

Gig Economy and Decent Work: Exploring quality of work among Online Food Delivery Workers in Delhi



Presented by:
Nandani Kumari (PhD Scholar)
CSRD, JNU.

Introduction

- **'Gig Economy'** coined during the **'Great Recession'**.
- Initially used for **hiring of musicians** for a specific event or performance; Outcome of digitalisation of labour market [**"Future of Work"**]
- **Diverse nature**: **'sharing economy'**, **'crowdsourcing'** **'collaborative economy'**-
- Farrell and Greig (2016), **"Online platform economy"**: Economic activity involving an online mediator that offers a **marketplace for independent contractors or sellers** to offer a specific commodity or service.



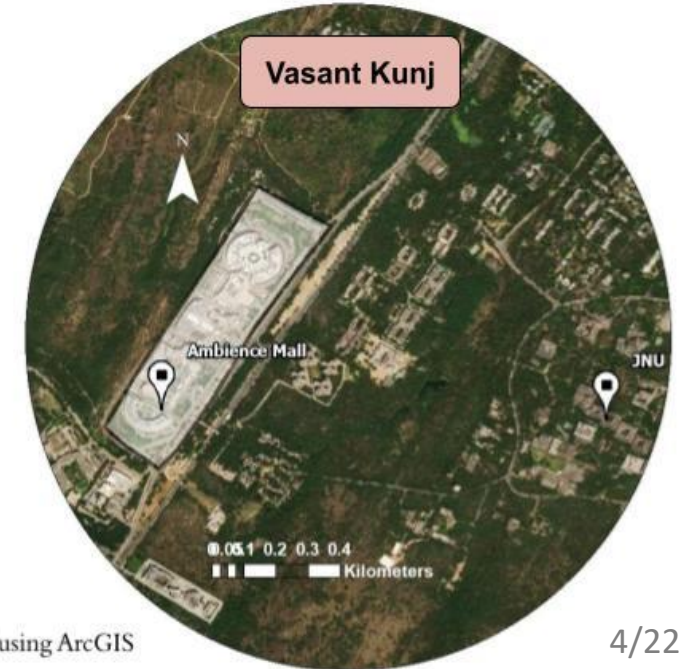
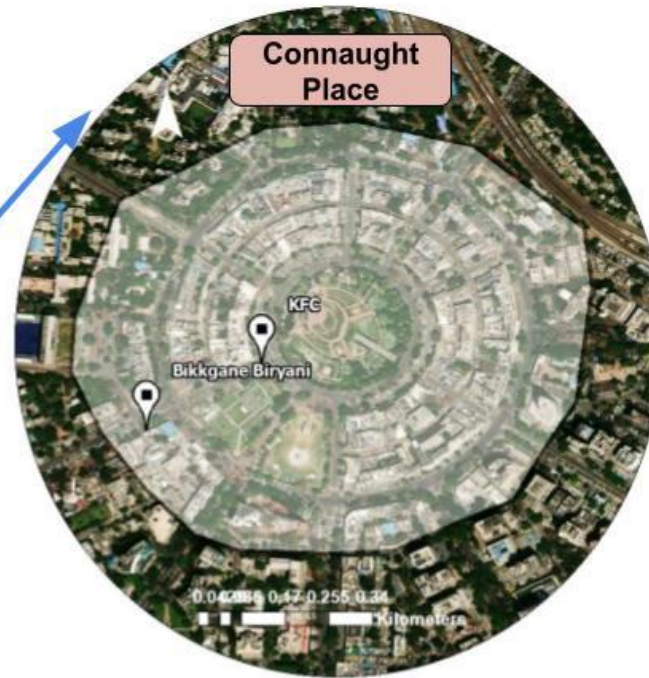
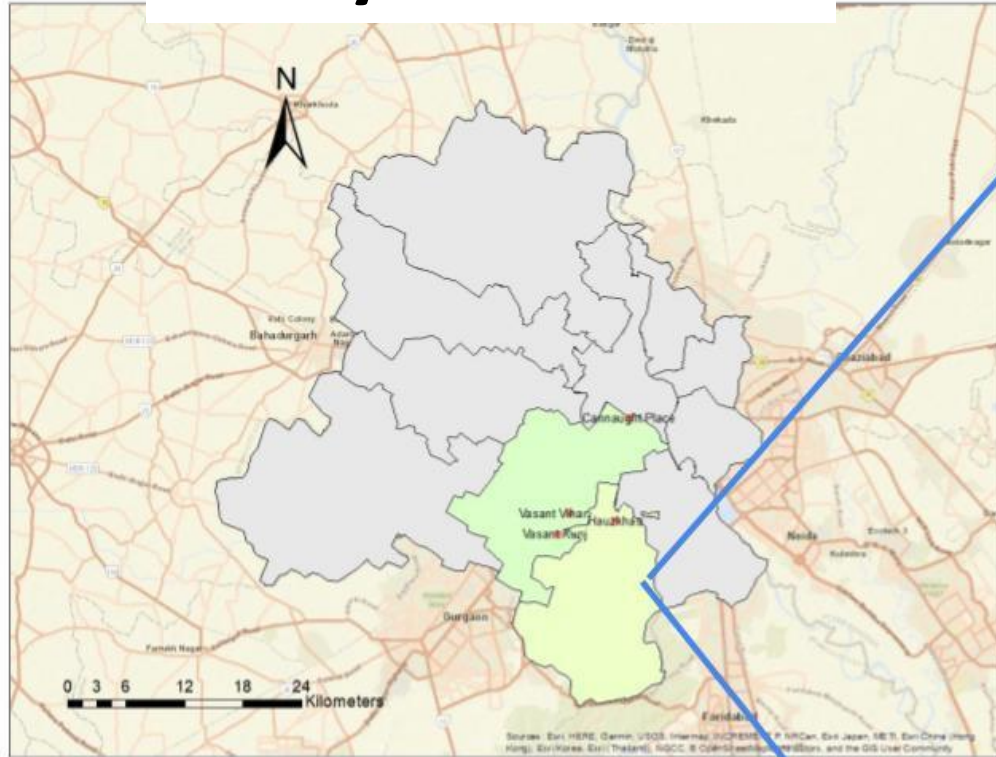
- **Online platform:** Market mediator and a 'shadow employer'
- **GE getting bigger in India:** Increasing numbers of FDWs

Indian Economy Recent features:

- Increasing informalisation within the organised sector
- Mismatch between high-growth and high labour absorption sectors
- Skilling crisis.
- **Decent Work:** At international and national level.



