

**The opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy for  
young emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa.**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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**Rhodes University**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, David Moemedi Kgwete, with student number 24K9802, hereby confirm that this thesis, "***The opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy for young emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa,***" is my work and has not been submitted for any degree purposes at any other university. I declare that I am fully aware of Rhodes University's policy on plagiarism and have taken precautions to comply with the regulations.

**Signature: DM Kgwete**

**Date: 09 December 2025**

## **DEDICATION**

This research is wholeheartedly dedicated to the following persons:

- ❖ My mother, Tumelo Kgwete, who has been my source of strength and motivation throughout the process of this study; and
- ❖ My sister, Promise Kgwete, who dedicated her time to support and cherish me for my academic achievements.

I also thank God for providing me with good health and wisdom.

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- ❖ Lastly, my entire family, for their guidance, support, and motivation.

## **ABSTRACT**

In South Africa, the Amapiano music genre has seen a rapid rise, propelled by its unique sound and the accessibility of online platforms for distribution and promotion. However, the dynamics of platformisation and the gig economy present a complex environment for emerging Amapiano artistes. These musicians must navigate issues such as algorithmic (in)visibility, monetisation challenges, digital music piracy, and the precarious nature of gig-based work. This thesis explores the ways in which young South African Amapiano musicians utilise digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment, navigate the complex and shifting dynamics of the gig economy, and evaluate the challenges that young Amapiano music creators face in their artistic journey as platform workers as well as the emotional labour that these Amapiano music creators face in their creative work. The study employed qualitative research methodology, using semi-structured and go-along interviews to collect data from twelve participants (young South African Amapiano music creators). Drawing from the diffusion of innovation theory and aspects of capital theory, the study reveals how digital platforms and gig-based opportunities influence the career trajectories of young Amapiano musicians in South Africa, as well as the challenges and constraints inherent in this space. The findings reveal that digital platforms are a huge stepping stone for South African music creators in releasing their music on the platforms, allowing them to get recognised and called for live physical performances. In addition, live physical performances have been acknowledged as the most reliable method to generate income. However, getting these live physical performances is not that easy; artistes sometimes get them through recommendations from friends. The gig economy has also been acknowledged as an ecosystem that can facilitate digital work such as beat-selling businesses, resulting in the accumulation of revenue. However, South African music creators continue to face challenges of digital music piracy, which does not seem to have a prevention or mitigation strategy. Moreover, the gig economy remains precarious for these young Amapiano music creators since digital distribution services also appear to charge artistes that are subscribed to them an extra annual fee, which young independent artistes do not seem to have the financial resources to keep up with, resulting in switching between services. South African music creators see the music industry as a 24/7 commitment, resulting in artistic growth and improved creative values. In addition, seeing the music industry as a 24/7 commitment often results in artistes facing frustrations and emotional fatigue due to the music industry pressure of keeping up with relevancy. Recommendations include artistes building relationships with concert promoters and getting booking agencies to assist in getting more live physical performances to enhance more revenue accumulation. Furthermore, young musicians could

put more commitment into extending their knowledge on how to make platforms such as BeatStars and SouldClick more profitable.

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**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CTA	Critical Thematic Analysis
SA	South Africa
US	United States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CD	Compact Disc
DVD	Digital Video Disc
EMI	Electric and Music Industries
DMG	Disney Music Group
DIY	Do-It-Yourself
NCC	Nigerian Copyright Commission
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
SAMRO	South African Music Rights Organization
HF-REC	Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee
AI	Artificial Intelligence
DM	Direct Message
PR	Public Relations

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

In post-apartheid South Africa and in the context of South Africa's educational system, a significant number of young individuals now possess diverse qualifications. Despite this, they continue to face challenges in securing employment, contributing to the high youth unemployment rate in the current economic climate (Stopforth, 2023). However, the advent of the digital age has ushered in new opportunities for income generation globally, and South Africa is no exception, particularly within the gig economy, despite the lack of income stability. This has resulted in "around 64 million individuals in the United States and European Union engaging in platform work to supplement income, with 53% of African and 60% of South African workers relying on minimal income for basic needs" (Stopforth, 2023: 6).

Hazarika (2019) characterises the gig economy as a form of employment in the digital era where individuals are self-employed, offering a departure from the conventional nine-to-five job structure. The prevalence of gig work has been observed across various countries and industries, such as the music and transport industries, with independent contractors capitalising on this opportunity to generate income (McDonnell, Carbery, Burgess & Sherman, 2021). Furthermore, these individuals often find success in securing a livelihood through freelance work, facilitated by technological advancements that enable clients to easily connect with professionals possessing a wide range of specialised skills.

With the advancement of digital technology, the media landscape has changed the mode of information collection, distribution, and consumption (Gbenga & Ekhueorohan, 2023). Audiences and clients have a more convenient space to exchange services. This has become evident in recent years since the development of the World Wide Web. The music industry in particular has witnessed the impact of digital technology and benefited from these technological advancements (Hviid, Izquierdo Sanchez & Jacques, 2017). These digital technological developments are important to the growth of many young Amapiano musicians between the ages of 20 and 35 in South Africa as they get exposed to target audiences (Long-Innes, 2022).

Some of the many South Africans without formal employment have access to opportunities and revenue through platform labour (du Toit, Fredman & Graham, 2020). Despite the role that digital platform work plays in generating revenue for young musicians in South Africa, platform workers are not protected by labour law. Thus, it should come as no surprise that there are many unfair conditions, such as poor pay and wage theft (du Toit et al., 2020), that young platform workers in South Africa experience, more so those of them who are in the

music industry. Moreover, platform workers face “a wide range of emotions due to the uncertainty of the process” (Keller, 2023: 1).

The role that platformisation plays in enabling the growth of musicians is not a South African trend only, but a global one. Platformisation has enabled musicians to be independent contractors and continue to grow in the music industry (Lal, Hesmondhalgh & Umney, 2023; McDonnell et al., 2021). Explaining platformisation, Nieborg and Poell (2018: 4276) note that this is where digital platform extensions become economically, politically, and infrastructurally embedded in web and app ecosystems, transforming the way the culture industries operate. Platformisation of the recorded music industry gives artistes greater distribution options and access to international markets than pre-digitalisation business models (Lal et al., 2023). The way music is created, shared, and enjoyed has profoundly changed the structure of the industry and created new locations that challenge the established geographic hierarchy of industries (Long-Innes, 2022). The role that digital platforms and technology play in the music industry has been impactful to musicians (Hviid et al., 2017; Massarotto, 2021).

Platformisation exists and develops more with the ongoing advancement of digital technology. As such, online streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube, among others, see the opportunity to create playlists that seek to exert control of artistes' content. Although literature argues that platformisation contributes to the growth of musicians through revenue generation, scholars like Massarotto (2021) argue that in the digital era, where music is distributed digitally, consumers download music without paying and keep the songs on their gadgets; as such, music ownership and collection tend to be irrelevant. A more insightful overview that stretches the negative side of one of the streaming platforms, Spotify: scholars like Prey (2020:1) argue that these platforms have “curatorial power” over artistes' music in terms of promoting their music to audiences. Although Spotify creates playlists for artistes, the playlists become less equal as these online platforms “appear to be exerting control over content suppliers” for their own interests (Prey, 2020: 1). As such, musicians and record labels have become increasingly dependent on landing on Spotify-curated playlists for the algorithm's spotlight (Iqbal, 2019).

This study focuses on young Amapiano music creators. In recent years, with the emergence of a new music genre in South Africa, Amapiano, this new genre was introduced to the consumers of music, and new musicians were introduced. Amapiano music originated in 2012 in several South African townships like Soweto, Alexandra, and Katlehong. The exact location and dates of its emergence remain unknown (Seroto, 2020: para. 4). The Amapiano genre has grown gaining national and international recognition, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Charisma, 2021: para. 5; Brown, 2022: para. 2). Artistes in the Amapiano genre

during its growth were independent artistes driving the genre towards its path to success (Long-Innes, 2022). This study intends to assess the impact of platformisation and the gig economy on the emergence of South African Amapiano artistes, following a qualitative exploration of the lived experience of young Amapiano music creators, aged 20 to 35.

The findings of this study will shed light on the inner workings of the culture industries, specifically the music industry, which is crucial for researchers and young musicians in South Africa and across Africa, especially in light of the high youth unemployment rate and the present economic situation.

## **1.2 Research Goal and Questions**

This topic delves into the intersection of platformisation, the gig economy, and the Amapiano music genre. It aims to explore how digital platforms and gig-based opportunities influence the career trajectories of young Amapiano musicians, as well as the challenges and constraints inherent in this space.

### **Research questions**

- What are some of the ways that Amapiano artistes utilise digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment?
- What is the role of the gig economy in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes?
- What are the challenges faced by young Amapiano music creators in their music journey in general and specifically also as platform workers?
- What kind of emotional labour do young Amapiano music creators face during their creative work?

## **1.3 Methodology**

The study employed qualitative research methodology. The exploratory research design employed helps to collect perceptions and experiences of the study population. Swedberg (2020: 17) outlines exploratory research design as a framework that aims to uncover something new. The researcher employed convenience and snowball sampling as data collection methods from young Amapiano music creators in South Africa, between the ages of 20 and 35. The researcher, who is an Amapiano music artiste himself, recruited, using a list of personal contacts, the first set of participants of young Amapiano music creators. This research study collected data from a minimum of 12 participants. The sample population possessed the necessary experience in the study phenomenon. This means that they are Amapiano music creators with relevant experience in the music industry.

Snowball sampling involves collecting data from the few selected participants in the entire population; each participant was required to identify other participants that are eligible to participate in the study (Kumar, 2011:168). From the referred participants, each participant was also required to identify other participants that are eligible to participate (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2008:27). This has been done until saturation point was reached. The researcher kept gender balance and other diversity factors in mind during recruitment. This means that effort was made to include diverse genders and different ethnic groups.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the artistes. Semi-structured interviews are suitable for this research study because they involve some pre-formulated questions and allow space for new questions that might not have been formulated to be explored (Myers, 2013: 167). Moreover, go-along interviews were also used. According to Moran, Gallant, Litwiller, White and Hamilton-Hinch (2022), go-along interviews offer opportunities for in-situ engagement and co-participation of the researcher with the research participant. This means that the researcher has prioritised “a day in the life of the artiste,” to get a first-hand experience of how they work and conduct the interviews as the activities unfold in a “natural” setting. These interviews were face-to-face. However, in the case of tight schedules and financial constraints, online interviews were used to collect data using platforms like Google Meet and Zoom. To ensure that this study followed good ethical conduct, ethics approval to collect data was sought from study participants. This ensured that the participants are aware of their voluntary participation, that they are anonymous, and that their data remain confidential.

This study utilised critical thematic analysis to analyse the data gathered from the interviews. Thematic analysis is a suitable tool for analysing interview discourses due to its critical nature. The recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness of critical thematic analysis have assisted in establishing shared experiences of participants (Lawless & Chen, 2019). Moreover, CTA has enabled the researcher to discover status-based hierarchies, power dynamics, and overarching ideologies at play in their platform and gig work.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The study explores the opportunities and challenges that platformisation and the gig economy have on young, emerging South African Amapiano music creators. The study aims to produce findings that will shed light on the inner workings of the culture industries, specifically the music industry, which is crucial for researchers and young musicians in South Africa and across Africa, especially in light of the high youth unemployment rate and the present economic situation. Additionally, these findings will guide young emerging South African Amapiano music creators in navigating through platform work opportunities that will financially benefit

their artistic goals within the music industry. The findings aim to provide insightful information on how independent artistes can utilise music distribution services, start music industry businesses, and the benefits and downsides of music record labels. Moreover, it also provides insightful information on stereotypes that the music industry may have that may affect artists in their personal lives.

### **1.5 Overview of the Thesis**

In chapter one, I introduced the study and gave a background and the context of the study. I also gave an overview of the gap that the study seeks to explore. I then outlined the research questions, as well as the research design.

In chapter two, I provided a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on the South African economic landscape on employment, the developmental procedure of platformisation, the use of the gig economy, music distribution channels, monetisation tools for musicians, and the challenges of music piracy. The theoretical framework guiding this study was merged into this section and elaborated upon.

In chapter three, I discuss the research design, study population, participant recruitment procedure, and the interview guidelines used. My positionality as the researcher is also acknowledged. I also provide an overview of ethical considerations. I conclude the chapter with a full overview of the method utilised to analyse the data collected.

In chapter four, I provide the findings of the research, which are presented and discussed. The data are arranged into themes that emerged during data analysis and are presented systematically.

In chapter five, I discuss the study's conclusions, highlight its limitations, and provide recommendations based on the findings, while also reflecting on the research process.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter delves into the empirical knowledge of the opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy as an entry point into this study's exploration of emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa. To begin with, it provides the empirical knowledge on South Africa's economic landscape on employment and creative work, extending to an overview of the gig economy. The chapter looks at the phenomena of platformisation and the challenges of both platformisation and the gig economy. Finally, it delves into the theoretical frameworks upon which the study is based. In the context of the South African music industry, there is a shortage of research existing in the area of the gig economy and platformisation.

