61

Source: Economic Survey 2019–20

*Table 2 Occupational Distribution (%) Overtime*

Sector	1960–61	1990–91	2000–01	2010–11	2020–21
Primary	72	67.5	57	47	42
secondary	10	12	17.5	22	18.5
Tertiary	18	20.5	25.5	31	39.5

Source: Economic Survey 2019–20

The distribution of occupations, as shown in Table 2, highlights the continued dominance of the primary sector in engaging the labor force.

From the information presented in the two tables, it becomes evident that the occupational distribution has not kept pace with the sectoral distribution over time. Although the contribution of the primary sector has declined, a significant portion of the labor force remains concentrated in this sector. Despite the secondary and service sectors being more productive, they have not been able to absorb the surplus workers

released from the primary sector. As a result, there is a substantial reserve army of the labor force eagerly awaiting opportunities for meaningful employment.

India's development trajectory aligns with the (Clark–Fisher–hypothesis, 2020), as the contribution of the primary sector has gradually decreased while the secondary and tertiary sectors have grown. However, occupational distribution has not followed the same trend. Currently, 42 percent of the labor force is engaged in the primary sector, which contributes only 14 percent of the GDP. The primary sector continues to dominate in terms of job availability. However, it suffers from declining labor productivity as it employs more workers than necessary. The surplus labor from the primary sector is actively seeking opportunities in non–farm sectors, such as secondary and tertiary sectors. Thus far, these absorptions have occurred through informal work arrangements, leading to an increase in informality within the labor market.

A significant portion of these workers contributes to the growing pool of gig workers in India. Due to the lack of meaningful employment opportunities in the manufacturing and service sectors, job seekers in the labor market, as well as those transitioning from agriculture, often resort to gig work as it offers easy entry into the market.

## **2.7 Gig workers in new Labor Codes**

The term Gig/Platform workers are only mentioned in the Social Security Code 2020, while three other recently enacted labor codes do not acknowledge gig workers. The Code on Wages 2019 does not include gig workers, which means they are not protected by minimum wage regulations and lack legal recourse if their wages are not paid on time. Moreover, gig workers are not entitled to bonuses, and gender equality in wage payment is not guaranteed under the Code of Wages 2019.

In the Industrial Relations Code 2020, gig workers are not mentioned, which denies them industry status and disregards the existence of employer–employee relationships. Consequently, gig workers are unable to collectively raise disputes or approach conciliation authorities in cases of termination or dismissal. This exclusion from the industrial framework prevents gig workers from being recognized as "workers" and makes them vulnerable to unfair labor practices by employers or aggregators.

Similarly, gig workers are not mentioned in the newly enacted Occupational Health Safety and Working Conditions Code 2020, which means they are not covered by the legal framework for occupational safety and health. Although 13 existing occupation–centric labor laws are merged into the OSHWC Code 2020 (Jain, M., & Jain, M, 2021), gig workers are excluded from its applicability. This exclusion deprives gig workers of their fundamental rights to occupational safety and health, as they often work in hostile environments and perform tasks that are detrimental to their physical and mental well–being.

Gig workers, such as drivers for Ola and Uber or food delivery workers for Zomato and Swiggy, face various occupational hazards, including long working hours, fatigue, and exposure to extreme weather conditions. However, the lack of legal safeguards leaves them without protection. The only labor code that mentions gig workers is the Social Security Code 2020, where they are classified as unorganized workers. Gig workers are required to self–register in the e–Shram portal provided by the central government to be considered beneficiaries of social security schemes. However, institutional social security benefits such as provident funds, gratuity, and maternity benefits are still not applicable to gig workers. The central government is responsible for formulating social security schemes specifically for gig workers under the Social Security Code 2020 (Iii, 2020).

## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design:

To gain a holistic understanding of the compliances in platform economy of App-Based gig workers and their social security bottlenecks with lived experiences, the study is divided into three segments: Initially, case study one discusses about the lived experiences of App-Based gig workers in platform economy by interviewing Transportation services (OLA, UBER), food-delivery services (SWIGGY, ZOMATO), and home service (Hotels, Restaurants, Electrician, Plumber) participants in gig work. Secondly, the study focuses on gendered compliances in App-Based gig workers in platform economy, interviewing home service (beautician and makeup artist) participants in gig work. Finally, the study adopts the data source triangulation approach by analyzing the findings from both the cases with secondary data which were taken from court verdicts in multiple developed countries to draw a better reliability of the study.

Home service	Transportation Services	Food –Delivery Services
Urban Company	OLA, UBER	SWIGGY, ZOMATO

**Case study 1:** Study of App based gig workers of platform economy, this includes gig worker from Transportation, Food delivery and home service (Electrician and Plumber)

**Case Study 2:** Gendered compliance in App-Based gig workers of platform economy (Home service)

In order to gain comprehensive understanding of workers' lived experiences, a semi-structured Phenomenology qualitative analysis and data source triangulation approach

to examine reliability of the study. The study was conducted on three different gig workers working for platform companies. This distinction is classified based on Transportation (OLA, UBER), food delivery (Swiggy, Zomato), home service (Urban Company). These platforms are one of the leading on-demand service providers for gig workers in India. Urban Company offers a diverse range of services, including beauty and makeup, which are exclusively performed by women, for women. It also provides home services such as electrician, plumber, AC repair, and so on. This particular platform was selected due to its alignment with key operational features commonly associated with organizations operating with the gig workers in the platform economy. These features include engaging workers on short-term contracts, offering work arrangements that emphasize flexibility and autonomy, and compensating workers on a per-task basis.

The selection of beauty and makeup services was studied by the fact that these services are performed by women within the client's homes, which leads to a reconfiguration of labor organization and processes. This unique aspect highlights the specific experiences of women within the platform economy. Moreover, beauty services account for the highest number of orders and contribute to 55% of Urban Company's revenue at one point, underscoring their significance within the platform (Parikh, Parth, 2022). The selection of drivers and food-delivery participants were studied that these services are on demand for their service. Most of the urban population on the daily basis use these platforms for their goods and services delivery.

To capture the diverse dimensions of the gig workers, a semi-structured qualitative analysis was deemed appropriate. Additionally, the researcher engaged in semi-participant observation by utilizing a few services offered on the Urban Company's app, Swiggy, Zomato, Uber and OLA. In consideration of the power dynamics between workers and customers, it was ethically acknowledged that approaching the workers for interviews could potentially reinforce those imbalances. Therefore, no workers

were approached for the purpose of conducting interviews in order to respect their agency and avoid perpetuating any potential exploitation or further power differentials.

The research was conducted in Hyderabad, located in the state of Telangana in southern India, during November 2022–January of 2023. The choice of Hyderabad as the research site was driven by two primary reasons. Firstly, Hyderabad holds the distinction of making the largest contribution to the revenue of the platform under study. Secondly, the researcher possessed a familiarity with the city and its local language (Telugu and Hindi), facilitating the research process and ensuring effective communication with the participants.

3.1.1 Sampling and Population:

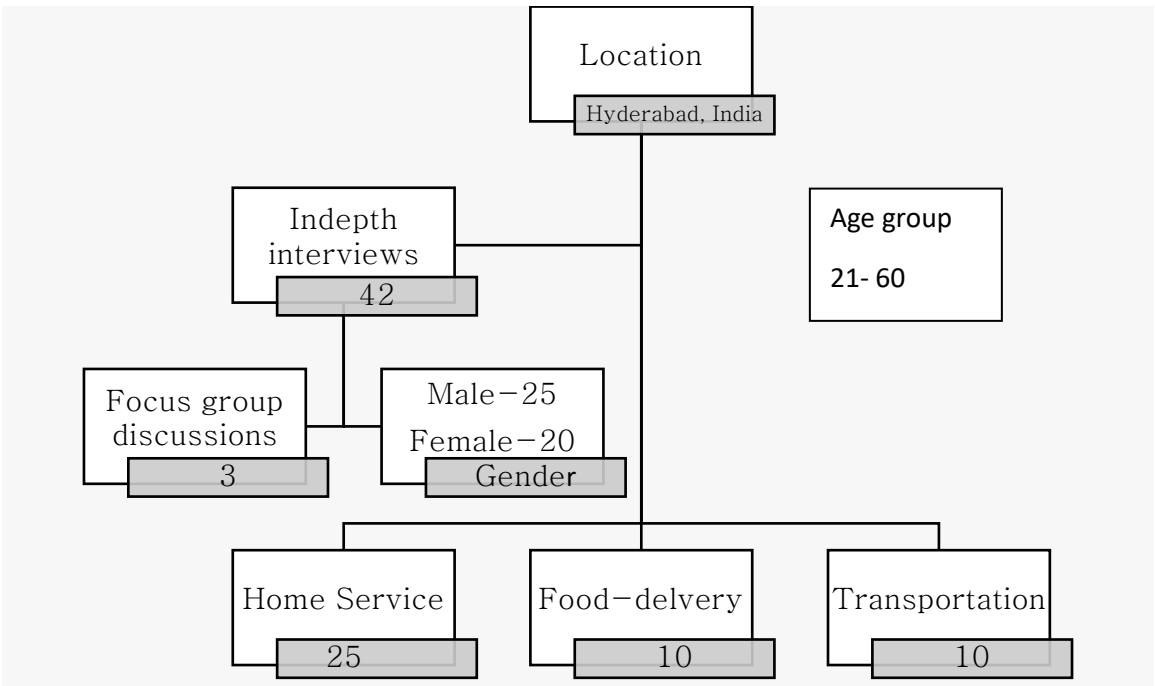


Figure 4 Sampling population and stakeholders

Table 3

App Based Platform companies for gig workers			
Services	Companies	No. of Participants	Age
Transportation	OLA/UBER	10	25–52
Food– delivery	SWIGGY/ZOMATO	10	20–48
Home Service	Urban Company (Beauty & Makeup artist)	20	20–40
Home service	Urban Company (Electrician, Plumber, hospitality)	5	22–50
Total		45	

A total of 45 gig workers working under the App–Based platform companies of which, Food–delivery (Swiggy/Zomato) 10, Home service (25), Transportation (OLA/UBER) 10, were interviewed for the purpose of research. The initial contact with participants from home service (beauty, makeup artists) and food–delivery (SWIGGY/ZOMATO) was made through two personal contacts of the researcher. Transportation service participants interviews were conducted through availing the service. Subsequently, the snowball sampling method was used to expand the pool of participants. While an interview of Transportation (OLA/UBER) and food delivery (SWIGGY/ZOMATO) were conducted in person at public spaces, hospitality interviews were conducted in location, and beautician, makeup artist few interviews are conducted in person while service availing and the majority of interviews were conducted over the phone. The method of conducting the interviews was determined based on the preference of each participant. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes. Prior consent was obtained from all participants, including consent for audio recordings, where applicable, to ensure ethical considerations were upheld.