Study Area: Delhi

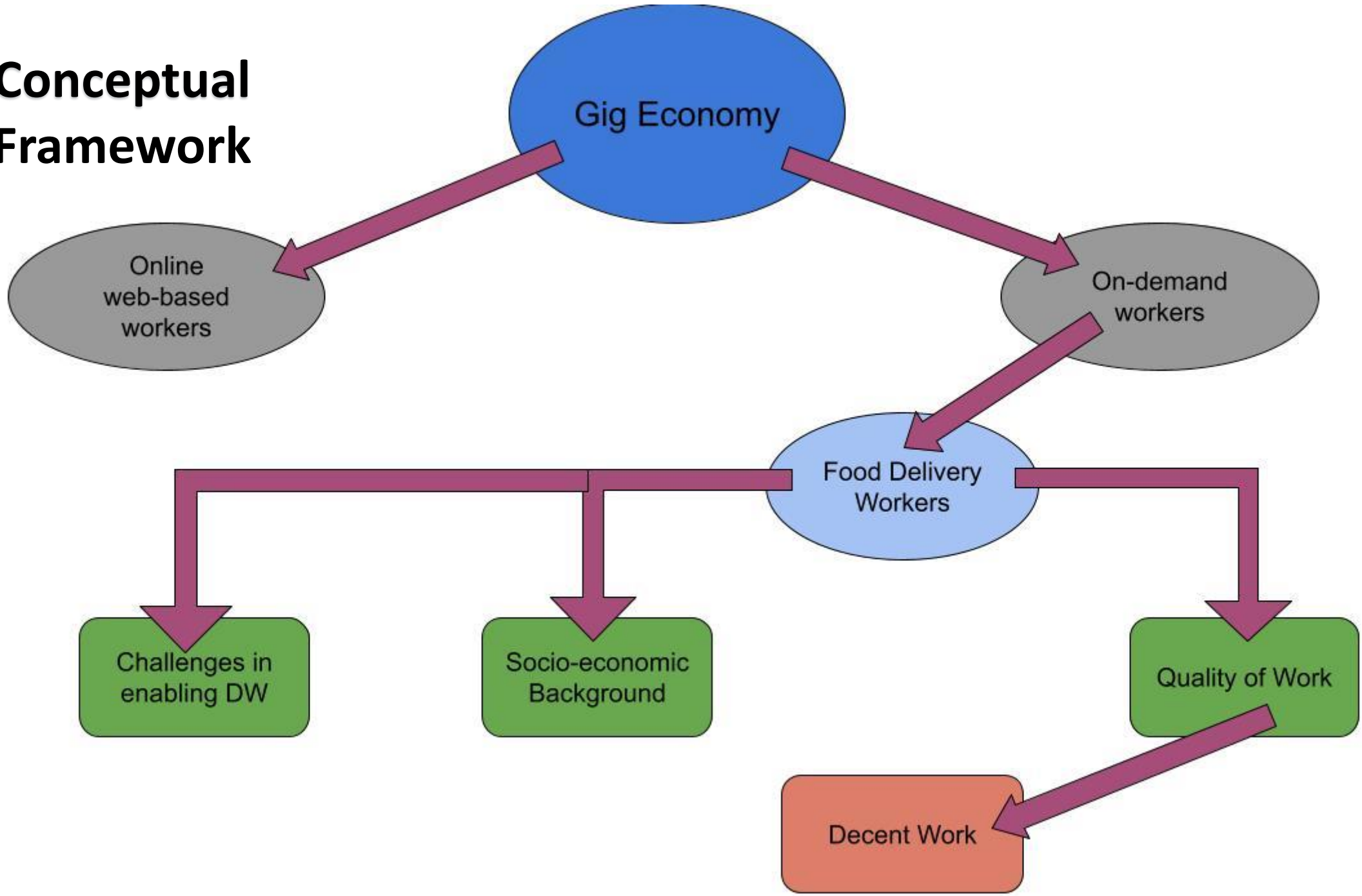


- Delhi- high migration and consumption demand.
- Number of food delivery workers (Sep, 2023)- 30000-35000([/news/business/delhi n. d](#)).
- Primary Survey places- Connaught Place, Hauz Khas, Vasant Kunj and Vasant Vihar.

bjectives

1. To analyze the socio-economic background of food delivery workers in Delhi.
2. To assess the working conditions along with quality of work among food delivery workers in Delhi.
3. To explore challenges in enabling decent work for food delivery workers.