### **2.2 South Africa's economic landscape on employment and creative work**

Unemployment has been a major global challenge across countries; South Africa is no exception (Hlayisi, 2022). The crisis of unemployment has been a growing factor across various industries leading to social instability and crime (ibid.). Adams and Yu (2024) argue that over the past two decades, unemployment has been a pressing socio-economic problem in the country. These scholars further argue that the country witnessed a great growth of employment in the initial years of the post-apartheid period. However, the process gradually slowed down, leading to the growth of unemployment from the year 2009 to date (ibid.). This section reviews recent empirical studies that examined South Africa's economic landscape in terms of employment and creative work.

#### **2.2.1 Unemployment**

In post-apartheid South Africa and in the context of South Africa's educational system, a significant number of young individuals now possess diverse qualifications. De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, and Leibbrandt (2018) argue that the South African educational system's access and quality have been improving throughout the years for young individuals, thus giving them a better chance for securing employment. Despite this, they continue to face challenges in securing employment, contributing to the high youth unemployment rate in the current economic climate (Iqani, 2019; Stopforth, 2023). While we trace back the South African labour market, the scholars Adams and Yu reviewed empirical studies post-apartheid, from 1995 to 2006, and they found that employment was gradually expanding. Nonetheless, this gradual growth was not greater than the intensifying unemployment in the labour market (Adams and Yu, 2024).

Reports made by the World Bank in 2022 show that the labour market in South Africa in 2014 had the lowest rate of 24.6% which the country has ever recorded (Gwala, Mthethwa, Jili,

2023). However, from 2015 to 2021 the rate gradually intensified from the 25.1% recorded in 2015 to the 33.6% recorded in 2021 (ibid.). According to Statistics SA (2020: para. 2), the youth with a tertiary level of education have a better chance of being employed. However, in the first quarter of 2024, an astonishing 32.9%, which is equivalent to 8.2 million individuals, of unemployment had been recorded (Statistics SA, 2024: para. 6). By the second quarter of 2024, the number had increased to 8.4 million individuals facing unemployment, and the third quarter held the record of 8.0 million (ibid.). In the fourth quarter of 2024, Statistics South Africa shows that the South African unemployment rate was 31.9% (Statistics SA, 2024: para. 1). South African musicians are no exception to this persistent confrontation of the peaking unemployment rate (Froehlich, 2023). Despite high unemployment in the country, some of the many South Africans without formal employment have access to opportunities and revenue through platform labour (du Toit et al., 2020).

Empirical studies show that the South African labour market has not been a static one in the post-apartheid era among the older adults and youth (Adams & Yu, 2024; Hlayisi, 2022; Gwala et al., 2023). According to Espi-Sanchis, Leibbrandt, and Ranchhod (2022), when South Africa faced the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's labour market faced intense effects relating to labour demand and labour supply. Statistics SA show that the time-related underemployment rate during the start of COVID-19 in 2019 was 4.7% in the fourth quarter, which later increased to 5.5% in the fourth quarter of 2020 (Statistics SA, 2024: para. 3). As such, this reflects the impact that COVID-19 had in the country in causing an economic disruption (ibid.). However, it is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic is not the main cause of the persistent high unemployment rates since the advent of democracy in South Africa; it only had an additional impact economically when the country faced the pandemic (Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2016). Espi-Sanchis et al. (2022) assert a noteworthy point that firms during the COVID-19 pandemic saw an opportunity to discharge and readjust older workers with younger workers that may be generally less costly to employ. Despite this, a high rate of youth unemployment remains a top national concern (Statistics SA, 2020: para. 6; Statistics SA, 2024: para. 1).

De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, and Leibbrandt (2020) argue that limited access to information is one of the causes for youth to face high unemployment status in the country. These scholars outline that youth lack information from high school whereby they are not given all the necessary information regarding career guidance. As such, when they exit the schooling system, "there are few readily accessible, reliable points of information about how to apply for jobs, how to compile their CVs or how to access further education opportunities" (ibid. 122). The South African labour market is highly competitive, which thus makes it more crucial to access relevant information about training options and job opportunities (Yende, Ntini & Mseleku, 2024). Mseleku (2022) suggests that there is a need for improvement with education

or training and job opportunities information. Yende et al. (2024) argue that lack of work experience contributes to high young unemployment status. These scholars further outline that having work experience would give youth an advantage in landing a job. Ingle and Mlatsheni (2017) substantiate this issue by outlining that when an individual does not have any work experience, they tend to wait longer before landing their first job. Despite the educational accomplishments that young South Africans have compared to their parents, they still struggle to find better employment prospects (De Lannoy et al., 2020). According to Wille (2021), the music industry, particularly the live music industry in South Africa, contributes to employment and is a source of income for freelancing musicians and those with contracts. In a case where musicians earn more income from live physical performances, the COVID-19 pandemic created devastating impacts on loss of income, and this lingered even after the pandemic. This contributed to unemployment and loss of income for many freelance and contracted musicians in the country (ibid.). As a result, issues of unemployment created a temptation for individuals, from a global perspective, to invest in the gig economy as an alternative way of earning income (Wille, 2021; Froehlich, 2023; Stopforth, 2023).

## **2.3 Gig Economy**

There is rich knowledge on the aspect of the gig economy from a general perspective; however, there is little knowledge on its connection to the music industry from the South African perspective. Froehlich (2023: 45) argues that “a gig within the context of the gig economy, however, would refer to a stream on Spotify” rather than an entailed live set performance at a function. As the concept of the gig economy may not be new to the music industry, according to Graham and Woodcock (2018), scholars like Froehlich (2023: 44) further argue that the economy of music gigs enables musicians to “enjoy the possibility of career advancement” when performing their platform gig, “while working within the gig economy typically offers limited opportunities for change”.

### **2.3.1 Overview of the gig economy**

#### **2.3.1.1 Global perspective of the gig economy**

Hazarika (2019) characterises the gig economy as a form of employment in the digital era where individuals are self-employed, offering a departure from the conventional nine-to-five job structure. Tan, Aggarwal, Cowls, Morley, Taddeo, and Floridi (2021) view the gig economy as digital markets that include on-demand, short-term, occasional, and typical task-based labour. The scholars further argue that the gig economy originates from the music industry from the term ‘gig’ (ibid.). Similarly, Dalzell and Victor (2012), as cited by Wardhana, Herlina, Bangsawan, and Tuori (2020: 142), argue that the term “was initially used in the 1920s by jazz musicians; ‘the gig’ was slang for a recording session, live concert, or other musicians.” How

it would be used in the music industry is when an artist has a physical performance (Wardhana et al., 2020). Additionally, how the term got to be incorporated into describing a temporary job was when it was used for the first time outside of the music industry (Parigi & Ma, 2016). The prevalence of gig work has been observed across various countries and industries, such as the music and transport industries, with independent contractors capitalising on this opportunity to generate income (McDonnell et al., 2021). Furthermore, these individuals often find success in securing a livelihood through freelance work, facilitated by technological advancements that enable clients to easily connect with professionals possessing a wide range of specialised skills (ibid.).

The development of digital media has created an opportunity for innovative companies to open the on-demand, short-term, occasional, and typical task-based labour in the digital space that gig workers can leverage for income (Wardhana, Herlina, Bangsawan & Tuori, 2020). Not only do gig workers leverage digital market models, but the gig economy platforms also leverage this transformational power of digital media to reshape the labour markets and workforces (Floridi, 2017). Davis-Blake and Uzzi (1993), cited by Schroeder, Bricka, and Whitaker (2021), argue that innovative companies leverage the digital transformational power for their advantage in these ways: (a) hiring non-standard workers, making it advantageous to the companies because training costs are significantly decreased, and there is an increased flexibility, making adjustments with the workforce size easily manageable; (b) the nature of work carried out by non-standard workers is less complex, whilst the more complex tasks are given to standard workers; and (c) gig work is feasible to complete. Similarly, Azar (2019) outlines that traditional employers utilise digital work to avoid costs that are associated with workers by using gig workers. Additionally, Lapanjuuri, Wishart & Cornick (2018) argue that gig workers are more satisfied with the flexibility and independence that the gig economy offers them whilst completing their gig tasks.

The shape that the gig economy has taken is impactful to many gig workers' lives and the labour market (Kerikmä & Kajander, 2022). From being considered a 'side hustle' for supplementary income to a main-income digital job for many, the gig economy has created an enormous impact (ibid.). Tan et al. (2021: 2) argue that the work done on digital market models ranges across various industries, including, "food and beverages, transport, education and many more." Veen, Kaine, Goods, and Barratt (2020) argue that digital market models offer tasks that can be accepted and carried out in virtual space. These are known as the 'crowd-work' (De Stefano, 2016), which will be dealt with later in this section. In a similar vein, Wardhana et al. (2020) argue that these tasks include UpWork, Freelancer, and Amazon Mechanical Turk, to mention a few. Despite having all the various digital tasks that gig workers can take, not all of them can be completed online – some should be accepted online but

performed in a physical setting (Stewart & Stanford, 2017). These include work operators such as Uber, Grab, and Lyft, to name a few. This is known as work on-demand (Jäger, Zilian, Hofer & Füllsack, 2019), which will also be dealt with later in this section.

A report carried out by the NatCen Panel between July and August 2017 in Great Britain shows that 56% of the entire sample population were younger people aged between 18 and 34 involved in gig economy work (Lepanjuuri et al., 2018). This report was carried out on 2,184 individuals to make an estimation of how many people were involved in the gig economy in Britain (ibid.). In a similar vein, a report by the European Trade Union Institute for 2022 shows that there were more younger platform workers than any workers that have never done internet work (Piasna, Zwysen & Drahokoupil, 2022). The report further elaborates that “young people are thus much more likely to be found among platform workers” in the age group of 18-24 (ibid. 23). Literacy-wise, Lepanjuuri et al. (2018: 5) argue that “the levels of educational attainment were similar between the general population and those involved in the gig economy”. However, this does not necessarily conclude that platform work in European countries has been the most prominent way for income generation despite even younger individuals participating in it (Kerikmä & Kajander, 2022). These scholars empirically reviewed studies conducted in 2016 by the European Union and a 13-member European Union state study conducted by the University of Herefordshire between 2016 and 2019 whereby similar conclusions were made: (a) that the prevalence of the gig economy was exaggerated due to the findings that 58% of labour was making greater income from traditional labour rather than completing gig tasks, and (b) that gig work was an additional source of financial income primarily to traditional work for most people (ibid.).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted many industries, from a global and domestic perspective, with many establishments closing down due to many restrictions and traditional employees losing jobs, causing an economic recession (Umar, Xu, & Mirza, 2021; Kerikmä & Kajander, 2022; Li, Xu, Yu, & Meadows, 2023). This has affected many markets globally – for instance, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the European Union had declined by an estimated 8%, with Italy being the most affected, with over 10.5% (Römisch, 2020: 1). The economic downturn caused by the pandemic had led to scholars claiming that there has not been any global pandemic that caused this enormous recession as powerfully as compared to COVID-19 (Baker, Bloom, Davis, Kost, Sammon, & Viratyosin, 2020).

Despite many scholars arguing that COVID-19 has negatively affected the stock market, Umar, Xu, and Mirza disagree with these arguments (Umar, Xu, & Mirza, 2021). In a study that these scholars conducted on the impact of COVID-19 on the gig economy, the study concluded that “COVID-19 has positively affected the gig economy exactly like the

environment. So, the incidence of coronavirus has not only brought devastation; rather, it has positively affected some areas i.e. family life, the environment, and the gig economy” (ibid. 2294). These conclusions come after findings show that there has been an increase of daily gig tasks completed by gig workers since the incidence of COVID-19 (ibid. 2284). Similarly, Kerikmä and Kajander (2022: 119) argue that the contractual model of gig work “stands to reason that the number of individuals relying on the ‘gig economy’ has increased during the pandemic in Europe.”

### **2.3.1.2 Gig Economy in South Africa**

The advent of technological advancement has given rise to the presence of platform work (Froehlich, 2023), whereby freelancers could work at their preferred working hours and locations (Hazarika, 2019). Similarly, Stewart and Stanford (2017) state that gig workers have irregular work schedules. While it is so, freelancers are working outside of labour regulation that governs formal employment (du Toit, Fredman & Graham, 2020). In addition, working outside of labour regulation places platform workers in South Africa in the presence of many unfair conditions, such as poor pay and wage theft (ibid. 2020). Some of the many South Africans without formal employment have access to opportunities and revenue through platform labour (ibid. 2020). While it is with no doubt that gig work continues to increase among industries from a global perspective, giving freelancers the space to execute platform tasks at their convenient working hours and location (Heeks, 2017; Graham & Woodcock, 2018; Hazarika, 2019; McDonnell et al., 2021). However, scholars like De Stefano (2016: 1) argue that “it is difficult to estimate the number of workers in the gig economy.” Similarly, Gandini (2019) outlines that making an estimation of platform freelancers becomes difficult due to freelancers registering on multiple platforms all at once.