### 3.1.2 Ethical Consideration:

To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' identity and personally identifiable information, the recorded data was transcribed with utmost care. All data were then coded, focusing on relevant, recurring, and emergent themes that emerged from the interviews. The analysis of the data followed the principles of phenomenology. Phenomenology, as an analytical approach, it enables a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. This approach helps to uncover the underlying essence and significance of the phenomena under investigation, providing valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of the study.

### **3.1.3 Research Question:**

The functioning of the platform economy, within the gig workers holds significant developmental implications for various stakeholders, including workers, consumers, and organizations. This research is relevant to the well-being of the workforce as it addresses the extension of labor rights and protections to gig workers. Additionally, consumers benefit from increased access to affordable goods and services facilitated by the platform economy.

Moreover, the availability of disaggregated empirical information regarding worker experiences can contribute to shaping legislative actions and policies. Such information provides valuable insights into the realities and challenges faced by gig workers in platform economy, enabling policymakers to make more informed decisions and develop appropriate regulations that support fair and equitable working conditions within the platform economy. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to the betterment of the gig workers in the platform economy ecosystem and promote the welfare of all its participants. Thus, the research aims to address following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the gig workers in the platform economy?

2. What is the influence of socio-economic positions of workers and consumers on the labor outcomes within technology-mediated work?
3. Does the platform company provide you any kind of social or security benefits?
4. Which policy and community measures are suitable for promoting economic and social development that benefits all stakeholders?

### **3.1.4 Research Objectives:**

1. To explore the lived experiences of App-Based gig workers in the platform economy in India.
2. To examine the influence of socio-economic positions of gig workers in App-Based platform economy.
3. To assess the extent to which platform companies provide social or security benefits to App-Based gig workers in India.
4. To identify and evaluate policy and community measures that can effectively promote economic and social development in the platform economy in India.

These research objectives aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the compliance challenges faced by gig workers in the platform economy in India, the influence of socio-economic positions on labor outcomes, the provision of social and security benefits by platform companies, and potential strategies for promoting economic and social development that benefits all stakeholders while addressing social security bottlenecks.

### **3.1.5 Limitations of the study:**

In-depth interviews were conducted with the three platforms of gig workers. As a result, the ability to reach women workers in the Food– delivery services sector and Transportation services sector was limited.

According to the survey results, approximately 89% of the women respondents work in the Home Services sector. Around 7% of them are employed in the Transport and the Food delivery industry.

### 3.2 Case study 1

Study of App based gig workers of platform economy, this includes gig worker from Transportation, Food delivery, Hospitality, and home service.

*Table 4 Demographic profile of the gig workers*

Sl.No	Age	Gender	Education	Experience (Years)	Daily leads	Current employment status	Monthly Income
1	32	Male	Degree	4	16–22	Ola	40,000INR (380\$)
2	53	Male	Engineering	6	24–26	Ola	48,000INR
3	29	Male	Degree	2	10	Hospitality	45,000INR
4	31	Male	Post– graduation	3	3	Hospitality	40,000 INR (380\$)
5	34	Male	Degree	2	2	Plumber	25000 INR (210\$)
6	39	Male	Intermediate	4	7	Ola	40,000 INR (420\$)
7	29	Male	Intermediate	3	22	Uber	42,000 INR (400\$)
8	30	Male	Degree	3	20–23	Food– delivery	30,000 INR (3000\$)
9	35	Male	Degree	6	4–7	Electrician	45,000 INR (450\$)

10	32	Male	Degree	5	22	Food– delivery	25,000 INR (210\$)
11	49	Male	Engineering	2	22–30	Food–Delivery & Ride–hailing	40,000 INR (350\$)
12	34	Male	Degree	7	20	Uber	45,000 INR (450\$)
13	45	Male	10 <sup>th</sup>	5	18	Uber	50,000 INR (500 \$)
14	36	Male	Degree	5	22	Food– delivery	30,000 INR (320\$)
15	35	Male	Intermediate	4	20	Food–Delivery	28,000 INR (220\$)

The case study of App based gig workers in the platform economy was carried out based on the Fair work framework of India. According to ILO standards, lived experience of gig work in the platform economy in Hyderabad:

### 3.2.1 Effective Voice:

Regarding voice, the majority of participants expressed minimal to no involvement in decision–making processes. The limited voice was often attributed to the dominance of platform operators and a prevailing sense of disposability, as several respondents described feeling like "just a number." Furthermore, while participants acknowledged occasional surveys conducted via email or within the app, a significant portion regarded them as superficial exercises with little indication of how the collected feedback would translate into meaningful changes. This lack of voice left participants feeling undervalued and harboring a sense of mistrust towards the platform operator. For instance, Venkanna, a taxi driver, exemplified how the absence of a voice breeds cynicism towards the gig organization.

*OLA has their own agenda. Whenever they introduce a new change in the app, we get nervous. Even though it's a good change for instance tipping system. We are suspicious as it is going to swindle more money— Venkanna, age 32.*

Collective voice opportunities were also limited. Only four participants reported being trade union members, but even then, it was unclear how membership could effectively amplify their voices. These participants were all aged 45 or above, and their membership was a legacy from a previous occupation. Non-members generally displayed indifference towards trade unions. Moreover, many participants, especially those aged 29–42, had little to no awareness of the role or purpose of trade unions.

Despite the lack of collective voice, participants did not consider their situation unusual. In some instances, they struggled to envision any alternative. Consequently, the data suggests that the absence of involvement in decision-making was viewed as a normal state of affairs. As a result, the most prevalent response to work-related difficulties was to seek employment with other platforms.

### **3.2.2 Career Advancement:**

The majority of participants expressed limited prospects for career advancement, especially in terms of promotions. Except for hospitality workers, who mentioned some training opportunities, most participants reported a lack of access to formal training. Instead, they relied on ad hoc experiences of "learning on the job."

Despite the absence of structured training and development options, participants acknowledged possibilities for personal growth through entrepreneurial activities, networking, and expanding their skill sets. For instance, some taxi drivers rented out their cars during idle periods to generate additional income. Additionally, two respondents started their own businesses due to the platform operator's growth. They

purchased, licensed, and rented out multiple vehicles to other drivers registered with the platform. Joe serves as an illustration of these opportunities.

*If someone want to work for a taxi and have no car or money, you come to me and rent a car, work for me, and save your earnings and then buy a car. This is what I did in my initial stages of earnings, and now I am saving to purchase another car. I call it progression. Now I couldn' t have 4 cars if I wasn' t working with the Uber platform (Shyam, Uber driver, age 53).*

Three additional individuals, one operating a consultancy firm and two managing independent private hire companies, shared their experiences of how gig work in platform economy contributed to the growth of their existing businesses.

However, it is important to note that the opportunities varied depending on the nature of the gig work. While some taxi drivers reported possibilities for entrepreneurship, plumber workers expressed a lack of opportunities for career advancement. On the other hand, hospitality workers highlighted the benefits of networking and skill diversification, as gig work provided them with additional chances to gain valuable experience that is often scarce in traditional employment settings.

Santosh, a hotel reception manager, exemplified such opportunities. Gig work allowed him to work in various hotels, exposing him to different departments and enabling him to acquire diverse work experience:

*In my part of planning for 3–4 years, I want to apply for the position of manager. At, the hotel I' m working currently we don' t have restaurant; hence my focus is only reception. With the gig I can work as a supervisor in food and drink shifts and also, I can work on bar, waiting. I can work as many as roles I can to gain handsome experience as an overall employee, which can be more helpful in going for full time interview, which can be an add on for my career advancement. (Santosh, hospitality, age 29).*

Although the study found limited opportunities for career development, the significance placed on these opportunities varied among the participants. For instance, individuals who were new to the labor market or seeking experience in unfamiliar fields appreciated the opportunities provided by gig work. However, a significant majority of participants expressed aspirations that were unrelated to their current employment. This was particularly evident among students who engaged in gig work to support their studies and hoped to establish careers in their respective fields.

Similarly, participants who relied on welfare benefits displayed little interest in career prospects associated with their current gig work. Despite diverse perceptions of career development, gig work was generally not seen as a path toward a better future career. As Nikhil points out, gig work tends to be viewed as a temporary pursuit in itself rather than a foundation for building a long-term career:

*The gig work in this App-Based platforms aren't a career. Every human looks for a proper career, and I feel this type of job isn't a proper career. It is wonderful for the short-term employment, but I am looking for a permanent to establish myself (Nikhil, Hospitality, 31).*

### 3.2.3 Job Security:

All research participants involved were engaged under non-employee agreements, devoid of any job security or entitlements to vacation or sick benefits. This absence of stability exposes workers to involuntary job loss and subjects them to considerable financial uncertainty arising from variations in demand, periods of illness, equipment or technological problems, or deactivation. The inherent insecurity commonly instills a sense of anxiety, exemplified by Satish's encounter with gig work.

*There is a lack of income stability for us in this type of work. Sometimes I get paid, and but sometimes I don' t find proper job unless we have a good reference, and it' s too hard to get rating in the job we do. Clients/customers don' t even care about the rating. I' m worried about my safety and security as well as the income too. (Satish, Hospitality, age 34)*

Aside from the absence of formal job security, participants expressed concerns about the fluctuating hours and income they experienced on a weekly basis. The issue of income volatility is further exacerbated by the fact that a significant portion of participants operate as self-employed individuals, particularly those working through home service and taxi platforms. Unlike hospitality workers, who generally receive shifts for their work, taxi and home service workers are only compensated when they complete specific tasks, such as delivering a food order. As a result, these workers face income volatility not only within a single shift but also over more extended periods. Although the advertised pay rates may appear competitive compared to traditional employment, the irregularity in work availability leads to instances of earning below the minimum wage.

