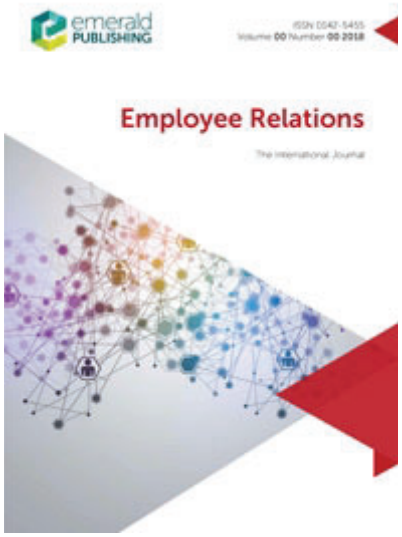

Gig-dependent or just gigging? Examining the gig economy's structural characteristics on food delivery couriers

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Abstract

Purpose: This study explores how the gig economy's structural characteristics, specifically within platform-based food delivery, have a differential impact on workers' experiences. The paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of platform work by contrasting the experiences of gig-dependent workers, who rely fully on gig work for income, with casual giggers, who engage in gig work with less financial dependence.

Methodology: A qualitative case study approach draws on 37 semi-structured interviews. It includes non-participatory observations of meetings and interactions within social media groups. Data were coded thematically, following an abductive approach.

Findings: The study finds that gig-dependent workers experience significant financial instability, job insecurity, and illusory autonomy. Casual giggers, while benefiting from the flexibility of gig work, also face financial challenges but are shielded by their primary employment. The illusion of autonomy in gig work is revealed as a key issue, with both groups struggling to balance flexibility with financial stability. The study highlights how platform-based food delivery work fosters precarious working conditions, with algorithmic management exacerbating job insecurity.

Originality: This article contributes to gig work research by theorising the role of resource vulnerability in shaping differential worker experiences. It addresses a gap in the literature and expands Ashford et al.'s (2018) framework by revealing a critical tension between financial insecurity and autonomy, contributing to debates on precarious employment and algorithmic management in the gig economy.

Keywords: Gig Work; Platform Work; Flexibility; Algorithmic Management; Illusory Autonomy; Control; Conservation of Resources.

Introduction

The gig economy has expanded rapidly, reshaping how work is structured, managed, and experienced across sectors (Kenney and Zysman, 2016). This shift has attracted scholarly attention about its implications for employment, autonomy, and control (Friedman, 2014; Vallas and Schor, 2020). Yet, little is known about how different types of gig workers perceive and respond to these conditions, especially in low-skilled, task-based sectors like food delivery (Caza et al., 2022).

As the platform economy expands, so does the diversity of its workforce. A key distinction has emerged between gig-dependent workers, who rely on platform work as their main income, and casual giggers, who use it as a supplement income (Cropanzano et al., 2023). Despite working under the same algorithmic systems (Inceoglu et al., 2024; Kougiannou and Mendonça, 2021), workers' experiences and vulnerabilities differ significantly. Studies have also identified such distinctions, particularly among ride-hailing drivers, differentiating between full-time drivers and part-time earners with varying motivations (Rosenblat, 2018) and proposing broader categorisations across multiple platform-mediated roles (Vallas and Schor, 2024). Building on this work, our study extends such insights to the under-researched segment of food delivery, offering a deeper understanding of how structural dynamics intersect with worker dependency.

Platform companies often prioritise flexibility and cost-efficiency by classifying workers as independent contractors, shifting risk while maintaining control through algorithmic management of tasks, performance, and pay (Ashford et al., 2018; Kellogg et al., 2020; Vallas and Schor, 2020). This has produced new forms of precarity, particularly for workers with fewer economic or institutional buffers. While prior studies tend to treat gig workers as a uniform group, our research offers a more differentiated view. Focusing on platform-based food delivery, we examine how key structural characteristics (Ashford et al., 2018)—financial instability, autonomy,

career uncertainty, transience, and isolation—are experienced differently by gig-dependent workers and casual giggers.

Therefore, our study seeks to make three substantial contributions. First, we conceptually distinguish between gig-dependent and casual gig workers; two groups often conflated in existing research but who face markedly different constraints, opportunities, and resource vulnerabilities. Using the structural characteristics of gig work as our framework (Ashford et al., 2018), we show how core features of the worker–organisation relationship are experienced differently within the precarious, low-skilled, platform-based segment of the gig economy. Second, by incorporating a resource-based lens (Hobfoll, 2011), we provide a more nuanced understanding of how individuals with differing access to financial security, social protections, and career alternatives navigate platform work. A resource-based perspective helps explain why gig-dependent workers, lacking resource buffers, are more exposed to chronic resource depletion, particularly in response to algorithmic control, income volatility, and restricted mobility. In contrast, casual giggers are better positioned to conserve resources, mitigating the impact of platform demands through the stability offered by their primary employment or other support. This article also shows how platform companies oversimplify worker needs by promoting autonomy and flexibility, which, without adequate protections, can lead to illusory autonomy and increased insecurity. Finally, we respond to calls for a more differentiated analysis of gig workers (Ashford et al., 2018) by segmenting the workforce and examining how worker dependency shapes experiences, capabilities, and behavioural responses within the food delivery sector. Thus, the research addresses the following question:

How do the structural characteristics of the gig economy influence individuals' attitudes and behaviours in engaging in gig work, and shape their work experiences? Does this vary between

gig-dependent workers and casual giggers?

Gig work

The gig economy's rapid growth indicates its popularity among organisations and independent workers (Horney, 2016; Lobel, 2017). The terms 'gig work' and 'gig workers' have become widely used across various jobs and industries to encompass a range of nonstandard employment arrangements (Cropanzano et al., 2023). Indeed, gig work is defined as "externalized paid work organised around 'gigs', which are projects or tasks that workers engage in on a term-limited basis without a formal appointment within a particular organisation" (Caza et al., 2022: 2125). This definition is characterised by three central elements: task-based work, term-limited engagements, and external arrangements outside of organisational structures.

However, work in the gig economy varies significantly, leading to distinct experiences (Caza et al., 2022). Gig work, though term-limited by definition, ranges from lasting months or even years in project-based or consultancy roles (e.g., Evans et al., 2004; Kunda et al., 2002) to brief gigs lasting only minutes, as seen in ride-hailing or food delivery (Wong et al., 2020). Gig workers also differ in structuring their work relationships and the role of technology within those relationships. While gig workers in previous decades relied on personal contacts and networking (Barley et al., 2017; Ranganathan, 2018; Reilly, 2017), more recently, they have increasingly used technology, especially digital platforms, for securing and completing work tasks (Duggan et al., 2020). The use of digital platforms for obtaining and governing gig work is not defining, but it has gained significance with the rise of technology and AI.

