Platform food delivery: A study on the labour process and emotional labour experienced by gig workers in the Eastern Cape food delivery sector

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Abstract

As central to the gig economy, digital platforms are transforming the character of the modern economy. South Africa has seen the increased use of technology and the integration of technological changes into the labour market and labour process, including via digital platforms. The gig economy has entered a range of economic sectors in South Africa and elsewhere, including the service sector. Examples of digital platforms in this specific sectorinclude Uber and Bolt for transportation, Sweep South for domestic help, and Mr D Food for food delivery. Undoubtedly, by inhibiting and sanctioning movements globally and locally, the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the expansion of the gig economy in the service sector, asit restricted walk-in customers. The digital platform mediates the relationship between servicesector workers and their clients and between workers and the companies operating the platforms. In this way, these technological platforms act as an 'extra hand' by, for example, hiring delivery workers in the first instance and then facilitating the delivery of products to customers.

This thesis examines the food delivery sector in the gig economy in the Eastern Cape Provinceof South Africa. The digital platforms in the food sector allow consumers to place food ordersat a restaurant of choice and deliver them to their doorstep in less than an hour, ensuring convenience, reliability and efficiency for restaurants and customers. However, understanding the gig economy involves identifying and unpacking the experiencesand perspectives of the gig workers. In doing so, this thesis examines food deliveryworkers labouring for two different companies (Uber East and Mr D Foods) in two sites (Makhanda and Gqeberha). The main aim is to analyse how the digital platformsrestructure the labour process in the gig economy and the emotional labour enacted by the delivery workers. The thesis draws upon labour process and emotional labour theory to pursue this primary aim. Research findings highlight a high level of precariousness and stress amongst food delivery workers as they work under algorithmic systems of labour control marked by surveillance and are constantly required to perform emotionally to maximise income.

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Dedication

To my grandparents, Kuku Kanuga James, who left in 1997, and Batategulu (Tate) Elijah Amos Mutshewa, who left in 2007. Kuku (Mme) Botsang Elijah Mutshewa left on the 7th of October, 2023.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), identified by the development of digital technology and the growing usage of online services, has drastically changed how work (and other types of organisations) operates (Moroane, 2023: 1). Digital platforms, in particular, are becoming more pervasive, and they an essential factor behind the increase and growth in new types of work both in the sphere of production and exchange. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a surge in gig workers in various economic sectors in developing and developedcountries. As observed during the pandemic, organisations in multiple sectors were forced to transfer their workload to home-based operations due to the lockdown restrictions implementedto moderate the spread of the virus. In this light, it becomes crucial to identify and understand gig economy-related developments in the labour market. Indeed, a growing body of literature recognises the significance of issues concerning the digitalisation of the labour market.

This thesis examines the employment relations and emotional labour amongst a specific category of gig workers in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, namely, in the food delivery sector. This chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, it introduces the study, providingthe context for the research study (Section 1.2). The chapter then details the main and subsidiary objectives of the thesis (Section 1.3). Next, it provides an overview of the case studyand discusses the research methodology underpinning the study (Section 1.4), and it concludesby outlining the thesis outline (Section 1.5).

1.2 Context of Research

The gig economy is regarded as increasingly important for the modern labour market, and its prevalence has many implications for workers (as service providers) labouring within it. Thereare many advantages arising from it from the perspective of workers. Thus, those working within the gig economy have a dynamic and flexible environment with diverse employment opportunities.

In the contemporary landscape of the burgeoning global economy, some workers can offer their professional skills and expertise in ways which are unrestricted spatially. Using digital platforms (or apps), they can present their skills, connect to a wide range of potential clients and manage the complexities of the gig economy. Therefore, work in the gig economy can be "transacted and delivered remotely via platforms" (Wood et al., 2019: 57).These types of gig workers (similar perhaps to freelancers), as highly skilled professionals, offer their skills irrespective of their geographical location. For example, an organisation can be based in the

United Kingdom but can hire its workforce in South Africa for a specific project.Such project-based work might include software engineers and graphic designers.

However, work in the gig economy is also often "transacted via platforms but delivered locally, therefore requiring the individual's [worker's] physical presence" (Wood et al., 2019: 57). These workers use digital platforms as a way to secure employment locally, performing their tasks primarily offline. A wide range of services fall under this classification, including domestic workers (for example, Sweep South), E-hailing drivers (such as Bolt and Uber), andfood delivery workers (for instance, Bolt Food, Uber Eats and Mr D Food); and lower skill requirements characterise them and often do not require formal education. In the caseof this study, the focus is on service providers (workers) who perform their tasks locally as food delivery drivers.

In this regard, online digital platforms take on different forms and require differentskill sets (Kalleberg and Dunn, 2016: 12), depending upon the character of the organisations using these platforms to attract service providers. As service providers, some workers in the gig economy do low-skilled, task-based employment, while others pursue more extended, creative, and knowledge-intensive work (Caza et al., 2022: 2123). The expanding realm of platform work comprises an extensive range of workforce varieties, each differentiated by knowledge and skills, fulfilling the various needs of organisations.

The role of food delivery workers reflects how technology is changing the traditional service sectors. Their tasks are made possible by digital platforms, further illustrating the accessibility and flexibility the gig economy offers. Food delivery workers continue to be in demand as more consumers choose to order food through these platforms. This expansion grew more rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the movement restrictions that were imposed on individuals in various countries. Therefore, expanding the food delivery sector in the gig economy exemplifies the shift toward a more flexible and decentralised employment arrangement, reshaping the fundamental character of employment in the twenty-first century.

Several critical issues arise in this context. One key issue concerns the very character of the employment of gig workers, namely, whether they are employeesentering into an employment contract or contractors involved in a business contract. Another issue concerns the specific nature of the labour process for gig workers relating to the question of control of (and power over) gig workers via the platform. Other issues pertain to the possible precariousness of many gig workers and, in the case of workers such as food delivery drivers, the emotional labour embedded in their everyday work.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The main objective of this study is *to examine the labour process and emotional labour experienced by gig workers in the food delivery sector in South Africa.* The subsidiaryobjectives include:

a) To examine the power relations experienced by food delivery workers concerninggig-management, restaurant workers, and customers.

b) To examine gig workers' working conditions, including precarity, in fooddelivery services.

c) To understand how customer rankings of food delivery platforms and restaurants affect the work experience of food delivery workers.

d) To identify the emotional labour undertaken by food delivery workers in their interactions with managers, restaurant employees and customers.

1.4 Research Sites and Methodology

This research explores two distinct study areas (the city of Gqeberha and the town of Makhanda) in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Makhanda (formerlyGrahamstown) is a small town in the province located about 127 kilometres from the larger city of Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth). There is also a specific focus on investigating the food delivery services of two companies within the gig economy – Mr D Food and Uber Eats – in both locations. These two digital platforms are the study area's most popular food delivery options. While these platforms' operational processes appear to be quite similar, Moroane (2023: 67) argues that the different dynamics of gig companies must be clearly understood through various experiences and contextual perspectives. Though the objectives of the thesis seek to understand food delivery (gig economy) workers in general, irrespective of platform and place of operation, it is essential to be sensitive to the variegated character of food delivery work. I do this by detailing the experiences of the food delivery workers studied.

In doing so, I draw upon an interpretive sociological perspective to make sense of the labour process and emotional labour of the food delivery workers (service providers). This perspective is "concerned with how individuals and groups create, find meaning in, and experience society, rather than how society affects them" (Weber, 1981: 152). The emphasis, therefore, is on agency rather than structure and on how people enact agency through their subjective understandings of their situations and the world around them (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:970). Focusing on the perspectives, practices and experiences of human agents (including food delivery workers) allows, at the same time, specific insights into how their lives are

conditioned (facilitated and constrained) by structural arrangements (including, in the case of the studied workers, the controls embedded in the digital platforms). A qualitative research methodology is consistent with interpretive sociology, as it entails methods which allow for a thorough examination and understanding of the experiences of the food delivery workers (concerning the labour process and the realities of emotional labour) for Mr D Food Delivery and Uber Eats. Thus, the thesis objectives are pursued throughinterpretive sociology and a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research focuses on subjectsin their natural (social) setting, which is conducive to investigating food delivery drivers' daily lives and work experiences. As Denzin and Lincoln (2007:3) put it: "Qualitative research is an interpretive and naturalistic approach that studies individuals' experiences in their natural settings". Qualitative methods provide an in-depth understanding of the context-specific factors that influence people's lives, as seen through their perspectives and practices.

For this particular study, the qualitative methods used were interviews and observation. Seven gig workers were interviewed within one month. Interviews were conductedfrom the 21st of August 2023 and completed by the 29th of September 2023. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling method that seeks to research participants who fit the study goals and criteria (Acharya et al., 2013: 332). For this study, the selection criteria used by the researcher indicated that a participant must have worked for at least one year for either Mr D Food or Uber Eats in either of the two sites. In this light, "the inclusion criteria were set to ensure a form of homogeneity among the sampling group" (Sibiya, 2021: 29). Ensuring that they had worked for at least one year meant that they likely had a sufficient level of experienceas a food delivery driver to engage with the issues raised by the research. During the initial observation of the research participants, which was done over seven days, I noticed that no women were employed by these two digital platforms at both sites, an issue discussed later in the study. This meant that all seven gig workers would inevitably be male.

As the fieldwork started, I observed that the nature of this gig job was fast-paced and marked by significant mobility on the part of the drivers and that these food delivery drivers had a busy work schedule. Because of this, I undertook the fieldwork interviews while the drivers were stationed at their central waiting location (as detailed later) – at two research sites, Peppergrove Mall in Makhanda and Green Acres Mall in Gqeberha. To minimise the challenges in recruiting more research participants, I employed a snowball sampling technique to identify participants who met the selection criteria and might be willing to engage in the research process. Snowball sampling, "also called networking, focuseson finding new participants through current participants' acquaintances or network, and thus isa facilitative measure In extending the number

of participants" (Karlsson and Wranne, 2019: 21). Therefore, the researcher made use of the referrals from workers who had been previouslyinterviewed, allowing the researcher to contact other workers.

At the same time, I was conscious of the need to ensure that I had at least one food delivery driver from both digital platforms (Uber Eats and Mr D Food) at both research sites.This would facilitate the identification of shared experiences and the possibility of various perspectives emerging from the workers delivering food. Because I did not use random sampling, I did not make statistical generalisations based on the study. However, the sample provides insights into the working lives of food delivery drivers in South Africa's gig economy, such that the study offers critical evidential clues about drivers' experiences, practices and perspectives in other parts of the country.

Seven food delivery drivers (service providers) were interviewed as indicated. In the thesis, I use pseudonyms to guarantee their confidentiality and anonymity. The seven participants are as follows:

- Participant 1: Takudzwa is a 24-year-old Zimbabwean Black man working for UberEats in Gqeberha.
- Participant 2: Kuda is a 20-year-old Zimbabwean Black man working for Mr D Foodin Gqeberha.
- Participant 3: John is a 20-year-old South African White man working for Mr D Foodin Makhanda.
- Participant 4: Tanaka, a 25-year-old Zimbabwean Black man working for Mr D Foodin Makhanda.
- Participant 5: Watipa is a 35-year-old Zimbabwean Black man working for Uber Eatsin Makhanda.
- Participant 6: Dube is a 29-year-old Zimbabwean Black man working for Mr D Food in Gqeberha.
- Participant 7: Ade is a 35-year-old Nigerian Black man working for Uber Eats in Gqeberha.

Further, for data collection, semi-structured interviews specifically focused on identifying the critical issues faced by the food delivery workers in gig economy employment. The interview questions focused mainly on the nature of the labour process(including the control function) within this sector in the Eastern Cape and the workers' experiences and practices of emotional labour. In doing so, the semi-structured interviews wereconducted to understand the overall experiences of being a gig worker, specifically in the fooddelivery industry, and the differences or similarities of working for either Mr D Food or Uber Eat in the two sites. Interviews ranged

from twenty minutes to an hour, and all were conductedin English. Each interview was recorded using a smartphone as a data collection method, and the recordings were transcribed after each interview. An in-depth interview is a qualitative research method used to understand the research participants' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes (Brounéus, 2011: 130). Hence, it was the most appropriate method for pursuing the objectives of this thesis. The data collection instrument was an interview schedule/guideline (see Appendix A) with open-ended questions related to the various subsidiary research objectives.

Though concentrating on conducting in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method, I also incorporated observation methods when undertaking the interviews. This involved observing, for instance, the use of the digital platform and the comings and goings ofthe workers in delivering food; observational techniques allowed for a better understanding of worker activities in real-time.

Furthermore, for this study, I used a thematic data analysis approach to focus on and highlight specific themes arising from the answers to the research questions. This type of qualitative data analysis, namely thematic analysis, involves deciphering and collating the data to identify, examine, and report common trends across research subjects (Kiger and Varpio, 2020: 847). The data was collected in a manner pertinent to the subsidiaryobjectives of the thesis, and this facilitated the arranging of the data collected on a thematic basis. It allowed me to dive into the analysis process by selecting codes and constructingthemes related to my study. These themes will be highlighted in the empirical discussion laterin the thesis, but they include key notions such as algorithmic control and surface acting.

Ethics play a crucial role in shaping research processes, defining what a researcher is and is not allowed to do and differentiating between right and wrong in research (Borah, 2020:92). An ethical clearance was requested from the Rhodes Humanities Faculty Research EthicsCommittee (HF-REC) and approved on 14 August 2023. The researcher approached participants and explained the research's purpose and context, after whichparticipants signed a consent form (Appendix B). All the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any given time during the interview without the need to provide a reason for their voluntary decision to participate. Interviews took place at thenearest open spaces around the restaurants to protect the participants and allow them to continue their work. Therefore, interviews were conducted from 8 am to 5 pm at a place and time convenient to them and without interfering with their work activities.

1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis consists of six chapters, including the introductory chapter.

Chapters 2 and 3 are contextual chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the gig economy and then sets out the theoretical framework for the study, namely, a combination of labour process theory and emotional labour theory. Chapter 3 examines the gig economy more specifically in relation to the objectives and subsidiary objectives of the thesis, highlighting the labour control, precarity and emotional performances of workers embedded in this economy. It does this with specific reference to food delivery workers.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the empirical chapters of the thesis. Chapter 4 discusses broadly the food delivery gig economy in the two study sites, including the process of becoming food delivery workers and the overall experiences of these workers. Chapter 5 focuses more specifically on the labour process in the food delivery gig economy at the two sites concerning labour control and emotional labour, thereby addressing the subsidiary objectives of the study.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by demonstrating how the objectives were addressed, showing the importance of the theoretical framework for the study, and highlighting the significance of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Theorising the Gig Economy

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework for the thesis, namely, labour process theory combined with emotional labour theory. It does this by first discussing the gig economy in broad terms so that the reader is more fully able to understand the significance and relevance of the theories for the study and the main objective of the study.

In this regard, it is necessary to distinguish between distinct yet interconnected concepts, the labour market and the labour process. The labour market refers to the selling andbuying of labour on the labour market and, thus, to the employment contract. The gig economy, specifically the food delivery sector, is more likely to be a business contract between the gig economy platform company and the driver. While the gig economy's labour market transaction is vital to this study, I do not theorise the labour market assuch. Instead, my main focus is on the labour process in the gig economy and theorising this. However, understanding the gig economy labour market provides a necessary descriptive contextfor analysing the gig economy labour process.

2.2 Gig Economy

Advancements in technology have affected various aspects of contemporary everyday life. Concerning the labour market, technological advancements have introduced the gig economy as an alternative to working arrangements, allowing for flexible-based work that is notconstrained by employment contracts with firms (Uchiyama et al., 2022: 166). The gig economy continues to grow, contributing to the development of non-standardised forms of employment (Behl et al., 2022: 818). Therefore, workers engage in different forms of non-standard labour and may be paid on a wage or piece-rate basis – this isthe case in both developed and developing countries such as South Africa (ILO, 2021: 43). Technological advancements are resulting in workers being managed by faceless online platforms and even paid through these digital platforms, in ways contributing to a more competitive labour market (Stewart and Stanford, 2017: 421). Furthermore, food delivery (gig)platforms such as UberEATS and Mr D Food allow customers to request and receive food through gig workers (food delivery drivers) as intermediaries. Customers place online orders for on-demand delivery using the websites or applications of the food delivery platforms (OIPMI, 2022: 4).

The gig economy is a type of labour market where individuals can find temporary employment by utilising online platforms that are provided by a specific company (Sibiya, 2021:

9). It has been loosely described as the ‘platform’, ‘sharing’, ‘crowd-based’, and ‘on- demand’ (De Stefano, 2016: 471). The gig economy is also defined as platform capitalism. Inparticular, scholars describe the gig economy as “the economic structure that uses online platforms to connect self-employed service providers with customers and provides temporary, flexible, or freelance jobs” (Duggan et al., 2017: 115). Similarly, Taylor et al. (2017: 23) maintain that the gig economy entails “people using apps [also commonly known as platforms]to sell their labour.” Two further definitions of the gig economy are worth providing. Thus, Goods et al. (2019: 504) define the gig economy as “markets created by intermediaries or platforms that facilitate and manage interactions between buyers and sellers of services via digital platforms and mobile phone applications.” Further, the gig economy is “the exchange of labour for money between individuals or companies via digital platforms that actively facilitate matching between providers and customers on a short-term and payment-by-task basis” (Lepanjuuri et al., 2018: 12). The common theme amongst these definitions is the use ofonline platforms for work. This form of work relies intensely on online connectivity to be utilised.