The level of vulnerability experienced by workers in such situations seemed to be influenced by whether employment served as their primary or supplementary source of income. For instance, some platform economy workers engaged in gig work to supplement a more stable income stream, while others relied on such work to meet essential living expenses. As anticipated, those who depended heavily on gig work as their primary source of income expressed the highest level of dissatisfaction due to the income insecurity, often describing their struggle to stay financially afloat. An illustrative example of how job insecurity impacts well-being can be seen in the following excerpt from Kiran, who also deals with a health condition that occasionally affects his ability to work:

*I' m a father, with two children and also a farmer in a paddy field, due to inadequate rain and low agriculture production, migrated to city to find a new job. With a friend reference in Urban Company, I learnt plumbing work to support my family, and I earn daily around 1000–1500 INR (450\$ monthly). In plumbing work, we deal with few kinds of concentrated chemicals, further it started effecting my health. We do not get any kind of health benefits, I' m happy that I can earn something and save for my family, but I have no insurance or neither safety at my work. (Kiran, Home service, plumber, age 39)*

### 3.2.4 Income Stability:

Apart from its impact on well-being, income insecurity also entails hidden costs associated with the work. In the context of plumber and cab work, for instance, drivers were responsible for covering expenses related to licensing, maintenance, and insurance. Some workers reported monthly costs of up to (\$450), which accounted for nearly half of their total earnings during that period. Even in cases where cab drivers could combine costs through rental agreements, these arrangements often came with undisclosed penalties, such as the need to work additional hours to cover basic expenses. As a result, these gig workers were unable to have full control over their working hours, leading to a sense of exploitation and undermining their pursuit of work-life balance, a goal commonly associated with nonstandard forms of work. Sudhakar details a scenario:

*I started food- delivery about a year ago because I need a job to support my family and wanted a flexibility, working for Swiggy platform I could earn 1800(20\$) daily working for 12 hours. But I felt misled to be honest. These earnings are not sufficient but on an average I can sustain somehow. Getting leads in and long working hours too, at times our target of 22 is not reached. On the other hand, if the delivery is late at the restaurant customer irritates and gives bad rating, of which company deducts our delivery cost, and if we met with the accident, we don' t have a provision to call*

*company, and the delivery is missed. In that case the food cost and delivery cost both cuts from our earnings. Company just cares about customers and their rating “companies are for customers we are just servants” (Sudhakar, Food-delivery, age 29)*

Hidden costs were also present in food delivery, cab, hospitality, and home service work. Food delivery workers, for instance, faced expenses for late delivery charges, low rating which in return measure on their performance in the application. On the other hand, home service workers experienced reduced income due to travel costs. While transportation was provided for "large events," workers were responsible for covering their travel expenses for smaller events. This often involved long and expensive journeys that were not compensated, further impacting their already minimal and variable income streams.

The absence of job security often led to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty regarding the long-term viability of gig work. Participants commonly expressed their aspirations to secure more stable and permanent forms of employment. While they acknowledged the lack of conventional security, participants associated a consistent flow of work with a certain level of security. For instance, Srikanth believes that it should be like a traditional work at times:

*One positive aspect of the gig economy is that you don't have to be concerned about facing redundancy in the same way. With all the stories in the media about platform like amazon, there's a sense of anxiety among those working in food delivery. However, when it comes to gig economy apps, there's a reassurance that they are here to stay ( Srikanth, food delivery, age 30).*

In fact, gig workers often pondered the concept of security in a broader sense, considering the perceived ability to access work swiftly and effortlessly through an app, especially during times of financial difficulty. This provided them with a broader

sense of security. Moreover, for some individuals, gig work was a deliberate choice, as they saw the absence of contractual obligations and associated rights as a worthwhile trade-off in their pursuit of control and a sense of freedom.

### 3.2.5 Platform economy— gig worker and fulfillment:

The appeal of gig work was often associated with the autonomy and control it offered over one's work. Many participants appreciated the ability to work remotely and without direct supervision. The freedom to determine the how and when of their work was frequently mentioned as a significant advantage of gig work.

*One of the key advantages is the ability to have complete control over your schedule and knowing precisely when you'll be working. In a sense, you become a voluntary worker, which contrasts with certain electrician work situations where you lack control over your schedule and work approach. (Mahesh, home service, age 30)*

While having control over work schedules was initially seen as a benefit, it is important to acknowledge that the reality of control and autonomy for many gig workers differs from this perception. The excerpt above highlights the limitations on control and autonomy that gig workers often experience. For example, participants found that acceptable levels of work were only achievable if they were willing to work evenings and weekends, indicating that control is contingent on aligning worker availability with consumer demands. Additionally, platform companies had the authority to deactivate workers (remove them from the system) if they declined too many requests or received negative customer reviews, further diminishing control and autonomy.

Gig workers also reported various other restrictions. Cab workers, for instance, had little say in setting the fare price or selecting the route to fulfill a fare. Food delivery

workers often faced limitations imposed by clients, who provided specific instructions for tasks. Home service workers also noted restrictions on autonomy, as they needed to maintain certain performance statistics to retain priority access to booking shifts through the app. One participant mentioned the requirement to work a specified number of hours per week to ensure continued access to preferred booking opportunities. These examples illustrate the ways in which control and autonomy are constrained in the gig workers of platform economy.

Nevertheless, evidence emerged of various strategies employed by individuals to resist the digital control mechanisms inherent in the gig economy. Several respondents mentioned subverting these mechanisms through practices that were deemed "prohibited." Examples included working simultaneously through multiple apps, sometimes using multiple devices, accepting cash jobs or tips, and engaging in questionable practices such as overcharging or manipulating customer payments as a means of rectifying perceived unfair treatment. One participant working in the home service and cab sector provided an example of such subversive activity, as illustrated in the following:

*"I would sometimes take cash jobs on the side and pocket the extra money. It was my way of fighting back against the unfair practices of the platform." I do food delivery work at the same time bike riding for extra pocket. They can' t stop me because they don' t employee me. I never met anyone in the company and there is no reason to be dishonest. (Varun, food-delivery & Bike riding, age 32)*

Although gig workers face limitations imposed by digital control mechanisms, many participants acknowledged the constraints of these mechanisms and expressed the belief that, despite their presence, their work still maintained a certain degree of autonomy.

Moreover, contrary to portrayals of gig work as monotonous and dissatisfying, the interviews revealed positive experiences and a sense of fulfillment among many participants. In fact, numerous individuals expressed high levels of enjoyment derived from their work. For instance, they found pleasure in the opportunity to stay physically active while undertaking food delivery work, viewing it as a way to "keep fit." Additionally, participants highlighted the social aspect of gig work as a source of enjoyment, emphasizing the interactions and connections formed within the gig economy community. Srinivasa Rao, a full time OLA driver, there are some social benefits meeting different people:

*I personally enjoy having a conversation with my customers if they allow me to. My app starts near Rajiv Gandhi international airport, Hyderabad. Most of my customers are from internationals who lands to the country after years or some foreigners who are visitors to the city. I meet lot of diverse groups of people, and I provide them good hospitality, and I explain about the city and its rich heritage, traditional food. (Srinivasa Rao, OLA driver, Age 49)*

The satisfaction derived from customer interactions was so significant that several participants expressed their intention to continue gig work as a "side hustle" even if they obtained better employment conditions elsewhere. Moreover, for some participants, particularly those engaging in gig work on an occasional basis to supplement their income, gig work was seen as more than just employment. They likened it to a "paid hobby" or participating in a "game," highlighting the enjoyment and sense of fulfillment they derived from the gig work experience.

### 3.2.6 Respect:

The lack of work-related social support from the platform companies was frequently cited as a significant drawback of working through an app. While some respondents appreciated the absence of a traditional manager, others expressed a

sense of abandonment after registering. Many participants described feeling like they were merely treated as a number, lacking personalized support or attention.

Another related concern was the consistent prioritization of customers' interests over workers' well-being. Instances were reported where the platform company manager/operator would side with customers in disputes, often resulting in the deactivation or suspension of the worker while the complaints were investigated. This not only resulted in a loss of income for the worker during the investigation, exacerbating job and income insecurity, but it also contributed to a feeling of being disposable and undervalued. Nazeer has a story of deactivation left with no income for a month:

*No matter what we say we are deactivated from the service without having a fair investigation. Company sides on whatever customer reports. I once said my customer to put seatbelt, he refused and he complained on my behaviour, and the other customer made 5 persons to sit, in the mini cab where 3 are allowed to sit, as I refused to ride, he complained on my harsh behaviour. Company deactivated my rides for a month, after a return letter and assuring there is will not be further mistake again from my side company unblocked me. I had to beg the company without any reason. They aren' t apps for us, they are apps for customers. ( Nazeer, cab driver, age 34)*

In this regard, numerous participants attributed a sense of "unfairness" to the subjective customer-based rating systems implemented to oversee work accessed through the platform. Concerns were raised regarding the arbitrary nature of these mechanisms and the lack of transparency surrounding how the data is utilized, both for consumers and workers. The perceived unfairness of such systems said Janaiah:

*I feel rating system is a sword to kick us from work. I' m on my way to deliver food, customer called me to get a bottle of beer at 1 a.m., I delivered food at the doorstep*

*mentioned in the app, we don' t know who takes the food while delivering. As I gave the delivery to the customer' s father with a beer bottle, the called me and shouted at me. She gave rating of 1 star and misbehavior. I can' t refuse the customer order due to rating, and now the lady complained about my behaviour. I was charged for my behaviour, even though I was not wrong. I was blocked for 4 days ( Janaiah, food-delivery, age 45)*