Additionally, experiences of gig work can vary significantly across different groups of workers due to disparities in their access to personal and structural resources, such as financial security, autonomy, and institutional protections. These disparities often reinforce unequal

outcomes and deepen worker vulnerability. While some gig workers, typically those with specialised or high-level skills, can exert greater control over when and how they work, others face tighter constraints. In app-based platform work, such as food delivery, autonomy is often curtailed by algorithmic management systems that govern task allocation and availability (Caza et al., 2022; Veen et al., 2020). These constraints are compounded by low skill differentiation and weak labour market leverage, limiting workers' influence over pay and conditions (Kuhn and Maleki, 2017).

Research has begun to explore the heterogeneity of gig workers in terms of dependency, identity, and motivation. For example, Uber drivers are categorised by whether they rely on the platform as a primary or supplementary income source—differences that shape their experience of autonomy and risk (Rosenblat, 2018). Others argue that platform labour reproduces class inequalities, with middle-class casual giggers benefiting from flexibility while more dependent, working-class users face heightened precarity (Vallas and Schor, 2024). These insights highlight the need to differentiate between gig-dependent workers and casual giggers, an approach this study extends to the platform-based food delivery sector. As competition intensifies in this segment, workers must navigate increasingly asymmetrical and precarious labour arrangements. Addressing the challenges they face is essential for developing fairer and more resilient models of platform-based work.

Balancing autonomy and control

Digital platform organisations classify workers as independent contractors instead of employees (Shapiro, 2018). While these platforms are renowned for offering high flexibility, they also introduce intensive surveillance and control through AI, governing supply-demand dynamics and labour processes (Gandini, 2019; Inceoglu et al., 2024). These dualities—promises of autonomy

coupled with technologically mediated oversight—create a working environment where flexibility often masks significant precarity.

Platform work, or 'work-on-demand via app', enables individuals to log in through mobile platforms to perform micro-tasks (De Stefano, 2015). Though marketed as offering autonomy and flexible income, it often exposes workers to unstable demand, volatile earnings, and performance-based pay. Flexibility, in practice, is conditional and frequently undermined. Platform companies exploit this model to cut costs and avoid labour protections by classifying workers as self-employed (Shapiro, 2018; Duggan et al., 2020), placing them in a 'legal void' outside institutional safeguards (Bothello et al., 2019). This status denies access to minimum wage, social security, health coverage, and paid leave, shifting financial risk, including costs for equipment, transport, and unpaid time, onto workers (Kahancová et al., 2020). As a result, especially for those dependent on platform work as a primary income source, exposure to economic insecurity, fatigue, and disengagement intensifies (Bajwa et al., 2018).

Recent work has shown that algorithmic control in platform labour is not static, but evolves to intensify asymmetries between workers and platforms. Algorithms shape work behaviours by embedding surveillance into the labour process while preserving the appearance of choice, and create calculative asymmetries that force workers to navigate opaque systems manipulating access to earnings (Kellogg et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2020). Meanwhile, emerging evidence of algorithmic wage discrimination shows earnings may be unequally distributed based on performance proxies or hidden profiling (Dubal, 2023). These developments reflect the growing technological sophistication of control in platform work, necessitating updated frameworks to analyse their impact on worker autonomy and security.

The unpredictability inherent in this model, especially the erratic scheduling and lack of

income guarantees, complicates personal planning and erodes the very flexibility platform work supposedly provides (Prassl, 2018). Refusals to accept assignments may be interpreted as breaches of implicit performance expectations, indicating that platform companies maintain indirect control over work schedules (Huws et al., 2016). This latent coercion reflects a broader dynamic in which workers, though technically autonomous, operate under constant pressure to remain responsive and available to sustain their livelihood.

Algorithmic management deepens the strain of platform work by enabling organisations to tightly monitor and control worker behaviour through GPS tracking, ratings, acceptance rates, and predictive modelling (Shapiro, 2018). While workers can self-schedule and choose tasks, failure to meet unspoken performance thresholds, like maintaining high ratings or accepting enough jobs, can trigger penalties or deactivation (Duggan et al., 2020). This pressure can cultivate an 'always-on' environment, where workers must constantly engage and optimise performance, often sacrificing rest.

Research has increasingly examined how these digital employment relationships reshape working conditions (Kelan, 2023; Kougiannou and Mendonça, 2021), exposing workers to irregular hours, income instability, limited social contact, and intense surveillance (Kahancová et al., 2020; Bajwa et al., 2018). These pressures are amplified by organisational strategies that shift risk onto workers in pursuit of flexibility (Graham et al., 2017). Studies also document resistance strategies, including 'platform sabotage', as workers push back against opaque and extractive systems (Shapiro, 2023). For those reliant on gig work as a primary income, such conditions can lead to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion, while those with more stable alternatives are better insulated. This disparity is central to the current study's focus on how structural dynamics affect gig-dependent workers differently from casual giggers.

Structural characteristics and their impact on gig-dependent workers and casual giggers

Casual gigs, often considered supplementary income streams, encompass income-generating activities undertaken alongside primary commitments like full-time employment. With the rise of platform technologies and increased demand for freelancers, contractors, and other gig workers (Sessions et al., 2021), it has never been easier for individuals to supplement their primary source of income with casual gig work (Ashford et al., 2018). The ubiquity of the phenomenon can be seen in approximately 88% of businesses incorporating gig workers and over 27 million people engaging in gig work in the United States (Cropanzano et al., 2022). Similar trends exist in Europe and Asia (Huws et al., 2017; Shibata, 2020).

The structural differences between gig work and traditional employment significantly shape how workers experience their roles (Ashford et al., 2018). We propose that the demands of platform-based work, particularly in low-skilled, task-oriented sectors such as food delivery, are experienced differently by gig-dependent workers, who rely on gig work as their primary income source, and casual giggers, who engage in such work alongside other income or support systems. Gig-dependent workers often operate with fewer buffers—financial, social, and regulatory—and thus experience greater difficulty sustaining key resources such as job security and income stability (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Halbesleben et al., 2014). In contrast, casual giggers, buoyed by alternative income or institutional affiliation, are typically better positioned to navigate platform demands without facing cumulative resource strain. Using Ashford et al. (2018) and focusing on platform-based food delivery gig work, we discuss how these structural and individual characteristics shape gig-dependent workers' lived experiences and how these might differ for casual giggers.