According to Ayentimi, Abadi and Burgess (2023), the gig economy is essentially categorised into two forms: crowdwork and work on demand. According to De Stefano (2016: 2) “crowdwork is work that is executed through online platforms that put in contact an indefinite number of organisations, businesses, and individuals through the internet, potentially allowing connecting clients and workers on a global basis”. Crowdwork is not a new phenomenon, as it appeared in the early 2000s (Berg, Furrer, Harmon, Rani & Silberman, 2018). While some scholars like Black (2020: 73) outline crowdwork as “cloud labor,” Black argues that “a requester makes a call for work through a platform, and the workers with the necessary skills are matched, bid for the gig, get accepted by the requester, perform the work wherever they are located, submit online, and are paid online”. On the other hand, De Stefano (2016) and Black (2020) argue that work on-demand is gig work that essentially requires a location specific for the work to be completed. This can include activities that are offered through the

platform, such as cleaning services, transportation services, food delivery services, and assembling furniture, to name a few (ibid.).

## **2.4 Platformisation**

Scholars like Nieborg and Poell (2018: 4276) argue that platformisation is where digital platform extensions become economically, politically, and infrastructurally embedded in web and app ecosystems, transforming the way the culture industries operate. Platformisation of the recorded music industry gives artistes greater distribution options and access to international markets than pre-digitalisation business models (Lal et al., 2023). The way music is created, shared, and enjoyed has profoundly changed the structure of the industry and created new locations that challenge the established geographic hierarchy of industries (Long-Innes, 2022). The role that digital platforms and technology play in the music industry has been impactful to musicians (Hviid et al., 2017; Massarotto, 2021). Platformisation has enabled musicians to be independent contractors and continue to grow in the music industry (Lal et al., 2023; McDonnell et al., 2021).

### **2.4.1 Path of music transformation**

The way music was produced, distributed, promoted, and consumed has changed significantly (Akil, Rasyidin & Dwihadiah, 2024). According to Arditi (2019), the consumption of recorded music before the advent of digital media would be limited to buying compact discs (CDs); long plays, also known as vinyl records; tapes; or attending live concerts. However, with technological innovations and the internet throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the music industry saw a change from the way music is produced all the way to the consumption of music (Coffey, 2016; Akil et al., 2024; Rosenblatt, 2024). Similarly, Watson, Leyshon, and Windsor (2023: 1) argue that “between the late 1990s and early 2000s, the music industry became the first major media industry to be fundamentally disrupted by digital platform innovations”. Scholars like Hesmondhalgh, Jones, and Rauh (2019) argue that the cultural industry that saw a major transformation due to digitalisation was recorded music. This fundamental change meant that recorded music can be disseminated and streamed through digital platforms (Kjus, 2016; Zhang & Fung, 2019; Watson et al., 2023).

According to Watson et al. (2023) platformisation had inserted itself between record companies and audiences, enabling the spread of MP3 in digital formats, essentially dismantling the old traditional music business model. Meanwhile, it may be like that; the scholar further critiques that, as a result of platformisation in the culture industry, the industry remains oligopolistic (ibid.). The South African music industry has seen a huge interest and competition with some of the major local and international record labels, such as Disney Music Group (DMG), Electric and Musical Industries (EMI), Gallo Music, Sony, and Universal Music

(Nkosi, 2020; Long-Innes, 2022). However, Warner Music Group had announced its joint venture amid the buyout of shares at Gallo Records in 2013 to establish Warner Music South Africa (Warner Music Group, 2013; Mureithi, 2021: para. 12). According to Warner Music Group (2013: para. 2), this buyout would enable the record label to “oversee the release of international repertoire within South Africa and other territories across the African continent”. Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group, and Sony Music Group, as the three major establishments in the music industry, controlled an estimated 68.6% of the market share globally from the physical and digital revenues in 2020 (Watson et al., 2023).

These world’s major record label companies have started to make investments into the South African music industry amid the rapid development of Africa’s music industry (Mureithi, 2021: para. 1-2). This comes as the music industry started to be more occupied with young artistes making their way into the music industry, the creative talents they have, and the opportunities that platformisation has brought into the creative culture (ibid.). Long-Innes (2022) critiques the significance of platformisation that the shift from physical to digital distribution of music has created a significant transition of South Africa’s revenue in the music industry through music streaming. Additionally, platformisation has resulted in the physical sales gradually declining (Mbhele, 2021).

While it cannot be argued that digitalisation has enabled a significant advantage for the growth of the music industry with the appearance of many music streaming services such as Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Tidal, to name a few (Afzali, 2018; Hesmondhalgh et al., 2019), it is also essential to argue that digitalisation has also enabled social media to further assist artistes to grow their music (Akil et al., 2024). Essentially, social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter – renowned as ‘X,’ as they are also part of the digital disruption – are also fundamental tools for the growth of the cultural industry (Afzali, 2018; Nwobu & Onwuekwe, 2023). YouTube, SoundCloud, and Facebook allow artistes and fans to upload engaging content on these social media sites (Webster, 2019). In addition, musicians use the insights from the social media posts to weigh their impact and keep track of their fanbase engagement (Servantes, 2018). Nwagwu and Akintoye (2023: 2) further critique the use of social media sites to build a solid reputation for musicians, more especially for “small-scale musicians who are endeavouring to make their marks in the industry.”

## **2.5. Opportunities of platformisation and the gig economy**

### **2.5.1 Independent musicians**

With the advancement of digital technology, the media landscape has changed the mode of information collection, distribution, and consumption (Gbenga & Ekhueorohan, 2023). The music industry, in particular, has witnessed the impact of digital technology and benefited from

these technological advancements (Hviid et al., 2017). These digital technological developments are important to the growth of many young Amapiano musicians between the ages of 20 and 35 in South Africa as they get exposed to target audiences (Long-Innes, 2022).

The music industries in South Africa have experienced changes due to digitalisation which was led by digital technological advancements (Willie, 2021). These technological advancements have better structured the platforms for musicians; moreover, dissemination of content by amateur and professional musicians has been made easier (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013; Mbhele, 2021). To a greater extent, these technological advancements – artificial intelligence software and automation of processes, to name a few – have been embraced by several sectors in South Africa (Stopforth, 2023). Digital technologies have introduced changes to value networks and traditional structure, among others, in the music industry subsequently to the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Willie, 2021; Tschmuck, 2016). Changes to the value network had brought links to companies that had no prior links in the culture industry and had suddenly become relevant (Tschmuck, 2016).

The digital revolution has enabled the establishment of electronic publishing companies, self-distributing creators, and digital start-ups (Willie, 2021); moreover, DIY (do-it-yourself) musicians have also been given the stage to present their creative work (Tschmuck, 2016). To this great extent, the cost of music production and distribution has remarkably reduced (Autio, 2019). Similarly, Ramnandan and Bhele (2023: 66) argue that digital advancement has enabled the “digital distribution of music,” which thus “created new opportunities for artists, enabling them to be independent”. In the music culture, DIY musicians are self-reliant producers and creators who create and perform music with resources at hand (Spencer, 2008; Smith & Gillett, 2015; Drijver & Hitters, 2017), together with being self-managed for their careers in the music industry (Willie, 2021). Platformisation has enabled musicians to be independent contractors and continue to grow in the music industry (Lal et al., 2023; McDonnell, Carbery, Burgess & Sherman, 2021).

In recent years, with the emergence of a new music genre in South Africa, Amapiano, this new genre was introduced to the consumers of music, and new musicians were introduced (Charisma, 2021: para. 3). This genre has gained traction in South Africa and in the international markets, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Charisma, 2021: para. 5; Brown, 2022: para. 2), with its exact location and date remaining unknown (Seroto, 2020: para. 4). Artistes in the Amapiano genre during its growth were independent artistes driving the genre towards its path to success (Long-Innes, 2022). The technological advancement underpins the creation and the ever-growing establishment of independent musicians and

labels for music production that embrace the digital platforms for their creative work (Mapuwe & Kemunto-Orina, 2018; Mbhele, 2021).

### **2.5.2 Creative work of musicians**

Given that South Africa has persistently high rates of unemployment (Hadisi & Snowball, 2017), the gig economy's potential is seductive to those without other means of financial support (Stopforth, 2023). "The gig economy is largely enabled by technology" (Froehlich, 2023: 44). As such, the youth of this country have become creative in various cultural practices (Abbing, 2016). To a greater extent, these cultural and creative practices form part of the country's economic growth (ibid.) and "will continue to increase..." in South Africa to make ends meet due to scarcity of employment (Stopforth, 2023: 142). Moreover, the country's creative economy has grown immensely during the recent decades (Wangen, 2017). Creative work encompasses an individual's creativity, talent, and skill, which they use to create wealth and job opportunities (ibid.). Moreover, these skills, creativity, and talent "are fast changing in the creative industries" (Abisuga, Oyekunle, & Sirayi, 2018: 229) due to technological developments. Therefore, creators must be professional (ibid. 2018).

Despite the struggle of employment in South Africa (Iqani, 2019; Stopforth, 2023; Hadisi & Snowball, 2017), creative labourers create a commodity with the skills, creativity, and talent they possess using the technological developments (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). Data is created and commodified through creative work in hope of obtaining partnerships with advertisement agencies for the accumulation of capital (ibid.). Moreover, other creative labourers may form part of brand ambassadorship (Iqani, 2019). The likeness of musicians may form part of brand ambassadorship because the music industry also forms part of the creative industry (Ramnandan & Mbhele, 2023). These digital developments have made it easy for creative labourers to share their work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013: 13-14).

### **2.5.3 Music distribution channels**

Technological advancement has played a significant role in the music industry (Hviid et al., 2017; Ramnandan & Mbhele, 2023). Primarily, when music streaming services such as YouTube, iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, and Napster were launched, the music streaming industry and digital music started to grow rapidly (Christensen, 2022). Music streaming services like Pandora were launched in 2005, whereas Spotify was founded the following year (Hviid et al., 2017). These music streaming services are popular for music consumption in recent days (Autio, 2019). With the innovations in the music industry, giving prominence to digital music, music consumers expect their music to be mobile, which thus creates a decline in physical music distribution and listening (Ramnandan & Mbhele, 2023). Similarly, Mbhele (2021)

outlines that the physical market of the South African recording industry is significant, even when it is witnessing a gradual decline.

Now that we have these music streaming services, which technology has enabled (Autio, 2019; Mbhele, 2021; Christense, 2022), it is with no uncertainty that the advent of these music streaming services, technology, and the Internet has provided musicians the pathway to “record their music and to distribute and promote it” in the absence of being signed by a record label (Hviid et al., 2017: 21). Similarly, Afzali (2018: 13) argues that unsigned musicians should be able to release music through various digital music distributors “without the need of major record labels”. Musicians use digital music distributors such as TuneCore, DistroKid, CD Baby, and Symphonic, to name a few (Trandafir, 2024). These digital music services facilitate easy distribution of music through online stores and ensure that there is easy access to the music for consumers (Mokoena, 2017). Moreover, digital music distribution has created ways for artistes to engage with fans and share more creative opportunities (Ramnandan & Mbhele, 2023). These various distribution channels also give artistes reports on analytics and revenue for each creative project released in music streaming platforms (Afzali, 2018). This allows artistes to see engagements from fans, downloads, and plays for their music (ibid.).

Since the disruption of digital media and the availability of digital music, fans have also preferred their music to be mobile (Ramnandan & Mbhele, 2023). This has also changed the music industry by allowing the growth of the industry, which also saw the increasing availability of music distribution channels (Park, 2023). These channels have been popular for musicians, as they eliminate middlemen for music distribution, allowing more growth for artistes (ibid.). While the music industry utilises digital music distribution, the physical music distribution method has not been totally erased (Ramnandan & Mbhele, 2023; Park, 2023). However, it is essential the musicians work with music distributors to help musicians create a wide audience to increase credibility and show their presence for profile creation (Bhattacharjee, Gopal, Marsden & Sankaranarayanan, 2009; Park, 2023).

#### **2.5.4 Monetization for musicians**

It is argued that digital advancements have created an enormous impact on the music industry, resulting in the independence of many existing musicians, enabling their creative work to reach national and international traction (Lal et al., 2023; McDonnell et al., 2021; Charisma, 2021: para. 5; Brown, 2022: para. 2). Digital disruption has enabled musicians, especially DIY musicians in the cultural industry, to gain financial rewards, especially without the aid of record labels (Drijver & Hitters, 2017). Remarkably, this has enabled DIY musicians to take ownership of their creative productions (ibid.).