Two main types of digital platforms have been identified. First, web-based digital platforms focus on macro and micro-tasking crowd work and contest-based creativecrowd work. The more common type (the second type) is location-based and concentrates mainly on the service sector. Thus, the gig economy is moving into a range of different economic sectors, including challenging traditional labour markets such as the transportation and food delivery sectors (Khethisa et al., 2020: 1). As argued by Stewart and Stanford (2017: 421), thegig economy is characterised by “online platforms and isolated independent workers” and “poses fundamental challenges to traditional models for regulating work and setting minimum standards in capitalism”. Furthermore, the literature on the gig economy in South Africa has brought to attention the poor working conditions and the precariousness experienced by gig workers (Hlatshwayo, 2022: 470). In this regard, while the gig economy relates to labour market transactions, as this thesis shows, it has implications for the labour process as well – asthis thesis seeks to show.

In this thesis, the food delivery sector will be analysed “using the Marxist tools of analysis that view the labour process as a terrain of cooperation and conflict among the employers, which are the platforms and those who sell their labour power and bring their toolssuch as bikes and smartphones” (Hlatshwayo, 2022: 471). Labour process theory will be complemented by emotional labour theory to capture the conditions and experiences of food delivery workers.

The two most popular meal delivery services in South Africa are UberEATS and Mr. D meal Delivery. These well-known services paved the way for smaller food delivery services like

Bolt Food. Founded in 1992, Mr. D Food Delivery rebranded in 2016 to become a mobileapp-based enterprise. Uber (the transportation platform) is in charge of UberEATS, a food delivery service. UberEATS was introduced in South Africa in 2016, and it appears that both of these platforms are in use throughout the country's provinces, particularly in places like Makhanda and Gqeberha (the two study sites) as well as Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and East London (OIPMI, 2022: 29).

2.2.1 Gig Workers and Gig Economy Skills

Notably, definitions of the gig economy, like those above, rarely refer to gig workers as employees; if they do, they speak of them as non-standard employees. In this context,gig workers are referred to at times as independent contractors, temporary employees, contractemployees, workers on-call, and workers on digital platforms (ECSECC, 2022: 3). As exploredin this thesis, this raises questions about whether gig workers enter into a labour contract (asemployees) or a business contract. Irrespective of this debate, Sibiya (2021: 10) highlights thatthe unpredictable demand for gig-worker services can lead to irregular work patterns in many instances, where workers provide their own workplace equipment needed for their jobs, ranging from a simple bicycle for delivering food to more sophisticated and costly computing or transportation equipment in other roles. Moreover, gig workers are typically paid based on the number of gigs they do daily and not based on hourly rates.

The gig economy is a growing phenomenon in the 'world of work', particularly in the Global North (Hlatshwayo, 2022: 474). According to SIA (2023), it is estimated that there are435 million gig workers globally, with claims about gig workers in the global labour force ranging from 4.4 to 12.5 per cent. According to the World Bank (in 2023), the gig economy makes up 12% of the global labour market (far more than previously thought), and working in it will likely become more common for young people and women in developing countries.[1] There areclaims that the gig economy will eventually dominate the labour market.

It is believed that the gig economy has experienced rapid growth in South Africa. For instance, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2023) for South Africa recorded an estimated 3.1 million people working in the informal economy. Furthermore, the survey showed a decreaseof 0.5 per cent of individuals with full-time employment and a significant increase of 13.2 percent of part-time workers between June 2022 and June 2023 (StatsSA, 2023: 1) – with the gigeconomy contributing to this increase. The growth in the gig economy and the number of gig workers is

[1] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/09/07/demand-for-online-gig-work-rapidly-rising-in-developing-countries.

also apparent in the Eastern Cape Province, the site for this study. As ECSECC(2021: 13) shows, the Eastern Cape faces low economic growth, high unemploymentrates, high levels of poverty and income inequities. In this light, unskilled workers turn to the gig economy as a possible means of earning a living.

The increased number of gig workers in South Africa is due to the increasing unemployment rates. In addition, in explaining gig-economy expansion in the country, Behl etal. (2022: 823) highlight the significance of advanced connectivity infrastructure, high rates of urbanisation that concentrate supply and demand, regulatory frameworks that support innovation and entrepreneurship, widespread mobile phone use, and high levels of entrepreneurship. In the case of the gig economy in South Africa, the primary users of the internetand digital platforms are the youth, showing an increase in technological skills required for digital platforms.

One of the key characteristics of the ever-changing gig economy is its ability to drawin a wide range of workers, frequently with minimal formal certification qualifications.However, a more thorough analysis by Luthfia et al. (2021) reveals the critical impact thatdigital skills play in this field. Technical skills, communication skills, and digital commerceskills are all included in the broad category of digital skills. These abilities enable workers tonavigate the complex digital spaces which support platforms (such as food delivery services):

> "Technical skills equip individuals with the ability to harness information and communication technology (ICT) devices and programmes, navigate online environments, and manipulate specialised digital media structures like menus and hyperlinks. Communication skills emerge as a linchpin, facilitating effective information dissemination across diverse audiences through various media and online formats. … [At the same time,] … digital commerce skills empower workers to buy and sell online, placeorders, and make informed decisions as consumers in the digital economy. It is evident that digital technical skills form the bedrock for individuals to establish and sustain theirorientation in the digital realm, which has become the lifeblood of the gig economy" (Luthfia et al., 2021: 142).

This claim demonstrates the significant influence that digital skills have on theacceptance and performance of applications for food delivery platforms. As Luthfia et al. (2021) argue, communication skills are the competency that significantly affects whether or not these applications are accepted.

This emphasises the necessity of creating user-friendly features that promote effortlessand effective communication between clients and gig workers. In this context, the importanceof technical skills, while acknowledged, has comparatively less impact on application acceptance (Luthfia et al., 2021: 144). This shows how crucial it is to give gig workers strong digital

communication skills, which are critical for acceptance and success on digital platforms.

2.2.2 Reconfiguring the Point of Production and Labour Process

Advancements in technology have resulted in an increase in the number and variety of digital platforms as well as forms of work (Sibiya, 2021: 42). Li and Jiang (2022) studied the emergence of new forms of work in the platform economy, explicitly focusing on food delivery workers, highlighting the shift from traditional industrial production to the platform economy, characterised by new spatial and temporal dimensions. They show how the platformeconomy challenges manufacturers' traditional innovation activities and competitiveness. Further, "in the platform economy, work is not constrained in the traditional physical space, and workers escape the narrow space of operation and constant supervision by foremen" (Li and Jiang, 2022: 8). In this sense, the point of production within gig economies has become more diffuse, with labour processes not as spatially bounded as in the conventional economy. As Gandini (2019: 1040) notes, "digitally based platforms can be regarded as the point of production, intended as the 'place' where the labour process is enacted upon workers." Traditionally, work has been geographically bounded with a specific place regarded as the point of production (Graham et al., 2017: 136). Gandini (2019: 1040), therefore, stresses thatthe gig economy does not have a single point of production, stating "that work activity is not accessed to a single, designated workplace where workers are subject to managerial directions."

Even in cases where the point of production has been typically diffuse, the digital economy is reconfiguring work. For instance, a study on workers' experiences in platform domestic work in South Africa by Sibiya (2021) notes the rise of on-demand platform work that influences the domestic work sector. In South Africa, domestic workers use the SweepSouth digital platform as a mediator within the labour market. Potential domestic workers register their availability for work on the app and go through the screening process before becoming a part of the workforce available for hire. This application is processed through the platform and is done online. Once the application has been approved, clients maketheir bookings online, and an available domestic worker is assigned to the client's household based on their specific needs and times. The domestic worker then accepts the request and carries out their cleaning services at the client's house. The client's house is the point of production, with different clients booking domestic workers in various locations. As explainedby Hunt and Samman 2020 (cited in Sibiya, 2021: 17):

> "SweepSouth provides a smartphone application that enables clients to connect with workers whose availability and profiles match their preferred service providers. Clients can

sign up and make bookings with this app while the intermediary oversees gigs and collects the cash. The platform's recruitment procedure entails an application andscreening process, checks on applicants' immigration status and criminal records, and orientation courses on utilising the site. The advent of digital platforms into South Africa's domestic work industry expands on an established model by including new elements."

Additionally, Wu and Zheng (2020) studied food delivery platform workers and managers in Beijing to demonstrate how employees are connected to and simultaneously construct multiple spatiotemporal ties in their daily work to meet the speed demand imposed by platform algorithms. They argue that workers in the gig economy develop various spatio-temporalities, showing that workers create different time and space patterns. In addition, the food delivery service sector is very time-sensitive, and algorithmic coordination is required tomanage many delivery workers across large geographical areas. Collectively, workers who usedigital platforms have a point of production spread across various geographical areas, indicating that gig work and platform labour relate to the spatial and temporal order underpinning this work (Wu and Zheng, 2020: 11).

Moreover, the decentralisation of the point of production due to digitalisation in the labour market has shifted work relationships. Gandini (2019: 1040) states that digitalisation is regarded as introducing both a market intermediary and a shadow employee based on the capital-labour interaction between employees and digital platforms mediating supply and demand. This has been noted to adjust the work and worker's relationship with the environment, leading to a more flexible and efficient work environment (Graham et al., 2017: 136). As intimated earlier, the worker seems to become more like a contractor than an employee. To reiterate, "gig work is usually typified by four characteristics: irregular work schedules; workers providing some or all capital (e.g., mobile phones, cars, or bikes); piece-rate work remuneration; and work being arranged and facilitated by digital platforms" (Newlands, 2021: 721). Examples of such digital platforms are Uber, UberEATS, Mr D Foodand Airbnb, with these digital platforms relying on the internet connection, Wi-Fi or Data, anda smartphone (Howcroft and Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019: 21). This, however, does not undercutthe fact that gig economy workers are located in a labour process – certainly, though, labour processes in the gig economy take on specific characteristics.

This thesis focuses on the food delivery sector within the gig economy, specifically focusing on Mr D Food and UberEATS, the most popularly used digital platforms infood delivery in the Eastern Cape. This "[a]pp-based food-delivery work represents a technologicalrepackaging and contractual reclassification of traditional food-delivery services" (Veen et al.,2020: 390). Therefore, consumers use these platforms to order food mostly when they are at work, unwilling to go out, lack time/skill to cook, are attracted by sales promotions or are experiencing bad

weather (Horta et al., 2021: 545). However, because gig workers are defined formally as independent and self-employed workers (rather than employees), they are not covered by existing labour laws regarding employees (Collier et al., 2017: 3). This leaves workers vulnerable to precarious and unimaginable working conditions.

Additionally, digital platforms such as UberEATS and Mr D Delivery act as mediatorsthat regulate economic activity between customers, workers, and restaurants. Therefore, "labour in the food delivery industry can be randomly distributed throughout the day. However, delivery workers choose 'whether to work' and 'when to work.' Flexibility in choice gives workers an experience of freedom, which is very attractive to delivery workers who seek freedom under the influence of individualism" (Li and Jiang 2022: 13). The platform economy often takes the importance of speed to an entirely new level in terms of the pace of the labour process. This refers to the use of the "order grab" used by platforms in the food delivery sectorto train workers into "speedy riders". Furthermore, the computer system allows for competitiveness among workers in delivering orders. Therefore, platform workers can choosewhen and how long they work, giving them a sense of freedom and highlighting the gig economy's flexibility characteristic.

Given this overview of the gig economy (in section 2.2), I now set out the theoretical framing which will be used for pursuing this study of food delivery workers in the Eastern Cape.

2.3 Theoretical Framing

This section will focus specifically on the theoretical framework deployed for this study. The study draws upon two interconnected theories that provide a strong basis for understanding the gig economy and for addressing the main objective of the thesis. This section first sets out labour process theory and then emotional labour theory. In discussing these, I demonstrate their interconnectedness, significance, and relevance for this study.

2.3.1 Labour Process Theory

The labour process theory, rooted in Marxism, connects work, employment, and industrial relations. It emphasises the bourgeoisie's ownership of the means of production and control over workers and focuses on three components of the production process: meaningful humanaction, the object of labour, and the tools used to do work (Gartman, 1978: 97). The labour-power of workers, through the expending of actual labour in the production of use value, createsvalue at a level higher than the cost of their labour, leading to surplus value and profit for the capitalists (Keen, 1993: 111). Furthermore, labour process theory examines the degradation ofwork and skills (deskilling) due to new capitalist production and management methods and strategies

(Thompson, 2010: 10; Gandini, 2019: 1042). The theory has been instrumental, therefore, in analysing "rapid changes in technology, management strategies, and production techniques" (Jaros, 2000: 26). Overall, the theory explores the complex nature of the relationship between employers and workers, specifically managerial control in the labour process, which commodifies labour power based on capitalist production relations (Gandini 2019: 1042). It suggests that capitalist production relies on human commodification, unfair working conditions of proletarians, and the maintenance of power and class inequalities (Smythe, 1977: 14; Cohen, 1987).

Gandini (2010: 1043) argues that labour process theory consists of "four main points: studying the function of labour in capital accumulation in the workplace, focusing on skills, examining employers control logics, and understanding the structurally antagonistic social relations between capital and labour in the point of production". Central to the development ofthe theory was Braverman's publication titled *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974), which highlights the relevance of the labour process theory to modern capitalism, emphasising the importance of management in transforming labour power into actual labour. This entails focusing on the unique nature of labour as a commodity, with the power latent in workers beingconverted into actual work effort (Brook, 2010: 327). The process of extracting actual labour is done through a production system characterised by managerial control, which takes on different forms over time and across economic sectors (Smith, 2015: 225). The existence of labour control does not minimise the possibility that workers might willingly consent to their own class subordination or that workers' resistance might arise under certain conditions (Thompson and Smith, 2009). Managerial control is thus central to ensuring that, at the point of production, labour power (i.e. the potential to labour) is transformed into actual labour to generate surplus value (Gandini, 2019: 1044).

Labour process theory also emphasises technological advancements and deskilling as a central dynamic in the production process to enhance efficiencies and profit levels (Grugulis and Lloyd, 2010: 91). These technological advancements, in part driven by intra-capitalist competition, also become a form of managerial control as worker tasks are automated and controlled by the rhythms of technologies. Jobs become characterised by repetitive tasks, low skill requirements, limited worker autonomy, and often low wages, prioritising efficient performance of designated functions. However, though deskilling might be a dominant trend, it is not a linear process, as upgrading skills and reskilling are also evident. Certain workersin specific new industries may be required to have specialised skills. As Thompsonand Smith (2017: 92) note, "skill extends beyond knowledge, technical know-how, andautonomy to include social, aesthetic, and emotional skills." Irrespective of skilling/deskillingtrends, capitalist organisations

can produce surplus value based on workers' knowledgeand skills. Edgell (2015: 211) states that the struggle between labour and capital is centred on employees' use of the skills required to generate surplus value, such that "skill hasalways been the pivotal aspect" of labour process theory (Grugulis and Lloyd, 2010: 93).

Undoubtedly, the concept of managerial control is central to labour process theory, andit refers to several dimensions and combinations that vary depending on the strategies and conditions of the organisation (Grugulis and Lloyd, 2010: 114). Edgell (2015: 195) notes that "managerial controls usually concentrate on performance management and rest firmly on the increased effectiveness of market discipline arising from employment insecurity". Therefore, organisations focus on increasing the scope, depth, and efficiency of managerial control. Technology, as noted, is regarded as a critical dimension in promoting managerial control effectiveness (Grugulis and Lloyd, 2010: 177).

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, the rise of the service sector and the advance of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) have created more diverse forms of production sites (Thompson and Smith, 2009: 918). In the platforms embedded in thegig economy, for instance, surplus labour is generated, that is, actual labour generating value beyond the cost of labour for the organisation. For workers such as food delivery workers, the production site (and labour process) is dispersed and diffused, and it entails interaction with customers and restaurants (takeaways). The workers are managed by an impersonal digital platform that conditions and configures their work and work activities. The metrics generated by platform-based data and data processing ensure the proper management and efficiency of gig-economy operations. This, therefore, provides a unique point of production in a setting where digital platforms are significant (Gandini, 2019: 1044).

In the gig economy, workers are no longer controlled directly and personally by those occupying positions of power in management. As noted by Friedman (1977: 50), direct control strategies involving simple or complex layers of human managers are a method that "replaces worker skill and independence with controlled job tasks, speed, and intensity". The gig economy is based on indirect labour control. However, the gig economy may still have bureaucratic and normative control elements, where organisations use norms, values and beliefs to regulate worker behaviour. Grugulis and Lloyd (2010: 116) note that normative control focuses on training workers to follow organisational beliefs, rules, regulations and goals. Individual workers' agency becomes a crucial control mechanism, oftenmanifesting as a collective emotional connection or self-control. However, Braverman's investigation of technical advancements within work organisation highlighted the importance of technology as a form of managerial control over the

labour process, strengthening the routinisation of work (Edgell, 2015: 62). In this regard, the term Taylorism was introduced byBraverman, who focused on the analysis of scientific management strategies that enable capitalists to increase labour intensity according to workflow mechanisms (Watanabe, 1991: 71; Carey, 2009: 507).