First, for gig-dependent workers, the lack of a stable income creates ongoing viability

challenges. Many describe living at the edge of economic security, where income volatility leads to feast-or-famine cycles and constant concern over meeting basic needs (Butler and Stoyanova Russell, 2018). These fluctuations compound over time, threatening not just material well-being but also workers' ability to plan, invest, or recuperate—key aspects of long-term resilience (Halbesleben et al., 2014). In contrast, casual giggers tend to experience fewer disruptions due to access to steady income, which helps maintain their baseline economic and emotional stability.

Another defining feature of gig work is its promise of autonomy. Workers are typically unsupervised and ostensibly free to choose tasks and manage their schedules (Ashford et al., 2007; Spreitzer et al., 2017). This perceived independence often draws individuals into gig work, with some even choosing it over traditional employment due to its flexibility (Caza et al., 2018). However, for gig workers, this autonomy is frequently undermined by algorithmic controls and demand pressures that limit their ability to exercise meaningful choice. The need to work during peak demand periods, adhere to strict performance metrics and avoid penalties makes autonomy conditional rather than authentic (Barley and Kunda, 2006). The more workers depend on gig income, the more this conditionality becomes a persistent source of stress and perceived loss of control (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

While autonomy, flexibility, and freedom are often framed as non-monetary benefits of gig work (Aguilera et al., 2022), these benefits may be inaccessible to those with limited economic leverage. For gig-dependent workers, particularly low-skilled migrants with limited language proficiency, platform work is often not a matter of choice but necessity (Mendonça and Kougiannou, 2024), leading to a cycle of constrained decision-making and heightened exposure to unpredictable and unrewarding work. In contrast, casual giggers are more likely to engage selectively, using gig work to supplement resources rather than replace them.

Furthermore, various studies have shown that gig workers, particularly those in online delivery services, are far from independent, and any independence they experience primarily serves to shift risk onto them rather than provide real control over their own work (Goods et al., 2019). These workers lack social protections, are subject to algorithmic micromanagement, and often endure long hours (Mendonça and Kougiannou, 2023), with no formal voice mechanism or collective bargaining power (Kougiannou and Mendonça, 2021). While flexibility is a key selling point, workers increasingly report erratic schedules, low pay, and limited control over their time and mobility (Aguilera et al., 2022; Heiland, 2021; Veen et al., 2020). This tension is most acute for gig-dependent workers, whose reliance on gig work limits their ability to exercise real flexibility. Casual giggers, supported by alternative resources, experience fewer constraints. Yet, despite these distinctions, research still tends to treat gig workers as a homogeneous group, oversimplifying debates about autonomy in the gig economy.

Career path limitations present a key structural challenge in gig work. While short-term engagement is well documented, it remains unclear whether platform-based work can support long-term careers. Food delivery is typically performed by young, often migrant men in temporary or transitional roles (Aguilera et al., 2022), with limited opportunities for progression or skill development (Ashford et al., 2018). For gig-dependent workers, the lack of training, recognition, or mobility prevents sustained effort from translating into future gains. This stagnation can erode motivation and increase vulnerability, especially when experience does not transfer to other fields (van Doorn et al., 2020; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Mendonça et al., 2023; Newlands, 2024). In contrast, casual giggers typically have clearer exit strategies. Their main jobs or student roles offer support, allowing them to treat gig work as a short-term supplement rather than a career path, and disengage more easily when better options emerge.

Work transience is another defining characteristic of gig work. While traditional jobs may no longer guarantee long-term careers, they often offer continuity and a sense of professional identity. Gig work, by contrast, lacks both security and progression. For gig-dependent workers, this transience brings instability—unpredictable earnings, limited control, and no organisational affiliation (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016; Veen et al., 2020). Some attempt to cope through multi-app strategies (Mendonça et al., 2023), but the strain of fragmentation and constant availability persists. Casual giggers, by comparison, face less pressure. Since gig work supplements other income, its short-term nature poses a manageable risk rather than a source of daily instability. Their core resources, such as employment and family support, buffer them against the volatility that gig-dependent workers must absorb alone (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Finally, platform-based gig work is structurally isolating. Food delivery is performed alone, often without meaningful interaction with coworkers or customers, reinforcing a sense of being 'perpetual strangers' (Kunda et al., 2002). Algorithmic management and task individualisation further diminish opportunities for connection (Garrett et al., 2017). For gig-dependent workers, this isolation can intensify over time, especially when coupled with financial stress, weakening emotional resilience and support networks. Casual giggers, by contrast, often retain social ties through other roles such as salaried employment or education. Even when informal interactions occur—at pickup points or within courier communities—casual giggers may see them as incidental, while gig-dependent workers may rely on them for both emotional and practical support (Kougiannou and Mendonça, 2021).

Ultimately, the structural characteristics of platform work are not experienced uniformly. They are filtered through each worker's access to critical resources and capacities for resilience (Hobfoll, 2011). Gig-dependent workers, lacking these buffers, often face prolonged exposure to

strain and resource depletion. Casual giggers, by contrast, are more likely to experience platform work as a manageable supplement, allowing them to benefit from its flexibility without incurring its full costs.

Methods and the Research Setting

This research uses in-depth qualitative methods based on fieldwork on food delivery gig workers' experiences at several food delivery companies in an English city. Data triangulation protocols were followed (Creswell and Miller, 2000) with four primary data sources; semi-structured interviews enabled an exploration of participants' lived experiences captured in their own words whilst keeping question consistency across the interviews. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, which ensured that the interviewees had the knowledge to respond to the questions (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Table I presents data sources and how they were used in data analysis. All data collection received University ethical approval before the fieldwork commenced.

------ Insert Table I here ------

We draw on qualitative data from 35 semi-structured interviews with food couriers; 20 participants indicated they were casual giggers, while the remaining were fully gig-dependent workers (see Table II below). The data also draws on interviews with two senior food delivery company managers. The interview themes centred on the lived experiences of work and working conditions, the nature of work, job satisfaction, and the impacts of work relations on the lives of couriers.

------ Insert Table II here ------

Crucial data were also collected from non-participatory observation of gig workers, at four

food-delivery couriers' group (FDCG)[1] meetings and five FDCG leadership meetings, where the theme of working conditions, especially financial instability, was frequently and extensively discussed by leaders and members of the group. Further analysis flowed from a private Facebook group page and Messenger chat initiated by workers. Chats focused on daily challenges workers faced, such as long restaurant waiting times and communication (or lack thereof) with the two major food delivery platforms (hereafter referred to as Platform A and Platform B), and, less frequently, with smaller or emerging competitors. Observation enabled a greater understanding of the case (Stake, 1995) by covering real-time events, their context and the consistency of people's statements (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, observation bias was mitigated by adopting a 'complete observer' approach (Burgess, 1984), in the sense that we chose not to take centre stage (e.g., we were not sitting with the leaders during meetings but chose to sit at the back). With social media and chat groups, rigour and bias of data collection were addressed by taking into consideration key criteria such as (1) selecting social media pages and chat groups related to the city where the study was being conducted, (2) only 'observing' interactions, without posting questions or our views; and (3) selecting interactions that related to the themes the study was focusing on (Kozinets, 2020). However, there may be a risk of nonresponse bias within this method, as the people who post on social media can be more opinionated and self-promotional than those who do not. The potential nonresponse bias was mitigated by always considering that we were not dealing with generalised views but only individual opinions (Kozinets, 2020). Moreover, conducting data triangulation (Table I) compensated for potential social media nonresponse bias. All data sources were vital in securing a multi-layered and comprehensive understanding of workers' attitudes, perceptions and behaviours.