According to Bourdieu (1986: 281), capital that is generated through an interaction or exchange of services is capital that can be “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights”. As musicians put their recorded music on streaming platforms, they generate economic capital through platform streams and digital sales (McDonnell et al., 2021; Park, 2023). As such, the amount made through music streaming is dependent on each platform (Pires & Soares, 2023). In addition, it is important for musicians to be aware that the recorded music’s commercial success is not always guaranteed (Guibert, Rebillard & Rochelandet, 2016). Although digital media is rapid in spreading ideas and innovations, it may take time for economic capital to be accumulated (Bourdieu, 1986), as “revenue is not limited by time and space” (Guibert, 2023: 124). In terms of royalty administrations, digital distribution channels handle the collection of independent musicians’ royalties as compared to mainstream artistes whereby their royalties are handled by their record labels (Afzali, 2018; Froehlich, 2023). Afzali (2018: 15) further outlines how independent musicians “keep more percentages of their music revenues for themselves”. Importantly, Prey and Lee (2024: 3) argue that artistes across markets “are more or less dependent on the income and publicity generated by MSPs”; as such, there are other alternatives for income.

Live streaming performances have gained economic capital for musicians, especially during the COVID-19 period, when live physical performance and social interaction were disallowed (Neves, 2022; Pires & Soares, 2023). These live-streamed concerts created “live interactions on digital social networks” (ibid., 2023: 4). The COVID-19 pandemic, which was an international dilemma in many sectors, found its way to cause a disruption in the music industry in South Africa (Willie, 2021). Remarkably, this caused closure for tours and bookings for artistes which resulted in financial scarcity, leading to musicians selling their music apparatus and quitting live music for good (Ansell, 2020: para 4-5). However, platformisation has enabled the music industry, on a global perspective, to do paid live-streamed concerts for economic capital generation (Pires & Soares, 2023). Live streaming has become a popular alternative among well-known musicians and independent musicians (Neves, 2022), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic as musicians rapidly occupied the virtual sphere (Vandenberg, Berghman & Schaap, 2020).

Although digital platforms have enabled musicians to do paid live-streamed concerts for revenue generation (Pires & Soares, 2023), it is of paramount importance that musicians also do live physical performances due to the significant value they have in generating most of the revenue and being the largest in the music industry (Krueger, 2019; Massarotto, 2021). More so, because live physical performances have “become increasingly important in the music industry” (Pires & Soares, 2023: 1). Live physical performances are not only beneficial to

musicians, as some scholars outline (Leenders, Farrell, Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2015; Krueger, 2019; Pires & Soares, 2023), but they are also beneficial to the consumers of music because a lot of emotional connections, memorable experiences, and energies are exchanged during live physical performances (Neves, 2022). A recent study revealed that live physical performance is the most significant method that artistes in the South African music industry employ to generate the most income (Kgasago, 2022).

Through live concerts, concert organisers and musicians “generate revenue through the sale of tickets” and selling merchandise (Morris, 2022; Guibert, 2023: 124). In addition, music event organisers serve a huge role in the success of a music concert (Nkosi, 2020). Importantly, these streaming platforms have given artistes the platform to promote their concerts on their artistes’ page, which thus makes it easier for the concert tickets to sell out due to their visibility on the artistes’ page (Autio, 2019). Apart from financial benefits from live music, Mulligan (2020: para. 2) argues that live music is beneficial to musicians for development and establishing their image within the culture industry, especially when small live music events are created by emerging musicians. Small live music allows emerging musicians to test the grounds (ibid.). Although it may be that live physical performances are important for revenue generation, it is of predominant importance to acknowledge that not all musicians are equal; as such, other musicians might have other methods of generating revenue (Leenders et al., 2015; Autio, 2019).

### **2.5.5 Crowdfunding**

According to Hagen (2017: 18), crowdfunding is “the act of gathering funds” from fans by artistes for a musical project. Similarly, crowdfunding seeks to leverage funds from the “general public or requesting individual donations” for a project (Belleflamme, Lambert & Schwienbacher, 2014; Gamble, Brennan & McAdam, 2017: 25). Crowdfunding is also an alternative of generating revenue that the digital evolution has made possible for musicians, and it is important, especially to independent musicians, to leverage revenue for projects (Hagen, 2017; Autio, 2019; D’Amato & Cassella, 2021). Belleflamme and Lambert (2016: 6) argue that there are five models of crowdfunding: the donation-based model, which is a model of crowdfunding where fans contribute money towards a project by musicians without the return of anything; the reward-based model, which is a model of crowdfunding whereby the contributors benefit from “a non-financial reward for their funding,” and this can be in the form of receiving exclusive music through pre-ordering. These two models are classified as ‘non-investment-based models’ (Hagen, 2017).

The last three models, which are regarded as ‘investment-based models’ (ibid., 2017), are the lending-based model, which involves the contributors acting as borrowers of the funds for the

projects and being “expected to be repaid when (if) the project is successful” (Belleflamme & Lambert, 2016: 6; Hagen, 2017: 19; Armit & Oliver, 2019); the royalty-based model, which involves the donors getting “share in the profits of the business” from the sales made; and the last model, the equity-based model, which involves the donors investing “their money into securities” (Belleflamme & Lambert, 2016: 6; Gamble et al., 2017). In this model of crowdfunding, “investors receive a share of equity in a given project relative to the amount invested and its ratio to money invested by others” (Nel, 2019: 26). Importantly, crowdfunding is essential to the growth of independent musicians to sustain their careers in the music industry without needing to be part of a record label (Armit & Oliver, 2019; Autio, 2019).

### **2.5.6 Entrepreneurship in the culture**

Numerous studies have discussed the entrepreneurship that digital development has created for many industries globally and in South Africa; however, there has been little discussion on how digital advancements have enabled musicians to practice their creative work in the form of being entrepreneurs in the music industries. Willie (2021) assessed the impact of the advancement of technological and socio-economic factors on DIY musicians as entrepreneurs in the culture in South Africa. One of the study’s conclusions argues that digital advancements have enabled musicians, especially DIY musicians, to take ownership of the creative work and be self-governed, which would then place them as part of the culture of entrepreneurs (Willie, 2021). Similarly, Ramnandan and Mbhele (2023) argue that digital disruption produces new cultural entrepreneurs. The study further assesses that the “inequitable access to digital technologies faced by Black DIY musicians severely limits their ability to participate as key players in the new digital economy” (Willie, 2021: 70).

### **2.5.7 Partnership and collaboration in the industry**

Digital evolution has enabled alternative income opportunities in the music industries, allowing musicians to take part in partnerships and collaborations with other music creators in the industry (Park, 2023; Dantas, Carvalho, Correia, Dubeux & Mansur, 2024). Musicians are now able to collaborate with other music creators from a global perspective, and that has been profoundly significant to their music careers, as collaboration allows music creators to widen their creativity and continue “to share ideas and exchange their different skills and experience” in the culture (Park, 2023: 17; Dantas et al., 2024). Additionally, independent music creators are capable of collaborating with other musicians digitally without the need to be in a proper recording studio, as digital technology eliminates geographic constriction for artistic collaboration (Walzer, 2017).

The significance of partnership and collaboration between artistes in the exchange of knowledge, complementary skills, and creative ideas has been argued by many scholars, such

as Sullivan (2010), and this idea of collaboration appears to be widely argued and agreed upon by recent scholars such as Park (2023) and Dantas et al. (2024). Moreover, Silva, Rocha, and Moro (2019) argue that for musicians to be able to create partnerships and collaborate, there is a need for social interaction, as it drives the success of creativity in the music industry. Scholars like Bourdieu (1986) had made arguments on social interactions that individuals within a cultural industry should maintain to create a strong connection. The scholar further argued that social interactions are not given naturally but rather are a “product of investment strategies” (Bourdieu, 1986:286-287). The role that digital technology has played in the music industry is significant, as it has also given artistes much better access to their audience to grow their fan base (Akil et al., 2024). In addition, a high fan base makes it easier for artistes to promote their music (ibid.).

## **2.6 Challenges of platformisation and gig economy**

### **2.6.1 Exploitative practices on musicians**

Economic capital is needed to support the lives of musicians and their career growth as well as to ensure that they survive in the industry (Leenders et al., 2015); however, musicians face challenges with revenue. With the advent of lower costs for music distribution through streaming platforms (Autio, 2019), the music industry still has complex situations (Froehlich, 2023). While record companies and signed musicians are not exempt from the issues induced by music streaming, scholars like Autio (2019: 9) argue that the artistes that are most negatively affected are the independent musicians, while they “make up the majority of the music industry”.

Despite the creativity and hard work that music creators put into the creative culture, music creators face several challenges in the music industry (Akil et al., 2024). The challenges faced include unequal revenue distribution and piracy, among others (ibid.). Undesirable economic capital benefits to artistes are a global challenge, as scholars such as Acquah and Acquah-Nunoo (2021) critique that artistes in Ghana also face unfair economic capital compensations from royalties. Scholars such as Hesmondhalgh (2021) also critique the unfair compensation of artistes, saying that they are being paid too little for their creative work in terms of royalties. Despite the easy facilitation of music dissemination that online music streaming platforms such as iTunes, YouTube and Spotify have (Mokoena, 2017), scholars such as Regner (2015) argue that these platforms have had a negative impact in terms of music earnings due to consumers paying more for albums by musicians. Moreover, musicians are economically exploited for the work they do in the culture industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2021; Acquah & Acquah-Nunoo, 2021).

The music industry has started to be more occupied with young artistes who are independent with the aim of generating a source of living and searching for a breakthrough to be signed by big recording labels (Drijver & Hitters, 2017; Mureithi, 2021; Long-Innes, 2022). Although it may be like that, music streaming platforms exacerbate the unequal distribution of revenue among independent musicians and 'superstar' musicians (Autio, 2019). The scholar further critiques that it becomes worse for independent musicians because they "cannot negotiate easily with music distribution giants such as iTunes, Spotify, or YouTube" (ibid. 10). The music industry continues to grow; however, artistes are not compensated fairly. The devastating part of this exploitation is that when artistes search for other jobs to make ends meet, there is a struggle, which may be due to the high unemployment rate (Acquah & Acquah-Nunoo, 2021).

### **2.6.2 Digital music piracy**

Digital music distribution has been made easy with the advancement of technology in the South African recording industry; artistes can now share their creative work at less cost to a larger audience on the online streaming platforms (Mapuwei & Kemunto-Orina, 2018; Autio, 2019; Mbhele, 2021). Despite this, the music industry still faces a download culture that affects both business models of record companies and musicians (Long-Innes, 2022). The music industry is faced with the non-stopping illegal downloading of music on various websites such as Tubidy.mobi, Fakaza.com, MyMp3, and mp3juices.cc, and this affects musicians in terms of generating revenue for their hard work (Kgasago, 2022). Although there are legitimate platforms such as Spotify, Google Play Music, Apple Music, and YouTube Music, to name a few, where audiences can download music from, music consumers still acquire music illegally (Tjiya, 2020: para. 8).

#### **2.6.2.1 Music piracy abroad: India and United States**

##### **India**

According to Shah (2019: 1), "music piracy is the repeating and distributing of recordings of a part or whole of music for which the rights owners (composer, recording creator, or copyright-holding record company) have failed to provide consent". Al-Rafee and Cronan (2006) share the view that piracy that is practiced digitally, referred to as "digital piracy," has to do with the illegal copying or downloading of media files without the consent of the copyright holder. The researcher consulted studies conducted in India on music piracy and discovered ample information on this topic. A study by Hassan, Nihar, Rahman, Razu, Tuhin and Das (2019) shows that music consumers practice music piracy unconsciously, as there is limited knowledge on music piracy, punishable laws against piracy, and paying methods for legal online downloading of music. The study made the conclusion that consumers also pirate music digitally because music is made available on the internet by third parties for illegal

downloading, and paying for music downloads is costly (ibid.). Although music piracy causes harm to the economies of recording companies and musicians, it is of paramount importance to note that piracy also affects the creativity of artistes (Sahni & Gupta, 2019).

Digital music piracy has affected musicians in India such that they are not paid well for their music (Hassan et al., 2019). Musicians may continue to be affected for a while since music is continuously supplied on the internet for illegal downloading (Shah, 2019). Additionally, this discourages consumers from paying for legal platforms that will enable them to download music that reflects the benefit of music creators economically (ibid.). The Indian music industry continues to suffer from piracy because India is not a well-developed country; moreover, consumers are not touched by music piracy (Hassan et al., 2019). India faces ever-increasing digital music piracy, like many countries (Naik, 2023). However, India is among the top digitally pirated countries for various products such as software, video games, movies, and music, with the United States and Russia being on the list. Among these pirated products, music piracy is in the third position with 10.8 billion visits in India as of 2022 (ibid.).