The literature notes that Taylorism is "a set of managerial principles from the Fordist era, aimed to boost manual labour productivity on assembly lines through rationalisation, standardisation, decomposition, and deskilling" (Liu, 2023: 264). In the new digital era, organisations now focus on adopting new technologies to standardise functions andoccupations. Therefore, "digital Taylorism is a new form of deskilling that involves translatingknowledge into working knowledge through the extraction, certification, and digitisation of knowledge into software prescripts that others can transmit and manipulate " (Thompson, 2010:105). Thus, labour process theory can now focus on how new software and internet-basedtechnologies have affected people's experiences at work. Furthermore, the rating system in the gig economy's feedback, ranking, and rating system can be viewed as a techno-normative control used to monitor workers. In addition, customer rankings, feedback, and ratings are tools used by digital platforms to evaluate worker performance, as "workers are subject to forms of control that leverage on 'gamified' practices aimed at fostering the achievement of 'personal bests' tostimulate – and reward – a worker's productive disposition" (Gandini, 2019: 1049). Customersuse gamification as a management technique that ensures workers are more engaged and attentive (Gandini, 2019: 1050).

Therefore, the new developments and understandings of labour process theory highlight increased work intensification. Electronic technologies are essential in self-policing, noting that workers can be supervised through technology, impacting work and reducing individual autonomy. Moreover, as indicated by Zuboff's 1998 study (cited in Wharton, 2022: 34), the impact of technology has changed the skills landscape, resulting in the rise of gig economy jobs, particularly in the service industry. Customer evaluations and reviews further reduce worker autonomy, as workers focus on providing for client needs for positive feedback. Algorithms used for algorithmic management aim to optimise organisational effectiveness andprofitability at the expense of reducing worker autonomy in decision-making and scheduling their work.

Oddly, it may be that workers in the gig economy experience a sense of autonomy, if only as an unintended consequence of the character of the gig economy. This does not necessarily equate to the notion of "responsible autonomy" as articulated by Friedman (1977),in which Friedman (1977:53) argues that responsible autonomy "aims to combat the undesirable effects of Direct Control". Responsible autonomy entails claiming that managerial control might allow

workers to make certain decisions within the organisation's boundaries, thereby allowing for individual accountability and reliability in their work. Insofar as gig economy workers are contractors and not employees, there might be feelings of autonomy on their part in choosing when and how to work. However, the rating and reward systems in outsourced models, as in the gig economy, involve customers reviewing workers for job performance, resulting in an outsourced model that relies on rating systems as a qualitycontrol mechanism (Thorbjørnsen, 2020: 26). This becomes a form of surveillance, which is a form of control deeply constrains gig economy workers.

At the same time, the rating system (at least for food delivery workers in the gig economy) leads to the loss of control by workers over their emotions, which are "owned" by employers and directed as part of the service offered, resulting in emotional disconnectednessand alienation (Vincent, 2011: 1372). I now turn to emotional labour theory to discuss this.

2.3.2 Emotional Labour in the Labour Process

Labour process theory is not focused specifically on emotional labour. However, it has sought to capture the constantly changing and variegated nature of work settings and distinguishes between emotional, mental, and physical labour. Thus, emotions at work and any uncertainties regarding emotional labour are of some interest to labour process theory (Thompson, 2010: 210). Therefore, as an increasingly important element, it emphasises the emotional side of labour and how the emotional satisfaction of workers is subservient to profitmaximisation (Thompson, 2010: 211). Labour process theory itself cannot decipher the complexities of emotional labour. Hence, it has been linked with studies and theories on emotional labour specifically.

Vincent (2011: 1370) notes that labour process theory recognises the existence of multiple forms of labour control systems in work organisations, and it highlights the importanceof an economy of feeling in commodity production. Marx's differentiation between exchangevalue and use value is used to define emotional labour as an element of labour power "sold fora wage", and this is used to develop "a materialist theory of labour subjectivity" (Brook 2013:332). This, worker emotions are incorporated into labour process theory, noting the prevalence of subordination-based management-worker relations, with emotional labour being emotional management for monetary profit" (Brook, 2010: 341). Therefore, workers perform emotional labour by managing their own and others' physical and emotional displays using complex skills to "adhere to the regulated feeling rules that an employer determines" (Vincent, 2011: 1371) – this relates to the issue of normative labour control systems.

The term 'emotional labour' was first used by Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart* (1983), focusing on how employers control workers' emotions. Hochschild (1983:7) argues that

emotional labour requires “one to induce or suppress feeling to sustain the outwardcountenance that produces the proper state of mind.” Ashforth and Humphery (1993: 90) defineit as “the act of displaying appropriate emotions”, whereas Grandey (2000: 97) speaks of emotional labour as “regulating feelings and expressions for organisational goals”. Therefore,it involves unseen work to keep customers (and others) happy. Therefore, emotional labour involves presenting certain emotions to fit the organisation’s expected job performance.

Moreover, Goffman’s symbolic interactionism theory is critical in conceptualising emotional labour. The notion of drama and acting is used to understand workers’ practices as if they were acting on a stage built by others. This involves workers as individuals producing and maintaining a show, which may entail experiences of alienation (Goffman, 1959: 229).Socially-organised emotional spaces (such as in the gig economy) shape social interactions, and emotions are displayed through social (including workplace) demands (Freund, 1990: 465). Emotional labour is seen as a labour product as workers must smile, feel, and appear in particular ways in the required organisational space (Brook, 2009; Hochschild, 1983).

This involves two forms of acting, surface and deep acting, essential to understanding worker emotions. Surface acting involves employees simulating emotions by changing their outward appearances, such as facial expressions, gestures, or voicetone (Choi and Kim, 2015: 285). This involves presenting emotions, where external expression is required and prioritised, regardless of internal feelings. Therefore, it will likely lead to emotional dissonance and exhaustion (Mishra, 2006: 20). Emotional dissonance, as surface acting, is a significant source of emotional control and regulation. In contrast, deep acting, also known as ‘faking in bad faith,’ is a more powerful technique in modifying emotions. It involves a more thorough adjustment of emotions or extensive internalisation and performance of altered emotions (Mishra, 2006: 8; Grandey, 2000: 97). Thompson and Smith(2017:206) further state that work organisations use worker emotions as a resource to enhance employee performance and align worker emotional experiences with organisational goals – thisentails the managerial control of workers and their emotions, including through any necessarytraining and supervision.

Hochschild (2012:7) notes that the deep and surface acting necessary for emotional labour interferes with the “inner self.” Workers experience alienation in being estranged from their feelings and others (Sawyer and Gampa, 2020: 198). Workers might labour in a disengaged manner or withdraw their labour entirely under these conditions. Alternatively, theymight engage in individual or collective acts of resistance against the imposition of labour controls, including algorithmic controls (Vincent, 2011: 1376) and the emotional performances almost demanded of them (Rydzik and Anitha, 2020: 883). It is important not toreduce worker agency to worker

resistance, as workers may use tactics to get on with their work (and lives) without directly and consciously confronting managerial authority. Edgell (2015: 187) thus explains that "misbehaviour in the workplace frequently includes pushing the limits of established rules" to ensure that, in the case of food delivery workers, they can maximise their earnings.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into the theoretical framework used for this study to pursue the main objective. The labour process theory and emotional labour theory complement each other and incorporate the latter into the former. In this regard, the labour process controls workers' mental and physical work and emotional labour. While this contextual chapter sets out, in broad terms, the character of the gig economy, the next contextual chapter hones in on more specific and pertinent issues about the gig economy labour process, namely managerial (labour) control in the context of power relations and emotional labour.

Chapter 3: The Gig Economy and Food Delivery Workers

3.1 Introduction

In the context of the previous chapter, this chapter examines the gig economy more thematically. It first considers the power dynamics within the gig economy, as this forms the basis for a more specific focus on managerial or labour control. The working conditions within the gig economy also receive attention. In doing so, the precariousness of gig workers comes to the fore in multiple ways. The chapter ends with a discussion of emotional labour and how emotional labour is performed in light of demands placed on workers because of the platform-based algorithmic control system in place.

3.2 Power Dynamics in the Gig Economy

The digital gig economy has restructured the labour market and processes (Ali and Muianga, 2020: 1). The platform controls workers using technological networks and structures. In this context, examining the power dynamics between digital platforms and gig workers is imperative to comprehend the character of the labour process. Understanding powerrelations clarifies how these platforms wield control and authority over 'their employees' and even conditions the possibility of workers' resistance. Therefore, to further examine the gig economy and the changes within the gig economy labour processes and markets, "academic analysis is needed to comprehend the power dynamics" (Healy et al., 2017: 2320). As highlighted by Wood and Lehdonvirt (2022: 8), power dynamics within the gig economy havefurther shifted control to technological mechanisms while also providing a role for customersin control mechanisms in the case of some gig economy industries.

Furthermore, Schumpeter's perspective is significant when looking at the power relations between capital and labour in the gig economy (Chinguno 2019: 33). As noted by Schumpeter (cited in Chinguno, 2019: 33), "technological innovation as having a double effect." It results in the decline and destruction of old industries while, on the other hand, it leads to the establishment of new ways of doing business as well as forms of labour and labour control. It generates new industries, business models, jobs and even economic values. This means that technological innovation may culminate in the decline or destruction of jobs tied to

the traditional ways of industrial work. At the same time, "new jobs and more efficient meansof producing goods and services emerge" (Chinguno, 2019: 33).

Understanding the nature of power relations in the gig economy is essential, yet this topic needs to be studied more. To provide one illustration of this, Ali and Muianga (2020) arguethat

using digital platforms in the economy has led to the informality, irregularity, and volatilityof Mozambique's current growth pattern. When examining the organisation of labour, service delivery, and production in the digital platform economy in Mozambique, their study highlightsthat the employment contract (typically a business contract) is often a verbal agreementwith no formal contract. Therefore, workers receive unstable wages below the minimum wagedespite platforms controlling working hours, with some gig labourers working over eight hours.Even where there may be a formal contract, workers lack organisational health and safety coverage and are not covered in workplace accidents; therefore, they have low bargaining power and experience precarious social and labour relations (Ali and Muianga 2020: 23). Theygo to emphasise that "the lack of any study or research on the platform economy or digital gigwork in Mozambique. Almost no data was available about this topic besides the number of workers subscribed on one platform, meaning it was difficult to situate the study" (Ali and Muianga 2020: 3).

A similar study in Johannesburg, South Africa, by Chinguno (2019), examined the power dynamics in the gig economy, focusing specifically on the taxi industry (Bolt and Uber) in Johannesburg. It looked at how new forms of transport service employing digital platformsand applications are altering labour relations and processes to allow for new areas of control and possibly worker resistance. Digital platforms in this industry make it easier for employersto regulate labour relations while concealing employment and power structures. At the same time, the study acknowledges that the "effect of digital technology on app work is ... paradoxical" (Chinguno, 2019: 62); on the one hand, workers are classified as independent contractors but reliant on digital platforms for their livelihood. Therefore, on the otherhand, the power dynamics are asymmetrical, where drivers are constantly anxious and controlled because the platforms have the power to deactivate them without giving them any prior notice (Chinguno, 2019: 50). Chinguno's study further shows that the platforms' failure to support workers' involvement in union activities or any other kind of collective organisation,shows evidence of power dynamics and continuous silencing of workers (Chinguno, 2019: 43). The effects of algorithm-based management and monitoring also comes out in this study, as away of deepening the imbalances in power through disciplining workers and eliminating any interpersonal and empathetic labour-relations management (Chinguno, 2019: 51).

In this light, Hoosen (2021) describes digital platforms as restricting worker agency as service delivery is controlled by technology through devices (smartphones), with apps used to assign tasks and track worker performance throughout the service delivery process. As a result, digital platforms are depicted as tightly controlling labour. At the same time, and to reiterate, Moroane (2023) notes that food delivery platforms regard their workers as self-employed

independent contractors who choose not only their own hours but also how much money they want to make, adding that: “there are no explicit guidelines or standards on these platforms thattell employees how they should perform their jobs. Employees are only given a chance to launch their own company and ‘make money’ on their own, under the supervision and controlof the digital platform” (Moroane 2023: 4). This seems to suggest that workers enjoy a high degree of autonomy as self-employed independent contractors. As suggested in Chapter 3, thismay entail simply a sense of autonomy rather than actual autonomy, with power relations andlabour control perhaps masked on this basis.

3.3 Managerial Control

Overall, “managerial control involves managers’ actions to direct employees’ conduct in a balanced manner, motivating incentives and effective sanctions, to ensure behaviour aligns with organisational aspirations, rules, and objectives” (de Vaujany et al., 2021: 678). As highlighted by Gandini (2019: 1044), the labour process theory assists in better-comprehendinglabour control and production relations in digital-platform work by drawing on concepts of control in the food delivery sector. This relates to Braverman’s concept of Taylorism, a scientific management strategy in which capitalists increase labour intensity artificially and systematically (Watanabe, 1991: 71). In this context, as Ruiner and Klumpp (2021: 890) stress,digital technologies modify work practices and settings through revolutionising work organisations and processes, and by introducing new worker surveillance and control methods.The following quotations highlight the relationship between the gig economy and new forms of labour control. Digitalisation, for instance, means that “technology is used as a new form ofmanagerial control, called algorithmic management within the workplace” (Woodcock, 2022:2). Additionally, Moroane (2023: 38) asserts that “algorithmic management is conceptualised as a tool that is utilised by platform capitalism that maximises managerial control and labour exploitation, which undermines the promises of the gig economy that empowers workers' autonomy.” Furthermore, the characteristics of algorithmic management include:

> “The constant monitoring of employee behaviour, where employees are constantlywatched and under control, which reduces their autonomy. Constant performance reviews of employees where performance data is compared and any unusual behaviour isimmediately notified to management. Similarly, food delivery workers’ movements are monitored in real-time through digital space, allowing for the control of their physical activity through algorithmic systems” (Newlands, 2020: 723).

It is noticeable that algorithmic management involves minimal human intervention, as algorithms

calculate and automatically make decisions that affect workers. Because of this, thereis also minimal transparency in the outworking of algorithmic processes (Möhlmann and Zalmanson, 2017: 4).

Understandingly, Chan (2021: 70) refers to a faceless algorithmic boss who mobilises and directs the workforce to fulfil specific tasks. Related to this, Lee et al. (2015: 1603) state that algorithmic management allows firms to track workers anonymously, optimallyand meticulously over a large scale, which is especially prevalent with crowd work. Algorithmic management makes it difficult for workers to collectively organise because of their diverse goals and reasons for working for digital platforms and because they may bedispersed spatially. This, therefore, results in a difference in demands for better working conditions. As a manifestation of algorithmic power and labour dynamics, "[a]lgorithmic management in the gig economy is a control mechanism that influences the labour process and limits workers' capacity to organise collectively" (Mendonça and Kougiannou 2023:3). The compliant workforce produced by algorithmic changes in gig economy platforms hinders the collective organising activities of food delivery drivers. The fact that digital platforms lack transparency because of algorithmic management hinders food deliverers' understanding of the algorithm and its impact on their work. It may also allow for modifications in the platform, which affect the labour process and workers' interests, without workers being aware of such modifications. It is no surprise then that the algorithm is labelled as a "'black box' due to its intricacy and lack of transparency" (Mendonça and Kougiannou 2023: 10). This black boxcharacter is justified at times on the basis that, after all, the affected workers are not employees,but independent contractors.

Algorithmic management has become a prominent practice in modern labour management, aiming to simplify the labour process and more effectively control labour. This aligns with the principles of McDonaldisation, which include predictability, efficiency, control,and calculability (Ritzer, 2013: 18). Additionally, it has been said that the paradigm of algorithmic management is, in effect, a modern-day version of Taylorism known, indicated earlier, as "digital Taylorism" (Huang, 2021: 3). This involves using computer algorithms that produce data autonomously to evaluate worker behaviour and even assign labour duties (Newlands, 2021:723). Due to this, organisations have implemented digital intermediaries to enable algorithmic monitoring, exposing employees to precariousness due to technology-basedmonitoring by their "employers" and assisted indirectly by customers (Adekoya, 2023: 1191). Scholars such as Duggan et al. (2017: 115) have stated that algorithms "increasingly make decisions that have tended to be the remit of managers and HR [Human Resource] professionals."

The platform-based food delivery industry in South Africa, as studied in Rustenburg by

Moroane (2023), provides a localised lens to better understand the service economy inside digital platforms. A specific geographical viewpoint provides insight into the distinct interactions between socio-economic and geographical factors that shape the gig economy in an area. Moroane's study deeply explores the complex dynamics of work organisation in the context of digital platforms, emphasising how these platforms mediate workprocesses. In addition, it draws attention to the different challenges that workers confront in exercising control over their labour processes. These challenges include issues like pay, working hours, and geographic flexibility, all of which have a significant impact on worker experiences and agency (Moroane 2023: 4). This Rustenburg study highlights that employees have some autonomy over how they carry out their work, but that their actions have to align with the standards and guidelines established by the platform organisation. Therefore, this reveals the systemic power dynamics, whereby workers have some autonomy but are constrained by the digital platform's standards and guidelines. Ultimately, this demonstrates the platforms' significant influence over working conditions.

In this regard, thoroughly comprehending worker dynamics in the gig economy requiresa more thorough investigation of collective interests and union activity among workers. Thestudy by Vandaele et al. (2019: 4) highlights platform workers' significant lack of union actionand attributes this phenomenon to traditional labour unions' lack of involvement. This brings to the fore workers' unwillingness and inability to join unions and the challenges unions face inadapting to the digital age. In platform-based domestic work, for instance, workers face matters of safety, security, and a lack of social protection, with limitations in collective organisation and bargaining (Hunt and Samman, 2020: 110).