[1] A worker-initiated community to support workers and discuss issues relevant to their working conditions, the challenges faced during work and how to overcome them.

The analysis process was the same for all data gathered and followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis: (1) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading and transcription review; (2) generation of initial codes using in-vivo expressions to remain close to participants' language; (3) clustering related codes into meaningful patterns; (4) reviewing themes for coherence and consistency across the dataset; (5) defining and naming themes in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework; and (6) producing the final write-up with analytic narrative and illustrative quotes. Open coding was initially used to identify descriptive, first-order concepts such as "no guaranteed income", "working double hours to earn the same", "freedom to work whenever", and "always waiting". These first-order codes were then grouped into second-order themes based on thematic analysis (Maanen, 1979; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), aligned with Ashford et al.'s (2018) structural characteristics framework, including financial instability and job insecurity, autonomy and independence, career path uncertainty, work transience, and physical and relational separation. For example, codes relating to income unpredictability and comparisons to minimum wage were clustered under financial instability, while codes such as "forced to work evenings" informed illusory autonomy. The analysis was iterative and abductive, conducted in NVivo 12, enabling systematic identification and organisation of patterns and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This abductive process involved a back-and-forth movement between theory and data to modify existing theory (Awuzie and McDermott, 2017), allowing for a tight but evolving framework (Dubois and Gadde, 2002) where theory and participants' accounts continuously informed each other in addressing the project's research questions (Cunliffe, 2011). This thematic structure formed the empirical foundation for the adapted framework presented in Figure I, which illustrates how structural characteristics intersect with resource vulnerabilities to shape workers' experiences within platform-based food

delivery. Table III below presents the alignment between first-order codes and their corresponding second-order themes, while Appendix I provides a set of illustrative quotes for each first-order code to support analytical transparency.

------ Insert Table III here ------

Findings

In this section, building on Ashford et al.'s (2018) structural framework and informed by a resource perspective (Hobfoll, 2011), we explore how key features of platform-based food delivery work—such as algorithmic management, flexibility, and risk distribution—are embedded in the business models of Platform A and Platform B, the two primary platforms used by our participants. We show how these features are experienced differently by gig-dependent workers and casual giggers. Our analysis highlights that workers' level of dependence on platform income critically shapes their vulnerability to resource loss—whether financial, temporal, or social—and influences how they engage with control mechanisms and manage precarity within the same organisational structure.

The business context

Data analysis shows that Platform B was secondary to Platform A in our participants' preferences, with 22 using Platform A as their primary app and Platform B as their backup. Several participants (n=4) had accounts in other food delivery apps (see also Table II). Platforms A and B generally operate similarly. However, there is a significant difference between the two platforms in managing the number of workers in a specific area at any given time. Platform B's model has continuously allowed workers to log in freely and operate wherever the service is offered. This model relies on 'economic nudges' (Rosenblat and Stark, 2016) in the form of surge pricing

(Gandini, 2018) to entice workers to areas of high demand (Veen et al., 2020). The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA, 2023) highlights how such practices, combined with opaque algorithmic systems, may limit worker choice and allow platforms to exercise disproportionate control without formal employment obligations.

In contrast, Platform A has a varied approach depending on the *'market's performance'* (P20:Manager) and the business strategy so that the company is:

> …able to respond to customers' orders as fast as possible and as reliable as possible. Reaching that optimum point, with no gaps between supply and demand, is what makes this company profit and decreases business risks. (P20:Manager)

Platform A used either a self-service booking system (SSB) or a free-login model, depending on market performance and worker availability, to 'optimise operations' (P22: Manager). This emphasis on optimisation reflects broader patterns reported by the CIPD (Cockett and Willmott, 2023). In the SSB system, Platform A established a limit of riders for specific time slots to which individuals were required to sign up in advance (i.e. work in shifts). In addition, based on workers' performance statistics, including speed of delivery, order acceptance rate, and completed shifts within a two-week timeframe, priority to choose shifts was given to the best performers. The most sought-after shifts were those with high demand in terms of orders. Within the SSB system, it is *'mandatory to complete 2 out of 3 shifts from Friday to Sunday…there are also set times you can start work'* (P30:GW). On the contrary, the free-login system has no limitations. Any worker registered with the platform can work any time, day and area they want, as long as the area operates the same system, i.e. free-login. According to one of the managers (P22), the operationalisation of a free-login system is much easier and in line with other competitors in the market and is now preferred over SSB:

> One of the reasons for changing the system from SSB to free-login is that it's much easier

> to operationalise and more efficient to operate. There are other operators that apply free-login, and therefore, for us, it is easier to compete like this. It's simpler to make onboarding of more riders and let a logic of free market manage the operation at local level.

All workers in this study had experience with both systems.

Additionally, platform-based food delivery companies do not have to adhere to the UK minimum wage requirements since workers are self-employed, subject to each company's piece-rate fee strategy. In response to a gig-dependent worker's question regarding meeting minimum wage requirements, Platform A explained their fee strategy:

> The fee you're offered for each order is different based on a number of factors, including whether it's a single or stacked order, and the distance we estimate you'll cover when delivering to the customer. There are sometimes also fee boosts available to help you earn more at our busier times. (FDCG Facebook[2])

Structural characteristics and lived experiences

Financial instability and job insecurity

This theme was developed from initial codes such as "no guaranteed income", "working double hours to earn the same", "minimum wage comparisons", and "always waiting", which highlight how financial instability manifests as resource depletion, particularly for gig-dependent workers. Financial instability and job insecurity were described by gig-dependent workers as especially challenging, with many emphasising the volatility of income and the emotional toll of not knowing whether they would earn enough to cover basic needs. Participants frequently highlighted how income fluctuated week-to-week, eroding any sense of predictability or control and aligning with the 'resource depletion' pathway (see Figure I):

> Some weeks it's really, really good, but more weeks it's not. With Platform A, you're not

[2] The worker had added screenshots of the communication to the group's private Facebook page

guaranteed; like you're getting this money guarantee every month. (P04:GW>CG)

Workers' posts on the private Facebook group also highlight that the low pay rate is the most challenging aspect of the work amongst both groups. Participants compare their earnings to the UK's minimum wage rate, with almost all participants, more often than not, struggling to reach it during their shifts. In a rather emotional post on FDCG's Facebook page, a gig-dependent worker commented:

> Platform A hasn't been worth it for years, but it just gets worse as the fees hit minimum wage already. All drops now are to rates significantly below minimum wage. We should not be working as slave labour.