Despite the mentioned absence of work-related social support, participants highlighted the presence of dignity and respect in various new and innovative ways. One notable aspect was the belief that having an app as a "manager" resulted in work being distributed in a non-discriminatory manner. Apps were perceived as impartial and devoid of political agendas or biases. Additionally, participants expressed a sense of safety facilitated by the elimination of the need to carry cash, thus minimizing risks associated with traditional employment, such as customer non-payment, counterfeit money, or potential robberies. Nagander, a food delivery, exemplifies how platform technology can enhance job quality by reducing the likelihood of encountering such issues. The introduction of App-Based platforms, despite their limitations, introduced certain benefits and improvements to the working experience, fostering a sense of fairness, safety, and enhanced job quality for gig workers:

*The security measures have significantly improved since the implementation of card payments as the primary mode of transaction. When dealing with cash jobs, there is always uncertainty regarding the identity of the person and the possibility of a no-show. It can be quite frustrating to spend valuable time traveling to a location, waiting for someone who ultimately doesn't show up, resulting in zero earnings. However, with Uber, Urban company(home service), food-delivery even if a customer cancels a job, you still receive a cancellation fee, providing some compensation for your time. Moreover, since both customers and drivers must have registered accounts, the likelihood of individuals evading payment or fleeing the scene decreases significantly. Consequently, the passengers who do choose to ride in your cab tend to be of higher*

*quality, making the overall experience more favorable. ( Pradeep, food-delivery, OLA, age 36)*

### 3.3. Case Study 2:

Gendered compliance in App-Based gig workers of platform economy ( Home service)

#### 3.3.1. Structuring of gig worker–app based platform relations:

The study findings are derived from the narratives of 20 beauticians and makeup artists who are active on the Urban Company' s platform. The participants of the study are between the age of 25–40 years, with the majority (75%) being Hindus, predominantly from upper–caste backgrounds. There are also a few Muslim and Christian participants. Most of the participants are married, and all except one have received formal education.

The findings section of the study begins by examining the motivations of the participants in joining the platform. It explores how the promises of freedom and entrepreneurship intersect with their everyday labor experiences. Through this analysis, the section aims to shed light on the ongoing tensions and conflicts between notions of entrepreneurship, traditional employment relationships, and the balancing act between family and work.

Furthermore, the section delves into the interaction between workers and technology. It specifically focuses on two algorithm–based features of the platform economy: ratings and worker profile deactivation. The narratives of the workers provide insights into the daily negotiations they undertake in relation to these technological aspects of the app. Additionally, the section explores how workers' safety and dignity are shaped by the intersection of flexible work arrangements, technology, customer interactions, and the embodiment of their gender and class.

Overall, the section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by gig workers in the platform economy, highlighting the multifaceted dynamics that influence their labor outcomes.

### 3.3.2. The structuring of relations between workers and the platform Opportunity:

Flexibility and autonomy: The primary driving force behind the majority of research participants' decision to join the platform economy was the flexible nature of its work schedule. In the research interviewed, it was found that 50% of the participants had previously been employed in full-time positions. However, full-time employment necessitates being physically present at the workplace for a minimum of eight hours each day, which posed challenges for the research participants in carrying out their household responsibilities.

The desire to have flexible work arrangements becomes more evident among women workers who have children. It was observed that the establishment of employment dynamics is influenced by the needs of the household and the responsibilities associated with motherhood by Sumana.

*I am a mother for a small baby, and I have a family so this [Urban Company] is good for me. In this job, I am independent, and I am the boss– I can decide when to work, what time to work and till when to stay and have a leave. If, I have any problem at home I would put off the app. (Sumana, beautician, age 28)*

The motivations behind research participants joining Urban Company were not solely based on personal work preferences and allocation. It became evident that their decision to join the platform was influenced by the complex interplay of labor processes, economic and social capital, and gender relations. Interestingly, the data

revealed that almost all the women interviewed relied on their family's savings to acquire the necessary skills and equipment to participate in the platform. This reliance on family-controlled capital brought to light the intricate negotiations these women had to navigate within the confines of gender norms and patriarchal expectations:

*I have done a makeup certification course prior to marriage, but my parents didn't allow me to do this work and after I got married, I joined hands with my husband business which apparently didn't go well as we expected. At the same time my brother joined this urban company as a plumber, by seeing his work and good earnings, my family said its okay to join.*

The research participants' choices regarding employment were significantly influenced by their social networks and access to social capital. Within patriarchal social structures, women often find themselves confined to the private sphere, which poses challenges in establishing social connections beyond immediate family relations. Poojitha, for instance, shared her struggles in entering the salon business due to the limitations of her social capital, highlighting the obstacles she faced in expanding her network beyond her immediate circle.

*I tried to join and work in many salons, they do not encourage new people, and they had lot of politics around. The existing Workers in the salon don't want to share their work with new people..., they feel it's a kind of competition among them and would lose their job..., they even liked my work..., but nothing happened. Hence, I decided to work in Urban Company. (Poojitha, beautician, age 32)*

Present there are many other alternatives to salon work, but freelancing requires social capital and connections to sustain in the market.

Thus, I found that the main driving force behind women's decision to participate in the platform economy stems from the gendered division of household labor and also, that their choice to join the platform economy as a gig worker is influenced by various

factors, including the gender-based disparities in accessing social and economic capital.

### **3.3.3. Transformations in employment relationships [Fulfilment]:**

The reclassification of platform economy-based gig workers as partners and entrepreneurs has had a significant impact on their employment outcomes. Surprisingly, none of the workers interviewed reported receiving fixed income, insurance coverage, maternity benefits, paid time-off, or sick-leaves. While men in the platform-based gig workers may also face a dilution of employment benefits, women's marginalized positions in both the household and labor market could render them even more vulnerable. In particular, the risks faced by makeup artists and beauticians interviewed were further compounded due to the high temporalities and unpredictable nature of their work demands. This unpredictability primarily stems from social factors, as makeup artists are in highest demand during the concentrated Indian wedding seasons, occurring in specific months such as April– May, August, and December–January. Similarly, beauticians often experience lower earnings on weekdays. Such variability in work patterns leads to income volatility for workers and complicates labor allocation, thereby undermining the promised flexibility of platform economy.

However, it is worth noting that the platforms do provide training and upskilling opportunities to workers, which can be seen as a positive aspect resembling traditional employment relationships.

### **3.3.4. Income instability:**

Within the platform economy, the structure of employment relations has undergone a significant shift, transferring the risks and responsibilities associated with fluctuating demand onto the workers themselves. As a consequence, this institutionalizes a sense

of precarity and uncertainty in working conditions, which was a major concern voiced by numerous research participants. One such participant, Kavitha, a makeup artist, have deeply impacted by demand fluctuations.

*The average monthly income is difficult to tell. I have no leads this month. During the season I do 5–6 leads per day. The time now is so bad. Now it as an off season, I only did 10,000 INR (120\$) worth of work. (Kavitha, Makeup artist, age 34)*

According to the research, I have discovered that the physical demands associated with manual labor contribute to women experiencing unique short-term income volatility within the platform economy. This observation stands in contrast to the conclusions drawn by (Surie, 2020), who found that male workers in India's transportation industry do not encounter short or mid-term fluctuations in their income.

However, research also reveals that as the platform has experienced growth, there has been a noticeable increase in income volatility among beauticians and makeup artists, extending beyond the short-term and into the long-term. This phenomenon suggests that these professionals are facing greater uncertainty in their earnings as the platform expands.

*Currently, there are lot of beauticians and makeup artists, so earnings has reduced. Example: I am in Banjara hills [suburb in Hyderabad] hub and it has 60 makeup artists and 30 beauticians. Moreover, many salons are losing their business. They joined platforms and making clients through app. Initially the demand was huge, and the number of makeup artists are less. I am looking for alternative job as my daily needs are not fulfilled. (Shabana, beautician & makeup, age 36)*

The combination of the unpredictable nature of body labor and the growth strategy implemented by the platform has resulted in an escalation of income volatility for

workers over the long-term. Consequently, workers now face challenges in coping with fluctuating demands and shifting business cycles, which were previously managed by salon owners. This dilution of workers' ability to navigate these uncertainties can be attributed to the evolving dynamics within the platform economy.

### **3.3.5. Capacity building and upskilling:**

Although gig work has disrupted various traditional employment relationships, it has managed to retain an essential aspect, capacity building and upskilling. When beauticians join the platform, they undergo training tailored to their skill level, assessed through a testing process. On the other hand, makeup artists are expected to possess a makeup diploma/certificate upon joining. However, the platform consistently organizes "masterclasses" facilitated by industry experts. While workers bear the cost of these trainings, all participants regarded them as a valuable and beneficial opportunity for growth.

Based on research findings, participants view these trainings as instrumental in their professional development, leading to enhanced earnings, increased confidence, and improved negotiation skills. The provision of trainings by platforms establishes a significant connection between the accumulation of human capital and economic growth, which is often lacking for informal workers.

In general, gig work has offered workers the advantages of flexibility and upskilling opportunities, which are often new experiences for many individuals. However, the shifting dynamics of employment relations have placed the burdens and responsibilities of entrepreneurship on makeup artists and beauticians, leaving them with little control over their income levels and work preferences. Despite the benefits, these workers face challenges in navigating the risks associated with their roles in the platform economy.

### 3.3.6. Gig workers Technology Interaction:

The technological reorganization of work has introduced two methods: ratings and algorithmic deactivation of worker profiles. After each service, customers have the opportunity to rate workers using a "star" system ranging from one to five. These aggregated ratings serve as an evaluation of worker performance. While ratings can foster trust between unknown and unverified parties, especially concerning safety for women (BBC, 2015), research indicates that ratings and deactivation processes tend to perpetuate social differentiation between workers and consumers.

The utilization of ratings serves as a means to exert significant control over workers, encompassing their adherence to company services, adherence to quality guidelines, acceptance rates, lead rejection rate, behavior with customers, and duration of activity on the app. However, according to the majority of research participants, the rating system lacks openness and transparency, raising concerns about its fairness and objectivity.