Collective action in the food delivery sector in South Africa faces similar challenges arising around issues of precarity. For example, Moroane's Rustenburg study emphasises that food delivery workers do not have significant control over their working conditions, and their hours of work, and their status as non-employees undermines work security, where workers are not protected legally as employees and can be unfairly dismissed and with no right to paid leave. Platform workers are considered either self-employed or independent contractors or evenbusiness partners (Sibiya, 2021:3). As argued by Webster (cited in Hlatshwayo, 2022:476), there are "significant implications regarding uberisation [or the gig economy broadly]. Workers[as workers] are entitled to basic rights, such as their specific working hours, rights to speak up and compensation for injuries; however, due to the classification of gig workers, they are not entitled to this. Being defined as self-employed, workers are no longer entitled to such rights". Moreover, platforms tend to avoid the financial obligations of guaranteed employment, such as social protection, which is mandated by South African labour legislation, and the legalrequirements

connected with becoming an employer. Though Webster and others may consider their status as contractors and not workers as misclassification of their status, their non-employee status has real material effects, and it signals the unequal power relations existing in gig economy labour processes.

Finally, a significant study by Ruiner and Klumpp (2022) explores the complex relationship between worker autonomy and emerging forms of control in the setting of digital workspaces in Germany. Drawing from the definition of autonomy given by Hackman and Oldham in 1975 (cited in Ruiner and Klumpp, 2022: 891), autonomy is defined as "the degreeto which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out." The study emphasises a fundamental idea: autonomy and control have a negative relationship;an increase in control leads to decreased autonomy. This zero-sum notion requires, however, further investigation. Although less freedom may be possible with digital-based surveillance technologies, worker autonomy might appear in some ways. This requires a deeper understanding of the effects of these new kinds of gig economy controls on worker agency (Ruiner and Klumpp, 2022: 903).

3.4 Precarious Working Conditions in the Gig Economy

Within the extensive landscape of the gig economy, academics have explored complicated elements at the centre of this new and dynamic labour market. Notably, algorithmic monitoringin the gig economy seems to be related to unstable working conditions, factors that tend to limit employees' autonomy and bargaining power as well as configuring worker's conditions of work and their daily experiences at work (Anwar and Graham, 2020: 1269), including aroundemotional labour. I demonstrate this with reference to a few relevant studies.

According to Netto and Revina (2010: 10), precarity affects social, demographic, and economic domains in addition to the workplace, highlighting the overall effects of gig work on individuals and society. Their study extensively examines the precarious working conditions of food deliverers in Sweden, which they divided into two categories: those who perform gig labour as independent contractors and those who rely on gig work as their primary source of income. This distinction highlights the reasons workers enter the gig economy and their differential experiences. The latter group, which depends on gig work more fully,faces a greater risk of precarity because of their almost complete reliance on the gig economy.People who use gig work to supplement their income are less prone to precarity in their overall work lives, though they also experience the precarity intrinsic to gig work. The study delves deeply into the real-life

experiences of six food deliverers from three well-known Swedish app-based meal delivery services. The study demonstrates that precarity is made worse by the gig economy's lack of labour unions and minimum wages, with platforms free tocharge how much workers are paid based only on their profit-driven policies. Furthermore, theplatforms' control over shift assignments allows them to retain highly flexible workers, which enables gig companies to react more rapidly to changes in the market compared to the complexities of traditional employment arrangements. The complicated power dynamics controlling platform labour are highlighted by the dynamic combination of control, flexibility, andprecarity within the gig economy (Netto and Revina, 2021: 57-58).

The transition of the labour market to digitisation, as with the broader change to non-standard forms of employment, has raised several issues concerning the consequences of working conditions. Workers' working circumstances have been discovered to be thoroughly controlled by platforms. According to Macias et al. (2023: 572), "gig delivery workers work inunsafe working conditions, underpayment, excessive working hours or multi-apping practicesto reach a sufficient income". As Nasreen and Purohit (2018) argue, precariousness and alienation seem to prevail within the complex structure of the gig economy. Their research about food delivery workers in India highlights the brutal reality of this form of work. Food delivery workers face unexpected consequences due to their long work hours and persistent stress, including worker exhaustion and vulnerability. The apparent lack of job stability in this labour structure, where employees frequently raise concerns about the markeduncertainty of their 'employment' position, is especially noticeable. Importantly, Nasreen and Purohit (2018: 1058) also reveal India's widespread lack of social security coverage that forces gig workers into informal working arrangements. These individuals seem to exist outside the reaches of conventional employee protections and highlight the apparent weaknesses in the country's current social protection system. The study brings to the fore the significance of collective action in resolving the harmful consequences of alienation, precariousness, and a lack of social security experienced by gig workers in the fooddelivery sector in India.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has expanded the food delivery sector as consumers began to rely more fully on services provided by digital platforms. A study in Franceby Aguilera et al. (2022) looks at the working conditions of platform-based food delivery before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. In France, gig workers bear the costs of smartphones, data, fuel, car and bike maintenance, and insurance, which are not reimbursed by digital platforms. The lack of social security and healthcare for the delivery drivers compounds this. Overall, their working conditions are difficult, including long working hours and low earnings under the hegemony of

platform algorithmic control. These conditions create insecure situations for workers dependent on this work as their only source of income (Aguilera et al. 2022: 3). The study results showed that:

> On-demand delivery is a low-paid activity, with 80% of couriers earning less than the minimum wage per month and hour in France in 2021. On average, 48% of respondents make between 10 and 20 deliveries daily, with 38% more than 20 deliveries. 28% work five days a week, 40% six days a week, and 17% seven days a week. Couriers with no other paid activity work the most, with almost half working six days a week (Aguilera etal. 2022: 5).

The results also show a high risk of vehicle accidents, with platforms' payment per delivery method contributing to this high accident rate. Drivers use illegal modes of transport,such as motorbikes, to meet the platform requirements of reliable transportation and reduce work-related costs despite the French laws on illegal modes of transportation. Workers in the gig economy focus on providing the best possible service for their customers to receive positive feedback. As noted, "[p]latforms can determine, manage and monitor the quality of service provided and received through an anonymous customer rating system" (Chinguno, 2020: 49). Therefore, in the gig labour process, food delivery workers seekto meet customer needs and ensure that they provide excellent customer service. Because platforms use a pay-per-delivery system, there is a temptation to ensure the fastest possible service, which also heightens the prospects for accidents. Labour control in the gig economyis based on "using algorithmic management, which is enabled by platform-based grading and reputation systems." (Ruvishani and Kariyapperuma, 2021: 3). The rating methods establishedin food delivery applications such as Mr. D Food and UberEATS are mechanisms used to exercise control over workers. These mechanisms include feedback rating systems and rankingsystems incorporated into digital technology (Moroane 2023: 43).

3.5 Emotional Labour in the Gig Economy

A crucial aspect of managing workers in the complex environment of the gig economy centreson the subtle performance review process. According to Gandini (2019), customer ratings are the foundation for 'employee' evaluation. Because of this, workers must focus on emotionally managing their clients (i.e., enact emotional labour), which amounts to performing unpaid labour while also increasing feelings of job insecurity. Workers focus on creating social bondswith their clients and maintaining friendliness, and clients are given the platform to rate workers based on their personal experiences (Wood and Lehdonvirta, 2023: 1009).

Regarding food delivery services, customers are frequently asked to rate workers on a

scale of one to five stars, making their assessments an important source of critical evaluation of workers. However, it goes beyond simple evaluations, as it entails a feedback system which produces an immediate and ongoing flow of performance ratings:

> "This real-time feedback loop is an effective tool for digital platforms to monitor employee performance and take appropriate action closely, especially regarding underperforming workers. Gig workers are subject to a strict standard criterion of roughly 4.6 out of 5 stars to maintain their active status within the digital ecosystem" (Gandini, 2019: 1050).

The client review and rating of the platform worker's service is part of the labour process in this type of work, which drives platform workers to perform emotional labour and forces themto repress their negative emotions to be seen as excellent workers (Hlatshwayo, 2022: 474).

In the gig economy, workers function in high-stakes settings characterised by brief relationships and rapidly shifting conditions. Customer ratings are incorporated into the evaluation process, acting as a mechanism for performance measurement andas a labour control factor that shapes workers' practices and tactics. Therefore, maintaining a perfect or near-perfect rating becomes essential to workers' survival since it dictates how longthey can continue to engage on the platform for work. The dynamics of performance review in the gig economy show a complex interaction between worker strategies, platform rules, and customer emotions and evaluations. By recognising and combining these elements, it is possible to deeply comprehend the complex systems that monitor the gig economy and the consequent emotional challenges encountered by workers labouring within the digital economy.

Platform corporations exert control over their workers through this 'algorithmic management'. Clients assess workers based on job performance, and workers with thehighest ratings obtain more work based on client preferences and the platform's algorithmic ranking of workers based on these ratings. Furthermore, this algorithmic management system dismisses low-rated workers by deactivating their accounts. Because of this, delivery workersmust obey the organisational rules and norms when working and actively establish positive customer relationships by utilising emotional labour (Li and Jiang 2022: 15). Thus, workers' involvement in the gig labour process is characterised as involving the positive use of personalresources such as energy and emotions for work tasks (Lang et al.: 2023: 2). The rating and ranking of workers by customers involve an algorithmically-mediated customer control system devoid of personal and direct management: rather, computers calculate and monitor customer evaluations to determine the future platform-based opportunities for particular workers (Cameron and Rahmanb, 2022: 1). It seems then that "gig workers appear to be becoming 'puppets' of algorithmic control" (Lang et al.: 2023: 2), manipulating their emotionsin the process.

The service-sector gig economy almost compels workers to change their behaviour to reflect emotional labour. Hence, managing "emotions at work is often an invisible yet increasingly pervasive monitoring and digital surveillance" system (Van Oort, 2018: 2). As Moroane (2023: 89) highlights, in focusing on food delivery workers in South Africa, "algorithmic management is a tipping system that encourages workers to deploy emotional labour to solicit tips from their customers". This is often to the detriment of personal self-respect. Lang et al. (2023: 2) thus argue that "[h]ighly reinforced algorithmic control causes gig workers to experience negative emotions such as self-denial and anxiety for long periods, which diminishes their sense of self-efficacy."

This is not to suggest that emotional labour does not pervade more well-established forms of (non-gig) labour in the service sector. It always has been a significant factor in traditional work. However, it appears to be more pervasive in the gig economy. Lang et al. (2023: 2) state that gig work makes it very difficult for workers to labour for extended periods due to the excessive stress produced by both physical and emotional tiredness, which may result in burnout. Emotional labour is encouraged by the feedback mechanism involving customer ratings and feedback. It is used as a constant mechanism of reward or punishment inthe gig economy (Lutz et al., 2018: 3), leading to significant stress levels for gig workers. After all, ultimately, customer ratings are beyond the control of the gig worker, leading to uncertainty and anxiety.

The comprehensive research by Xiang and Wu (2021) in China provides an insightful analysis of the significant impacts of emotional labour on takeaway delivery workers in the gig economy, providing thoughts about various aspects that extend well beyond work. Their research explores the practical methods delivery workers use to carry out emotional labour, such as speaking with clients face-to-face or over the phone (Xiang and Wu, 2021). This dimension deepens our understanding by exposing the strategies employed by workers to manage the complex demands of the gig economy. In particular, though, the study emphasiseshow high emotional labour levels substantially affect several important aspects of worker well-being, such as overall job performance, physical and mental health, and job satisfaction. It sheds light on the psychological toll that gig work can have on those involved in the field, adding significant depth. Their research on gig companies' organisational regulations and how these impinge upon the emotional labour delivered by workers emphasises how structural elements determine worker experiences. The emotional labour undertaken is influenced by various factors, including platform rules and regulations, customer feedback, time standards, and merchant behaviour (Xiang and Wu, 2021: 487).

Essentially, it is critical to comprehend how digital monitoring and emotional labour

interact in the gig economy context. Platform workers are constantly under surveillance by impersonal technology, as Chinguno (2020: 51) stresses, forcing them to perform emotional labour tactics because they are forced to recognise and acknowledge, if only to themselves, that customers are the ones who will evaluate their work.This involves several emotional engagement strategies to improve customers'experience. In this regard, Moroane (2023: 90) highlights that:

> "Food delivery gig workers create feelings of welcome and friendliness for consumers by conducting effective labour. … [O]ne food delivery worker states that frequent connection with consumers is essential for their line of work. … [W]hile the app would alert the customer that their order had been picked up at the restaurant, it is also crucial for the person delivering the food to contact them via the App chat box and keep them updated on their order. Workers find this impressive on the side of the customers and would maximise their probability of getting tipped on top of their delivery rate".

In Moroane's study, maintaining constant communication with clients and deploying emotional labour is crucial for food delivery workers.

Additionally, the study by Lang et al. (2023: 2) explores the implications of heavily reinforced algorithmic control on gig workers' emotional well-being. The study reveals an unsettling pattern in which being "monitored" and "on-call" all the time makes workers uneasy, exhausted and unhappy. It highlights how gig workers' constant exposure to monitoring and control mechanisms might cause them to experience feelings of worry, self-denial, and low self-efficacy. These difficulties highlight the necessity for an in-depth investigation into the psychological effects of gig labour and its possible impact on workers' mental health. Therefore, the complex interaction between worker well-being, emotional labour, and digital monitoring is an important field of research that must be further explored in the literature.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter and the previous chapter have set the context for the two following empirical chapters, which focus on food delivery drivers in the gig economy in South Africa. This chapter focused on the gig economy thematically in ways which speak quite directly to the thesis's main objective and subsidiary objectives of the thesis: in particular, labour control and emotional labour. In analysing the gig economy thematically, it also becomes clear that labourprocess theory and emotional labour, when combined, are relevant and significant for pursuingthe main objective of the thesis. I now turn to the case study for this thesis.

Chapter 4: Food Delivery Drivers in the Gig Economy in the Eastern Cape

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first empirical chapter. It discusses the process of contractually becominga food delivery driver in the gig economy in Makhanda and Gqeberha, and it explores a food delivery worker's overall experiences and practices. It, therefore, maps out the daily routines of these workers, including their interactions with the digital platform, customers and restaurants. This leads to critical questions about the very status of these workers and how they might be placed in an ambiguous location: contractually, it seems, as independent contractors but falling under a system of technologically-driven managerial (or at least labour) control. Despite the tight surveillance, they sometimes experience a sense of autonomy. Overall, though, their position is marked by precarity.

4.2 Becoming a Food Delivery Driver

Digital platforms have become essential to today's economic system, with various models available to connect service customers and suppliers. Two distinct types of these platforms have emerged: location-based and web-based. Web-based platforms, such as those offered by Upwork, create a global marketplace where people can supply and purchase a wide range of services regardless of location. These platforms enable simple online transactions and give clients access to many potential workers. On the other hand, location-based platforms, like Uber Eats and Mr. D Food, address the specific needs of consumers in specified physical areas.Uber Eats and Mr. D Food thrive in the fast-paced food delivery industry, giving customers easy access to a wide range of foods from surrounding restaurants. This simultaneous categorisation emphasises the creativity and flexibility of the digital market, satisfying both local and global demands and ultimately transforming the way services are provided and usedin today's marketplace.

Gig economy workers start working for these platforms for several reasons, and each individual experiences their work differently. The majority of the participants of this study stated that they started working for these digital platforms due to their financial situations andtheir need for money. They indicated that they started working for Mr D Food or UberEats because they had been searching for jobs; however, due to the limited number of jobs in South Africa, especially for foreigners, these platforms provided them with the opportunity to earn a living and to support and provide for their families. This particular finding sets the tone of the paperto show that these participants entirely depend on these platforms as their source of income and, therefore, can influence the workers' day-to-day experiences at work. As expressed by Tanaka(Makhanda, Mr

D Food), a 25-year-old Zimbabwean man:

> *I came from Zimbabwe looking for a permanent job, but as you know, it is difficult to find jobs in South Africa as a foreigner, so I tried to look for a part-time job to earn something that pays.*

A few participants stated that working for these digital platforms allows them to earn the money they need to survive in this economy. Furthermore, digital platforms allow them to earn an income without an academic qualification. John (Makhanda, Mr D Food), a 20-year-old SouthAfrican, states that:

> *It is a good opportunity to get money without any degree or qualification. I can get extra money for it while trying to figure out my overall life outlet.*

Participants' pathways to becoming delivery drivers were varied. John learned about this opportunity from a family member who had already worked for the platform. Tanakadiscovered the prospect while looking for work in South Africa from his social network. The various information sources illustrate the complex interactions between individual surroundings and interpersonal connections influencing participants' trajectories before signing the platform contacts.

Both digital platforms do their contract signing process online. Specifically for Uber Eats, workers read their contract, which has the terms and conditions of their work and are allowed to accept these terms and conditions, which, once confirmed, is the completion of the contract signing. While Mr D Food delivery workers sign their contract online and read the terms and conditions of their work online, the workers in both research sites are called to theirbranch offices to sign the platform contract. Mr D's process continues to show that, even though the organisation has characteristics of the gig economy, elements of traditional organisation processes are still present.

According to the interviews, most workers stated that, as a part of the terms and conditions in their contract, they need to have their own transportation system, which in the food delivery sector can be a car or motorbike. Further, it states that these platforms do not reimburse them for these costs. The contract also states that workers must have their own smartphones, which they will use to receive the orders:

> *They do not assist you with any of these things. Your own money pays for the car, the phone and the fuel. They give us the uniform, but you must also pay for it. The car maintenance is on you. When you apply for Mr. D, they ensure you have everything before you start working. There are no compensation policies that I am aware of* (Tanaka, Makhanda, Mr D Food).