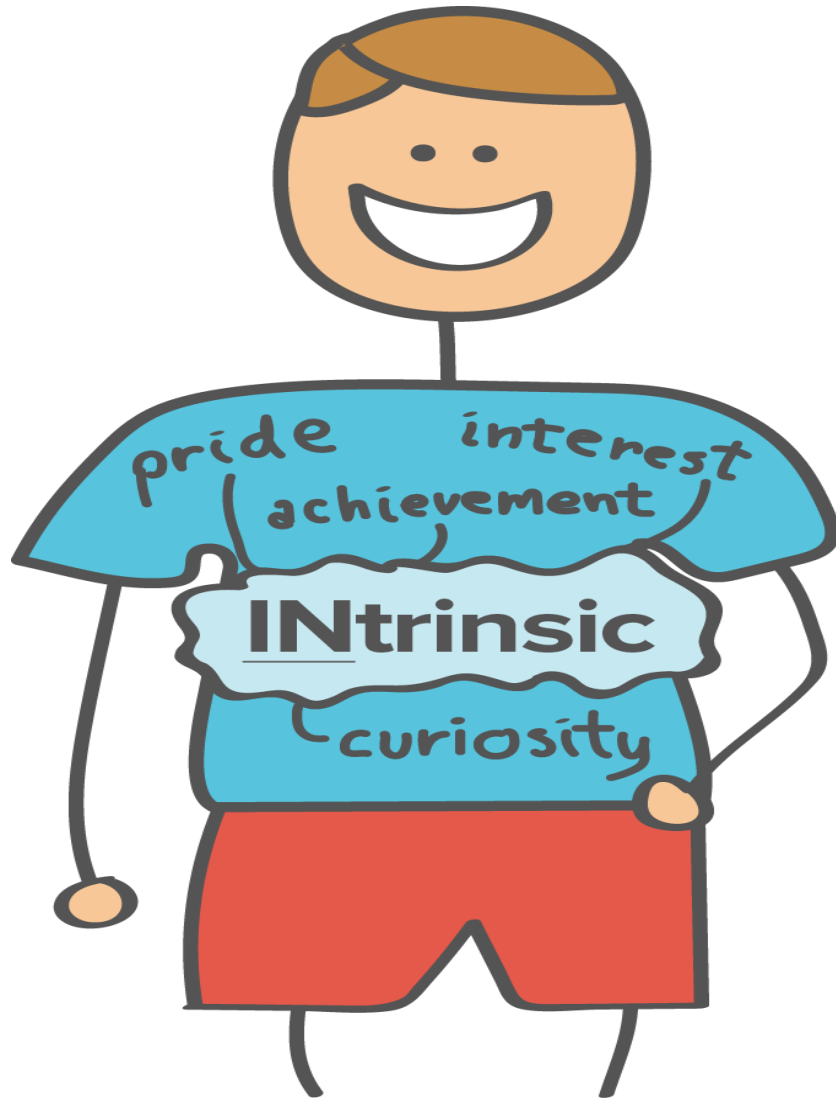
Conceptual Framework



Database and Methodology

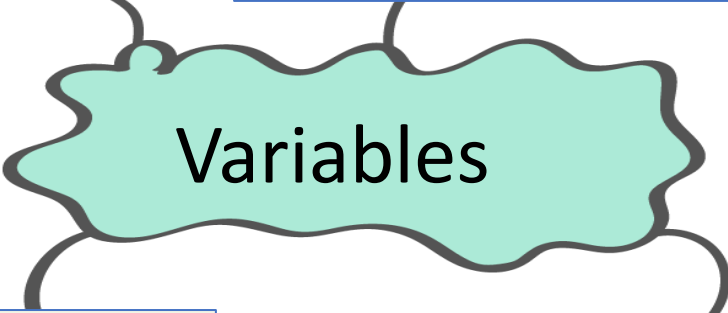
Objectives	Database	Methods
Obj. 1-Socio-economic conditions	ILO, NCAER report 2023, Literatures and Primary Survey.	Data analysis through tables and graphs
Obj. 2- Quality of Work	ILO, NCAER, NITI AYOOG articles and primary survey	<p>“Decent Work Index” will be calculated for assessing the quality of work of food delivery workers. It is given by –</p> $Xi = (X_{actual} - X_{min.}) / (X_{max.} - X_{min.})$ <p>where Xi is the normalized value of the index, Xactual is the actual value for the individual, Xmin. is the minimal value for any individual, and Xmax. is the maximum value that any individual achieved. (Standing, 2002)</p>
Obj. 3- Challenges in enabling decent work.	Literatures and Field Experiences	Qualitatively done.

Source: Compiled by author



Social Security Status (health insurance; accidents; life insurance)

Status of Employment & Income Security (level of income, working hour, employment security, employment stability, income regularity, relative income, financial accessibility).