### **United States**

A study conducted on the impact of deviant peers, moral attitude, and perceived legality on an individual's participation in digital piracy makes a few arguments for digital piracy. Digital piracy was introduced with the digital age when the WWW (World Wide Web) exploded (Sadiku, Ashaolu, Ajayi-Majebi & Musa, 2021). Up to this point, every individual is involved in piracy, directly or indirectly (ibid.). A study conducted by scholars such as Lee, Paek, and Fenoff (2018) argues that moral attitudes play a role in digital piracy such that “if a youth views the act of downloading a music file via a peer-to-peer file-sharing website to be morally acceptable, he or she is more likely to partake in similar behaviour, compared to those who deem it as morally unacceptable.” In essence, digital piracy is a reflection of one's moral values (ibid. 293). Moreover, these scholars also argue that the probability for one to engage in digital piracy is based on the time they spend online ‘consuming digital content of entertainment media.’

While digital piracy may be a result of an act of humanity toward one another without the awareness of the damage caused (Sadiku et al., 2021), file-sharing resources such as BitTorrent and Freenet, among others, have been found to be the sources of where peer-to-peer music and software program file sharing occurs (Lee et al., 2018). Slabykh (2019) argues that music, movie, software, and video game consumers engage in digital piracy due to lack of knowledge, ignorance, and habit. The scholar further argues that pirates are knowledgeable on technology, and they have a clear understanding of the internet (ibid.). Despite the increasing number of paid subscriptions to music streaming in the United States market, digital

music piracy is still a significant challenge (Borja & Dieringer, 2022). It is estimated that the U.S. economy makes a loss of approximately 71,000 jobs annually, which would be an estimation of about \$12.5 billion due to digital music piracy (ibid.).

### **2.6.2.2 Music piracy in African countries: Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and South Africa**

#### **Zimbabwe**

Digital piracy in the recording industry is not a South African dilemma only but a global one (Hassan et al., 2019; Eisend, 2019). Scholars such as Mapuwei and Kemunto-Orina (2018), who conducted their study on the prospects and challenges faced by Zimbabwean and Kenyan musicians, found that music piracy has been a major factor in the downfall of a lot of artistes. Illegal file sharing has left many musicians bankrupt with some changing mode of securing a living through farming, while some rented their production places (ibid.). Importantly, with the advantages that platformisation has introduced in the culture industry, it has also introduced music piracy because music piracy has not been a major dilemma in the recording industry when music was consumed in physical formats such as compact discs, vinyl records, and tapes (Ofochebe, 2020; Kgasago, 2022). Scholars such as Yende and Pashkevitch (2022: 153) further outline that music piracy does not only negatively affect musicians and the sales they are supposed to make from their music but also “negatively affects the legal distribution of music and the establishment of more registered music distribution stores”.

Interestingly, music piracy in Zimbabwe does not occur as much as in other parts of the world. Nyathi and Maguraushe (2023: 17) outline that “piracy is now largely happening online through illegal uploading and downloading of music; in Zimbabwe, a fairly significant amount of music piracy is still done the traditional way, through CDs.” What is astonishing is that consumers choose to pirate CDs even when they are not durable (Chimbudzi, Muranda & Maguraushe, 2021; Nyathi & Maguraushe, 2023). The pirating of CDs results in the recording music industry not generating revenue from CD sales (Mapuwei & Kemunto-Orina, 2018; Mutavati & Muranda, 2023). In a case where there is a music group, band members tend to go separate ways due to poor remuneration that is caused by music piracy (ibid.).

#### **Nigeria**

Similar to the previous reviews of studies, the creative industries in Nigeria are also affected by digital piracy (Ojukwu, Onyiuke & Esimone, 2015; Nnamani, 2016; Ofochebe, 2020; Adedeji, 2023; Okechukwu, 2024). Nigerian creative industries such as the film industry, media broadcasting, computer software, and music industry make a contribution to the Nigerian economy of 1.2 trillion naira, which equates to \$7.5 billion (Nnamani, 2016). This

serves well to the economic and cultural development of the country (Nwogu, 2015). Despite such impactful contributions to the development of the country and cultural scenes, digital piracy places musicians and entertainers at risk of royalty losses (Justia, 2024). What is more concerning with digital piracy is that “the entertainment industry loses billions of dollars each year due to copyright infringement, putting jobs and careers at risk” (Justia, 2024: para 3). Similarly, Nwogu (2015) argues that revenue losses tend to affect the employment of those employed by music creators, such as managers, which in turn affects the government due to the loss of taxpayers.

Nnamani (2016) reports that the Nigerian Television Authority declared in 2008 that copyright piracy caused an annual loss of one hundred billion naira in the music, video, and software industries, among others. Adedeji (2016: 265) states that “It is indeed clear now that the major challenge is piracy, as it is the only cancer eating deep into the entertainment industry where a dearth of proper labels has been observed.” Now that it is easier to obtain illegal digital content than before, digital piracy has exploded, and this poses a threat to the creative cultures (Okechukwu, 2024).

A glance into the most recent studies, Nwobu and Onwuekwe (2023) argue that pirates in Nigeria rent stores to pirate artistes’ albums that were recently released by converting the CDs into MP3 format so that they can sell each track at an estimated price of N20 (R0.22 in South African currency). This has become “devastating to the extent that even music artistes leverage that as a means of promotion whereby an artiste will even pay these MP3 pirates to share their song freely” (ibid. 59). The scholars further argue that the development of social media has also made it more devastating to even trace the uploading of illegal content without proper authorisation. Music piracy is not a new phenomenon, as it dates to the history of the Nigerian music industry (Adedeji, 2023). A fascinating perspective into music piracy shows that new emerging artistes in Nigeria view piracy as a marketing tool to get their music ‘to the street’, while well-established musicians view it as a devastating dilemma in the music industry (ibid.). In a similar vein, Tade and Akinleye (2012), as cited by Asenye, Udoh and Mandor (2024: 4), argue that “pirates see themselves as legitimate marketers and promoters.”

A study by Nnamani (2016) revealed that Nigeria has suffered an amount exceeding N100 billion annually due to copyright piracy. By the end of 2022, from a global perspective, it had been revealed that there had been a total loss of US\$51.6 billion in the creative industries due to music piracy (Tuck, 2022: para. 1). Some of the causes of music piracy in Nigeria are a result of poverty, inadequate awareness about copyright piracy, the excessive cost of genuine products, misconceptions about copyright piracy, and financial gains (Nwogu, 2015). To mitigate the exploitation and frustrations that copyright infringers deprive music creators of

their creativity for financial gains (Ojukwu et al., 2015), the Nigerian government has placed agencies such as “the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) and the National Film and Video Censors Board, who in conjunction with the Police, Customs, and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) carry out raids against pirates and their syndicates” (Nwogu, 2015: 113). A modest practical method to curb music piracy is through spreading awareness about music piracy through educational systems (Ojukwu et al., 2015). The scholars argued that injecting children with awareness of music piracy with the assistance of parents at home and government (through formal school, public enlightenment, workshops, and seminars) would cause children to grow with the knowledge that it is morally wrong to download music illicitly or purchase pirated works.

### **South Africa**

Postmodern technologies have changed the music industry (Kgasago, 2022). Physical music accessibility and consumption are things of the past now that consumers access and consume music through digital music streaming (Mbhele, 2021; Ramnandan & Mbhele, 2023). However, due to the socio-economic confrontation with music consumers, illegal accessibility and distribution take course, undermining the strategic investments by music companies in the South African recording industry and the global perspective (ibid.). These digital advances not only bring easy access to music as a form of opportunity for creativity growth and entrepreneurship but also carry challenges that music creators express (Hesmondhalgh, 2020). Scholars such as Kgasago (2022) elaborate that artistes have utilised a strategic method of getting themselves known by sharing their music for free with the hope of gaining popularity to secure paid live physical performances. However, the scholar further acknowledges that this method “also raises the issue of piracy” (ibid. 118).

Music piracy started when Napster was released back in 1999, created by Shawn Fanning and Sean, which allowed the possibility of downloading and peer-to-peer file sharing, such as MP3 audio files, for free on a global scale (Kanyora, 2016; Kirui, 2023; Massarotto, 2021). Despite the severe challenges that digital music piracy creates for the music scene, South African Amapiano artistes have developed unique strategies to promote and disseminate their creative work that seem to embrace the dilemma of music piracy (Long-Innes, 2022). This comes due to the “weak copyright frameworks, thriving piracy, and public entity corruption,” which “has led to informality in the production and distribution activities of local artists and labels” that the South African music scene has (ibid. 43). According to Tjiya (2020: para. 4-5), some of the Amapiano songs that were digitally pirated mostly are by artistes such as Kabza De Small, DJ Maphorisa, MRF Souls, Sha Sha, and Master KG during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, artistes in the Amapiano genre were not the only South African artistes

affected by digital music piracy, as various other artistes in different genres were included (ibid.). Artistes such as DJ Zinhle, Joyous Celebration, Blaq Diamond, and Elaine, who are not within the Amapiano music scene, were among the affected artistes during the lockdown (Lephaka, 2020, para. 3; Tjiya, 2020, 1-5).

Music consumers practice digital music piracy when they download and make available the digital music without paying the necessary fees to the copyright holder (Tomczyk, 2021). This creates financial damage to the music copyright holders, such as the music creator and production house (Naik, 2023). According to Shah (2019: 711), illegal websites that make available digital files “undermine the authorised music business across several forms and channels” through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing and unaccredited streaming. Moreover, advertisements and cryptocurrency mining malware are promoted on such illegal websites for the financial gain of the website creators (ibid.). Digital music piracy in particular is stimulated by financial gains, which is similar to what Nwogu (2015) had argued about.

Although there is little that is known of digital music piracy, particularly in the Amapiano genre, a recent study by Kgasago (2022) shows that South African artistes have always had to deal with piracy, even before music became digital. While it has long been practiced to duplicate recordings, including cassettes and vinyl, the digital format of music has made it easier and more feasible to do so without sacrificing the original quality (ibid.). Similar to local artistes in Nigeria (Adedeji, 2023), local artistes in the South African music culture intentionally share music on the internet for a certain subscription fee or for free, depending on the music distribution company, with the intention and hope to be well-known and increase the possibility of live physical performances (Kgasago, 2022; Long-Innes, 2022). The scholar further argues that this method is beneficial in the sense that their creative projects may become popular and that it is disadvantageous in the sense that they lose money on music sales (ibid.). Kaushik (2024: 114) highlights that the biggest victims of piracy actually benefit from it.

The South African music industry is not an exception to music piracy through physical formats of music such as CDs and DVDs (digital video discs or digital versatile discs), like many African countries such as Zimbabwe and Nigeria (Nyahuma, 2021). Music piracy is a significant threat to the revenues of many artistes in South Africa and globally (Kirui, 2023; Nyahuma, 2021). While it may be a struggle to deduce accurate figures of piracy (Nyahuma, 2021; Kazungu, 2023), South African Amapiano artiste Master KG justified on Sowetan Live that many industry artistes lose a lot of their revenue on piracy, and as such, they are hoping that the law will protect them in the near future because at this moment there is not enough law that protects artistes from music piracy (Tjiya, 2020). Long-Innes (2022) outlines that the music industry in the country is faced with ineffective copyright governance, which thus leads to corruption

regarding production activities and distribution of royalties. As such, it would be a great practice when governing laws relating to copyright frameworks are adjusted and flexible to address the dilemmas of digital piracy when digital technologies continue to develop (Kgasago, 2022).

From the year 2013, the South African Music Rights Organization (SAMRO) took a major step into creating educational awareness for South African citizens on the effects of music piracy (Nyahuma, 2021). This has been dealt with through the publishing of booklets in all eleven official languages in the country, which were made available in conferences, schools, and universities, to name a few (ibid.). Such awareness campaigns may be effective to mitigate music piracy because there is no special act that will combat piracy. Only regular activities in different directions will help weaken the issue” (Slabykh, 2019: 98). Scholars such as Borja and Dieringer (2022: 917) are in a similar vein with educational awareness, noting the development speed of technology “that parents, educators, the music industry, and the government keep up with these changes to effectively address online piracy.” Particularly, “young consumers exhibit a restricted comprehension of the impacts that music piracy has on various industry stakeholders” (ibid. 906).

## **2.7 Theoretical framework**

### **2.7.1 Diffusion of innovation theory**

Diffusion of innovation theory, dating back to the 1800s, is a crucial theory in understanding technology adoption, user needs, and designing user-friendly systems. It facilitates new ideas, practices, or projects through communication channels over time (Miller, 2015). With the advancement of digital technology, new innovations have been introduced, some adopted, while others were rejected. This may be due to the uncertainty of an innovation. ‘To reduce the uncertainty of adopting the innovation, individuals should be informed about its advantages and disadvantages to make them aware of all its consequences’ (Sahin, 2006:14).

While individuals and companies develop platforms to be utilised by artistes and audiences for distribution and streaming of recorded music, digital media serves its role to keep a consistent flow of these new innovations, solutions to products, and ideas. This is particularly relevant in the context of the platformisation of music, in which artistes utilise these innovations to share their music releases. Moreover, this theory also accommodates the context of the gig economy, especially since platform work is conducted on the digital platforms. As a result, diffusion of innovation theory assists in establishing the practices that make platform work possible. The gig economy is a digitalised platform work that can be utilised by any individual (Kaine & Josserand, 2019). This theory is relevant as it outlines the seamless flow of music through digital media from South African Amapiano music creators to consumers of music due

to such technological innovation. It helps to explain the utilisation of the innovations to generate revenue.