The introduction of free-login systems, replacing the more predictable SSB model, further diminished workers' ability to manage their schedules and earnings. For gig-dependent workers, this change intensified the erosion of financial and psychological resources:

> Before, when I was in the booking area, in five-six hours, I was able to save some good money. Now, for the same money, I need to work up to 10 hours. (P16:GW)
>
> They are always cutting rates to the point that now I must do 50% more to earn the same—roughly 60/65 hours a week. (P31:GW)

For certain GWs who were informally employed by food delivery companies, the situation was highly precarious. They had no access to basic health and safety protections and little to no opportunity to break free from a vicious cycle of low-paid, unstable, and unsafe work:

> I work all day just to get by. There's no sick pay or insurance if something happens. I want to be legal, but the process is complicated, and I'm scared of being deported. (P27:GW)

In contrast, casual giggers were able to buffer the effects of unstable income through their main jobs, student stipends, or family support. As a result, while they encountered similar fluctuations, these did not provoke the same sustained distress:

> Because in the restaurant, I get £8.50 per hour, so a 12-hour shift by £8.50, and I know I'm getting that at the end of the day. With Platform A, sometimes I'm sitting in the [name] square, and you are just waiting, you get nothing for the whole hour, and you are just wasting your time. (P08:CG)

However, casual giggers also noted the increased difficulty in meeting their supplementary income goals due to the unpredictability introduced by free login:

> I was averaging £9.80 an hour. But on the free login zones, there's no guarantee whatsoever. And if you get a nice day, everyone will be out, and you'll end up doing nothing for an hour. (P13:CG)

Findings show considerable differences in job insecurity between gig-dependent workers and casual giggers, resulting from the nature of their engagement in gig work. One contributing factor was that casual giggers enjoyed feelings of security and were able to reap the benefits of 'traditional' employment or their student status, i.e., health insurance, holiday pay, etc., while enjoying the autonomy of gig work and earning supplementary income:

> I was getting, say, £12 per hour for doing some evenings, and I'd get like £24 for two hours. Very satisfied with that because I'm a student so £120 quid just for doing like 10 hours a week is very satisfactory. (P02:CG)

> It was easy for me to pick and choose when I wanted to work. Especially doing it around a full-time job, with paid holidays and sick days, it was perfect when I wanted to earn a bit of extra money before the end of the month. (P28:CG)

While both groups experienced uncertainty, gig-dependent workers were uniquely vulnerable to sustained resource strain and had fewer coping reserves to manage this instability, deepening cycles of financial and emotional depletion.

Autonomy and independence

This theme drew on codes including "freedom to work whenever", "forced to work evenings", and

"never stop working", illustrating how the promise of autonomy often translated into illusory flexibility for gig-dependent workers, in contrast to casual giggers' chosen flexibility. Autonomy and flexibility were frequently cited as primary motivations for engaging in gig work, with many participants describing the appeal of being able to work independently and without managerial oversight. For example, P17, who transitioned from casual gigging to fully gig-dependent work, stated:

> The alternative is not good—you're washing toilets, you're cleaning tables, you're getting pushed around by managers—whereas in our job, you know, we can just chop out and have a bit of food; it's quite nice like that. (P17:CG>GW)

However, the autonomy described by workers, particularly gig-dependent ones, was often more illusory than genuine. Although they technically had control over their schedules, this freedom was constrained by economic necessity and platform-driven market demands, especially following the shift from Platform A's SSB to the free-login model. As P16 noted:

> So if I wish to work, I see something I need to go after most in evenings. So now, even if it is a free-login area, I am forced to work when I don't want to; I don't like to work in the evenings. (P16:GW)

This illustrates how the freedom to work 'whenever' becomes the necessity to work constantly, particularly for those without a stable income buffer. Some participants acknowledged this directly:

> I like it because I can stop when I want—but honestly, I almost never stop. You can't afford to. (P11:GW)

Such reflections suggest that autonomy, while valued rhetorically, often serves as a psychological coping mechanism. For many workers, it becomes a form of functional self-deception—a way to preserve a sense of agency in a context where control over one's time is

actually limited. Rather than confronting the structural constraints of platform work, some participants appeared to internalise the flexibility discourse promoted by the platforms, reframing a precarious livelihood as personal choice.

Career path uncertainty

This theme emerged from codes such as "no prospects", "temporary survival job", and "stuck in food delivery", reflecting how gig-dependent workers experienced entrapment with limited mobility, while for casual giggers, career paths remained external to gig work. Most gig-dependent workers (n=12) could not envisage gig work as a sustainable career, instead viewing it as a temporary means of survival with no clear opportunities for advancement.

> I choose to work this low-paid job because I like to ride my bike every day. But this is only for now because no one depends on me. (P17:CG>GW)

Some expressed a feeling of being professionally stuck, unable to transition into more stable roles despite previous qualifications or work history:

> It's so frustrating. Back home I'm seen as versatile but here I'm stuck in food delivery with no prospects of moving to another job. (P05:GW)

Casual giggers, by contrast, maintained career paths external to gig work, using it primarily to safeguard time or money for future goals:

> This suits me because I can spend more time on my passion, which is music creation. I hope I will be able to live off music at some point. (P34:CG)

Work transience

Codes underpinning this theme included "multi-app juggling" and "no stability", illustrating constant adaptation demands for gig-dependent workers compared to the more manageable rotation experienced by casual giggers. This fourth structural characteristic of work transience was reinforced by managers, who described how the platform encourages rotational, transient

participation in its workforce, reinforcing the idea that food delivery is not meant to be a primary career:

> Platform A's business model is based on rotation and flexibility; anyone can and should log in and log out whenever they want. Platform A envisaged this business as a gig that anyone can do on top of their own main jobs to bring extra cash and so on. (P20:Manager)

Gig work is time-limited, which leaves future work and relationships uncertain. Instead of belonging or feeling loyal to a particular company, most of our sample (n=23) found themselves willingly working for more than one food delivery company (Table II), operating in multiple apps to maximise their income.