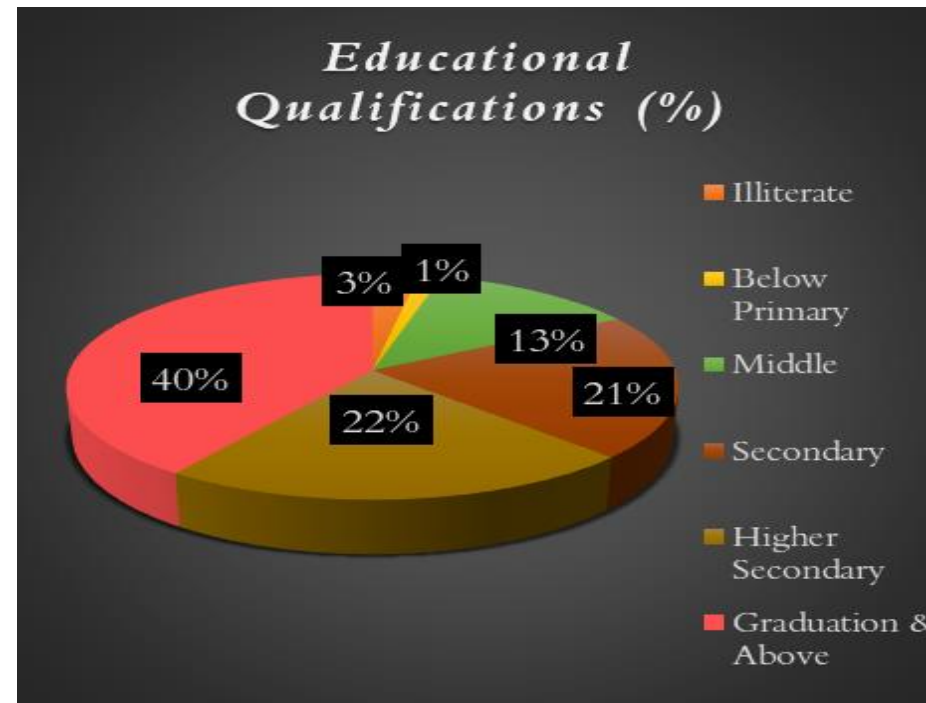
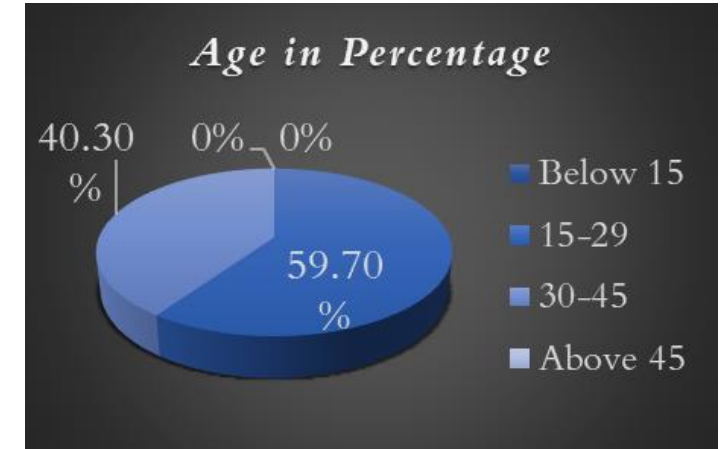
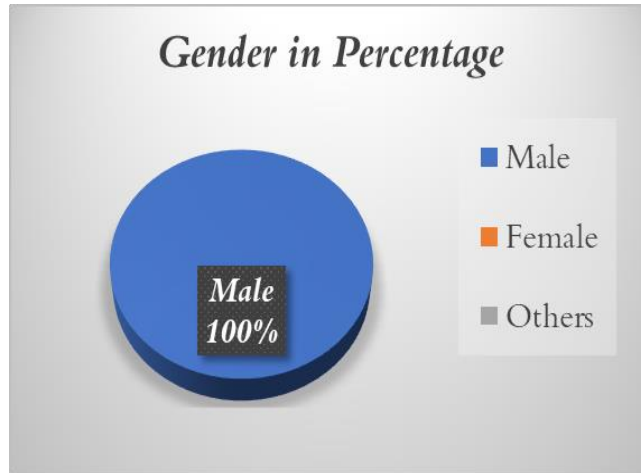