The diffusion of innovation theory is a relevant theory in the context of this study, particularly as it helps to identify products, inventions, and ideas that music creators use to shape their artistic careers. Some of the products that were developed may still be in use in the modern era, while others were rejected for use. These products, ideas, and inventions are important, as they measure the economic growth and the expansion of the music industry in this context (Yilmaz, Utterback & Pistorius, 2020). Utilising this theory will help measure how far the music industry has come from the use of compact discs (CDs) to being digitally distributed and consumed. In discussion, the theory is relevant in measuring the future use of certain inventions in whether or not technological development will continue to make music production, distribution, and consumption easier for music creators and wider audiences (ibid.).

### **2.7.2 Capital theory**

Bourdieu (1986: 281) argues that economic capital is “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights,” and social capital is “made up of social obligations, which are convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility.” Economic and social capital are appropriate in the context of this research, as they outline the accumulation of revenue and maintaining connectiveness by young Amapiano artistes in South Africa. As artistes put their music on streaming platforms, they generate economic capital through sales and royalties (McDonnell et al., 2021). Although digital media is rapid in spreading ideas and innovations, in this case, capital may take time to accumulate. Artistes accumulate social capital by creating connections that need to be maintained, as the “connection is not a natural given, or social given” but rather a “product of investment strategies” (Bourdieu, 1986:286-287). Moreover, social capital “may exist only in the practical state” (Bourdieu, 1986:286). Bourdieu’s economic and social capital theory, in this study context, explains the generation of economic capital by musicians in the form of sales and royalties. They further explain the connectiveness that musicians must maintain towards revenue generation in their creative work.

Drawing on social capital, this framework assists in setting analytical methodologies that will allow the researcher to discover societal expectations that artistes must adhere to and continue to maintain to establish strong connections with other music industry music creators. In fact, Apruzzese, Barretta, and Tompkins (2023) talk about relationships that musicians must build and maintain with booking agencies for a better music industry experience. As such,

social capital theory is relevant in identifying and explaining these societal exchanges in the music industry. In addition, the framework of economic capital is relevant, particularly in analysing whether or not music creators are gaining economic capital with their music on the digital platforms. Both these frameworks have become practical in many industries that facilitate the exchange of services between individuals or companies.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study, including the research design, population and sampling methods, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and the measures taken to ensure quality criteria are maintained. Furthermore, it outlines and justifies the choices made in setting out the methodological processes.

### **3.2 Research approach and design**

Before deciding on a research design, I researched more on research design methodologies that are available, taking note of their advantages and disadvantages. Upon reviewing these methodologies – qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and mixed methods – I found qualitative methodology appropriate for my study. According to Mahlangu (2021), qualitative research design enables researchers to gather all valuable information to provide a more detailed understanding of events, issues, and the study phenomenon without limitations. Queirós, Faria, and Almeida (2017) argue that qualitative methodology is appropriate when researching topics that are concerned with realistic social relations, focusing on understanding and explaining social aspects. Similarly, qualitative research methodology focuses on phenomena that impact individuals or groups in their lived reality (Mills & Birks, 2014:9). Qualitative design is advantageous not only for collecting information through prepared or unprepared questions but also for interpreting body language when data is collected in a natural setting. Additionally, the qualitative method is advantageous for collecting detailed information, including opinions, experiences, and feelings (Rahman, 2020). As such, qualitative methodology was employed in this study to identify the opportunities and challenges of the gig economy and platformisation that young Amapiano music creators face in the South African music industry.

Given the exploratory nature of my thesis on the lived experiences of young African Amapiano music creators, an exploratory research design was employed to help collect data on perceptions and experiences of the study population. Swedberg (2020:17) outlines an exploratory research design as a framework that aims to uncover something new. Since there is little that is known of this study's phenomenon in the South African context, particularly contextualised in the music industry, exploring the lived experiences of artistes in the Amapiano genre will allow me to uncover something new. The study aims to delve into the perspectives, experiences, feelings, and viewpoints of young Amapiano music creators on the opportunities and challenges of the gig economy and platformisation that they face in the South African music industry. Choosing an exploratory design is based on the rationale of exploring those experiences, feelings, and viewpoints (Strang, 2015).

### **3.3 Study population and sample**

For this study, the researcher employed convenience and snowball sampling as data sampling methods from young Amapiano music creators in South Africa between the ages of 20 and 35. The rationale for this age group is that the researcher believes that the participants would have the music industry's experience to provide concrete data. In addition, based on the researcher's music industry observation, the Amapiano music genre is highly populated with creators in this age group. While there may be Amapiano music creators at a younger age group than the selected, the researcher believes that this age group will have the necessary experience, especially when we consider the integration of platformisation of music, the year in which the Amapiano music genre was born, and the active age group in the music industry. In a general perspective, especially in the South African music industry, musicians that are over 36 years old are usually not as active with releasing music compared to the selected age group, based on the researcher's industry experiences. Narrowing it down, there are a few active Amapiano artistes in South Africa that are above 36 years old that release music consistently. However, this makes the age group ineffective as the study's population since it is often difficult to get hold of them (there are few of them compared to the age groups of 20 and 35).

The researcher, who is an Amapiano music artiste himself, recruited, using a list of personal contacts, the first set of participants, who are young Amapiano music creators. This research study collected data from twelve participants. This study includes South African Amapiano music creators who are independent, have their own record labels, and have joined a distribution deal with music distribution companies. The researcher sent recruitment invitations to Amapiano music creators to participate in the study, and the first twelve participants who accepted and were accessible are the ones who participated in the study. The sample population of this study possesses the necessary experience in the study phenomenon. This means that they are Amapiano music creators with relevant experience in the music industry.

Snowball sampling involves collecting data from a few selected participants in the entire population; each participant was required to identify other participants who are eligible to participate in the study (Kumar, 2011:168). From the referred participants, each participant was also required to identify other participants who are eligible to participate (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2008:27). This was done until the saturation point was reached. The researcher has kept gender and age balance, including other diversity factors, such as ethnicity, race, language, and cultural diversity in mind during recruitment. This means that efforts have been made to include diverse genders and different ethnic groups. Nine participants in this study speak Northern Sotho, two speak isiXhosa, and one speaks Afrikaans as a mother tongue.

Additionally, all twelve participants are from the Black community, with two being females and ten being males.

### **3.4 Data collection procedure**

The researcher employed semi-structured interviews to collect data from the artistes. Semi-structured interviews are suitable for this research study because they involve some pre-formulated questions and allow space for new questions that might not have been formulated to be explored (Myers, 2013:167). Similarly, Lopez and Whitehead (2013:128) describe semi-structured interviews as flexible interviews. Semi-structured interviews were relevant because the researcher aimed to explore the attributes, personal experiences, opinions, and views of South African Amapiano music creators, potentially leading to new questions emerging during the discussions, providing flexibility. Moreover, these semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express themselves freely.

Moreover, go-along interviews were specifically used to collect data. According to Moran, Gallant, Litwiler, White and Hamilton-Hinch (2022), go-along interviews offer opportunities for in-situ engagement and co-participation of the researcher with the research participants. This means that the researcher has prioritised “a day in the life of the artiste” to get a first-hand experience of how they work and conduct the interviews as the activities unfold in a “natural” setting. These interviews were done in person. According to Mahlangu (2021), go-along interviews are a part of qualitative data collection methods. This method is advantageous not only because it allows researchers to ask prepared and unprepared questions in a face-to-face setting but also because it allows the researcher to interpret body language and facial expressions. It is generally known that not everyone is able to express themselves with words. Some people express themselves with the creative work that they do; in this case, these participants are music creators. As such, with observation, which forms part of go-along interviews, I allowed the participants to produce their music while on the interview with me. This was done to allow participants to participate freely while doing what makes them happy and not feel watched and judged by a new person (observer) within their creative space.

Given the busy schedules of participants and financial constraints, online interviews were also used to collect data using platforms like Google Meet and telephone calls. For both the online and face-to-face interviews, I recorded the interviews with a mobile device to ensure that the analysis part of the study is done with accurate data, as it was said by participants. In addition, whilst recording the interview, I was also taking notes on a Word document to assist me in developing follow-up questions. To ensure that this study followed good ethical conduct, informed consent to collect data was sought from the study participants. This ensured that the

participants were aware of their voluntary participation, that they were anonymous, and that their data would remain confidential.

### **3.5 Researcher's Positionality**

Goundar (2025: 2) argues that positionality “is the process of identifying and acknowledging potential conflicts of interest that a researcher can encounter in a research project.” These conflicts of interest might be caused by cultural contexts, community-oriented roles, or employee-related roles (ibid.). As such, the researcher must outline and make clarifications on how these potential conflicts can be managed. In a similar vein, Olukotun et al. (2021) argue that a researcher should do a reflection on these areas of tension in the research process. Moreover, Chiseri-Strater (1996), cited by Holmes (2020), argues that a researcher's positionality may take a certain direction based on culturally motivated conflicts such as race, gender, skin colour, and nationality, whereas some directions may be influenced by political views, experiences, and personal life history. Goundar (2025) points out that a researcher can have the insider-outsider perspective, whereby it stems from how the researcher views themselves and how they are viewed by others. According to Ali et al. (2022), as cited by Goundar (2025), having an insider's perspective may lead to the researcher having critical information, and having an outsider's perspective may lead to the researcher having prior knowledge of the participants' lived experiences.

My positionality was shaped by my role as a researcher, a freelance beatmaker, and an independent young Amapiano music creator who is strongly informed about the use of the internet to make ends meet through both freelancing and music releasing with digital music distribution companies such as DistroKid. My personal experience as an independent musician who is also trying to make it to the top has had a huge influence on the question of the potential and pitfalls of young Amapiano music creators in South Africa. As a musician, I am aware that the struggles I have faced as an independent music creator might develop potential biases in the interpretation of this study's data. As such, to keep my interpretations unbiased, I separated my role as a musician from my role as a researcher. This had enabled me not to take sides based on my industry experiences and beliefs on certain subjects raised by the study participants. This became remarkably effective in the study because, from my lived reality in the music landscape, I have not experienced some of the challenges and opportunities, such as being signed under any record label or opening my own record label to separate my music from my personal involvements. As such, the researcher had an unbiased interpretation of the data to allow the study to reach its full potential in uncovering the lived experiences of the study's participants on the challenges and opportunities of the gig economy and platformisation, instead of making interpretations based on my personal life history, political views, and industry experiences.

### **3.6 Ethics and ethical guidelines**

At the beginning of my research, I was aware that there were formal requirements that I needed to follow to conduct interviews with the study participants. As such, permission to conduct interviews was granted upon the review and approval of my research proposal by the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee (HF-REC) at Rhodes University (see Appendix). Upon being granted permission to conduct interviews, I sent participant invitation letters to young South African Amapiano music creators. Once they had accepted to participate in the study in face-to-face or online interviews, we scheduled a date to conduct the interviews, with a consent form being handed to them before we could start conducting the interviews. The consent form explained the following ethical guidelines briefly.

#### **3.6.1 Voluntary participation**

Nii Laryeafio and Ogbewe (2023: 102) outline that “to gain reliable information from the interviewee, none must be forced or induced to participate in the research investigation.” The researcher had outlined to the participants at the beginning of each interview that their participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and that should it happen that they wished to opt out at any moment during the interview, they could do so without any judgement (Mumford, Higgs & Gujar, 2021). It is of paramount importance to note that when participants are forced to participate in a data collection process, the data collected may not be factual, as it was forced to be given out (Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). All the participants interviewed had a clear understanding that their participation was fully voluntary. The researcher observed this when one participant jokingly said that they were done with the interview before any question was asked. Moreover, one participant had outlined that they were exhausted from their late-night music creation before coming to have the interview. As such, the participant wanted to opt out due to their exhaustion and was allowed to do so.

#### **3.6.2 Privacy**

The researcher has ensured that the participants are made aware that their personal details and every other piece of information about their experiences will be used as research data and ensured that the level of privacy is high. The privacy of participants has been maintained by ensuring that personally identifying information is not used in the data analysis in such a way as to give off the identity of the participant. During the data collection in the fieldwork, one participant had asked the researcher to exclude some of the personal information in the data analysis and discussion since the information was spoken out in a way of being open and getting comfortable with the research. Allowing participants to be open about personal experiences relating to the study’s focus helped out with the interviews. However, it is of paramount importance to note that participants may mention information that may not be

related to the study. As such, respecting the privacy of participants and adhering to their requests about the data is critically important. According to Nii Laryeafio and Ogbewe (2023: 103), maintaining the privacy of the collected data ensures that “no third party has access to the raw data unless otherwise stated by the interviewee for exposure.” To ensure that the privacy of the data was maintained, the researcher stored the data in secure storage and shared the data with the research supervisor only.