Physical and relational separation

This theme was developed from codes such as "working alone", "meeting at pick-up points", and "FDCG support", which illustrate how workers counteracted isolation by forming informal communities of support. While research has suggested that gig work is often carried out in physical and relational isolation, participants in this study revealed how, within platform-based food delivery, social ties can emerge in shared urban spaces. Despite the solitary nature of the work, participants frequently interacted during waiting times, built connections at common pick-up points, and engaged through social media platforms. These interactions fostered a sense of community and mutual support, culminating in the creation of the FDCG to support one another:

> There is a strong community. This is part of the reason I love it, you know, you come to town, and you know every rider, you'd have a chat, you know you never feel alone in the city. (P17:CG>GW)

> We also have FDCG, where experiences are shared, for instance, about pay and waiting time—the ratio between one and the other. The main topics are pay and restaurants, you know you have to wait for and so on. (P19:CG)

Autonomy and independence vs financial instability and job insecurity

Autonomy remained the most frequently cited benefit by both groups. For example, all workers indicated that this job allowed them to work without having to answer to a manager or a supervisor:

> I like it very much because I feel free and I don't have managers or supervisors. It means a lot for me not to be pushed by anybody. (P16:GW)
>
> So I would say that I'm my own boss in a way. I don't need to deal with managers that are just ****, and just because they have woken up on the wrong side of the bed, they are constantly shouting at you. (P08:CG)

However, the voluntariness of gig participation emerged as a key distinction. Casual giggers overwhelmingly emphasised choice. As one casual gigger stated when asked whether they would ever consider working full-time in the gig economy:

> Not a chance in hell. Things like Platform A were never intended to be full-time sources of income and are entirely unreliable as a full-time source of income. Over summer, when there are no students around, demand drops entirely, and it's near impossible to make money. That's why I've always had a "main" source of income, and Platform A was to just prop up my income. (P32:CG)

For gig-dependent workers, gig work was the only viable option due to mostly personal constraints (e.g. knowledge of English) and inability to find jobs in the traditional economy. All workers also expressed a preference for traditional jobs over gigs as these jobs offer at least the standard employment benefits and a more stable income:

> I'd take the full-time contract every time. There is a little flexibility on offer working for Platform B, but realistically the package is not desirable at all…doesn't provide workplace benefits. (P29:GW)

However, an interesting theme highlighted in participants' responses is how the '*freedom to work whenever*' (P01:CG) becomes an obstacle to satisfactory income generation and contributes to

financial instability for both casual giggers and gig-dependent workers. These are two conflicting structural characteristics of food delivery gig work that become a source of discontent for both groups:

> That's the reason why I stopped because so many people can become Platform A and B riders. And then you can get hardly any hours because there's so many people now on. I wasn't getting many orders, and it just wasn't good money. (P02:CG)

The interviews with the managers revealed that food delivery companies assume the flexibility and autonomy offered to independent contractors working for them are enough to entice them to work. Additionally, managers acknowledged this strategic reliance on constant churn, suggesting the platform's goal was not to cultivate long-term workers, but to maintain operational efficiency through an expendable, rotating workforce:

> I think having tenured riders turns this strategy around, they can become more dependent, which was not the company's goal; they can start treating this job as their main source of income, which was not the company's intention. In a way, new riders will have fewer schemes and misbehaviours. I think for Platform A, new riders will maintain operations more efficiently than tenured ones. They [new riders] will bring fewer disturbances. (P20:Manager)

Discussion

This article contributes to knowledge by examining how the structural characteristics of platform-based food delivery work (Ashford et al., 2018) are experienced differently by workers depending on their level of economic dependence on platform income. By empirically comparing casual giggers with gig-dependent workers, our findings reveal how similar features, such as autonomy, financial instability, and algorithmic control, translate into divergent lived experiences. Central to this difference is how workers' existing resource reservoirs shape their capacity to

manage or resist precarity.

A central tension emerged across both groups: the push and pull between financial insecurity and autonomy. Financial instability functioned as a draining force (Butler and Stoyanova Russell, 2018), while autonomy operated as a compensatory resource or motivator (Ashford et al., 2007; Spreitzer et al., 2017). Casual giggers valued the ability to flexibly supplement their income, but the platforms' transition to open-access, free-login systems blurred the line between autonomy and insecurity. Workers were increasingly compelled to extend their hours or widen their availability to maintain earnings, with greater organisational flexibility translating into reduced control and predictability for individuals (Rosenblat and Stark, 2016). This undermined workers' ability to manage core resources—time, energy, and stability—especially for those without alternative support systems (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

These pressures were most acute for gig-dependent workers, who experienced heightened work intensity, prolonged economic strain, and reduced capacity for resource recovery (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In contrast, casual giggers often benefited from other income sources or institutional supports (e.g., student funding, permanent jobs), which served as buffers against resource depletion and allowed them to view gig work as a short-term or secondary pursuit. The ability to absorb strain and preserve well-being was thus directly shaped by broader life circumstances and the degree of dependence on platform income.

Independence, often associated with the absence of managerial oversight, also took on different meanings across the two groups. While both appreciated the lack of supervision (Ashford et al., 2007; Caza et al., 2018), gig-dependent workers were increasingly open to traditional employment if it meant gaining more resource stability. However, constraints such as language barriers or precarious migration status limited their ability to transition out of platform work,

compounding their vulnerability (Caza et al., 2022; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

The lack of a clear career path further exposed gig-dependent workers to structural vulnerability. Platform work offered no formal progression or accumulation of career capital (Ashford et al., 2018), and many participants found themselves trapped in repetitive, low-paid roles without pathways to advancement (van Doorn et al., 2020; Newlands, 2024). Casual giggers, by contrast, treated the work as temporary and peripheral to their long-term career aspirations.

Work transience also had asymmetrical effects. For gig-dependent workers, the constant churn and unpredictability reinforced instability and necessitated juggling multiple platforms to sustain earnings (Mendonça et al., 2023; Veen et al., 2020). This adaptability came at the cost of chronic work engagement and limited recovery time (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For casual giggers, transience aligned with expectations; they opted in and out on their own terms and were less impacted by the volatility of platform conditions.

Contrary to much of the literature portraying gig work as isolating (Ashford et al., 2018; Vieira, 2023), we found that workers built social ties during idle time at pick-up points and through online communities. These informal networks offered emotional support, knowledge-sharing, and solidarity (Kougiannou and Mendonça, 2021). Particularly for gig-dependent workers, such networks became vital mechanisms for relational resource recovery (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

While platforms frame flexibility and independence as sufficient sources of satisfaction, our findings challenge this assumption. Autonomy alone does not compensate for earnings volatility, long hours, and chronic uncertainty. In fact, platform practices, such as unregulated onboarding and opaque algorithmic scheduling, often exacerbate internal competition, diminish earnings, and intensify the pressure to stay available (Rosenblat and Stark, 2016). This erodes workers' sense of control and well-being, particularly for those with no fallback options.