The lack of compensation policies draws attention to the fact that platforms do not assist employees with the necessary work-related expenses such as petrol, network data or the upkeepof their vehicles or motorcycles. They further noted that they receive community guidelines, which they use throughout their working day. These community guidelines include acting professionally and accordingly when dealing with customers and customer orders.

After installing the digital platforms, prospective drivers for the delivery companies MrD Food and Uber Eats must upload the required documentation through the application. Employees distributing food for Mr D in Makhanda and Gqeberha claim that paperwork can be submitted online or in person at the corresponding offices. Mr. D Food keeps offices in Makhanda and Gqeberha. Uber Eats has no physical offices in any of these areas. A form of identity is required as part of the documentation procedure; South African nationals must submit a copy of their ID, and international nationals must present certified copies of their passports. In addition, a copy of a driver's licence, proof of address, banking details, and criminal background check documentation are required from both citizens and foreign nationals. A working permit allowing them to work in South Africa must also be included for foreign nationals. The participants also revealed that it usually takes a few weeks for the digitalplatforms to validate and approve papers that potential workers submit; this might take up to seven weeks before workers can access the platforms and start working. Workers of these digital platforms are identified through branded uniform jackets and bags in the restaurants where they collect their orders. Therefore, workers must conform to a standard appearance as specified in the rules and regulations of both delivery companies. They must wear distinctive branded uniforms and carry the approved branded delivery bags. There are similarities betweenUber Eats and Mr D Food Delivery’s labour processes, but subtle differences have been notedthroughout the study.

In contextualising gig workers, it is critical to comprehend the intricate framework of skills that enables the services that customers can use through platforms. The skills workers need are crucial in this research as they help understand the food delivery sector. In contrast to traditional jobs that require workers to have a certain number of school years and years of working experience, the gig economy uses an alternative framework. Due to the alternate framework, the gig economy provides employment opportunities for people with limited schooling and working experience required for traditional jobs. Further, it assists in helping with the rapidly growing unemployment rate in South Africa.

4.3 Being a Food Delivery Driver

Customers who use Uber Eats and Mr D Food can read different restaurant menus, order from

various restaurants, and pay for the food at the restaurant using their devices and in the comfortof their homes. According to Mr D's food delivery website, “over 8,000 restaurants trust us todeliver their food fast and hot” nationwide[2]. These are similar numbers seen with the number of restaurants that use Uber Eats as a reliable food delivery platform. User applications can be downloaded by the different operating systems (Android and iOS) to place orders and for potential workers to submit their job applications, or this can be done through the platform website, meaning that potential workers and customers can access these platforms using any smartphone and require internet connection or mobile data from perspective network providers. These platforms use location detection to locate the customer and show the customer the restaurants that are open and closed at different times based on their location. Workers deliver food using either motorbikes or cars. Before this, customers are informed of the total cost, which includes the meal price and delivery fee at the time of ordering. Customers can use theirdebit or credit card that they have added to their platform as a payment method or pay cashon delivery. After the customer has confirmed their method of payment, an order is placed, andthe customer can see the progress of their order, from when the restaurant accepts the order tothe order being prepared to when the driver collects the order to how far the order is from theirset address.

The digital platforms receive payments from customers for their delivery services. A commission on restaurant orders is placed on the platform in exchange for handling the transaction and matching the customer with their desired restaurant (Raj et al., 2023: 6). Both Mr D Food and UberEats provide a wide range of choices, satisfying the preferences of various customers. For example, Uber Eats lists popular food delivery categories, including Indian food delivery, dessert delivery, quick food delivery, and health food delivery, all of which are also offered by Mr D Food Delivery. Furthermore, restaurants and independent food outlets can register without setup fees, start their e-commerce listing and begin order collection and delivery procedures using both platforms. The ease of online payment processing with cards or instant Electrical Funds Transfer (EFT) is available to customers. Restaurants can work with skilled drivers and continuously track their sales using digital platforms, which adds to the smooth operations.

4.3.1 A Note on Skills and Training

As this section focuses on delivering food to customers at their location, a key skill required by

[2] https://www.mrdfood.com/become-a restaurantpartner#:~:text=Over%208000%20restaurants%20trust%20us%20to%20deliver%20their%20food%20fast%20%26%20hot.

digital platforms is driving. Participants state that a copy of their driver's licence is requiredduring the application process. Moreover, in traditional employment, the workers are considered to have "low skills." As noted by the participants, no formal qualifications are required when applying for this job. The participants further pointed out that some skills necessary when working include timeliness and efficiency to ensure customer satisfaction. These digitalplatforms aim to provide customers with fast food delivery. Therefore, they must focus on timemanagement skills to fulfil the platform's business model. Further, they must focus on communication skills. Workers need to ensure that they communicate in a friendly manner with customers regarding the progress of their orders from collection. Workers must further communicate with customers upon arrival. Communication skills are important when using the digital platformchat box and during delivery. Another important set of skills that workers need is navigating. Gig workers must be able to navigate around the working area using the GPS tracking system on their phones; therefore, worker navigation is important.

To improve worker skills, they receive training from the digital platforms. Both digital platforms provide drivers with online training videos on the digital platform itself that focus on providing workers with customer service skills to ensure customer satisfaction. The workersstated that they are provided with e-learning systems that teach them how to collect orders from restaurants, communicate with customers using the digital platform, interact with customers when delivering their orders, and complete orders successfully.

Mr D Food workers in Makhanda state that for further training, managers ensure that new workers work alongside experienced workers as a part of their training process. Further, refresher training is provided to the drivers every six months. This refresher training includes the process of watching videos and taking quizzes. This e-learning system is self-paced so thatworkers can do this on their own time. In contrast, Uber Eats only provides training when workers start working for them; however, they have community guidelines which are provided by the platform throughout their work. Workers, therefore, have access to this information andcan revise it. As mentioned by Kuda (Gqebera, Mr D Food), a 20-year-old:

> *When you start working, an account with your name and details is opened. When you start working for a month before they can begin to rate you, in the first month, your ratingscore must be between 99% and 100% and not below. So, if the rating is low from that month, they move you to a less busy hub. As soon as your account is approved, you starttraining. They train you on how to use the application, and then the Mr D application will train you on how to use the GPS; they also give you an orientation of the restaurantsyou will be working with at the hub you have been assigned, and they train you on the road rules. We*

receive no training regarding the rating system. We do not receiveany refresher training; the training you receive when your account is approved is the only training we get.

4.4. Mapping the Food Delivery System

This section highlights several important issues related to the digital platform food delivery work dynamics. These platforms have revolutionised the delivery system and have focused on maximising their efficiency by serving as an intermediary between customers and restaurants. The participants' experiences may differ regarding operating procedures and geographical flexibility. Also covered in this section are the participants' flexibility to determine their own working hours, the terms of payment using these platforms, and the needfor connectivity to ensure efficient operations.

Location-based services like Mr D Food and Uber Eats become crucial. These platforms allow the efficient delivery of products and services in specified areas. These platforms, for example, make transporting goods from nearby restaurants to the customers' physical addresses easier, creating an essential connection between production and consumption. Digital platformsare transforming distribution networks and helping organisations improve operations, cut costs,and increase overall productivity. It is, therefore, important to understand the point of production where labour occurs. According to the labour process theory, the point of production is usually found at a single geographical point in a distinct building site. In this study, workers appear to regard digital platforms as their point of production. As previouslynoted, customers place orders on these digital platforms and perform transactions on the sameapplications.

According to the interviews, participants state that this type of work gives them the flexibility to start work in any geographical location, usually near restaurants. Uber Eats workers specifically state that they can log in and start work from anywhere to start theirworking shift, finish work, and log off from anywhere. This is, however, slightly different for Mr D Food delivery workers, as the company expects them to drive to the branch office to signa working form before they can log in and start work. Workers in Makhanda and Gqeberha must, therefore, sign a duty form confirming their availability of work. Even with that, the workers can officially log on and start work from various geographical locations.

In Gqeberha, however, the operations differ due to the city's geographical size. Gqeberha has a total of three malls. In the study, workers in Gqeberha stated that the platformsuse three "hubs" (working zones): Baywest Mall, Greenacres Shopping Centre, and Walmer Park Shopping Centre. Workers are assigned to each hub (working zone), and a worker assigned to a specific "hub" cannot change to a different hub unless the platforms authorise them. As stated by

the participants, the Greenacres hub is one of the busiest working zones in that area: most workers focus on working at that specific hub. However, due to the number of restaurants at the locations in the different malls, workers are divided to providetheir services in the different malls. This difference will be discussed further throughout this chapter.

Workers in Gqeberha and Makhanda experience differences regarding operations. As previously noted in the chapter, these areas are described in different ways geographically, which influences the worker's experiences. Mr D workers in both these areas use WhatsApp to communicate with their branch office managers and each other. Workers in Makhanda noted that because this is a small town with one mall in the town, they are designated to a single working zone. They stand around this specific zone waiting for orders throughout the day. Workers wait for orders, which can come from any partner restaurant around Makhanda. Workers further stated that their working schedule is done weekly. Every Saturday,managers send the weekly scheduling form, where workers can choose their own shifts based on their preferences and personal plans. Shifts are allocated, and the week's working scheduleis sent to the drivers at the beginning of the week. This further shows that workers have autonomy to a certain degree regarding their work, as workers decide when, where, and howmuch they want to work.

Digital platforms use both card payments and cash payments from customers. As previously stated, Mr D Food Delivery has been identified to have offices in both Gqeberha and Makhanda. Therefore, as a part of their contract, workers of Mr D Food are expected to submit the total amount of cash they received throughout their day, which is expected to tally the amount shown on the platform from the total number of orders the worker delivered throughout the day. Uber Eats, however, has a different process, as the company does not have an office. So, workers are expected to state on the application itself the amount they have received from each customer as physical cash as they deliver the food.

The working shifts are entirely based on the worker. Workers have three options forthe shifts they can work. The day shift starts at 8:00 am when the restaurants open and finishesat 5:00 pm. The night shift starts at 5:00 pm and finishes at 9:00 pm on weekdays.During the weekend, from Thursday to Saturday, workers begin their shifts from 7:30 am and finish at 10:00 pm:

> *The working schedule depends on you. We work with shifts, so you put in some shifts if you want to work. For a double shift, you start from 7:30 am to 09:00 pm. When working day shifts, you begin from 7:30 am to 05:00 pm; when working a night shift, you start from 17:30 to 21:00, from Sunday to Thursday. On Fridays, if you want to work a double shift, you beginat 7:30 am and finish at 10:00 pm. Then, on Saturdays, when you work a double shift, youbegin at 8:30 am to 10:00 pm. Day shifts on Saturday are from 8:00 am to 05:00*

pm. The night shift is from 05:30 pm to 10:00 pm. I am working the day shift every day this week, so I have been here since 8 am. I am going to finish at 05:00 pm (9 hours). Then, I will be doing double shifts on the weekend, so I will start at 8:30 am and finish at 10:00 pm (13 hours). So, every morning, you go to the branch office to sign in for your shift; afterwards, you come down to therestaurants, log on to the application, and wait for the orders. If you did any cash deliveries, every day you knocked off, you went back to the branch office, and you handedin the money you made from the cash deliveries. Everything is on the phone and online, so when you deliver the money at the end of the day, they check that it matches the amountshown on the system, and then you can go from there. Shifts are put in every Saturday forthe following week's shifts. (Tanaka, Makhanda Mr D Food)

Some participants stated that with their kind of job, you won't get paid if you do not work. Therefore, you are paid for what you work for. Workers are paid using a pay-by-deliverysystem by digital platforms, allowing customers to tip drivers based on their service delivery. Platforms use this system, and employees receive their payments only after completing specifictasks, such as delivery. Platforms use this method as it is linked to performance. It is assumed that this system aims to create a working environment that motivates workers. Therefore, top performers continue to increase worker productivity and skill levels.

However, the participants admitted that they face more connectivity issues than technical. They have experienced technical glitches due to application updates, which rarely happen. Further, participants noted that the platform can sometimes become overwhelmed, where participants cannot receive customer orders, and sometimes customers cannot place any orders. These technical and connectivity issues that they experience can affecttheir total income. Tanaka (Makhanda, Mr D Food) stated that:

I usually experience problems when they are updating their applications. It is a big problem because sometimes the application, after an update, will not show us any ordersthat are available for pickup, and we have to wait until they fix the problem. Because weare working online, sometimes the network gives us problems. Since I started working, Ihave been using Cell-C, and sometimes, not often, there are issues with the network. It isimportant to have airtime and enough data; you will not know that your data is finished,andyou won't get any orders.

Delivery rates differ according to the days of delivery. Mr D Food workers have a flat rate stipulated by the platforms. During the weekdays, workers are paid about R25 per delivery, directly credited to the worker. During the weekend, the workers are paid about R35 per delivery. For Uber Eats drivers, delivery costs are calculated based on the distance per delivery. Therefore,

delivery costs vary according to the distance, and the furtherthe customer's address is, the higher the delivery cost. Workers can also receive tips from customers, which is an addition to the flat rate that has been stipulated. The participants interviewed said that besides the money they receive as per delivery, the tips received from customers positively contribute to their financial stability and that the money they earn makesthem happy:

> *We are paid per delivery; tips can be added to the delivery total. The tips are very important; they do not affect my income negatively because I am paid for every delivery,but they add to my money. The tip contributes a lot to my income. For example, if I remember correctly, the highest I have gotten from tips was R180. It is a very importantpart of our job.* (Tanaka Makhanda, Mr D Food)

However, the total earnings of the delivery workers are unpredictable as they are determined by factors such as the number of shifts a worker takes and the number of orders they deliver. The interview highlighted that there are days that are not so busy, such as in the middle of the month, where workers can wait for customer orders for hours, compared to end-of-month dates, where workers are constantly busy with customer orders. Drivers in the interview also stated that sometimes they can get up to 7 orders and tips that can amount to about R100 on some days. Workers are paid weekly for both digital platforms, but the specific days differ. InGqeberha, Mr D, Food delivery workers, said they are paid every Friday, whereas Makhanda workers said they get paid every Tuesday. The Uber Eats workers for both Gqeberhaand Makhanda stated that they are paid every Monday. The study also highlighted that, although these payments are made on these specific days, workers receive them at different times due to bank transaction cut-off times. Furthermore, the majority of participants highlighted that they had not experienced any issues in relation to their payment; they further stated that they received their payment in full.

As a part of the labour process, after the customer's order has been delivered and the transaction has been completed, the application prompts customers to review and rate the quality of the restaurant food and the service received from the delivery driver separately. Theseplatforms use a five-star rating system where customers provide ratings between one and five based on their experience with the deliverer. This is an integral part of the labour process andwill further be explained in this chapter.

4.5 Ambiguities of being a Food Delivery Driver

This study focuses on understanding worker experiences of labouring for digital platforms. Therefore, this study also seeks to understand if and how the experience and perspectives of food delivery drivers in the gig economy differ from working directly for restaurants and beingpart of

the in-house delivery systems. Two critical issues arise in this respect: the actual employment status of the food delivery drivers and their sense of autonomy (and perhaps actual autonomy). Both issues speak to the possible ambiguities of becoming a gig economy worker (at least in the case of Uber Eats and Mr D Food) and how the drivers are controlled and experience this control.

It certainly seems the case that being a food delivery driver in the gig economy has its own particularities. For example, most workers state that working for these platforms brings a high level of psychological stress as they deal with different types ofcustomers. At the same time, they feel compelled to focus on delivering the best service to theircustomers. Drivers acknowledge that they have had to deal with customers who are rude and unhappy with them for issues beyond their control. They highlight that theirinteractions with customers are sometimes difficult due to factors such as longer restaurant preparation times and traffic. Watipa (Makhanda, Uber Eats) narrates her experience of interacting with unhappy customers:

> *Sometimes, I can bring the food late because I got it late from the restaurant. The customer will be angry with me and give a low rating because they think I am the one who delayed the food. There are also traffic issues, and sometimes you get a problemwith your bike during delivery.*

4.5.1 Employment Status

It is sometimes difficult to understand the specific type of work relationship in which gig economy labourers are embedded. In particular, is it an employment relationship or a business relationship?

In this respect, academics have used many terms to refer to individuals living outside of traditional organisational processes. These terms include contingent workers,freelancers, non-standard workers, and independent contractors (Caza et al., 2022: 2125). As previously noted, "a gig worker is employed on a freelance basis, carrying outshort-term jobs or contracts, to one or more employers. Some may rely on a website or app tohelp them find or organise their gig work. Others may connect more with word-of-mouth in this reputation business" (Tripura Times, 2020: 1). Existing literature has focused on understanding how digital platforms commodify labour. Furthermore, it has been noted that theclassification of workers plays a significant role in whether workers receive employment-related benefits and protections. Employees are entitled to a significant number of benefits, including minimum wage, overtime pay, and cost reimbursement; however, if a worker is classified as "self-employed" or an " independent contractor", they do not receive any of the benefits. Therefore, organisations focus on shifting to platforms where workers are classified as freelancers instead of employers, resulting in workers no longer being covered by employerprotection systems. (Masiero, 2021: 6350).