*"I feel that for every 20 ratings we get, they might consider only one. Most of the clients says they give 5 rating and good reviews after the service in front of us, but our rating do not increase, and also clients does not understand the importance of rating which is the only mechanism for our good/bad service. If the client provides 4.5/5 rating with a good review, it' s good for us and can have more bookings, which leads to good impression also motivates us to work further" – says (Swapna, Beautician & make up, age 31)*

In order to gain a better understanding of the rating system, the conducted interviews and approximated the criteria used. According to the findings, Urban Company considers a rating above 4.8 as indicative of satisfactory service provision. However, if a worker's aggregated rating falls below 4.6, they will receive fewer job allocations.

When the rating drops to 4.3, workers are given a warning to improve their services. If the rating falls below 4.3 stars, workers are deactivated from the platform without any notice or explanation. Through discussions with workers, it became apparent that this entire process is algorithmically driven. Unlike traditional employment situations, there is no communication between the workers and clients or management regarding performance ratings and reviews.

The interdependence of ratings and earnings has led to the exacerbation of class inequalities, caste relations, and power dynamics between workers and customers. From the extensive research, it is evident that the literature review emphasizes the significance of body work dimensions, which in turn make socio-economic differences tangible in both the nature of the work itself (involving the bodies of workers and customers) and contextual factors.

### 3.3.7. Respect:

The findings from the research indicate that the interviewed workers primarily belong to the lower or lower-middle class, while their clientele consists predominantly of upper-middle and upper-class individuals. This stark differentiation in social status, combined with the inherent feeling rules of privilege and pampering associated with body work, can perpetuate, and reinforce existing inequalities through the rating system.

*I had to make two hair buns for the client. This plating and round bun process took 12 minutes to finish the work. but the client gave 1 star rating. we are Sikhs(a religion), and working here is our compulsion. What to do? Do I have respect? Clients only problem is that I took only 12 minutes in the meanwhile she asked my caste. From my understanding clients provide rating based on caste, religion, and also 'client knows that they can reduce the rating' so they misbehave. (Fathima, Makeup, 33)*

Likewise, (Hannák et al., 2017) discovered indications of perceived gender and race biases manifesting in the ratings and feedback that workers receive. and also observed similar patterns during the research analysis:

*In a meeting with a makeup artist Sirisha says a customer spoke about her caste and wrote a review “makeup was extremely bad that my toilet looked better than my face” how can they write this in review? (Sirisha, makeup, age 30)*

Drawing upon the comparison of a toilet and its connotations of purity and pollution within the context of the caste system, it further emphasizes the argument regarding the intricate connection between body labor, gender, class, and caste. Caste-based notions profoundly impact customers' perceptions of the value and quality of services, as well as their attitudes towards the individuals performing those services. In the accounts shared by many participants, they expressed being treated as "servants" by clients. This unequal relationship, characterized by the usage of the term "servant," involves economic exploitation, a lack of respect for the individual and their labor, and the privileging of certain identities. Consequently, finding that class, caste, and gender operate in a mutually reinforcing manner, perpetuating and reproducing social differentiation.

Within the context of these inequalities, gig workers in the platform economy are often compelled to engage in unpaid labor in order to maintain a satisfactory rating and receive appropriate feedback. While some participants expressed a willingness to perform a few minor unpaid tasks, it is not uncommon for demands for unpaid labor to assume exploitative forms. Mangli, for instance, had an experience that exemplified this exploitative nature:

*Some of the clients are really troublesome. one of the clients said my work was excellent but gave a 3-star rating. The client even said that if you refund half of the*

*money, I can improve your rating and provide outstanding review. (Mangli, beautician & makeup, 35)*

Findings shows that the distinctiveness of unpaid labor predominantly lies within body work gig workers in the platform economy. Unlike certain services such as ride-hailing, which can be regulated through GPS tracking, the realm of makeup and beauty services defies standardization. Consequently, assessing and appraising such services becomes a complex and ambiguous endeavor, rendering it susceptible to exploitation by consumers seeking to avoid payment. Numerous individuals shared accounts of clients who withheld payment upon perceiving the work as unsatisfactory. In cases where participants resisted, they faced the repercussions of receiving unfavorable ratings.

### 3.3.9. Effective voice:

Moreover, the embodied nature of body work plays a crucial role in facilitating conversations, thereby enabling networking opportunities, earning gratuities, and securing favorable ratings (van den Broek, 2017). This phenomenon becomes particularly prominent for women working under Urban Company, given the prevalence of normative social values and expectations that place a greater burden on women to regulate their expressions and emotions compared to men. Harini provided insight into how this occupation requires the performance of emotional labor, along with adhering to the feeling rules of privilege and indulgence set by upper and middle-class women.

*It all depends on how we handle the customer. We have to make the client feel better and provide a good harmony in or appearance. We have to make the client beautiful both inside and outside. We can do a beautiful outlooking makeup but, if the client*

*inside do not feel beautiful, then I can't make them good looking. It all depends on us that how we handle the customer. (Harini, beautician, age 32)*

Through interactions with the participants, it became evident that the rating system not only amplifies the requirement for engaging in emotional labor but also grants the platform a certain level of influence over the emotional experiences of the workers. Many interviewed workers shared common phrases and dialogues during customer interactions. They also adopted similar voice intonations, indicating that these practices were likely acquired during their training sessions conducted by the platform.

Given the potentially repetitive and monotonous nature of beauty and makeup work, numerous participants place significant importance on the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of their job. They perceive these aspects as the most demanding, enjoyable, and personally fulfilling elements of their work. According to the participants, their adeptness in navigating diverse temperaments, personalities, and situations among their clients sets them apart from other workers on the platform. Jennifer provided a detailed account of how she effectively managed the emotional and interpersonal aspects of her job within the platform.

*As a makeup artist. I believe it all depends on how I handle my customer. I explain the process in advance so that I don't have to repeat my actions. I have to be humble and discuss about the procedure of make up in detailed to customer and the process needs a conversation with client which could keep them busy, and engaged. It does happen they become rude at times but who doesn't, they are paying for the job, and I have to handle it. Moreover 95% of our job handling the customer with utmost care. (Jannifer, makeup, age 34)*

Yet, ratings hold significant influence over labor outcomes, with a negative rating or review capable of blocking a worker's profile on the app and severing their primary source of income. Despite the pivotal role of the rating system, there are no

established mechanisms to address worker concerns regarding unfair ratings and deactivation. Structural inequalities within the worker–organization dynamic hinder the ability of workers to demand explanations, request rectifications, or provide their own perspectives. Most participants shared their experiences of being informed by the platform that they have no recourse against unfair ratings bestowed upon them by customers. The lack of a centralized "office space" further exacerbates these inequalities, as workers lack a designated location to lodge complaints, pursue follow-ups, and seek redressal regarding company policies, consumers, and third parties. Dispute resolution becomes arbitrary and challenging for workers with limited social and economic capital. These issues are particularly evident for women who face dual disadvantages due to limited access to public spaces and restricted freedom to navigate them for personal and professional benefits. Anjum Sultana, a beautician on the platform, recounted a distressing incident of being deactivated.

*It was only seven months, I have deactivated after joining Urban Company, my daughter was sick... I have to leave her and go to work for five days, because the hospital bill was 20,000 INR (240\$). As I do not have the money, I went to my regular customer on a working day, and I forgot the disposable sheet which is used after the beauty procedure. The customer is angry, and she scolded me, said 'don't do this job, just leave'. In return she hasn't paid me for the service which I have done was costed (50\$). She raised a complaint and the company charged a deduction fee of (\$25). (Anjum sultana, beautician, age 33)*

*And the very next day, I had to take the other job, When I called the customer about the service, she just said it's a pedicure and waxing, but after reacting there she said I need a hair coloring, which is not in the booking menu. Coloring material has to be provided by the client, as I refused, I cannot make it now, the client is angry. Here the mistake is not mine either, but the rating she gave was 2/5 and she wrote review 'worst service'. She paid half of the amount. With this the company deactivated me, there is no further helpline or to justify the situation. I went in person to company and*

*make a letter of justifying, but company refused to believe me. It went till 5 days I had to beg the customers to raise my rating as company reluctant to believe my actions. Finally, after 10 days, after requesting so much to the customer she raised rating, then the company unblocked me.*

The evolution of the rating system and the process of deactivation resonates with Foucault's argument that engaging in body work can not only reflect power dynamics but also generate them. The inherent imbalance among different stakeholders compels workers to endure exploitative and abusive practices at the hands of clients. Consequently, platforms must be cognizant of the influence of workplace technologies on worker experiences and livelihoods. It is imperative to address these issues to ensure fair and equitable working conditions for all.

### **3.3.10. Safety, Security, and hierarchy:**

The convergence of flexible work arrangements and the rating system poses risks to worker safety while undermining their control over spatial and temporal factors. Workers often find themselves operating within the intimate confines of another person's home, which immediately impacts their safety. Task assignments typically provide workers with minimal information, such as the client's name, address, phone number, and a brief task description, making it challenging for them to assess the potential risks they may encounter. This lack of information further compounds the difficulties faced by workers in ensuring their own safety while performing their duties.

Through extensive interviews, it was discovered that Urban Company has minimal safety measures in place to address hazards. The current system effectively places the responsibility of ensuring safety onto the workers themselves. During their training, workers are instructed to make a phone call to the client within 15 minutes of

receiving a work request, aiming to assess the legitimacy of the lead. Participants often rely on their intuition, their so-called "sixth sense," to evaluate potential dangers and risks. However, complications arise when appointments are booked by men on behalf of their wives, mothers, or sisters. In such instances, workers insist on speaking directly to the woman client. While most men comply, some refuse or respond rudely, thus forcing workers to make a risky decision on whether to proceed with the lead.

Some of the participants relay on the family members until they reach the clients home for the safety measures.