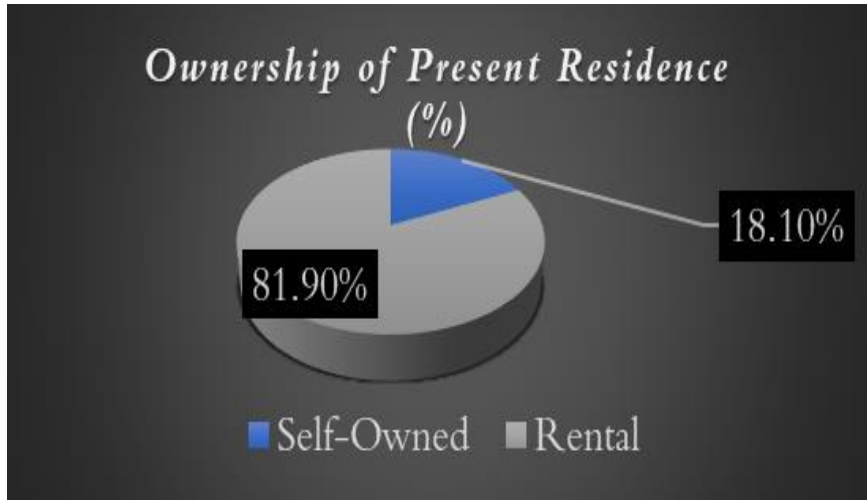
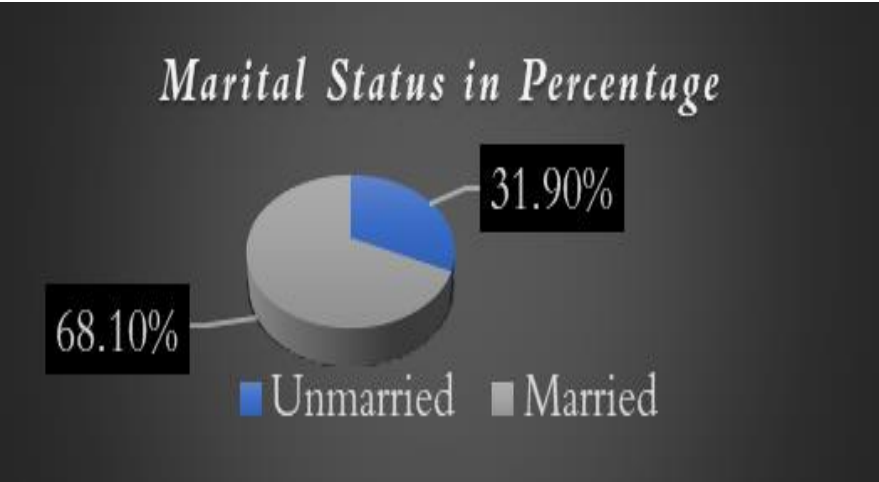
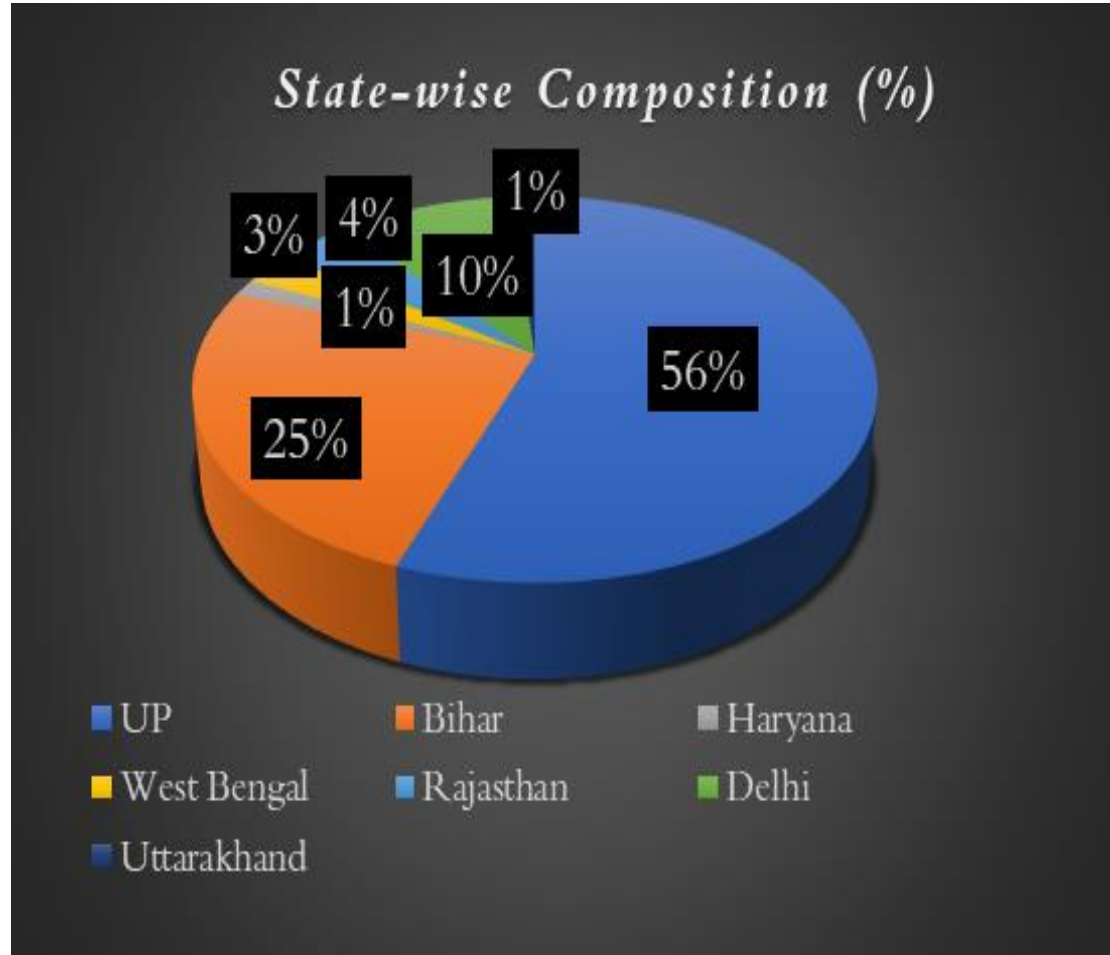
Participation in decision making.

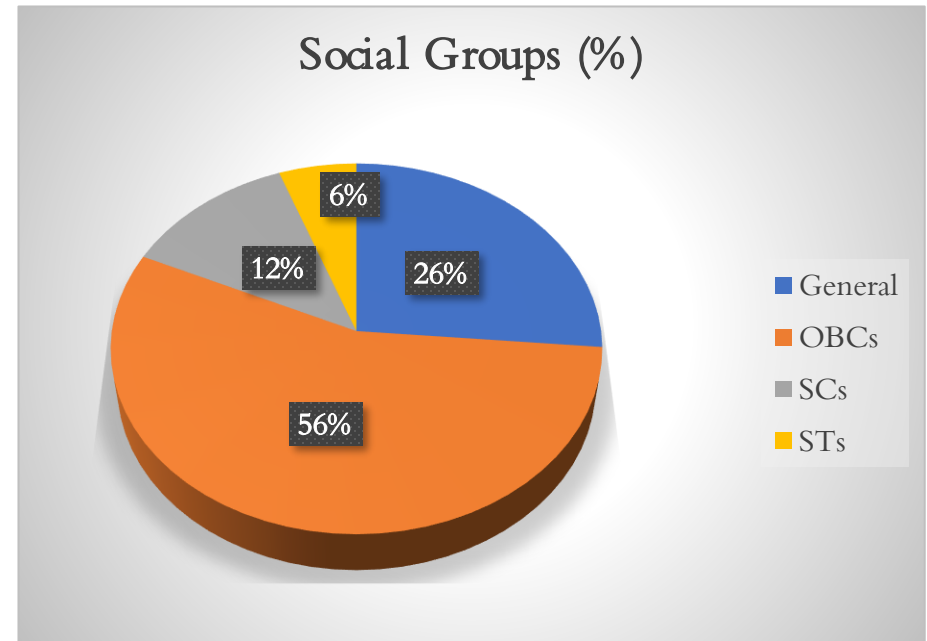
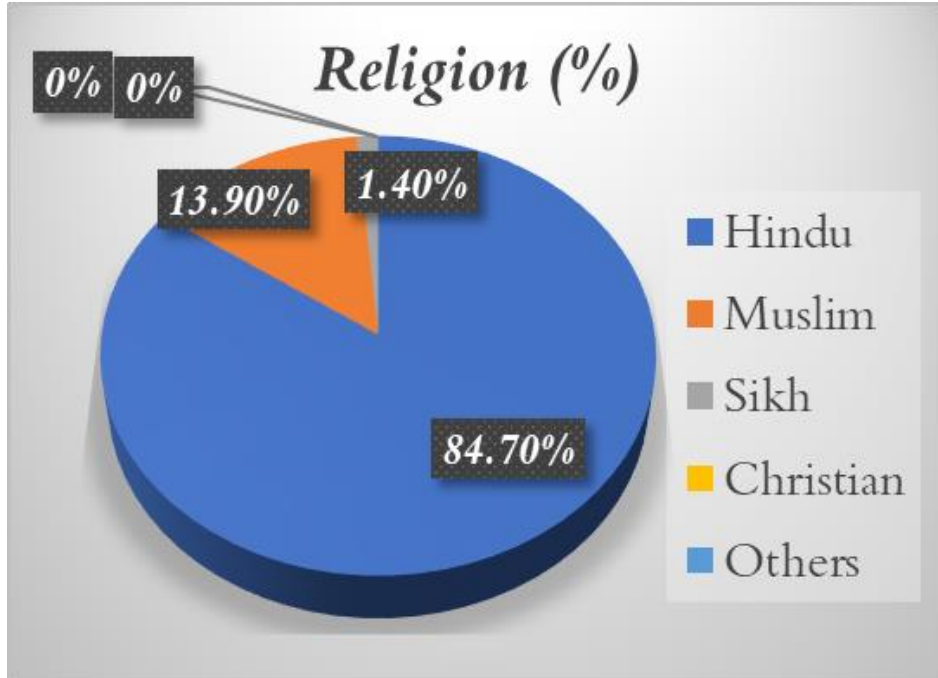
Social Dialogue(respondent belong to any organization related to his work, any union, respondent is part of any other trade union).