Hunt et al. (2019: 12) noted that workers accept gigs without guaranteeing future work, and platform companies consistently categorise them as independent contractors instead of employees. Further confirmed by ECSECC (2022: 16), "the gig economy relies on self-employed or independent contractors (freelancers)." Most of the participants in this study confirm that they consider themselves "self-employed", and some state that they are "part-timeworkers." Some also considered themselves part of a "partnership" with the digital platform. According to the Mr D Food Delivery website, their hiring strategy is to call delivery drivers "partners" of Mr D Food, not workers. These findings confirm what has been argued by Gandini (2019: 1045), stating that "platforms are a digital point of production transforming social relations into production relations…platform acts as a mediator between a "hirer" and aworker, establishing a nonstandard employment relationship on a self-employed basis. However, this study shows that worker contracts and working conditions do not reflect self-employment. As reflected by Takudzwa (Gqeberha, Uber Eats), a 24-year-old Zimbabwean Black man,

> *I consider myself a part-time worker and not someone self-employed. There isn't much of a contract when you start working for UberEATS because everything is done online. Ididn't sign anything, but there are terms and conditions which I cannot violate because they will block my account if I do. All I did was submit my documents online, including my criminal background check, and they verified everything. You can start working. Thisprocess is a bit long because it can take up to seven weeks to approve you. Some of the terms and conditions that I remember are that you can't share your account (rent it out)with anyone, you can't eat the customer's food, and lastly that if you received cash fromcustomers, you have to state that you have received cash from the customer.*

This classification of workers provides an intricate issue to the legal system regarding the classification of the worker's employment status. The classification of workers as eitherself-employed or independent contractors means that the platforms use this as a method of worker exploitation of their labour power.

4.5.2 Feelings of Autonomy

Most workers stated that working for digital platforms allows them to work whenever they feel like it. They highlighted that working as an in-house deliverer means that you are working based on the restaurant's working hours, and the workers have little control over when they should work. Furthermore, the participants highlighted that working directly for restaurants limits their earnings, and they stated that they believe they earn more moneyworking weekly than being paid monthly. Participants also highlighted that working for digitalplatforms allows them to work for

different restaurants, increasing the number of orders they can get daily and contributing to their income. Most workers said they would rather keep working for digital platforms than for restaurants directly. As stated by Dube in Gqeberha,

> *Yes, it is different. I am my own boss; I don't work under anyone. So I can start working when I feel like it. Those who work for restaurants have to go in the morning and finish only when the restaurant closes. Also, the money at Mr D Food is better because I am paid per delivery; those working for the restaurants are paid hourly. If you calculate it, you will find that I make more money than them because I deliver for different restaurantsand not just one.*

4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this empirical investigation highlights the complicated relationships surrounding becoming a food delivery driver in Makhanda and Gqeberha's gig economy. Investigating contract specifics and the day-to-day experiences of these workers also shows the complicated connection between control and autonomy. Even though they areconsidered independent workers, they work in an environment where technology-driven managerial tracking confuses the boundaries between their job and self-employment. These employees balance and have a generalised sense of precarity through their interactions with customers and digital platforms.

Chapter 5: Labour Control and Emotional Labour amongst the Food Delivery Drivers

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the food delivery gig economy and considers, more directly, the objectives of the thesis. It examines the power relations within which the food delivery drivers are placed and how the digital platform and algorithmic control systemcondition and constrain the daily activities of the workers. Focusing on the rating system, customers use also demonstrates the multiple practices whereby workers perform emotional labour to maximise their income despite the stress this brings upon them. The labour control system and emotional labour practices relate to the precarity embodied in the workers' working conditions and set out. The chapter ends by providing the working experiences of two particular workers, highlighting similarities and differences and, therefore, the variegated character of being a gig economy food delivery driver.

5.2 Power Relations

Digital platforms depend highly on modern technology for tracking, managing,and controlling work relationships and labour processes. Understanding power dynamics in the context of the gig economy refers to the interaction and distribution of power between different individuals, including customers, platforms and employees (Chinguno, 2019: 31).

The gig economy has grown exponentially in recent years, challenging traditional norms of employment and changing the traditional labour market. In this paradigm, digital platforms increasingly use app-based approaches to connect consumers with workers to execute on-demand tasks. These on-demand apps have created new labour markets that cross boundaries and rely on a revolving door of workers to accomplish both local and global duties(Lata et al., 2023: 1). However, these distinctive features of the gig economy raise concerns about issues related to the level of managerial control that gig workers are subjected to from either the platforms, employers or customers.

This section examines the complex power relations within the food delivery sector in Makhanda and Gqeberha to contextualise it further. The interactions between the delivery drivers and the key agents that affect their working environment, specifically management entities, restaurant employers, and customers, will be critically examined in this section. This section of the chapter aims to clarify the power structures that shape and impact workers' experiences. It additionally seeks to focus on the degree of management control between platforms, the dynamics of work between restaurant employees and delivery drivers, and how customer interactions all work together to shape the gig economy.This investigation has the potential to

provide significant insight into the difficulties experienced by delivery workers as well as their degree of resistance and contribute to a morecomprehensive understanding of the broader power dynamics within the sector.

5.2.1 Direct Managerial Control (Mr D Food)

As a part of the labour process, food delivery workers experience a significant level of controlby these digital platforms. However, besides this form of (technological) control, Mr D's Food delivery drivers experience a more direct form of control as well – a second layer of control. I detail this briefly, but it should be stressed that the main form of control is via the platform.

Mr D Food delivery workers go to the branch office every day to sign forms of availability before they can log in to start working. Most participants admitted that their relationship with their branch manager is hierarchical. The branch managers instil theorganisation's rules and monitor workers during their shifts. Further, they stated that their managersare their bosses and are there to assist them and make their work easier. As stated by John (Makhanda, Mr D Food), a 20-year-old South African White man:

> *It is very hierarchy-based, but I know that's how it has to be because the manager has toset an example. The manager imposes the organisational rules and ensures workers do the right thing throughout their shifts.*

However, participants further state that their relationship with their branch managers can be strict, making them uncomfortable. As stated by Dube (Gqeberha, Mr D Food), a 29-year-old Zimbabwean Black man:

> *The problem is between drivers and managers at the office. My contract states that I aman independent contractor, but managers treat us like employees. They are very strict with us and sometimes act as the authority. Sometimes, working with the managers is not nice at all.*

Furthermore, as noted by Moroane (2023: 71), the link between the branch office and the online system Mr D uses shows the control of the platform workers are under. Furthermore,the participants who work for Mr D Food in both areas state that a WhatsApp group has all thedrivers and the branch managers. This group is used as a method of communication and supervision by the managers. This labour process experienced by Mr D's Food delivery workers shows that they are monitored by more than one party. This also showsthe strict monitoring that is exerted by digital platforms.

5.2.2 Algorithmic Control

The food delivery drivers enter into a business contract rather than an employment contract. In this regard, referring to managerial control of the drivers might be problematic. Nevertheless, if used loosely, it is conceptually appropriate to speak of the drivers as being managed (or at least controlled) in a very impersonal manner via algorithmic control.

Managerial control is the processes managers or supervisors, or management generally,use to shape and monitor workers' behaviour (Li et al., 2022: 4). Furthermore, it is critical to understand these procedures and systems as they affect gig work-related factors, including the nature of the worker-employer relationship, working conditions, and job satisfaction. Moreover, a crucial characteristic of digital platforms is algorithmic control.Technical innovation in the labour market results in "organisations increasingly relying on algorithms to exert automated managerial control over workers" (Wiener et al., 2023: 485).

One key theme from the interviews was the amount of control exerted bythe digital platforms (Uber Eats and Mr D Food) on the food delivery gig workers. As previously stated, customers place their orders on digital platforms and can see their order progress from when the preparation begins to when the driver collects the order. These platforms go the extra mile to show the customer exactly where they are after they have collected their order. Most workers stated that digital platforms use GPS trackingsystems to show the customer and the platform their exact location. One of the key requirements of the digital platform is for drivers to constantly have their data connected and live location to make it possible for workers to be tracked in real-time. Platforms use this requirement as a method of labour control as they state that they cannot receive any orders if they turn off their live location. Therefore, they are not able to make any money, whichin turn further affects their income.

Platforms then rely on algorithms as another aspect of control. As noted by Goods et al. (2019:5040), automation of work allocation and performance management has resulted in a shift of managerial tasks from humans to machines, resulting in different types of algorithmic management. The algorithmic management of workers is a control mechanism that creates the surveillance of workers. As stated by Moroane (2023: 84), algorithmic management refers to the computer-programmed procedures used by digital platforms to input data into the intended output in a more complete, instantaneous, and interactive manner. This system is usedas a replacement method for human management, completely in the case of Uber Eats driversand almost completely for Mr D Food drivers who also experience direct managerial control. Digital platforms use this to direct, configure and monitor worker performance. Watipa (Makhanda, UberEats) narrates:

Uber Eats also tracks us, and the tracking is done via the phone GPS because once you are

online, they know where you are. The tracking used by the apps doesn't affect me because it is a part of the job.

This is further confirmed by Dube (Gqeberha, Mr D Food), stating that:

You always have to keep your GPS on when you are working. You can't switch it off because you won't get any orders if you do. That means you won't be making money. Thesurveillance is that they always track me on my smartphone when working to ensure the food gets delivered. Mr D will show me the amount of timeI have, and it will also show the customer when I have picked up the order. It will use themap, which needs my GPS to direct me to the customer's address.

This creates control and surveillance of labour through digital platforms. Most workers stated that they know the surveillance and do not mind that these platforms are always watching them. It was noted that the surveillance they experience is for their safety. As previously stated, customers are asked to rate drivers after delivery. The customer ratings and reviews are seen as an algorithmic control framework. Participants working for Uber Eats stated that customer ratings affect their work. Stating that for them to continue working, they have to maintain high customer ratings. Uber Eats workers specifically stated that they are expected to maintain an average that is above 97 % of the customer ratings, and if a driver receives a rating that is below the average, their account is at risk of being blocked,which may result in an individual losing their source of income.

To further understand the rating and evaluation system used by digital platforms, the study looked to understand the level of transparency used by platforms for algorithmic control. The Mr D Food Delivery and Uber Eats participants stated that workers cannot rate the customers and the restaurants. They are showing a lack of transparency with the digital platforms. Customer management is another aspect of algorithmic management that workers experience.The customer ratings are solely dependent on the customers' customer service experience. Furthermore, Mr D Food drivers who worked in Makhanda stated they are unaware of the rating system and have no thoughts on whether this affects their work. The lack of knowledgeabout the rating system further emphasises the lack of transparency of these platforms.

Furthermore, the labour process is facilitated and carried out on the platform. Interactions between the restaurant, the workers and the customers are done on the platforms (Moroane 2023: 69). After the customer has placed their order, it is communicated directly to the restaurant and the workers simultaneously, and workers are notified of the customer's order.They are given 15 seconds to accept the order. Once workers have accepted an order, they cannot cancel or reject the customer's order. The food delivery sector is time-based.On average, workers have a specific

amount of time in which they are expected to have completed each order. According to the participants, a timer starts immediately after an order has beenaccepted. The worker then waits at the restaurant for the customer's order, and once it is ready,they take the order sealed, take a picture, and upload it to the app. This is used as a mode of communication between the worker, the manager and the app. This whole process is done within a specific time. Workers are given 15 minutes to collect and deliver their order, and oncethe food has been handed to the customer, the worker is expected to confirm on the app that they have completed an order. Further explaining the idea of control by the platforms as workers' delivery time is also controlled. Tanaka (Makhanda, Mr D Food) narrates,

> *We work with time, and we are given 15 minutes to collect an order and 15 minutes to deliver an order to a customer; if it is busy, they will give you more time. So, they are monitoring online to see if you have collected an order. Then, they monitor to see if you deliver to the correct address. The GPS is always on, and so they will be tracking us.*

In narrating this situation, John (Makhanda, Mr D Food) explains that:

> *If an order is late, it will slow us down, and we could have at least three orders in the space of time that we are sitting at the restaurant. So, your pay decreases slightly. This is something that can be very frustrating. However, it isn't much of an issue for me because at least we get a small amount of the money once we have reached the time to deliverthe order. When we get into a "red amount", the fault of late delivery goes over to the restaurant and not the driver. So that's when we get a little bit from the order, just for the extra waiting time.*

Moreover, besides the control that workers experience from the platforms and the managers, the managers admitted that the restaurant employees have a specific amount of control over their work. The participants noted that due to the time limitations they are given by the platforms, when restaurant employees take long during restaurant preparations, this affects their total working experience. Additionally, workers build on the idea that the platforms have high control over theiremotions when working. The industry itself focuses on customer satisfaction and, in turn, cansometimes be at the expense of others.

5.3 Digital Platforms and Precarity

Literature has looked at the significance of the digital revolution, further noting how precariousand commodified the platform economy is, extending on digital Taylorism principles which ispart of neoliberalism (Parwez, 2022: 2). According to Kalleberg and Vallas (2017, 1) precariouswork is defined as "work that is uncertain, unstable, and insecure and in which employees bearthe risks of

work (as opposed to businesses or the government) and receive limited social benefits and statutory protections." Workers in this sector have limited individual and collective power to oppose the low pay and unstable, unpredictable and unsafe working conditions that these factors generate. Therefore, there is a need to understand the precariousness that is produced.

Moreover, existing South African literature on the gig economy has continuously highlighted the precariousness and the working conditions of the gig economy. Moroane (2023:76) states that precariousness and exploitation practices are frequent in the gig economy. Someworkers only work at specific times to meet their financial goals. The employment status of being delivery partners by platforms allows these platforms to minimise costs andprevent risks, which are the main characteristics of the capitalist society. This section will provide an in-depth analysis of the precarity of the food delivery sector, looking at factors such as working conditions, health and safety, and collective action.

5.3.1 Working Conditions

As a part of trying to understand the nature of the gig economy and the working environment,this section of this study will focus on the working conditions of the food delivery sector in Gqeberha and Makhanda. Moreover, most workers showed that they rely solely on these digital platforms as a source of income to provide for themselves and their families. Therefore, workers are dependent on these platforms to survive. This section of the chapter will show the significant connections between worker classification as self-employed and independent contractors and the precarious working conditions experienced by workers.

Most participants stated that this job was their only source of income, demonstrating a reliance that increased their difficulties. The lack of standard work benefits, along with fluctuation in incomes and limited control over their working environment, highlights gig workers' vulnerability to exploitation. All these factors contribute to a widespread feeling of insecurity. This is seen in regard to the Uber Eats workers who admittedthat they do not feel safe and confident about their working contract. As previously noted, theUber Eats labour process is online, and no regional offices exist. Workers state that they experience minor issues with customer orders, stating that Uber Eats will flag their account andinvestigate it once a customer has given them a low rating. The process that UberEats follows relies on the customer's ratings and, therefore, can result in their account being suspended, showing that workers who work specifically for Uber Eats face many unfair dismissal issues and cannot take it up with the labour laws due to the worker classification. Asmentioned by Watipa (Makhanda, Uber Eats), a 35-year-old Zimbabwean Black man:

I don't feel safe about my job because you don't know where you will deliver and the type of customer you will meet with. Sometimes, you can deliver to a customer who doesn't tell the truth and have your account blocked. There is no union or legal protectionin this work.

Most participants, specifically Mr D's Food delivery workers, have stated that they feel safe and secure about their working contract, reporting that this is because their contract allows them to decide whether they want to continue working for these platforms; they stated thatthey have not experienced any issues related to unfair dismissal. However, they said that if there are any customer complaints, their branch managers contact them directly via email ofthe customer complaint. In Gqeberha, workers stated that if there are any customer complaints, they are contacted by the branch office and moved to a less busy working hub called the coast.

When the customers rate us down, I work in the Greenacres Shopping Centre *hub. When my ratings are down, they will move me to the coastal hub, where there is less money.There are no orders there. That is how I'm affected. So, when I get low ratings, they putme where there is less work, which means I earn less* (Takudzwa*,* Gqeberha, Mr D Food).

Existing literature on the gig economy highlights long working hours as a key characteristic and an issue of interest. A key theme in this study is long working hours. Workers from both digital platforms confirmed that there is a level of autonomy regarding having flexible working hours and that they dictate their own working hours, which is a positive aspect of working for this sector. Workers are given the platform todecide the number of shifts they want to work daily, dependent on their personal schedules. However, throughout the study, the participants revealed that earning a decent total income to maintain their financial stability involves working long hours. The participants state that they work 11 to 15 hours daily on average. This builds into the idea that digital platforms exploit their workers with the lack of standardised working conditions to fit the minimum wage in South Africa. Furthermore, due to the nature of the work, there are inconsistencies in the weekly working hours. The total number of hours each participant works weekly and monthlyis inconsistent.

5.3.2 Health and Safety

The theme of health and safety looks to understand whether or not workers are provided with any equipment, including safety gear, and their general safety during working hours. Participants state that they are not provided with any work-related assistance, as these platforms force them to buy their own working uniform and their own safety gear, such as helmets. The participants admitted that during their work hours, they are faced with several safety issues, including being robbed of customer orders, cash-in-handand their smartphones.

Participants are not limited to a specific location, meaning that their deliveries can be in areas that are not safe and putting them at risk. In Makhanda, for example, participants statedthat they have to pay particular attention to an area they call “the coloured area,” stating that this area is known for constantly targeting these workers. This particular participant who used a vehicle for delivery narrated that if they have any deliveries in that area, specificallyat night, they do not come out of the car or come to a complete stop until the customer has come out of their house. He continuously communicates with the customer about his exact location, and when he is closer, he asks the customer to come out. This is a strategy he uses toensure his safety at work. Similarly, another participant states that some areas around Gqeberhaare not safe for leaving his motorcycle unattended, or it will be stolen. Furthermore, participants stated that these platforms, specifically Uber Eats, offer workers a panic button, which, when they press, emergency services come to assist them; however, this does not help them in any way because if someone is being robbed, their phones are also taken from them.