*Shama says, if a man books an appointment, I always tell them to let me speak to the madam. Although, I speak to the women if I am not satisfied, I am scared, and I take my husband/ brother along with me. If the man doesn' t give the phone to women, I had to take my brother/ husband to ensure my safety. But if my family members are not along, I had to take a brave step and go. (Shama, beautician, age 34)*

When confronted with hazardous situations, workers have two options: contacting their immediate manager or reaching out to the company's help center. However, both avenues have significant shortcomings that render them ineffective in emergency responses. According to the majority of participants, while their immediate manager can be reached, they often take a considerable amount of time to respond to calls and messages. Communicating with an operator at the help center is time-consuming, and many workers reported that these operators are not trained to handle safety hazards. In emergency scenarios, workers are instructed by the help center to cancel the leads, resulting in penalties and additional transportation costs for the workers themselves. These obstacles frequently hinder women from reporting unsafe working conditions and dangerous customers to the platform, further exacerbating their vulnerability and limiting their ability to seek redress.

The presence and acceptance of sexual, physical, and verbal harassment, assault, and aggression in the workplace can be attributed to both the existing gender and class hierarchies. These hierarchies serve as both the outcome and the catalyst for such misconduct. The narratives provided by workers clearly illustrate the prevalence of these issues and the ways in which they are intertwined with broader power dynamics related to gender and social class.

*I had the payment problem with one of the customers. The makeup is over, it was the package for 4 members, and at the time of payment they called a male in the house. I got scared and left the house immediately. The service costed 14000 INR (180\$), but he paid me 5000 INR(60\$). When I called the customer, the male men picked it and said 'come to home I can provide you additional charges' – sarcastically. – says (Shama, beautician, age 34)*

Furthermore, findings revealed that despite using public transportation to commute to appointments, participants did not report experiencing harassment on buses, metros, or rickshaws. This observation aligns with the prevailing discourse that emphasizes how the imposition of societal "honor" on women's bodies exposes them to heightened risks to their personal safety within private domains.

Additionally, it was evident in certain cases that safety hazards extended beyond the immediate workplace, highlighting the pervasive nature of these concerns in various aspects of workers' lives. Farhana Begum described a distressing experience.

*A lady booked for a beauty and makeup; I accepted the lead because I knew the lady, she likes my servicing, this is the second time booking of the lady and it priced high 18000 INR (200\$). The service takes 7 hours to finish the entire procedure. And I felt happy that in a single day I can earn my half month salary. The lady is quite talkative and friendly, as I had to stay for long hours and humble in order to make a good service and rating. Her son fell in love with me, and he started sending me*

*messages. I blocked him, but he contacted me through other numbers, messaging me at nights. I had to block more than 15 numbers, he kept calling and messaging. This went on for four months and I had to tell my husband to handle it. (Farhana Begum, beautician & makeup, age 36)*

However, the incident had enduring consequences on her husband's perceptions regarding her work, which in turn affected her ability to receive job requests in the future.

*Leave the job says my husband. this is the reason why I didn' t tell him because he is fearful of the work. He keeps on asking me about my security, and any problems in the job I do. I' m a married women with two kids, if the situations goes on, what will I answer in my family and the how does the society sees me? I cannot complain to helpline or manager, they don' t care... (Farhana begum, beautician & makeup, age 36)*

The incident brings attention to the delicate balance women workers navigate between financial independence, patriarchal protection, and societal assumptions about their morality. The awareness of the potential consequences associated with reporting physical hazards, especially related to sexual safety, discourages women from taking any action. Additionally, my research reveals that women have limited access to legal protections when it comes to personal safety threats. Furthermore, it remains unclear how gig workers are covered under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, leaving their rights and protections uncertain in such situations.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Case study 3: Data Source Triangulation Approach

The present study adopts the data source triangulation approach of research to get insight into the applicability of the both the case study of gig workers in App-Based platform economy with the legislation verdicts in India and globally.

The data analysis conducted yielded findings concerning the effective voice, job quality, income stability, fulfilment, Job security, career/ business opportunity, social respect, of gig workers in the App-Based platform economy i.e., Transportation (Ola/Uber), Food-delivery (Swiggy/Zomato), Home service (Urban Company). This inductive model study generated primary concepts, secondary themes, and ultimately, overarching dimensions.

#### 4.1.1 Payments, incentives, and growth What is the financial management between workers and platforms?

Primary factor behind the employment of platform gig-workers is the financial aspect of their work. The financial benefits associated with platform gig work, such as convenient and timely remuneration for completing individual tasks, coupled with a relatively low entry barrier, make it an appealing option. Compared to traditional gig work models like contractual engagements or temporary work arrangements, platform gig work offers a higher level of payment certainty.

The payment and incentive structures employed by platforms exhibit certain consistent features across various sectors investigated in this study:

Algorithmic determination of prices: Payments are determined through algorithms designed by the platform and driven by computer calculations. These algorithms ascertain the value of completed tasks and incorporate incentives or penalties associated with each task.

On-the-job feedback through customer ratings: Evidence indicates that customer ratings, in addition to successful service fulfillment, constitute a crucial factor in platform gig work. These ratings are influenced by customers' experiences, as well as potential biases related to their race, ethnicity, or gender. In certain platforms, these ratings are incorporated into the algorithm and play a pivotal role in shaping gig workers' future prospects within the platform.

Direct online payment transfers: Platforms facilitate direct payments made by consumers through the service application. Consequently, a majority of payments made to platform gig workers occur through secure online transfers directly into their bank accounts.

From the study it is evident that the majority of platforms across the three sectors follow to an algorithm-driven approach and online payment system for compensating platform gig-workers for their completed tasks.

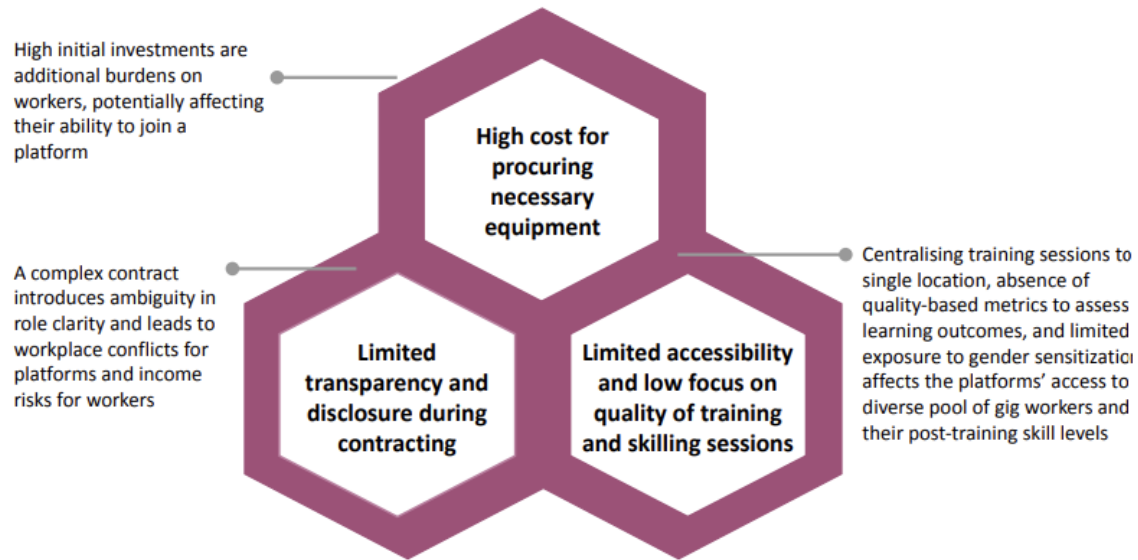
Food delivery Services	In the food and beverage delivery sector, platforms typically offer platform gig-workers a fixed base pay for the initial 6–7 kilometers traveled after picking up the food for delivery. Beyond this initial distance, platforms compensate gig-workers at a rate of approximately INR 5–6 per kilometer. The total income earned by gig-workers is contingent upon the number of deliveries completed, the distance traveled beyond the initial stretch, and any tips provided by customers.
Transportation services	Compensation in the transport and logistics services sector is determined by the distance traveled and the duration of each ride. Similar to other sectors, platforms deduct a predetermined percentage from the fare charged. Additionally, certain platforms within the logistics industry offer a set payment for each parcel delivery, considering factors such as shipment size and distance covered.
Personal and Home service	Within the personal and homecare services sector, customers are invoiced for each specific service rendered by the workers. In instances where customers opt for online payments, platforms subtract a predetermined commission rate before transferring the workers' portion to their accounts. Conversely, if customers make cash payments, the commission amount is later deducted from the workers' accounts.

Based on our research findings, gig platforms employ various monetary incentives to enhance the productivity of their workers. These incentives include rewards for meeting targets, bonuses tied to high customer ratings, overtime pay, and higher base pay during peak hours. Time-specific bonuses and incentives are also utilized to promote worker retention. Additionally, annual, bi-annual, and seasonal bonuses are common in the food and beverage delivery industry. To expand their gig workforce, platforms often offer referral bonuses to existing workers, typically ranging from INR 1000 to 1500 for each successful referral.

However, alongside these positive incentives, platform gig-workers may also face wage reductions for non-compliance with platform rules. These rules encompass factors such as punctuality, unexplained absences, maintaining a minimum customer rating, refusal to accept bookings or tasks, incomplete tasks, and failure to meet a minimum number of daily bookings.

#### **4.1.2 Challenges in payments, incentives, and growth models:**

Although higher incomes are a recognized benefit for workers in the gig economy, there exist various obstacles pertaining to payment, incentives, and growth models. These challenges, which can significantly impact platform gig-workers, stem from the unequal bargaining power between the workers and the platforms. Our research has identified three primary challenges that directly influence the day-to-day experiences of platform gig-workers and have long-term implications for them:



*Figure 5 Challenges in the selection and onboarding process*

Workers enjoy greater flexibility in managing their work schedule, but they are required to put in extensive hours and accomplish a significant volume of tasks in order to earn a satisfactory income.

In the beginning, platforms relied on incentive schemes to attract and engage workers. However, as these platforms grew and the number of workers increased, it led to a surplus of available labor. Consequently, workers found themselves needing to take on a larger workload in order to maintain the same level of earnings they had initially achieved when they joined the platforms.