Result and Discussion

Socio-Economic Background of Food Delivery Workers in Delhi









Working conditions and Quality of Work among Food Delivery Workers

- FDWs as **Independent Contractors**.
- Gig economy provides **flexibility and autonomy?** (Lehdonvirta, 2018).
- Triangular relationship between platform, worker and customer- **“demutualisation of risk”** over workers.
- “Pay-as-you-go” basis – **“Human as a service”**
- **Need of a kind Labour?** FDWs as **“Emotional Labour”** (Gandini, 2019)



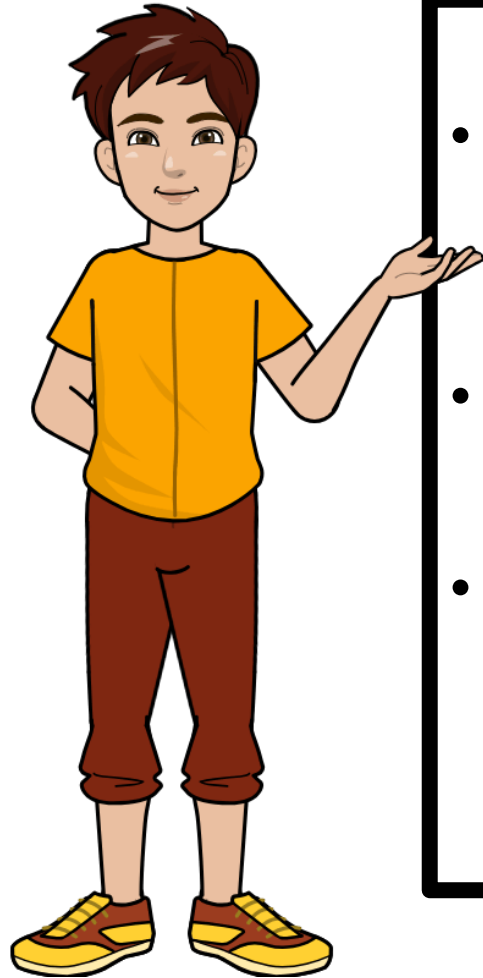
- 97 % are full-time FDWs.
 - Average monthly salary: 30000 Rupees.
 - Controlled by reviews, blocking system and incentive given by platform.
 - 96 % FDWs work overnight.
- “Here customer is treated as God and workers are nothing”.**

Major reason for working

- No option/Lack of employment.
- One of OFDW (Vasant Vihar) used to work in a Bike factory in Punjab but during lockdown factory got closed and he became jobless so joined OFD.
- Another guy used to teach in Patna in his own school (at rent) but due to lockdown school got closed and higher rent value impelled him to leave Patna and joining as Food Delivery work in Vasant Vihar.
- Also, one was electrical engineer in Bengaluru and during lockdown company closed so he came to Delhi in search of job and doing Food Delivery work.