Participants further stated that besides getting robbed when they are out on delivery, they also get into several accidents as they feel like other road users do not respect them on the road. The platforms do not offer workers any insurance but pay for third-party insurance.They further stated that this third-party insurance is deducted monthly, and this is for situationswhere the worker is found guilty of a road accident.

Moreover, the participants stated that they face both mental and physical health issues. Further, they admit they face short-term illnesses like flu and headaches due to the weather. Furthermore, the majority of the participants have stated that. They experiencepsychological-related diseases such as stress and anxiety when working. As narrated by Tanaka(Makhanda, Mr D Food), a 25-year-old Zimbabwean Black man:

> *Working for Mr D Food comes with much stress. The customers stress you, the restaurant workers stress you, and sometimes the weather stresses you. Sometimes, when you don’t meet your targets, it becomes stressful and affects your work significantly. Most of the stress is really from not meeting your weekly target. I remember there was a time when Ihad set a target of R2000 for the week, and I did not get that amount. I got less, and it was so stressful for me.*

As previously stated, because workers depend on these platforms, they will continue working even in situations that do not favour them. This means that they will endure precautions.

5.3.3 Collective Action

In investigating the gig economy, this section of this chapter will investigate whether workerscan

participate in any collective action to respond to their working conditions. Worker agency focuses on empowering workers to look and engage their rights and voice their concerns. The decentralisation and platform-mediated nature of employment relationships often constrain worker agency. With that, workers engage in collective action as a form of resistance. Worker resistance is an important idea in Marxism; therefore, looking at this elaborates the labour process.

Workers in the study asserted that they do not engage in any collective action or have the opportunity to do so. Most workers have stated that despite their good relationship with each other, they do not have much of a relationship with the platforms or their managers. They further state that these platforms make it difficult for them to participate in collective action as they work for different reasons. Participants state that because they are self-employed, they need help to collectively meet for action change, stating that they work for these platforms for different reasons. The classification of workers denies them their basic labour rights, which include collective bargaining and action. The WhatsApp group created by workers is used as a source of collective bargaining and to organise worker resistance.

5.4 Emotional Labour in the Gig Economy

Acknowledging emotional labour's minor but critical function in the food delivery sector is essential. This section of the data analysis chapter looks to understand workers' experiences, the emotions they experience and their reactions to platforms as labour mediators. This section will further analyse the algorithmic management that is used by platforms.

A majority of the participants in this study revealed that this job requires them to showand express specific emotions when interacting with customers and restaurant employees. Further explaining that during customer delivery, they are expected to smile and be polite to customers throughout. They further note that this emotion has to stay consistent in order for them to meet the customer needs and achieve the organisational goals of customer satisfaction. As noted in this section, platforms use a tip-based system to commodify labour and are, therefore, a part of algorithmic control. Moroane (2023: 89) states that algorithmic management encourages employees to use emotional labour to ask for client tips. Therefore, platforms were driven to start this system to maximiseprofits and extract excess labour power.

Most participants stated that the customer rating system does not affect theiremotional engagement throughout the day. This is because after every customer delivery they experience, whether negative or positive, they must consistently keep their smile and happiness. Tanaka (Makhanda, Mr D Food) narrates:

You are expected not to show any negative emotions when working. You are smiling fromthe beginning to the end of your shift. It would be best to hide many emotions when speaking, especially when dealing with customers. Firstly, you always have to bepositive(good), and the customer should never feel like you are not interested in your work. So, when you are delivering, there are customers who will want to have a conversation, and you try to speak to them for the short time you deliver the food. Some,you can see, are angry, and in those situations, you greet them, give them their food, andsay thank you. The whole time, you are smiling. It is important to say thank you to the customers all the time. In this job, I have learnt there is no point in being frustrated because you deal with many people. Imagine being angry at everyone because of something that has happened. It affects you and your money.

However, participants who know and understand the rating system state that it affects their day. In an analysis to understand this, the study revealed that workers cannot see any of their ratings and rankings from the customer; they stated that these platforms expect them to maintain a performance evaluation of 97 % or abovebased on customers' feelings. They revealed that the fact that they see the customers' comments and rankings is not fair and puts them under much pressure. Customerfeedback is essential to their work, and platforms listen and rely solely on customer ratings instead of investigating the situation. This means that workers have a high chance of their accounts being flagged and eventually deactivated, affecting their financial stability. This feeling of always being worried about being deactivated stresses workers and, in turn, affects their job satisfaction. Furthermore, workers have stated that throughout their working day, they face issues of staying positive throughout an interaction with a difficult customer.

Workers stated that even when interacting with restaurant employees, theyare expected to interact with them positively. They further stated that restaurant employees have significant control over their labour process. So they have to maintain a positive interaction with these workers for them to be able to receive customer orderswithin the given time. Tanaka (Makhanda, Mr D Food) further narrates:

When you are dealing with restaurant employees, it is the same. I have always tried to be happy. Humans are always going through their things, so to make sure that we get our food on time, we understand. Even when they switch off the app and no orders are comingin, you have to keep laughing with them because they know that we depend on them, too.Working with the managers, I know that my manager is my boss. I know that I have to respect her and make sure that I communicate with the manager every time I have a problem. Suppose I know that I am not going to be able to move past something that happened during or even

before work. In that case, I can call the manager and tell her what is going on, and she usually will tell me to log off and give me the day off so that I can get myself and my emotions together. It is important to try to pretend every day you are working. You can't be emotional at work, if you are upset about something and you are unable to move past it, it is better you go and tell the manager that you are sad, because they know when you are like that, you won't be able to work and deliver any food.

Workers further revealed that they have been in multiple situations where their personal feelings do not match the emotions they are expected to show when working. The majority ofthe workers stated that they could not bring any of their personal issues to work. As soon as they start working, they put those issues aside and focus on their job. Some workers evenstated that they listen to music and sometimes engage with each other to stay positiveand have a positive mindset. As narrated by Dube,(Gqeberha, Mr D Food) a 29-year-old Zimbabwean Black man:

I remember when I had a customer, I arrived at the gate and waited for the customer. The customer had not left a note to say to "press the button when I got to the gate and come inside, " so I waited for the customer for 10 minutes; she started shouting at me as I was about to leave. I knew I had to greet her, be quiet, and deliverher food. I minimised communication with her until the order was complete.

5.4.1 Rating System

Participants noted that the platform's rating system is used by platforms to determine worker workload and further affects the total number of orders a worker receives. Mr D Food workers in Gqeberha stated that the rating system determines which hub they work at; if a worker receives low ratings, they are moved to a less busy mall, affectingtheir emotional well-being. Furthermore, workers stated that there are no specific terms and conditions regarding the rating system; however, Dube (Gqeberha, Mr D Food) states:

Regarding the rating system, the customer expresses their side, whether the driver is good, fast, and communicating. The rate of the restaurant is very wrong because if the customer puts a thumbs down, you will be punished with Uber Eats because they will think the driver is rude or something; you have to be polite all the time. If you have a high rating,you are good at Uber Eats, but if you get a low rating they block your account so that you don't pick up in that particular restaurant.

An analysis of the rating system found that workers have experienced both negative and positive ranking and feedback from customers. The majority of the workers stated thatmost of the time, their negative feedback is due to miscommunication and misunderstanding. Narrated by

John (Makhanda, Mr D Food) :

> *I have received negative feedback from customers and the restaurants. For me, it always needs to be communicated better. It just takes one person to be having a bad day to set the energy to a negative (hostile environment) energy. For example, the delivery I had this morning was a thing of the wrong address being sent out to me, and so that caused much frustration. In these times, you have got to realise that everyone has their problemsand move on from them. It is important to focus on the bigger picture.*

Similarly, Ade (Gqeberha, Uber Eats) narrated:

> *Yeah, from the customer because I demanded the pin. I asked for the pin, and she refused.I explained to her that UberEATS told us this: ask for the pin before we deliver, and shewas not happy. She complained about UberEATS. I received a message that there was a complaint and that my account was being reviewed. I was very sad about it, but there was nothing I could do about it, so I accepted it.*

The worker, Ade, narrates a situation in which he was following protocol and the community guidelines provided for them to use by the platform. However, they received negative feedback because the customer was unhappy with the demands. Their account was put under review andat risk of being deactivated.

In the same way that workers have received negative feedback from customers, they have revealed that they have received positive feedback from customers. Most workers stated that receiving positive feedback motivated them to continue working and representingthe platform positively. Workers use the positive feedback they have received to meet theirfinancial targets and to engage in positive emotions, which makes every interaction positive. They further stated that positive customer feedback and ratings mean they will receive tips, bringing positive emotions. Digital platforms have embodied the tipping system intheir transaction process. Workers state that the tips they receive make them happy andencourage them to continue engaging in emotional labour to solicit customer tips.

5.5 Work Stories: John and Ade

The interviews showed similarities and differences between those working for either Mr D Food or Uber Eats. To further understand this, this chapter will follow and narrate two distinctive participants working for Mr D Food and Uber Eats. This section will examine John and Ade's stories of their experiences working for these two digital platforms. John is a 20-year-old White South African man who has been working for Mr D Food in Makhanda for overa year. Ade is a Nigerian black man who has worked for Uber Eats in Gqeberha for two years.John noted that he

saw his older brother working as a driver, and it caught his attention becausehis brother obtained financial stability. Similarly, Ade narrates that he heard about Uber Eats from an individual in his social network and decided to apply for the job opportunity.

5.5.1 Similarities of working for Mr D Food and Uber Eats

Mr D Food is a digital platform developed locally in South Africa. As previously noted, it focuses on reducing the unemployment rate in South Africa and hiring delivery drivers and other individuals who maintain organisational standards. John narrates that his application process was done through the local branch office in Makhanda and online. At the same time, Ade submitted all his documents on the Uber Eats digital platform application. Uber Eats is a global platform, which means it has no physical offices in South Africa.

As noted, potential employees submit copies of their documentation. As a local, John submitted his national identification card, a police clearance form and a copy of his driver's license. As a foreigner, Ade submitted a copy of his passport, a police clearance, a working visaand a copy of his driver's license. Both workers noted that they waited for a certain period before they could be able to start working. This, as John notes, is for verification purposes. During the application process, both platforms ensure that potential employees have their own mode of transportation, either a car or a motorcycle, that they use to deliver customers' food. Furthermore, workers mention that neither platform compensates workers for any work-relatedexpenses. The workers are responsible for their own petrol, airtime and data expenses. Moreover, one of the key things is that these platforms provide potential workers with guidelines they can use when interacting with customers. One thing mentioned in the guidelines for both platforms is that workers cannot be rude to customers at any given point.

The payment process used by both these digital platforms is a pay-by-delivery system, which allows for a tipping system. Therefore, this brings in the idea of stability and also uncertainty. Drivers are paid weekly, specifically on Tuesdays, and payment delays are usuallydue to bank processes. Even though payment issues are experienced, the majority of the time,their payment is received in full. They receive the amount they have worked for, including theircustomer tips.

John compared his work to directly working for the restaurants themselves and notes that the variety of options that arose from taking orders from different restaurants ensures a steady flow of income by serving as a safeguard against slow business days. Similarly, Ade, who works for Uber Eats, states that working for restaurants means working for an hourly rate, which he believes does not allow him to make as much money as working for the digital platform.

Further, both drivers state that, with their kind of work, they are given the freedom to dictate when they want to work and how long they want to work. The only difference is that Mr D Food's workers are given a shift sheet at the end of every week to set up the working schedule. Mr D Food provides workers with a day shift, from 8 am to 5 pm, a night shift from5 pm to 9 pm and then 8 am to 10 pm on weekends. The schedule is based on an individual's personal schedule of the week. During the time of the interview, John was working the day shift all week and was not working during the weekend.

Compared to Uber Eats, drivers can log on and off whenever they feel like they want to work without having to fill in any shiftsheets. The Ade states that he usually starts at 9 am and logs off the app at 10 pm when the restaurants close. Both these workers show the long working hours they workto meet their minimum financial stability. The Ade even states that this can be from 14 to 15 hours per day.

A positive that this worker shares is the sense of individual agency highlighted by their ability to decide when to work and their working shift; however, it raises legal and union protection concerns. Regarding their job safety and legal protection, both respondents reflect a need for job security and safety. Highlighting how their employment status being regarded as self-employees raises issues as their classification results in a lack of union representation and legal protection of their work.

One of the key themes of interest in this study is the labour control that workers experience throughout their working days. Firstly, both workers stated that restaurant employees have significant control over their work. Stating that when restaurant preparations take too long it affects their total income as they are forced to wait for a longer time for that specific order, which they could have completed and accepted another. John states,

> *A big time, they have much control. If an order is late, it will slow us down, and we could have at least three orders in the space of time that we are sitting at the restaurant. So, they can slow us down a lot. As I said before, you are paid based on the number of ordersyou do for that day.*

Similarly, the Ade states,

> *Once I have received an order request and go and pick it up, they must make sure that they give me the order on time. If the restaurant takes time with the order, the customerswill keep complaining, affecting me and influencing my work experience. Sometimes, when you are talking to the restaurant employees and remind them that they are taking too long with the order, they will tell you to cancel the order, and we can't cancel the Uber order because it will affect your rating.*

Furthermore, one of the key elements of working for these digital platforms is the use of smartphones, which allows for the use of live location as a method of labour control. The platforms use GPS live locations as a method of worker surveillance and to ensure that serviceis delivered to the customers efficiently. Workers are expected to keep their GPS location enabled throughout their working hours. This not only allows the platforms to track drivers asthey are working but also assists drivers in ensuring they deliver the customers' orders to the correct location. After a customer has placed an order and the driver accepts the order, the platform provides the driver with the customer's delivery address, name, and contact details. The platform also provides the driver route information to the address and ensures efficient customer delivery.

The labour process happens through digital platforms requiring internet connectivity, using WIFI or mobile data. Both these drivers state that they face network problems when working. Drivers usually connect to the local network providers: MTN, Cell-C, Telkom or Vodacom. Stating that sometimes they are unable to connect to the internet at all, which then affects their work as they are not able to receive orders.

Moreover, John and Ade's experiences present an in-depth perspective on the demandsand challenges employees encounter as delivery workers regarding emotional labour, whichgoes beyond physical responsibilities. Both workers discussed the emotional elements of theirjobs, including interacting with customers and restaurant employees and building connectionsin a constantly changing and fast-paced industry.

In essence, both participants mention the need to maintain a positive attitude and remain positive throughout their interactions with customers and restaurant employees. Further, they receive training from both Uber Eats and Mr D Food through e-learningto guide them on interacting with various customers and handling different situations.Both recall situations where they have shown emotional resilience, specifically with difficultcustomers. John narrates:

> *Yes, you have to be a professional, and it's the mindset where the customer is always right, which is, it's not always the right. I have to constantly be happy and smile when I am working. I also have to remember to be professional at all times. Platforms provide training through e-learning modules that we complete every six months. These modules cover various topics, including how to interact with restaurant managers, employees, and customers. They guide us on how to use the app effectively and handle different situations that may arise during our interactions.*

Further saying:

> *Emotional resilience is important for my work. You've got to push yourself to work. You'vegot to be here every day. I try my best to get one day off on Sunday. So, every day teaches you*

that you can't be in control of everything. The push and resilience come with consistency. So, if you are consistent, you can see yourself doing something better. And that's my point of view of it. I'm bettering myself by being here because I'm getting some income, and I can use that money to better my life. I deal with difficult customers who are angry due to various issues, such as late deliveries. I try to remain positive andnot to show any other emotion that isn't positive.

Similarly, Ade states:

The restaurant workers and managers are always so rude to us when they are serving us. Even with the customers, you encounter rude people most of the time. When interacting with customers, I am expected to be polite and always smiling whenever I am at work. We receive training videos that show us how to deal with customers and how to speak to customers when we are delivering food. We are taught how to take orders and ensure that the order is correct. I have learnt to be patient when I am dealing with customers. I know why I am doing my job and remind myself whenever I find myself ina difficult situation.

Further saying:

I try to remain positive and force a smile when I am dealing with customers because if I don't do that and a customer gives me a low rating, I will have my account under review,and then sometimes, it will get blocked. You encounter different types of people throughout the day, so you learn that you have to stay positive and be happy when you are working.

5.5.2 Differences between working for Mr D Food and Uber Eats

Despite these parallels, differences have emerged between the two gig workers. The first difference that emerged was the application process. Although both these digital platforms submit their potential employee's papers online, John, who works for Mr D Food, has stated that there is another option to submit their application papers at the branch office, which is what he did. He even signed his contract at the branch office.

Joining Mr. D. Food involves applying to the branch office in Makhanda. I provided my identification (ID) for verification as part of the application. Afterwards, the branch office contacted me to arrange a contract signing meeting. During this meeting, they explained the requirements and expectations outlined in the contract before I signed it.

In contrast, Ade states that everything was done online when he was applying for Uber Eats, from uploading the documents to the signing process.

The contract signing process involves submitting the required documents through the app.

This difference in application procedure further illustrates the theme of labour process control. Ade narrates how he has no managers, building to the idea that he is a self-employed worker. However, John narrates the relationship with the branch manager as hierarchical, which also impacts how he interacts with his managers. He further explains that the branch managers uphold the platform policies, and sometimes, to ensure this, they show authority by communicating with them in a 'rough' way.