### **3.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

According to Mirza, Mirza, and Bellalem (2023), before the data collection sessions, confidentiality and anonymity must be communicated to the study’s participants to allow full incorporation into the researcher-participant agreement. The researcher ensured that the participants remained unknown or did not have their identities disclosed. This was ensured by not using the participants’ real names; instead, pseudonyms have been used. Moreover, the analysis was done in a thematised and composite manner and in a way that makes it impossible to identify specific individuals being talked about. Moreover, Mirza et al. (2023) argue that to maintain confidentiality of the research data between the researcher and a participant, the data must be handled and stored in a secure location where only the researcher and the research team members, if applicable, should have access. As such, the data was captured, transferred, and stored securely on external hard drives, flash drives, and Google Drive for storage. This is shared only with the research supervisor.

### **3.7 Interview guide design**

The interview guide for this study comprises four sections – see Appendix. Section A focuses on how South African Amapiano music creators utilise digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment. Section B focuses on the role that the gig economy plays in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes. Section C focuses on the challenges that young Amapiano music creators face in their music journey. The final section, Section D, explores the emotional labour that Amapiano music creators face during their creative work.

During the data collection process, the first set of questions, which formed part of the general introduction between the researcher and participant, prompted the researcher to add two more sections prior to the four sections mentioned earlier. The first section addresses the demographic details of participants, and the second section touches on music industry biography. Participants’ music industry biography touches on whether or not participants are signed under a record label or own one and the years they have been active in the music industry.

The researcher used the first interview to prevent possible issues with the study population’s recruitment method. The first set of participants was recruited using a personal list of contacts.

This was guided by the snowball sampling method. However, amongst the set of participants invited to participate, only one accepted the invitation. From the first interview, the researcher initially requested the participant to nominate one other possible participant. However, that attempt also failed, as the telephonic interview was interrupted from the participant's side. Upon making a follow-up contact with the first participant with the request for one possible participant to be interviewed, no participant was nominated, leading to zero active nominees to be interviewed next, as the initially contacted recruits did not accept the invitation. At this point, the researcher had to restart contact with new possible participants again to be interviewed.

The researcher successfully recruited the second participant through a personal list of contacts. To refine and make possible adjustments to the recruitment procedure, the second participant was asked to nominate as many participants as they could to speed up the recruitment process. This was refined to enhance the active nominees to be interviewed. Learning from the first recruitment procedure of using personal contacts, the researcher identified that recruited participants might choose not to participate by rejecting the invitation, or this could be a prolonged back-and-forth rescheduling of interview dates leading to a failed recruitment. I observed that the back-and-forth rescheduling of interviews was most likely active with participants that are well-known artistes. This might have been due to their busy schedules since they have things such as music production studio sessions, music video shoots, live physical performance schedules, radio interviews, etc. From the list of possible participants nominated by the second participant, the researcher reached out to the nominees and sent invitations for participating in the interview process. From the nominees that accepted, interviews were scheduled, and they were also asked after the interview to nominate as many participants as they could. Ultimately, the nomination of two or more possible participants was effective because the researcher was able to interview three participants in different natural settings on the same day, leading to a sped-up data collection process. This was also effective because the active nominees kept on multiplying. This led to twelve participants being recruited and interviewed, both in an in-person setting and telephonically, on time.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

According to Flick (2013), qualitative data analysis is defined as the interpretation of the collected linguistic or visual data to make statements about the representations within the collected material. This study employed critical thematic analysis (CTA) to analyse the data gathered from the interviews. Thematic analysis is a suitable tool for analysing interview discourses due to its critical nature. The recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness of critical thematic analysis will assist in establishing shared experiences of participants (Lawless &

Chen, 2019). Moreover, CTA enabled the researcher to discover status-based hierarchies, power dynamics, and overarching ideologies at play in their platform and gig work.

The researcher firstly manually transcribed the data collected from all the participants' interviews so that recurrences, repetitions, and forcefulness of words can be plainly identified for a successful critical analysis. Since both the online and face-to-face interviews were recorded and manually scripted down, these came in handy during the transcription since some parts of the recordings were not clear enough. Mwita (2022) argues that qualitative research data is usually huge, which is likely to consume time to analyse. What I have found time-consuming was both the manual transcription and analysis. Although in these modern days we have Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools that could assist in transcribing data, these would not have been useful since these AI tools are mostly able to transcribe audio that is clear and in English. Most of my participants spoke freely in their native languages and everyday lingo, which AI tools are unlikely to grasp. Thus, I manually transcribed the data. Moreover, while transcribing, I was also translating from various languages, such as Northern Sotho and isiXhosa, to English. This supports what Mwita (2022) argued about time consumption in qualitative research data.

Since this study employed semi-structured interviews with non-scripted questions emerging through follow-ups, the researcher carefully went through each participant's transcribed data for related topics (for instance, music industry stereotypes, revenue generation, freelancing, etc.) and grouped them into one topic. For all the data, the researcher employed the same strategy of arranging related topics before starting the process of identifying themes. Upon grouping related topics, the researcher manually identified similar codes from the grouped data of all the interviews, which led to the development of themes that are guided by subthemes for analysis. Recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness were well observed from each grouped topic to allow the researcher to identify how accurately the themes and subthemes were drafted. Upon identification of repetition from all the grouped data, the researcher drew the analysis supporting the subthemes and the main themes.

Since CTA does not only analyse the surface of the data through themes generated from the recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness of data, instead it critically analyses the data and asks questions relating to status-based hierarchies, power dynamics, and overarching ideologies at play based on the participants' data. I have critically analysed and interpreted the data by asking questions in relation to the theoretical frameworks to identify those power dynamics at play in the music industry and the gig work. Moreover, I attempted to bring out existing knowledge on these themes to answer the questions in discussion. Some of the participants' responses were also used to answer the questions in discussion.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve young South African Amapiano music creators, who were interviewed telephonically and face-to-face for this study. The aim of this study was to explore how digital platforms and gig-based opportunities influence the career trajectories of young Amapiano musicians, as well as the challenges and constraints inherent in this ecosystem. The evidence is provided in qualitative terms of form, analysis, and interpretation.

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are some of the ways that Amapiano artistes utilise digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment?
- What is the role of the gig economy in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes?
- What are the challenges faced by young Amapiano music creators in their music journey in general and specifically also as platform workers?
- What kind of emotional labour do young Amapiano music creators face during their creative work?

The analysis identified four major themes: the use of digital platforms to generate income; the role of the gig economy on music artistes; difficulties associated with the music industry; and the emotional labour associated with the music industry. These themes are discussed in detail below, supported by direct quotes from participants. These themes are unpacked in different sections using sub-themes. The first two sections show the participants' demographic details and their position within the music industry, followed by other sections on the themes and their sub-themes. Moreover, the analysis draws on the diffusion of innovation and capital theories to provide an in-depth understanding of the opportunities and challenges that young South African Amapiano music creators face in the context of the gig economy and platformisation.

### **4.2. Section A: demographic details**

#### **4.2.1. Age of the participants**

Twelve young South African Amapiano music creators participated in the data collection process. See table 4.2.1.1 below, which illustrates the age of the participants. Out of the twelve participants, nine were aged between 20 and 25 years, while three were aged between 26 and 30 years. Additionally, none of the participants were aged between 31 and 35 years or 36 and above.

<b>20-25</b>	9
<b>26-30</b>	3
<b>31-35</b>	0
<b>36 and above</b>	0

**Table 4.2.1.1: Age of Participants**

#### **4.2.2. Gender of participants**

The figure below illustrates the genders of the participants. Out of the twelve participants, ten were males and only two were females. While invitations were sent evenly to both genders, only a few female artistes (2/12) accepted the invitation. This could be based on structural, cultural, and economic factors in the music industry, particularly in the Amapiano scene. In a larger sense, historically, the music industry has been dominated by male artistes, and certain genres have thus been dominated by a particular gender; for example, R&B music has been dominated by female artistes.

<b>Male</b>	10
<b>Female</b>	2

**Table 4.2.1.2: Gender of Participants**

### **4.3. Section B: music industry biography**

#### **4.3.1. Positionality of participants in the music industry**

Eight participants are independent music creators; four participants who create music own their record labels. Additionally, none of the participants are signed under any record label. See Table 4.2.2.1 below, which shows the positionality of the participants in the music industry.

<b>Independent</b>	8
<b>Signed by a record label</b>	
<b>Owns a record label</b>	4

**Table 4.2.2.1: Positionality of participants in the music industry**

#### 4.3.2. Participants' years in the music industry

The table below illustrates how many years the twelve participants have been involved in the music industry. Participants A, C, and H have each been involved in the music industry for three years. Participants E, F, G, and I have been in the music industry for six years. Meanwhile, participant B has been in the music industry for ten years, participant K has been involved in the music industry for thirteen years, and participant L has been involved in the music industry for eleven years.

Participant A	3
Participant B	10
Participant C	3
Participant D	8
Participant E	6
Participant F	6
Participant G	6
Participant H	3
Participant I	6
Participant J	5
Participant K	13
Participant L	11

Table 4.2.2.2: Years of participants in the music industry

#### 4.4. Section C: The use of digital platforms to generate income

This theme addresses the first research question: *What are some of the ways that Amapiano artistes utilise digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment?*

This theme delves into the use of digital platforms in generating income by young Amapiano music creators in South Africa. The analysis is presented in an order that will link all the sub-themes to the main theme, with the sub-themes being guided by the key concepts of platformisation and the gig economy. Artistes strategically use social media to attract booking agencies and secure paid performances. The financial success and emotional connection fostered by these initial shows often drive a demand for further live opportunities. This shift is fueled by platformisation, which has streamlined everything from talent discovery to digital revenue generation

With this theme, the researcher tried to pin down how these young Amapiano music creators in South Africa are leveraging the digital space to generate income amid the high unemployment rate in the country. As of the second quarter of 2025, Statistics South Africa reported that the official unemployment rate in the country was currently sitting at 33.2% (Statistics SA, 2025). This percentage is a result of the official unemployment rate increasing by 0.3 percentage points from 32.9% in the first quarter of 2025 to 33.2% in the second quarter of 2025 (Statistics SA, 2025: para. 3).

#### **4.4.1. Live physical gigs**

Sourcing revenue through live physical performances, also known as ‘gigs’ in the music culture, eleven participants revealed that they had their first live physical performance, with only one participant having not performed at all. Recommendations for the first live physical performance by close friends have been popularly pointed out by all eleven participants as a major promotional tool. While it may be like that, ten participants highlighted that their first live gig performances were not paying performances. How the participants respond to their first gig performance shows that there is a generally known narrative that first gigs are always free of charge. This leaves two major questions based on the power dynamics in the performance culture as to who decides who should not get booked and paid and what performances are paying performances drawn upon. Participant C explained thus:

*“The one I got invited to: I never got paid. You never get paid on your first gig. If you do, it would be by luck. Unless it was organised by someone who knows that there’s money. Let alone as a creative, you will never get paid on your first gig.”*

Whilst an overall of eleven participants had their first live physical performance, only one participant echoed that they got remuneration for their performance. Participant D echoed that, “I did. Yes, because the record label catered for everything: music distribution, management, marketing, and studio records. So, you would understand that it was the management team that made sure that we got everything, including the gig. So, I would say yes because it was done by them.” This view, echoed by participant D, also leaves a major question as well in securing a paying gig performance: are record labels the only way to go for the acquisition of a paying gig performance, especially when the artist is not yet known? In addition to free gig performances, participants A and J highlighted the major concrete wall that stands between the possibilities of generating income and artistes. Participant A echoed that:

*“I got the experience even though there is a lot of gatekeeping in this place. You get the same DJs or the same lineup in the same place. It is never a matter of changing DJs or whatsoever.”*

In a similar vein, participant J echoed that:

*“Let me put it this way: there is a lot of gatekeeping. If you are a performer, chances of you getting a gig are very less but if you are a DJ then you’re sorted. This gatekeeping is the reason why this talent is not getting exposed. Those who already have the platform they keep it to themselves, or they give it to their friends. It’s like that.”*

While artistes trade their talents to generate income, gatekeeping remains a brick wall between that possibility and several townships. Generally, it is known that live physical performances have a significant value in generating most revenue for most artistes (Massarotto, 2021). In fact, if we examine the data from participants, we see that live physical performances are echoed as the highest revenue-generation sector in the music industry. Moreover, from the researcher’s perspective, who is also a performer, live physical performances hold valuable developmental features for an artiste, besides generating most revenue. In a similar vein, Mulligan (2020) argues that live music events are beneficial for musicians’ development as their image gets established within the music industry. Live physical performances are also valuable and beneficial to those attending the live performances as memorable experiences, energies, and emotional connections are exchanged (Neves, 2022; Pires & Soares, 2023). This, as a result, leads to live physical performances being the most valuable revenue generation because of the physicality that it includes. Thus, the more emotional connections you form with music consumers, the more you are likely to be booked more often to make live performances.