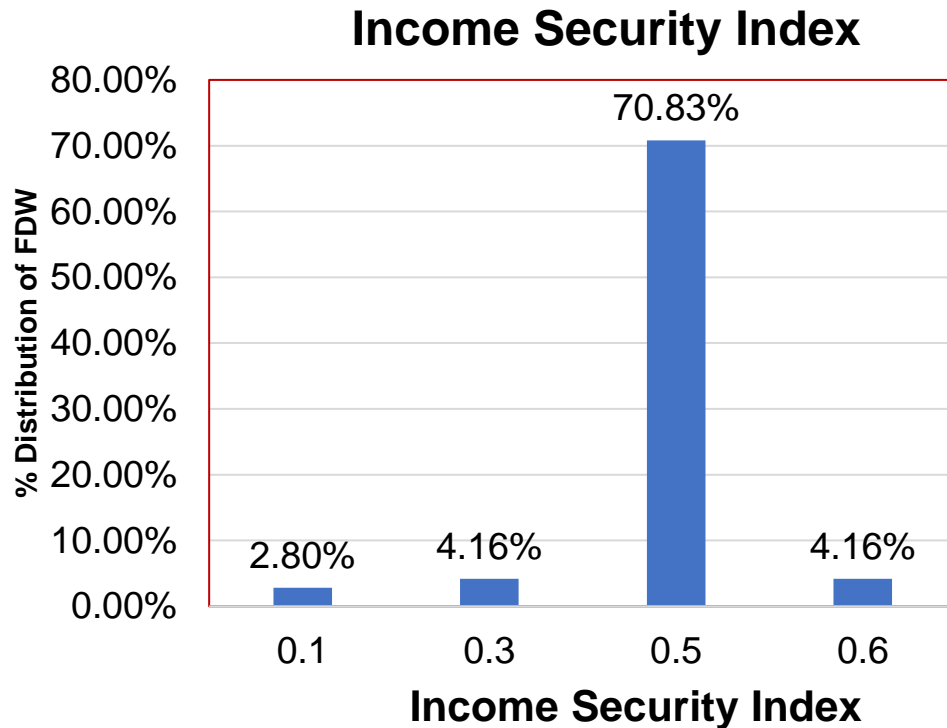


Quality of Work



- Now-a-days quality of work and unemployment situations are in limelight.
- Gig and Platform economy as a **solution to unemployment?**
- Workers are ensnared in **perpetual cycles of exploitation** due to the apprehension of job loss, abrupt termination of contracts, and wage withholdings (Anwar & Graham, 2021; Friedman, 2014)- **more incentive on festivals and weekends.**

Quality of Work- through decent work index



Source: Compiled by author

**Employment
Security Index
(0.14)**

**Skill
Reproduction
Index (0.2)**

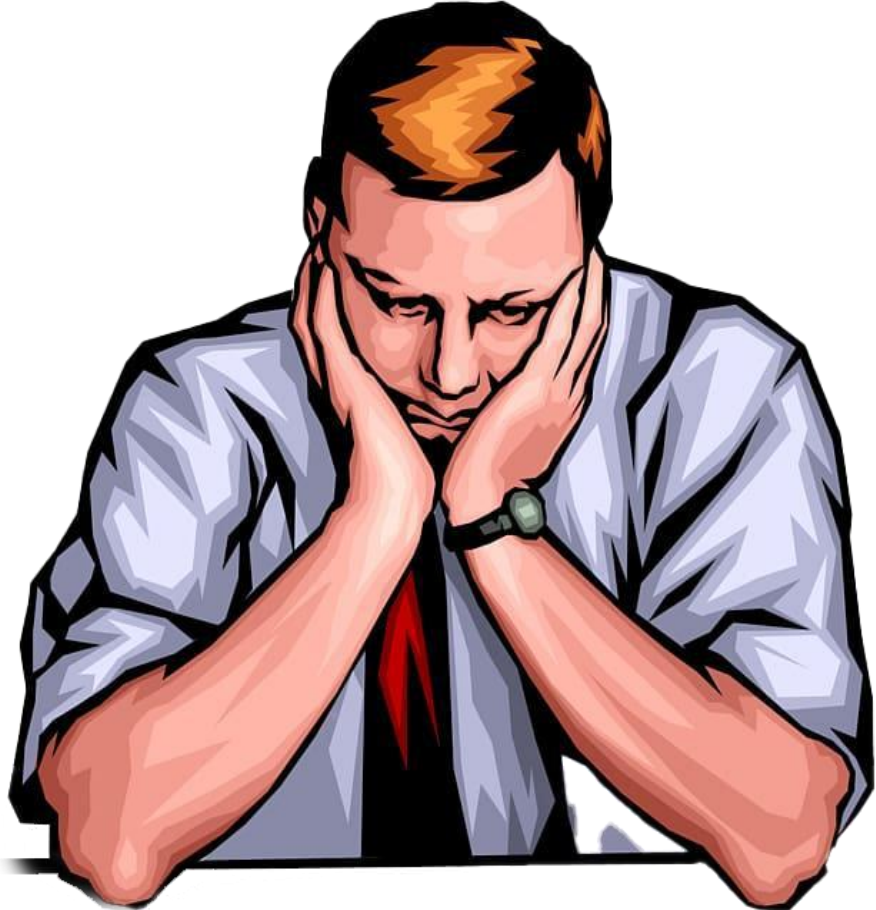
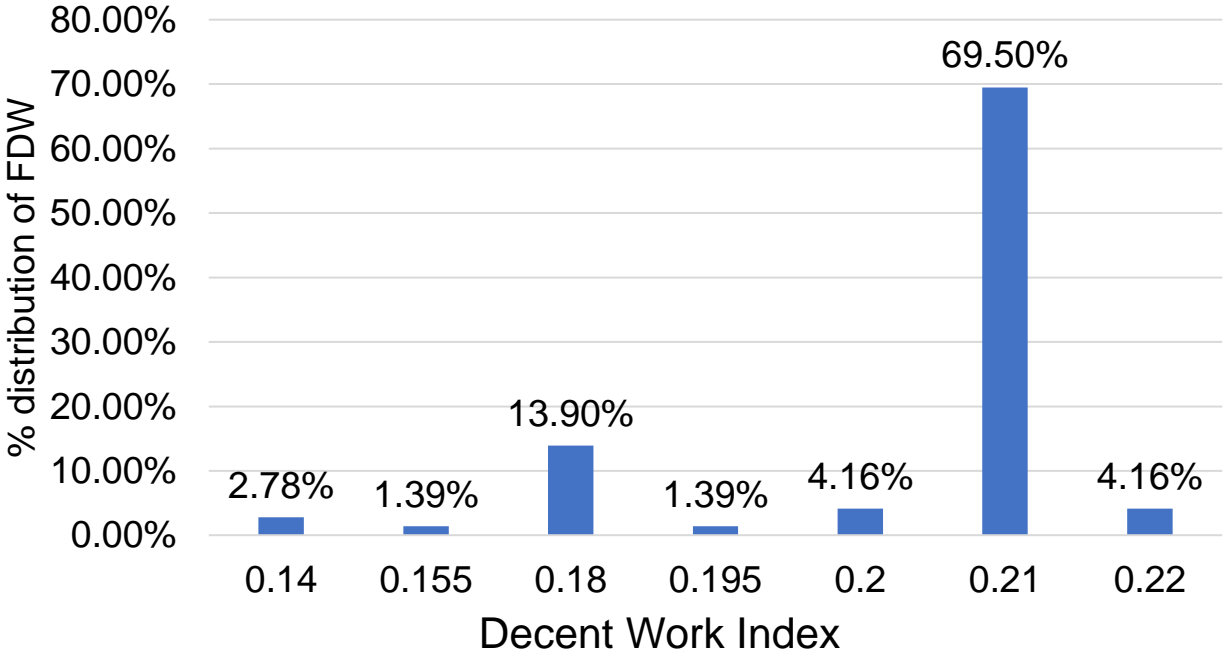
**Voice
Representation
Index (0)**