Moreover, interestingly, during the interview with John, he mentioned that they are not trained in the rating system that Mr D Food uses, noting that the only reason he knows about the rating system and that the app is different from their app is because he has placed an order as a customer, where he received a prompt to rate the driver. This, on its own, goes against the main characteristic of online work.

Whereas Ade acknowledges the importance of the rating system. Showing that the customer has significant control over their work with this rating system. This shows how workers have a distinct perspective on the importance of the ranking system. Furthermore, Adenarrates a situation in which he received a low customer rating for something communicated to him by the platform itself. He states:

> *I demanded the pin. I asked for the pin, and she refused. I explained to her that UberEATS told us this: ask for the pin before we deliver, and she was not happy. She complained about UberEATS. I received a message that there was a complaint and that my account was being reviewed. I was very sad about it, but there was nothing I could do about it, soI accepted it.*

Moreover, the repercussions that workers experience after receiving customer complaints are significantly different. John states that for action to be taken against an individual, it has to be something very serious; minor complaints are not necessarily taken seriously when it comes to them. However, for Ade, this impacts him significantly because as soon as his account is put under review by Ube Eats, the chances of his account being blocked and ultimately deactivated from working are high.

In conclusion, this section provides a brief comparison of the workers' personal experiences, highlighting how these platforms are similar in various ways but also very different and affect individuals in different ways.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter thoroughly analyses the gig economy surrounding food delivery. It carefully examines the power dynamics at work, showing how algorithmic controlsystems and digital platforms deeply shape and regulate the daily activities of food delivery workers. The

chapter shows the complex nature of emotional labour that employees perform to maximise their income, despite its strain on their well-being, through a focusedexamination of the customer rating system. As previously said, these labour control measures and emotional labour practices highlight the widespread precarity that characterises the working conditions of gig economy workers.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter offers an overall conclusion to the thesis and brings together in a coherent way the different components of the thesis in doing so. It starts by demonstrating how the thesis (particularly the empirical chapters) addresses each of the four subsidiary goals. On this basis, it then shows how the main objective of the thesis was addressed. This also involves demonstrating the importance of the theoretical framework in pursuing the main objective and highlighting the thesis's contribution. The chapter ends by outlining future directions for research and the limitations of this current study.

To remind the reader, the main objective of the thesis is *to examine the labour process and emotional labour experienced by gig workers in the food delivery sector in South Africa*. The main objective was pursued by addressing four subsidiary objectives.

6.2. Addressing the Subsidiary Goals

The four subsidiary objectives are as follows:

a) To examine the power relations experienced by food delivery workers in relation to gig-management, restaurant workers, and customers.

b) To examine the working conditions, including precarity, of gig workers in food delivery services.

c) To understand how customer rankings of food delivery platforms and restaurants affect the work experience of food delivery workers.

d) To identify the emotional labour undertaken by food delivery workers in their interactions with managers, restaurant employees and customers.

The main objective focuses primarily on labour process control and the ways in which emotional labour emerges in the context of gig economy labour control regimes. The *first objective (a)* examines quite directly the form of labour control within the gig economy in the case of the studied food delivery workers. The *fourth objective (d)* examines quite directly the question of the emotional labour enacted by the workers. *Objectives two and three (b and c)*, about the working conditions of the food delivery drivers and the existence of customer rankings, respectively, provide further insights into the character of the labour process and the necessity of emotional labour.

The labour process theory was applied in this thesis as an analytical tool to comprehendin the main the labour control systems in the gig economy and, more specifically, in the food delivery sub-sector of this economy. It provided a useful framework for identifying the significance of digital platforms and how they offer a technological foundation for the labour control regime in the gig economy. Notably, digital data and platform metrics contribute to the commodification and control of labour power (Gandini, 2019: 1040). In this regard, the first objective examined the control of workers' labour and the overall power dynamics embedded in these platforms, specifically referring to the case study. In detailingthis, the thesis examined the algorithmic management control which conditions the labour process and work of the food delivery drivers. According to Moroane (2023: 102), "algorithmmanagement, which functions as a structure of control and is perceived as limiting worker agency and creating an environment of surveillance, individualisation, and alienation", is fundamental to the gig economy. The empirical case study showed that algorithms are central to the studied workers' labouring practices and experiences. For instance, due to the expectation that they maintain their (real-time) live locations during working hours, workers are under constant observation, monitoring and evaluation.

The second objective was to examine the working conditions that gig workers face in the food delivery industry, emphasising the widespread precarity these workers' employment and labour arrangements entail. The results confirm previous research, namely, that individuals involved in the gig economy often labour in unstable working conditions characterised by extended workdays, sometimes lasting up to 11 hours. As Nasreenand Purohit (2018: 1053) point out, long hours, precariousness, vulnerability and alienation aredaily experiences that lead to high levels of stress and exhaustion. Their status as contractors and not employees also leads to their exclusion from a range of possible employee benefits, including health and car insurance coverage in the case of the food delivery drivers. Theprecariousness of their worker status puts them in a weak position. It makes them vulnerable to the algorithmic control system and configuring their need to perform emotional labourif they want to maximise earnings.

The third objective explains how customer evaluations of food delivery providers and workers' daily interaction with restaurants influence the work environment of food delivery workers. Digital platform rating systems play a crucial role in controlling worker behaviour, especially when it comes to Uber Eats. Workers must maintain a satisfactory rating of 4.6 outof 5 to maintain operational privileges. If they do not achieve this requirement, their status on the platform is jeopardised, and they could be the target of account investigationand deactivation, which would significantly disrupt their working life. Again, like the second objective, the findings

pertinent to this (third) objective link back to the main objective. More specifically, customer evaluations are central to algorithmic control, and, additionally, these evaluations are primarily responsible for the need of food delivery drivers to perform emotional labour.

Lastly, as the fourth objective, the thesis examined workers' subjective experiences and how the labour regime conditions and even control their emotions. Addressing this objective involved relying upon emotional labour theory. In accordance with this theory, workers are frequently expected to sacrifice their well-being by constantly having to be happy and in control of their emotions to meet their work's emotional demands. For example, this might involve maintaining composure, professionalism and positivity even when dealing with difficult customers. This came out very clearly in the case study of the two food delivery platforms in the Eastern Cape. Many drivers emphasised the consequences of straying from the necessary emotional behaviour while interacting with customers. As a result, this study supports earlier studies by showing, for example, how workers use surface acting as a tactic for emotional labour, carefully selecting the public image they present to conform to client standards and increase their chances of receiving positive reviews and even tips.

6.3. Addressing the Main Objective

The study's main objective is to examine the labour process, labour control and emotional labour experienced by gig workers in the food delivery sector in South Africa through a case study. A theoretical framing and a literature review contextualised this specific focus. Despite limited literature on the food delivery sector in the gig economy in South Africa, the literature review (set out in both chapters 2 and 3) was able to draw upon sufficient gig economy literature (including global literature) to frame the study, with a particular emphasis on the introduction and importance of technology in the food delivery industry and how this, through algorithmic control, configures the labour processes for gig workers. The literature also highlights the importance of emotional labour in the gig economy. This study adds to the prevailing scholarly literature by demonstrating how algorithmic control and emotional labour play out in particular ways in sites in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa.

As indicated above, the theoretical framing for this study drew upon both labour process theory and emotional labour theory, with the latter being incorporated into a labour process perspective of the gig economy. This theoretical framing was crucial in pursuing the main objective because it allowed for a clear, concise and focused analysis of gig workers' labour processes, including labour control and emotional labour. In this context, the study's main objective was successfully pursued, as I was able to understand and analyse the local complexities that

influence labour control systems, workers' labouring conditions and emotional dynamics in the growing food delivery sector. By examining the labour process, this study provides insights into the managerial control and surveillance techniques used by digital platforms such as Uber Eats and Mr D Food. Moreover, the investigation of emotional labour in relation to customer interactions provides a deep understanding of the demands made on workers to uphold an appearance of happiness and friendliness during their work shifts, as well as coping mechanisms they use to manage their challenging and precarious working environments. The study also examined the significant influence that customer ratings have onworker workload and well-being, thereby showing the complex relationships between the algorithms, customer ratings, labour control and emotional labour management. Together,these points make clear the relevance of the theoretical framing for addressing the main objective.

Overall, this thesis contributes significantly to the scholarly literature on the gig economy in South Africa and beyond. First, it validates many of the key claims made in the existing literature about labour control and emotional labour in the gig economy, includingwith reference to the food delivery sub-sector. Secondly, it demonstrates the ongoing relevanceof labour process theory, when combined with emotional labour theory, in offering insights into the current restructuring of the capitalist economy (including the rise of the gig economy) andthe lived experiences of workers labouring in the gig economy. Lastly, the study sheds light onthe growing importance of algorithmic control systems in shaping and conditioning key sectorsof the modern economy.

6.4. Limitations and Areas for Future Research

Despite the significance of the thesis, several limitations to the study shouldbe noted. First, the sample was limited to male participants only, eliminating the possibility of gender-related differences in the experiences of gig economy workers. Related to this, other key variables such as age, marital status and residential status were not considered, yet these factors may also configure gig worker practices and perspectives. Secondly, the unpredictable and rigorous schedules of the workers made it difficult to arrangefor more extended interview sessions, which made gathering intensive and in-depth somewhat difficult. The fact that the study was conducted over a short period of time also contributed to this limitation. Thirdly, a further constraint included the participants' unwillingness to participate in the study without payment, driven mainly by worries about their financial stability. Interestingly, a significant number of initially interested workers withdrew their participation in the research unless they were provided with incentives, sometimes knownas "cool drinks." Finally, communication inefficiencies caused by

language challenges made itnecessary to provide further explanations and examples to maximise mutual understanding, which might affect the accuracy of participant responses.

As this thesis concludes, it is clear that the study contributes, no matter how limited, to the body of knowledge already available about the gig economy by thoroughly examining both labour processes and emotional labour dynamics. Additionally,it likely pinpoints and clarifies potential paths for policy interventions and labour advocacy campaigns targeted at resolving specific issues faced by gig workers in South Africa. The extant literature highlights a noteworthy gender imbalance in the food delivery industry, whereby women are underrepresented in work related to digital platforms. This emphasises the importance of looking into the underlying causes of this discrepancy, providing insightful information about gender dynamics in the industry and providing opportunities for well-informed measures to advance diversity and gender equity.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

1. How long have you worked for Mr. D Food or UberEATS? Explain how you startedworking for this company and how you feel working there.
2. Do you consider yourself self-employed, temporary/part-time, etc.? Please explain.Please explain what kind of contract you have and the contract-signing process withthese digital platforms. Do you remember the terms and conditions of your contract?Please, can you explain them?
3. What is the payment process when working for these digital platforms? Do you have any challenges or difficulties receiving payments on time or in full? Please explain.
4. Could you describe the relationship between you (the food delivery worker) andmanagers? Please explain.
5. How much control do restaurant employers have over your work? Please explainhow this affects and influences your day-to-day work experience.
6. Do you think working for these digital platforms differs from working directly fromworking for restaurants? Please explain.
7. Could you describe how the digital platform (Uber Eats or Mr D Food) ensures theservice has been delivered to its customers? What kind of surveillance do you experience as a worker? Could you please explain how these platforms' surveillanceimpacts affect you?
8. Please describe any problems (technical, connectivity, etc.) you experience when using digital platforms and how that affects your work.
9. Does the rating system allow you to rate customers and restaurants? If so, do theseplatforms take your ratings into account?
10. Please explain how the customer rating system (that is used by these platforms affects your work.
11. Could you describe your working schedule, when you start work, and when you finish work? The process of your work throughout the day. (How many hours workper day/ week/ month?)
12. Please describe the method of payment. Is it a pay-by-delivery system or a tip-basedsystem? Does this affect your total income and allow you to maintain financial stability?
13. Do you think the rating system used by digital platforms is transparent and allows for equality regarding task assignment, performance evaluation and income? Pleaseexplain.
14. Do you face health and safety issues during working hours? Please explain and describe these issues. Please explain how the digital platforms assist in reducing thehealth and safety issues you experience.
15. Does working for these digital platforms (UberEATS and Mr D Food) psychologically affect you? Examples of psychological effects include increased stress, anxiety, and job satisfaction.

16. Do these digital platforms (Uber Eats and Mr D Food) offer social security/protection such as health insurance, thirteen checks, etc. (add more social protection covers)? If so, please explain what benefits they offer. If not, please describe the alternatives that these digital platforms offer.
17. Do you feel safe and confident about your job with the contract you have? Please explain. Are you legally protected at work? What about unfair dismissals? Does a union protect you?
18. Do the digital platforms provide you with any assistance regarding work-related expenses? For example, do they provide you with transportation, fuel costs, vehiclemaintenance, and equipment such as digital phones? If not, how do the digital platforms (Uber Eats and Mr D Food) compensate workers for the extra costs acquired?
19. Does working for digital platform-based companies allow you as workers to speakcollectively on the issues you experience at work? How is your relationship with co-workers? How do these platforms usually react to this? Please explain.
20. How do you feel about the working conditions of your work? What working conditions need to be improved for you to feel happier and content while working?
21. The ranking system is important when working for UberEATS and Mr D Food. Canyou please explain how this system works? Do you receive any training on the rating system used by these platforms? Please explain how you received the trainingand how often you receive refresher training when these digital platform applications update.
22. Are you, as a worker, able to see the customer and restaurant employer's commentsand ratings? How does it make you feel? Please explain.
23. Have you ever received negative feedback from the platform, customers or restaurants? Please explain how you feel and deal with the negative feedback you received.
24. Have you ever received positive feedback through the rating system? Please explainhow this affects your interaction with other workers, and do your feelings affect how you behave with your friends?
25. Please explain the terms and conditions regarding the ranking system. What are youfeeling, and what are the consequences of a high or a low rating? Explain.
26. How do customer ratings and reviews affect your emotions and your job as a food delivery worker? Does this impact your emotional engagement with the customers?
27. Looking at the rating system used, have you experienced or seen a difference in workload from other workers based on the rankings received?
28. Do you think the customer rankings and reviews influence these platforms (Uber Eats and Mr D Food) in deciding on aspects such as bonuses and promotions? Pleaseexplain.
29. Do customer ratings create tension or conflict between restaurant employees and delivery drivers?

30. Have you ever received low customer rankings due to factors beyond your control,such as traffic or restaurant preparation times? Please explain.
31. As an UberEATS and Mr D Food worker, does the job require you to behave in aparticular way when dealing with customers and managers?
32. Have these platforms provided you with any training on how to deal with restaurantmanagers, restaurant employees and customers? Are there any particular techniquesyou use to cope with emotional challenges? Please explain.
33. Please explain which emotions are frequently displayed when interacting with managers, restaurant employees and customers. Mention some of them.
34. Do you remember on what occasions you had shown positive emotions towards a difficult customer? Could you explain the situation and how you handled it?
35. Please explain how you deal with situations where your personal feelings do not match the emotions you are expected to show when dealing with customers.
36. Please explain how the ranking system that is used by these digital platforms (UberEATS and Mr D Food) by customers affects your emotional display throughout the day.
37. How have you handled situations that required emotional resilience? Pleaseexplain.
38. Do you think the emotional display you participate in daily impacts your overall jobsatisfaction and well-being? Please explain how.
39. Do you have any specific emotions that you find challenging to display or managethroughout your interaction with customers and restaurant employers? Please explain how you handle such situations.
40. Do you have anything else you want to say about working for UberEATS and Mr D Food?

Appendix B: Consent Form

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: Platform Food delivery: A study on the labour process and emotional labour experienced by gig workers working in the Eastern Cape food delivery sector.

Taboka Mutshewa from the Department of Sociology, Rhodes University, has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

The purpose of the research project is to examine the labour process and emotional labour experienced by gig workers in the food delivery sector. Gig workers refer to workers that use digital platforms such as Uber Eats and Mr D Food to deliver food to customers.

Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project 7341, and I haveseen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)

By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards a deeper understanding of the labour process and of emotional labour experienced by gig workers in the food delivery sector regarding their relationships with managers, restaurant owners/employers and customers.

I will participate in the project by answering questions asked by the researcher during the interview in detail. The interview will be conducted by the researcher (Taboka Mutshewa), and the researcher shall be using her cell phone to record the responses.

My participation is entirely voluntary, and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

I will not be compensated for participating in the research as this is an academic project.

The following risks are associated with my participation: there are no risks that will arise. Confidentiality and anonymity will be a key factor in my participation in this study. Perhaps some research participants may feel some discomfort from revealing their experiences at work. However, the researcher will ensure the safeness and comfortability of all participants by providing a secure environment/place to conduct the interviews.

The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of A Master's Degree Dissertation. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained, and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved inthe conducting of the research *unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure, my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.*

In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly howconfidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also requestto know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely and for how long it will be stored.
If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing, and my written consent is requestedagain. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initialpurpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request.In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the EthicsCoordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).

In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of communication via telephone or email to schedule an in-person meeting with the researcher unless *I elect not to receive this feedback.*

Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by Taboka Mutshewa (g23m2850@campus.ru.ac.za).

By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.

I *disagree* to the Researcher's request to take photographs, or videoing me as part of this research project, recognizing that agreement here is likely to raise the risk of compromising my anonymity and that steps will be taken to ensure this will not happenit my consent is given.

I *agree* to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions duringinterviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded.

I, , have read the above
information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand, and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wishedto ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected ofme during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

……. ……. …….

Participants' signature Witness Date