From the study it is evident that a typical workday for gig workers in the transportation and food delivery sectors revealed that they tend to work extended hours. Some food delivery workers reported working until late at night, sometimes even past midnight, and not returning home until around 2 AM. As a result, the combination of long working hours and the need for consistent online availability to earn a satisfactory income raises doubts about the notion of "flexibility" in these jobs. Additionally, the nature of the tasks assigned to these workers is typically singular,

with each task carrying the potential for either incentives or penalties. This creates a constant state of stress and control for the workers.

During the hiring and onboarding procedures, the gig economy encounters three primary obstacles that have a substantial impact on its long-term viability and expansion. These challenges **impede** the seamless interaction between gig workers and platforms throughout the onboarding process, resulting in either:

Heightened barriers that impede the entry of workers into the gig economy, making it more difficult for them to join and participate effectively.

Disruptions to the equitable distribution of power between the two parties, affecting negotiations and creating an imbalance in the existing power dynamics.

These challenges have far-reaching implications for the sustainability and growth of the gig economy, as they hinder the smooth integration of workers into the system and can contribute to an unfair and unbalanced environment during contractual discussions and engagements.

## **4.2 Enhancing job quality for gig workers through improved economic security**

### **4.2.1 Legalization of a minimum monthly wage:**

The research findings from study 1 &2 indicate that gig workers experience income uncertainty, leading to instability in their lives. Despite earning a reasonable salary according to gig workers across various platform economies, they are forced to make compromises on personal commitments. Consequently, implementing minimum wages could provide financial beneficial, particularly in unforeseen circumstances. Additionally, studies have revealed that ridesharing and food-delivery workers in developed nations often earn below the minimum wage(Codagnone & Biagi, 2016). Furthermore, observation of the study indicate that many of these respondents are

middle-aged, which allows them to manage physical exertion to some extent. However, as they age, it becomes challenging for them to maintain the same demanding schedule, given their already poor lifestyle. As a result, health complications are likely to arise. Therefore, it is crucial for the appropriate authority to establish minimum wages.

#### **4.2.2. Lack of benefits for gig workers in the App-Based platform economies:**

From the research findings study 1 &2 the gig workers experience a significant lack of employment benefits compared to the traditional economy, where benefits such as insurance, paid leaves, and retirement benefits are common. These workers are not classified as employees by the platforms they work for While the flexibility aspect is often cited as a justification for withholding benefits from gig workers, (Hall & Krueger, 2018),(Market et al., 2019) raised concerns about a previous study that did not provide gig taxi drivers with the option of employment benefits. The absence of benefits in gig work renders many organizational theories irrelevant (Turk, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to establish fundamental benefits for gig workers, according to the literature.

#### **4.2.3. Income volatility for gig workers in App-Based platform economies:**

From the research findings study 1 &2 the gig workers experience economic instability and face uncertainty in their careers(Liu et al., n.d.). The gig workers primarily relies on economically vulnerable individuals who are available during irregular hours to benefit from surge pricing mechanisms (Zwick, 2020). In fact, the surge pricing that attracts a majority of drivers highlights the precarious nature of gig

work(Ming et al., 2021) . Consequently, the literature argue that providing only minimal economic compensation to gig workers further contributes to their precariousness. Establishing stable economic security is therefore essential for the future.

#### **4.2.4 Enhancing the psychological safety of gig workers to improve the quality of their jobs:**

Work Pressure: From the research findings study 1 &2 the gig workers consistently face intrinsic pressure due to the piece rate compensation they receive(Christie & Ward, 2019). Digital platforms, in their pursuit of monopolization, often transfer this pressure onto the workers (Christie & Ward, 2019). The intense pressure placed on gig workers contributes to the development of psychologically stressful situations. From the research respondents explicitly expressed that they constantly feel pressured to perform the work.

Perform the work despite the difficulties: From the research findings study 1 &2 the precarious nature of work within the gig work is a deeply rooted issue (Vallas & Schor, 2020). Regardless of harsh weather conditions or equipment breakdowns, gig workers are expected to fulfill their duties without any room for inefficiency. The freedom to work at any time comes at a significant cost (Anwar & Graham, 2021). These platform-based jobs are characterized by super-exploitation and high levels of surveillance (Vallas & Schor, 2020). Given that gig workers have often faced challenging situations, it is crucial for them to have a voice and be allowed to form associations(Johnston & Land-kazlauskas, n.d.). Especially women gig workers expressed pressure from the families due to safety & security challenges, and also food-delivery gig workers expressed their pressure working for more than 12 hours and reach target 22 leads per day to earn (20\$).

## 4.2 Social security bottlenecks faced by gig workers in the App-Based platform economy:

Nominal: From the research findings study 1 &2 the autonomy and flexibility are often presented as attractive features to lure workers (Li et al., 2023). However, it is evident that gig workers have limited autonomy without any legal protection or job security (Zietlow, 2020). Research respondents echoed the same sentiment, emphasizing that the platforms hold the true power over autonomy. For instance, three of our respondents mentioned using the new platform 'in Driver' (in addition to 'Ola' and 'Uber'), where multiple driver options are provided to customers and drivers have multiple options as well. However, this perceived autonomy is merely an illusion. The ability to cancel rides on both sides creates more confusion. There is a need for service providers to have a significant level of control in reality.

### 4.3.1 Social bias:

From the research findings study 1 &2 the gig workers often face social biases and are left to navigate these bottlenecks on their own (Kinder & Carolina, 2019). Evidence of the existence of social and cultural bias was presented by a platform's chief operating officer, highlighting the need to address this issue (Wood & Hjorth, 2019). The women gig workers also expressed similar feedback, citing instances where they did not receive high star ratings despite performing their job diligently. Furthermore, communal biases are not uncommon, as many respondents shared an experience of being denied by an individual based on belonging to a different community this is more evident in beauty & makeup services and in ride sharing.

### 4.3.2 Low intrinsic motivation:

From the research findings study 1 &2 that there may be a temporary period where gig workers perform their job diligently even without having their intrinsic motivational needs fulfilled. The task performance of gig employees with high intrinsic motivation tends to be better than those who lack it (Link, 2022). However, challenges arise when existing processes do not allow for the fulfillment of these needs. From the findings, all respondents indicated that they turned to gig work as a last resort when they had no other employment options available. One interviewee mentioned attempting various positions in the ride sharing, another discussed their failure to establish a successful business, and a third respondent stated that their earnings in another profession were insufficient to support their family's expenses.

## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATION

### 5.1 Impact of UK Supreme Court Verdict:

Uber London lost its final appeal on February 19, 2021, after a prolonged legal battle dating back to 2016. The British Supreme Court ruled that Uber drivers should be classified as 'workers' rather than 'self-employed' individuals. This decision, based on the Employment Rights Act 1996, means that Uber drivers are now entitled to minimum wage, paid leave, and other legal entitlements similar to employed workers. While this ruling specifically applies to the drivers involved in the 2016 case, it sets a significant precedent that could impact the working conditions and entitlements of gig and platform workers globally (Defossez, 2022) (Hie et al., 2022)

During the judgment, the UK Supreme Court considered several factors. They noted that Uber sets the fares for each ride, and drivers cannot determine their own prices as they would if they were self-employed. Uber also determines the contract terms, leaving drivers with no say in the matter. Drivers can only accept the terms and conditions imposed by Uber. Additionally, Uber monitors and assesses drivers' performance, with the power to terminate their working relationship if they fail to meet expectations even after repeated warnings. This level of control exhibited by Uber reflects a characteristic of an employment relationship known as subordination. Moreover, Uber monitors drivers' ride requests and may penalize them for excessive cancellations (Adams-prassl & Coyle, 2021).

The court emphasized that the determination of whether the drivers were "workers" should not be based on the contractual agreement between Uber and its drivers. Instead, it is crucial to consider the underlying purpose of protective labor legislation, such as the Employment Rights Act 1996 (Freedland, M. R., & Adams-Prassl, J,

2017). The legislation aims to safeguard vulnerable workers from exploitation by granting them specific rights. If Uber's argument were accepted, it would allow the company to decide whether or not the legislation designed to protect workers applies to its drivers. This exemption would undermine the significance and effectiveness of the legislation established by the Parliament.

This UK Supreme Court verdict on Uber drivers can also have significant repercussions in India. Gig and platform workers have been demonstrated in various cities across sectors. Matters are being taken to the courts. Judiciary has taken up the issues in a few instances. Certainly, the UK Supreme Court verdict on Uber drivers is going to have an impact on these ongoing judicial proceedings. The Uber verdict demonstrated that it was possible to establish employer–employee relations in the gig and platform economy. That judgement showed that Uber could be held accountable as an 'employer' and Uber drivers are its 'workers'. The same principle applies in India too. Gig and platform economy used technology to mystify the employer–employee relation and the UK Supreme Court verdict untangled the labyrinth of such mystification. There are enough solid reasons to believe that Indian Courts would apply similar criteria as gig and platform models follow a similar pattern across nations. In the gig and platform economy, employers would find it increasingly difficult to hide behind the veil of technology to deny workers their identity and statutory labour rights.

## 5.2 Managerial Implications:

The gig and platform economies rely on advanced information technology, and policymakers are grappling with the crucial question of whether technology will create more jobs or disrupt the already precarious employment landscape in India. The data indicates a steady decline in the wage share of net value added, while profits have increased. The impact of modern information technology on the labor market remains uncertain. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, and big data are

redefining or blurring the traditional employer–employee relationship in the world of work. Labor organizations within the gig and platform work domain often obscure the employer–employee relationship. (Nahar et al., 2022)

Increasingly, employment relationships resemble gig and platform work, which often operates outside the realm of labor laws. A significant number of workers are adversely affected by the terms and conditions of employment in the gig and platform economy. Unpredictable work schedules, long hours, and harsh working conditions are prevalent features. Labor market policies, designed to regulate and establish the employer–employee relationship, have not kept pace with the technological changes shaping the world of work. Workers from various backgrounds are negatively impacted by these significant transformations.