**Work Security
Index (0)**

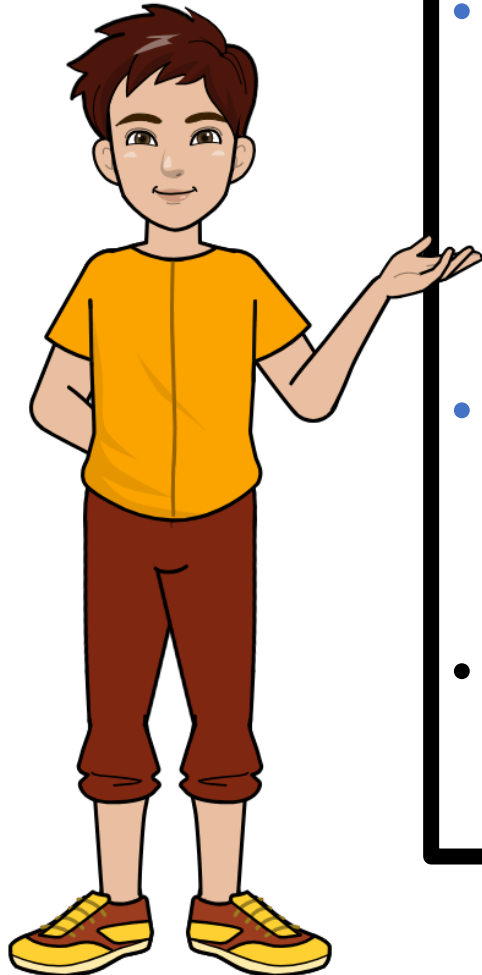
**Job Security
Index (0)**

Decent Work Index

DWI among Food Delivery Workers



Source: Compiled by author



- **Food delivery workers' conditions** – low-income security, low employment security, low job security, low work security, low skill reproduction security as well as low voice representation.
- **No security or assurance** that one would work tomorrow and earn a fix amount.
- Their **IDs get blocked** in case of slight complaint from customers and they don't get listened by company at all.

Challenges in enabling DW in food delivery

- Lack of Data Collection.
- **Ambiguous employment status** of food delivery workers.
- Claim of **Platforms as 'Intermediary'** - No social security schemes.
- No security of Work.
- Unpredictable hours of work.
- Uncertain income.
- **No proper step taken** by policy makers for protecting rights of food delivery workers.



Conclusion

- Food delivery work can be considered as ‘Necessity-driven’ activity where workers are ‘Independent contractors’.
- The triangulation of work leads to ‘demutualisation of risk’ over FDWs making them more vulnerable.
- The flexibility provided by platforms should be reconsidered.
- Lack of proper classification of platform workers.
- The quality of work is low that shows high intensity of vulnerability and lack of ‘Decent work’ among FDWs.
- Even though Indian government recognized FDWs' entitlement to social security benefits in SSC (2020), the goal of providing them decent work appears far off.

Key References

- Friedman, G. (2014). Workers without employers: shadow corporations and the rise of the gig economy. *Review of Keynesian Economics*, 2(2), 171-188.
- Gandini, A. (2019). Labour process theory and the gig economy. *Human relations*, 72(6), 1039-1056.
- Graham, M., & Anwar, M. A. (2019). The global gig economy: Toward a planetary labor market. In *The Digital Transformation of Labor* (pp. 213-234). Routledge.
- Graham, M., Woodcock, J., & du Toit, D. (2020). The fairwork foundation: Strategies for improving platform work.
- Kost, D., Fieseler, C., & Wong, S. I. (2020). Boundaryless careers in the gig economy: An oxymoron?. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 30(1), 100-113.
- Koutsimpogiorgos, N., Van Slageren, J., Herrmann, A. M., & Frenken, K. (2020). Conceptualizing the gig economy and its regulatory problems. *Policy & Internet*, 12(4), 525-545.
- Kuhn, K. M., & Maleki, A. (2017). Micro-entrepreneurs, dependent contractors, and instaserfs: Understanding online labor platform workforces. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 31(3), 183-200.
- Stewart, A., & Stanford, J. (2017). Regulating work in the gig economy: What are the options?. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 28(3), 420-437.

Thank You