Our analysis reveals that platform workers' experiences are deeply shaped by their broader life contexts. For casual giggers, flexibility can enhance agency and income supplementation. For gig-dependent workers, however, those same features mask a deeper structural vulnerability, exposing them to cycles of exploitation and chronic resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The ability to exit or scale back was central to casual giggers' relative resilience. Gig-dependent workers, lacking alternatives, remained locked in, making continued participation a necessity rather than a choice, intensifying strain and limiting options for recovery (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Despite diverging from traditional employment through the absence of career progression or managerial oversight, gig work does not diminish workers' need for community, predictability, and sustainable structures. The informal rider network observed in our study illustrate efforts to recreate supportive environments in the absence of formal protections (Kougiannou and Mendonça, 2021). These grassroots rider communities, formed in response to the absence of formal protections, show workers' collective efforts to restore predictability, connection, and dignity. Informal networks like the FDCG offered a partial antidote to relational and professional depletion (Hobfoll, 2011). They signal a latent form of resistance and solidarity in the face of extractive platform structures.

Taken together, these themes demonstrate that platform dependence is the critical axis shaping workers' exposure to risk, control, and resource loss. Financial instability, illusory autonomy, work transience, and isolation are not uniformly experienced; rather, they reflect stratified forms of precarity based on workers' capacity to buffer systemic strain. The adapted framework (Figure I) captures this divergence, illustrating how platform structures interact with resource vulnerability to produce highly differentiated worker experiences.

The structural divide between gig-dependent and casual workers appears to strategically

benefit platforms. Casual giggers can enjoy the flexibility of gig work without relying on it for survival, while gig-dependent workers often lack alternatives and face heightened financial and legal vulnerability (Mendonça and Kougiannou, 2024). This heterogeneity enables platforms to promote narratives of autonomy and choice while resisting regulatory efforts to classify workers as employees—undermining collective claims for rights and preserving the organisational ambiguity central to the gig economy model (Mendonça et al., 2023).

For migrant workers, dependency is exacerbated by fears of deportation, informal legal status, and exclusion from state protections (van Doorn and Vijay, 2024). In these contexts, autonomy becomes a coping narrative rather than a lived experience. Many internalise platform discourse on freedom and flexibility to sustain a sense of agency, even when materially constrained—a form of functional self-deception that legitimises the platform model while obscuring structural subordination (Ashford et al., 2018; Cropanzano et al., 2023).

These findings reinforce the need to consider the structural characteristics of platform work, and the algorithmic infrastructure that governs it. Predictive technologies now regulate access to work, pay, and scheduling (Kellogg et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2020). For workers who lack transparency into these systems but must continually adapt to them, platform governance itself becomes a chronic source of resource depletion.

Emerging evidence of algorithmic wage discrimination (Dubal, 2023) further complicates the picture, especially given that many platform workers are migrants disproportionately excluded from formal labour protections (van Doorn and Vijay, 2024). These intersecting forms of dependence, identity, and invisibility compound precarity and call for more nuanced, intersectional analysis of platform labour.

Figure I presents a nuanced adaptation of Ashford et al.'s (2018) framework, integrating

resource-based theory to show how structural features of platform work produce variable outcomes. While casual giggers can generally buffer instability through external supports, gig-dependent workers face prolonged exposure to financial, temporal, and social resource depletion. They do not thrive under platform conditions—they endure them.

------- Insert Figure I here -------

Conclusion

This article examined how the structural characteristics of platform-based food delivery work shape the lived experiences of gig-dependent workers and casual giggers. By distinguishing between these two groups, the study provides a more granular understanding of how economic dependence, social protections, and personal constraints influence workers' experiences. In doing so, this research contributes to the growing literature on the gig economy by extending Ashford et al.'s (2018) structural framework and incorporating a resource-sensitive perspective (Hobfoll, 2011) to analyse variation in workers' vulnerability and resilience. Our findings suggest that while both groups value autonomy, they experience it differently depending on their ability to buffer against instability (Halbesleben et al., 2014). For gig-dependent workers, algorithmically mediated flexibility often translates into precarity, with limited pathways for mobility or resource recovery. For casual giggers, flexibility is an advantage precisely because they are protected by parallel structures of support, such as formal employment contracts or student benefits.

Our findings raise significant implications for platform companies operating ultra-flexible recruitment models. While these models promise autonomy and opportunity, they frequently produce diminished earnings, intensified competition, and limited worker discretion, particularly for gig-dependent workers. From a managerial standpoint, this strategy may prove unsustainable. If casual giggers opt out due to increased financial volatility and gig-dependent workers

experience burnout or demand stronger protections, the platform workforce may become increasingly fragmented and unstable. Platform managers should therefore take steps to address these emerging risks. This includes improving income predictability through clearer communication of earnings structures, limiting workforce oversaturation, and increasing transparency in algorithmic allocation systems. Additionally, the study highlights how workers counteract isolation by forming informal peer communities, such as the FDCG. Supporting these bottom-up networks through voluntary, peer-led communication channels could improve worker engagement and morale. More broadly, platform managers should move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach by recognising the differing needs and expectations of casual and dependent gig workers. Failure to do so may not only reinforce structural inequalities but also undermine the long-term viability of the platform model itself.

While our study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. Conducted in a single urban setting, the article's findings may not generalise to rural or international contexts where the gig economy functions differently. Although we included both gig-dependent and casual workers, the sample may not capture the full range of intersectional identities, such as gender or migration histories. Additionally, our focus on food delivery excludes other sectors like ride-hailing or digital freelancing, which may involve distinct dynamics of autonomy, precarity, and resistance. Future research should deepen our distinction between gig-dependent and casual workers by examining how economic reliance influences the potential for collective action, and how these dynamics evolve over time. Longitudinal studies could track transitions between dependency levels, revealing how worker experiences shift with changing personal and labour market conditions. Comparative research across countries and sectors would also help illuminate how institutional factors, such as employment laws or welfare systems, shape the realities of gig work in diverse

settings.

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Table I: Data sources and use

Source	Type of data	Use in the analysis
Social media	1. Private Facebook group 2. Private Facebook group Messenger chat 3. Public [city] riders Facebook Page	Gather information regarding work practices, level of focus and participation of gig-dependent workers and casual giggers. Understand individual differences but also group differences. Cross-check the truthfulness of interview statements and observation notes.
Interviews	37 interviews were conducted: 35 couriers in total, out of which 20 were casual giggers at the time of the interview; two digital platform company managers. All audio-recorded (but one) and transcribed. *Note 1: Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours, with an average duration of one hour.*	Gather data about food delivery gig work, gig-dependent workers' and casual giggers' attitudes, perceptions and behaviours; structural characteristics; and couriers' lived experiences of work.
Non-participant observation	Four food-delivery couriers' group (FDCG) meetings; Five FDCG leadership meetings (all meetings were audio-recorded). *Note 2: Average duration of network meetings and leadership meetings was two hours.*	Gather data regarding work practices and conditions, experiences of couriers regarding such practices, and differences of focus between gig-dependent workers and casual giggers. Contextualise interview narratives. Triangulate facts.