The changes in the world of work are unlikely to be uniform across sectors and different worker categories, such as gender and skill levels. Inequality becomes a major concern as technology is employed to concentrate profits in the hands of a few. Access to technology and financial resources becomes key in shaping labor market institutions and the concentration of capital among a small number of dominant players. A critical question remains: How sustainable will this concentration of power be in the long run?

### **5.3 Policy recommendations from the study:**

1. **Establish Clear Legal Definitions:** Develop a comprehensive legal framework that clearly defines the employment status and rights of App–Based gig workers. This framework should explicitly recognize gig workers as "workers" entitled to appropriate labor protections and social security benefits, including minimum wages, paid leave, and health insurance.

*Justification:* App-Based gig workers in India often face ambiguity regarding their employment status, which can lead to the denial of essential benefits. Providing a clear legal definition will ensure that workers are adequately protected and can access social security provisions.

2. Strengthen Labor Laws: Update and strengthen labor laws to address the unique challenges posed by the App-Based gig economy. These laws should cover gig workers' rights to fair compensation, safe working conditions, social security benefits, and collective bargaining.

*Justification:* Existing labor laws in India primarily focus on traditional employment relationships and may not adequately address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of App-Based gig workers. Strengthening labor laws will ensure compliance, protect workers' rights, and promote social security in the gig economy.

3. Develop a Social Security Framework: Establish a dedicated social security framework for App-Based gig workers, encompassing provisions for retirement benefits, healthcare coverage, and income protection. This framework should be designed to be flexible and portable, considering the non-standard and intermittent nature of gig work.

*Justification:* App-Based gig workers often lack access to traditional social security benefits like pensions and healthcare. Creating a dedicated social security framework will address their specific needs and ensure a safety net for income stability and healthcare support.

4. Facilitate Collective Bargaining: Encourage the formation of gig worker associations or unions to enable collective bargaining and representation of workers' interests. Provide legal recognition and protection for such

organizations, ensuring they have a voice in negotiating employment terms, wages, and working conditions.

*Justification:* Collective bargaining empowers gig workers to advocate for their rights and negotiate fair terms with platform operators. Recognizing and supporting worker associations or unions will strengthen their bargaining power and enable meaningful discussions on social security benefits and compliance.

5. Implement Regulatory Oversight: Establish a regulatory body or authority responsible for overseeing the App-Based gig economy. This body should monitor compliance with labor laws, investigate worker grievances, and ensure platforms adhere to fair employment practices and social security obligations.

*Justification:* Robust regulatory oversight will deter non-compliance, protect workers from exploitation, and enforce adherence to social security measures. A dedicated regulatory body can act as a watchdog, promoting compliance and addressing social security bottlenecks.

6. Foster Public-Private Collaboration: Encourage collaboration between the government, gig platforms, and relevant stakeholders to develop industry-wide standards and best practices for social security and compliance. Platforms should be actively involved in designing and implementing mechanisms to ensure worker protection.

*Justification:* Public-private collaboration is essential to foster an environment of shared responsibility in the gig economy. By working together, stakeholders can develop comprehensive solutions that address social security bottlenecks while considering the unique dynamics and challenges of the platform economy.

These policy recommendations facilitate to enhance compliance and address social security bottlenecks in India's App-Based gig economy. By implementing these measures, the government can ensure that gig workers receive adequate protection, enjoy social security benefits, and have a more secure and dignified work experience.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The study highlights the challenges faced by App-Based gig workers in India regarding compliance and social security bottlenecks in platform economy. The expansion of the platform economy, while providing alternative employment sources and flexible work arrangements, has also brought forth issues related to worker well-being and rights. The study reveals that factors such as workers' physical presence, technology, spatial arrangement, and time, along with social positions like gender, class, and caste, intersect to influence labor outcomes and lived experiences. The organizational structure of gig worker in platform economies often obscures the employer–employee relationship, leading to a loss of worker identity and labor rights. Employers take advantage of this structure, referring to themselves as aggregators or platforms, which allows them to avoid employer obligations and shift responsibilities to so-called self-employed partners. As a result, gig workers are not protected by labor laws and lack access to institutional social security, often working long hours without guarantees of minimum wage or fair working conditions.

To address these issues, the study emphasizes the need to redefine the employer–employee relationship within the gig and platform economy. It calls for gig workers to be included within the scope of existing labor legislation, providing them with protective measures and ensuring compliance with basic international labor standards. The recent verdict by the UK Supreme Court, which recognized gig workers as entitled to employment rights, is cited as a useful guide. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of workers' associations and the government's intervention in addressing labor market fissures and improving job quality for gig workers.

In conclusion, the study highlights the necessity of prioritizing the well-being and rights of gig workers in the platform economy. It also highlights the need for policy

interventions, regulatory measures, and compliance with labor standards to create inclusive and safer workplaces. By recognizing the blurring boundaries between public and private spheres, the market and society, and expansion and welfare, thoughtful approaches can be developed to build future workplaces that protect the economic, psychological, and social well-being of App-Based gig workers in the platform economy.

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# Appendix

## RESERAHC QUESTIONNIER

### Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Highest Educational Qualification:
4. Occupation (Gig Worker/Employee/Other):
5. Years of Experience in the Platform Economy:
6. Prior to platform economy what is your occupation?
7. Does your income have increased after working with platform economy?
8. How many leads you take per day?
9. How many hours you work per day?
10. Does the platform provide you extra incentives?
11. What is your current rating in the platform you work?

### Section 2: Lived Experiences of Gig Workers in the Platform Economy

1. How would you describe your overall experience as a gig worker in the platform economy?
2. What are the main challenges you face in your work as a gig worker?
3. How would you characterize your working conditions, including flexibility, workload, and control over tasks?
4. Have you faced any issues related to job security or uncertain income as a gig worker? If yes, please elaborate.
5. How does your work as a gig worker affect your personal and social life?

### Section 3: Influence of Socio-economic Positions on Labor Outcomes

1. What is your monthly income as a gig worker?

2. Do you perceive any differences in earning potential based on factors such as education, skills, or social background?
3. How does your socio-economic position impact your access to better job opportunities within the platform economy?
4. Do you feel that your socio-economic position affects your overall job satisfaction and well-being as a gig worker?

#### Section 4: Provision of Social or Security Benefits by Platform Companies

1. Does the platform company you work for provide any social or security benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plans, accident coverage)? If yes, please specify.
2. How satisfied are you with the social or security benefits provided by the platform company?
3. Do you believe that the provided benefits adequately address your social security needs as a gig worker?
4. Have you faced any challenges in accessing or utilizing the social or security benefits provided by the platform company? If yes, please elaborate.

#### Section 5: Policy and Community Measures for Economic and Social Development

1. In your opinion, what policy measures can be implemented to enhance social security for gig workers in the platform economy?
2. Are there any community initiatives or support networks that you think could contribute to the economic and social development of gig workers?
3. How do you perceive the role of platform companies in promoting economic and social development that benefits all stakeholders?
4. What measures or strategies would you suggest ensuring fair and inclusive practices within the platform economy?

Section 6: Additional Comments Please provide any additional comments or insights regarding your experiences as a gig worker and the social security bottlenecks in the platform economy.

Thank you for your participation in this research study! Your responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

# Consent Form

Seoul National University

Graduate School of Public Administration

Seoul, South Korea

Contact: +91-9502125997

Title: Compliance in the platform economy: A study of App-Based gig workers and their social security bottlenecks in India.

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "Compliance in the platform economy: A study of App-Based gig workers and their social security bottlenecks in India" The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of App-Based gig workers and their social security challenges in India. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences.

Before you decide to participate, we ask that you carefully read the information provided below. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researchers at the contact information provided above.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to understand the lived experiences of gig workers in platform economy and their social security bottlenecks in India. And to understand the employer- employee relationship of these workers. By participating in this study, you will contribute to advancing knowledge and understanding in this field.

Procedures: If you agree to participate, you will be asked to [describe the research procedures, such as completing surveys, interviews, observations, etc.]. The specific details of your participation will be provided to you separately in the study protocol or research plan.

Confidentiality: Your privacy is important to us. All the information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your responses and personal data will be stored securely and accessed only by the research team. Any personally identifiable information will be kept strictly anonymous, and your identity will not be disclosed in any research outputs or publications.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or the institution.

Risks and Benefits: Participating in this research study poses minimal risks. [Describe any potential risks or discomforts associated with the research procedures]. On the other hand, potential benefits of participation may include [describe potential benefits, such as contributing to knowledge, personal growth, etc.].

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please contact the above provided information,

By voluntarily participating in this research study, you acknowledge that you have read this consent form, understood its contents, and agree to participate. You may request a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records before participating in the research study.

지난 10 년 동안 인도와 전 세계적으로 플랫폼 경제에서 참여하는 기가 워커의 수가 크게 증가했습니다. 이러한 성장은 의사 소통 기술의 발전과 전자 상거래의 인기 증대로 인해 플랫폼 모델에서 기가 워커들이 번성할 수 있는 유리한 환경이 조성되었기 때문입니다. 그러나 지난 2 년간의 코로나 19 팬데믹은 플랫폼 경제에서의 기가 워커들의 확장을 더욱 가속화시켰습니다. 비접촉식으로 상품과 서비스를 배달하는 수요와 유연한 인력 공급의 필요로 인해 기가 워커와 플랫폼 워커의 이용이 크게 증가했습니다. 그러나 플랫폼 경제의 기가 워커들은 전통적인 고용주근로자 관계의 부재로 인해 중요한 도전을 마주하고 있습니다. 이러한 격차는 대부분의 노동 규정에서 기가 워커들이 제외되어 왔습니다. 따라서 이러한 근로자들은 성별에 관계없이 직업 안정성, 사회적 안전 혜택, 직업 안전과 건강 조치에 접근할 수 없습니다. 본 연구는 앱 기반 기가 워커들의 고용 관계를 분석하고 사회 보장 규정을 준수하는지 조사하는 것을 목표로 합니다. 또한 이러한 보호를 받지 못하는 근로자들이 마주하는 어려운 상황에 대해 조명을 끼치고자 합니다.

키워드: 기가 워커, 플랫폼 경제, 규정 준수

학번: 2020-20599