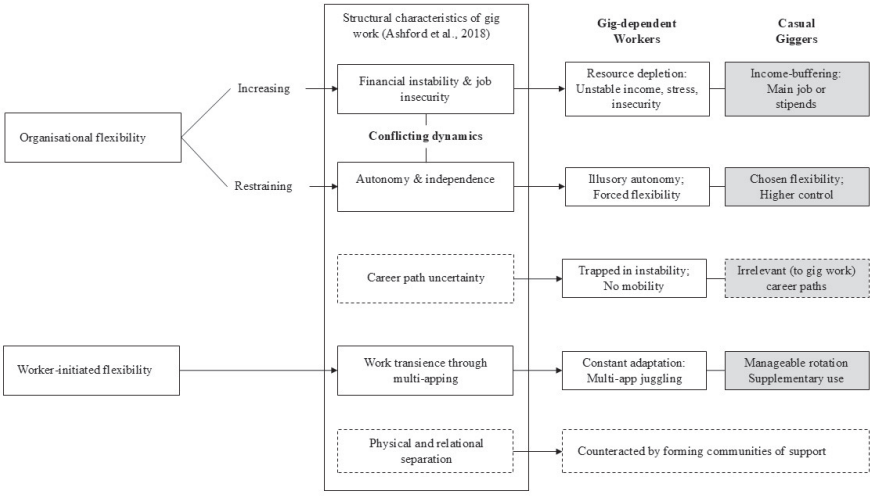
Table II: Interview participants' characteristics

ID	Platform(s)	Delivery mode	Casual Gigger (CG)/ Gig-dependent Worker (GW)	CG's main occupation
P01	Platform A and B	Bicycle	CG	Student Union employee
P02	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Student
P03	Platform A and B	Moped	GW	-
P04	Platform A and B	Bicycle	CG > GW > CG	Bike shop employee
P05	Platform A and B	Bicycle	GW	-
P06	Platform A and B	Bicycle	GW > CG	Barista
P07	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Union activist
P08	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Chef
P09	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Union activist
P10	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Union activist
P11	Platform A and B	Bicycle	GW	-
P12	Platform A and B and one other	Moped	GW	-
P13	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Student
P14	Platform A and B	Moped	GW	-
P15	Platform A and B and one other	Car	GW	-
P16	Platform A and B	Moped	GW	-
P17	Platform A and B and two others	Bicycle	CG > GW	Factory worker
P18	Platform A and one other	Bicycle	CG	Business-owner
P19	Platform A and B	Bicycle	CG	Student
P20	-	-	Manager	-
P21	Platform A and B	Bicycle	CG	Bar employee
P22	-	-	Manager	-
P23	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Student
P24	Platform A and B	Bicycle	CG	Bar employee
P25	Platform A and B	Bicycle	CG	Bar employee
P26	Platform B	Bicycle	CG	Warehouse employee
P27	Platform A and B	Bicycle	GW	-
P28	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Primary school admin
P29	Platform B	Bicycle	GW	-
P30	Platform B	Bicycle	GW	-

P31	Platform A and B	Bicycle	GW	-
P32	Platform A	Bicycle	CG	Student, Supermarket employee
P33	Platform A and B	Bicycle	GW	-
P34	Platform A and B	Bicycle	CG	Teaching assistant
P35	Platform A and B	Moped	GW	-
P36	Platform A and B	Moped	GW	-
P37	Platform A and B	Bicycle	GW	-

Table III: Alignment of first-order codes and second-order themes.

First-order Code	Second-order Theme
No guaranteed income	Financial instability & job insecurity
Working double hours to earn the same minimum wage comparisons	
always waiting	
freedom to work whenever	Autonomy & independence
forced to work evenings	
never stop working	
no prospects	Career path uncertainty
temporary survival job	
stuck in food delivery	
multi-app juggling	Work transience
no stability	
working alone	Physical & relational separation
meeting at pick-up points	
FDCG support	



Notes: a) Figure 1 was developed directly from the thematic analysis, illustrating how second-order themes (e.g. financial instability, illusory autonomy) map onto diverging worker experiences depending on resource vulnerabilities.
b) The dashed boxes indicate a lack of relevance or contradictory effect of what is proposed in the literature.

Differentiated Experiences of Platform Work: Integrating Structural Characteristics and Resource Vulnerability among Gig-Dependent and Casual Food Delivery Workers

338x190mm (96 x 96 DPI)

Appendix I: Illustrative quotes for each first-order code.

Illustrative Quote	First-order Code
They dropped the fees… overall, if you look at how many orders you do a day, that's quite a lot of money. (P05)	No guaranteed income
Before I could save some money in 5-6 hours. Now I need to work up to 10 hours for the same. (P06)	Working double hours to earn the same
We need to frame this in terms of minimum wage… we say should at least earn the minimum wage, they are refusing to pay. (P07)	minimum wage comparisons
Sometimes when orders are low then it can be hard to earn while working a 4 hour shift. (P30)	always waiting
I enjoy the freedom of working for myself; of starting work when I want and finishing when I want. (P24)	freedom to work whenever
My weekend, 6pm to 12, I had to do it. If I'm not going to do it, it's going to pull me back. (P15)	forced to work evenings
10 hours work nights 10 hours non stop moving stop for lunch dinner. (P17)	never stop working
For the first month I thought that it was great, after that month though I started to realise that I wasn't that excited to go to work and nothing was going to be done to change that. (P30)	no prospects
While working for UberEats it was my sole source of income as I was between jobs and needed a little money. (P29)	temporary survival job
It's just been since that day, I've just been working. I don't know what's gonna happen at the end. (P15)	stuck in food delivery
They try to get as many orders possible between all the platforms. (P12)	multi-app juggling
You know. It varies even between apps. Sometimes you go for 3 hours and earn more than the other day within 5 hours. (P34)	no stability
I also felt that I was very much on my own whilst working for Deliveroo… If I felt like working I would ride to my zone, sign in and start delivering orders. (P28)	working alone

I just go there and wait with other riders. (P34)	meeting at pick-up points
It's a group where we can all put our concerns forward and also any useful information that we need to know will be in the group. (P14)	Facebook group support