Live music performances through concerts, music festivals or just small music events at clubs and bars are a growing sector of the music industry. However, due to the technical infrastructure needed, concerts are high risk (Guibert, 2023). In an attempt to critically examine the questions posed to this theme, Apruzzese et al. (2023) argue that in a music concert/festival, performers are booked through booking agencies. In this regard, booking agencies are a middleman between concert promoters and performers/artistes. In fact, “the relationship between agent and promoter can be a huge advantage for those artists with representation; for artists who do not have an agent, it can be a much harder process to get the attention of a concert promoter” (Apruzzese et al., 2023: 163). As such, it can be critically concluded that for an artiste to get a live physical performance booking and get paid, they would need to have a booking agent that will build a strong working relationship with the concert promoters. While responses from participants favour live physical performances as the best revenue generation tool, they often neglect that having a booking agent means you should have the financial means to pay them salaries. Often these salaries come from artistes with big pockets – which young independent artistes may not have. Drawing from capital

theory, both the booking agent and artiste get remunerated for the roles they would have played overall. The booking agent gets paid for securing the booking, and the artiste gets paid for the performance. Both are aspects of capital theory: social and economic capital. Social capital draws relevancy in this phenomenon since the booking agents maintain the strong connection between the artistes and concert promoters, while economic capital results in the accumulation of revenue.

#### **4.4.2. First live physical gig feeling**

Performing at a live physical gig for every artiste shows a sign of achievement and can be a huge personal milestone when you are in the industry. A majority of participants in this study echoed that their first live physical performance made them feel excited, especially because this signifies a huge milestone for them. In addition, they were excited also because they were looking forward to how the audience was going to receive their music selection, since it plays a critical role in a live set. Participant G said, “I was happy because it was my first gig. It was the first time people were going to hear my music. I had no problem with that gig. I was just pleased with it.” In support of this, participant E showed self-belief with his own music. Participant E said:

*“I was excited. That’s for sure, for being in front of people. I do not know if it’s just the guys I went with that just made me feel better about my set, but according to them, they say they liked my set because I had my songs. I think I had good set. What I didn’t have was skill.”*

Critically, the excitement described by participants can be seen as a positive emotion and physical reaction. With the face-to-face interviews, whilst participants were highlighting the excitement they had, both facial and physical expressions showed how relentless they were to finally perform in a live physical setting with the audience exchanging emotions and creating memories. Empirical studies show that live physical performance can create memorable experiences, emotional connections, and exchange of energies amongst audiences and artistes (Leenders et al., 2015; Krueger, 2019; Neves, 2022). Their facial and physical expressions reacted to the feeling of being watched while performing live. These responses showed the live physical performance formed a bridge of connection amongst individuals. However, it is also important to show a critical view that not every artiste experienced excitement the same way. While some showed full confidence, some showed hidden fear behind the word “excitement.” In fact, participant I said, “I do know that every time I do something for the first time, I get really nervous and anxious. But for me, it will be like, ‘Wow, what a change.’ I was very excited.” The expression of ‘excitement’ reveals how live physical

performance is not just a performance but an emotional journey that transforms anxiety and nervousness into an emotional connection, creating memorable experiences.

#### **4.4.3. Opportunities in digital space**

The current state of music distribution and consumption that we are in has significantly shifted from the old traditional ways; this has become possible due to the evolution of technology in modern days. Scholars like Nieborg and Poell (2018) had highlighted earlier that this is the process known as 'platformisation' whereby music becomes economically, politically, and infrastructurally embedded in web and app ecosystems, transforming the way the culture industries operate. This has been witnessed when music creation moved from CDs, vinyl records, and tape recorders to software, which became possible by the disruption of digital platform innovation, which is explained theoretically by the diffusion of innovation theory (Watson et al., 2023; Liang, 2025).

The digitalisation of music has come out as a great stepping stone for all twelve participants, with some having the same opportunity created by this innovative move. Out of twelve participants, four participants echoed the impressive innovative work that technology has implemented in the culture industry in making their music digitally accessible and affordable to distribute without the aid of traditional distribution methods. Participant D explained that:

*"I think releasing music digitally, it's much more affordable than in the old ways of CDs and having to go and publish them yourself. Do you still remember, there used to be an era whereby if you want to pursue things like music, you will have to be in Johannesburg. Nowadays it's not like that. You can do music wherever you are."*

In a similar vein, participant C also explained that:

*"I feel like many platforms they created accessibility for our music to be heard because remember if it weren't for them now, we would be doing traditional way of marketing our music. Going around with a speaker to a mall to play our music, going to places to sell our music."*

According to Park (2023) and Dantas, Carvalho, Correia Dubeux, and Mansur (2024), tremendous supremacy with digital evolution is giving artistes the space for collaborative projects. Scholars such as Pietrzak (2021) argue that with the constantly evolving internet and creative collaboration that has been in existence for a long time, new innovative technologies will allow creative collaboration to be executed even better in the modern world. Three participants explained that they have benefited from digital space through music collaboration with other music creatives, and that has made them improve their music creativity. Participant I explained that "Most people do that, like if a lot of people in DM wanting to collaborate, but I

think it is, I mean, a kind of situation right now. So, I need to learn my stuff in order to maybe be the producer that I want to be.” This experience corresponds to what Liang (2025) has explained: that music collaboration sources out the invaluable skills that music creatives have to improve their skills with other cultural creatives even better.

Since diffusion of innovation theory outlines the introduction of new technology and facilitates how it is adopted and rejected, a posed critical question to platformisation would be whether or not this innovation has been adopted or rejected. Watson et al. (2023) argue that the music industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a major disruption in how it was produced, distributed, promoted, and consumed. This new innovation has been introduced since then, and it has been tested and adopted by musicians and record labels. From the introduction to date, this innovation is still being used for even better music industry opportunities, such as growing record labels – Warner Music Group buying out shares at Gallo Records in 2013 to cement its establishment in South Africa to form Warner Music South Africa, as per reports by Warner Music Group (2013); the appearance of music streaming services – Spotify, iTunes, Apple Music, Amazon Music, etc. (Afzali, 2018); music partnerships and collaboration (Dantas et al., 2024); taking ownership of music (Willie, 2021); and paid live-streamed concerts (Pires & Soares, 2023). The diffusion of innovation theory highlights the introduction of new innovative ideas, their adoption, and their usage by users. In this case, artistes utilise these innovations, as they give them easy access to reach a new potential fanbase daily with their music. Thus, digital accessibility has been enabled by the innovation of new ideas. Artistes seem to have accepted the innovation and are consistently using it to release music digitally.

#### **4.4.4. Revenue generation in the digital space**

Live physical performance emerged as the most popular way of generating revenue from your music. Although live physical performances are conducted in a physical setting, the majority of the participants echoed that it was the music that was distributed on the digital platforms that earned them the slots to perform in a physical setting, resulting in revenue generation. Scholars such as Krueger (2019) and Massarotto (2021) revealed that live physical performance holds a significant value in the market, with most of the revenue generated coming from such performances. Participant L said the following:

*“For me it's the bookings. We put our songs there to get recognition after recognition, to get gigs. We are not yet fighting for royalties. Yes, we must get royalties. You know why? Because royalties pay a small money.”*

In the same motion, participant B said that “most of the money from the industry does not really come from streaming. It comes from gigs and collaborations with other companies for advertising a brand. Most of the money comes from gigs.” In a study by Kgasago (2022), it

was reported that live physical performance is the most employed method in the South African music culture in generating substantial amounts of revenue. The comparison of the estimated revenue generated from gigs, as an example that participants argued about, revealed that royalties from streams are relatively low, whilst it takes a prolonged period of time for the royalties to be received compared to gigs that pay out instantly. Participant C said:

*“Let’s say you’re booked at three different places, and you charge R15 000, then it means at the end of the day I would have R45 000. Which is way higher than what YouTube is going to give in the first day of dropping music, even in the first month or even with 100 000 streams. The only way to make nice revenue is making sure you get gigs (live physical performance).”*

Participant A echoed the long duration of waiting for royalties generated from streams on the platforms. “So, whereas with DistroKid, in the streaming remuneration, it takes a prolonged period of time to pay out or to receive your money. The fact that you have to wait for three months in order to get your first royalty – that’s a lot of patience also.” Participants largely agree that live performances are the primary drivers of revenue in the music industry — a trend prevalent in South Africa and mirrored globally. This alignment of practice and theory is best understood through Diffusion of Innovation, which explains the industry’s shift toward digital distribution and streaming, and capital theory, which accounts for the accumulation of wealth through both royalties and live events.

A critical question in light of this theme would then be, should musicians have the core belief that putting their music on the digital platforms may result in a possible acquisition of live physical performance, or should it be concluded that revenue generation from music distributed via digital platforms would always take a longer time? According to Kgasago (2022) and Long-Innes (2022), artistes intentionally release their music on the internet with the intention of getting recognised and getting booked for a live physical performance. Digitalisation of music has made the music industry a fast-paced industry. However, not every aspect of the industry is fast-paced. Participants in this study echoed that it takes a longer period to receive royalties generated by the songs you have put on the streaming platforms. In fact, music distribution services such as DistroKid, Amuse, Ditto, and Symphonic, etc., published on their websites that “streaming services usually pay out royalties 2-3 months after the streams happen” (Amuse, 2025: para. 1). In a similar vein, DistroKid (2025, para. 1) outlines that “services report your earnings every 1-2 months, with those reports representing streams or sales from a few months prior. You can typically expect to see earnings from the majority of services after about 3 months of your release going live.” While it may be guaranteed that eventually an artiste will get paid their royalties and sales, it remains of

significance to note that royalties do not get paid instantly compared to live physical performance whereby once you finish your performance or a week prior to the performance, you get your remuneration based on outlined agreements handled by booking agents and concert promoters.

#### **4.4.5. Revenue generated from digital music**

According to scholars such as Akil, Rasyidin, and Dwihadiah (2024), it is relatively known that music creators in the creative culture industry face a battle of unequal revenue distribution and exploitation, among other things. However, participants in this study echoed that they have generated a fair revenue from their music that is digitally available. Comparing the number of streams their individual songs have gained on the digital music streaming platforms with the royalties generated, seven participants had the same view that they were compensated fairly. Participant D said:

*“Yes. I would say I was compensated fairly, even though I’ll never get enough. If YouTube says 1000 streams is equivalent to \$1 for instance, who am I to come and say I want to change their terms? So, if it’s like that then I would say it’s fair because automatically that thing counts itself. I would say it’s fair.”*

In a similar vein, participant E echoed that:

*“Yes, if you put it like that, yes. For instance, I can’t get 10 views and expect R10 million. So, they’re corresponding.”*

According to Marocco (2021), with music streaming platforms such as Spotify, artistes earn \$0.004 per stream. For instance, if an artiste generates 1000 streams, they will relatively earn about \$4, which is R70.20. However, Spotify takes 30% of the artistes’ subscription revenue. While different music streaming platforms would earn artistes different rates per stream, and, depending on the distribution company an artiste uses, the company will also take a certain percentage of the generated royalties. Music distribution companies such as Ditto and DistroKid, among others, claim that artistes keep 100% of their royalty earnings (Ditto, 2026; DistroKid, 2026), whereas Amuse claims that artistes can keep 100%, except for royalties generated on YouTube with YouTube Content ID, which takes 15% of the Content ID revenue (Amuse, 2026). This may be the motive behind the conclusion from previous studies from scholars such as Acquah and Acquah-Nunoo (2021) and Hesmondhalgh (2021) on unfair revenue compensation. Participants in this study highlighted fair compensation from the music streaming platforms based on how they have promoted the music and the streams they have generated from their music. Participant I highlighted that:

“Yeah, it depends on how you promoting music before, maybe using any sort of money. So, how you promoting music must go hand in hand with the royalties you get. So, for now, with my music, the amount of money I'm getting, I understand. I do understand.”

While it may be difficult to critique the legitimacy of the exact amount of revenue each participant has generated from their songs since they could not share the breakdown for each official song, it can be concluded that participants are not facing exploitation, as per the sub-theme’s findings. However, one participant has provided a breakdown of royalties generated by service for the overall music catalogue extracted from their DistroKid account. See figure 4.4.4.1 below, which illustrates the breakdown of royalties on the DistroKid dashboard.

Service	Amount	Category
YouTube (Ads)	\$9.55	YouTube (Ads)
YouTube (Ref)	\$1.26	YouTube (Ref)
YouTube (ContentID)	\$4.08	YouTube (ContentID)
YouTube (Audio)	\$0.00	YouTube (Audio)
YouTube (Ads) - Composition	\$0.00	YouTube (Ads) - Composition
YouTube (Ref) - Composition	\$1.39	YouTube (Ref) - Composition
YouTube Shorts Composition	\$1.09	YouTube Shorts Composition
YouTube Creator Music	\$0.00	YouTube Creator Music
Groove (Downloads)	\$0.00	Groove (Downloads)
YouTube Creator Music PUB	\$0.00	YouTube Creator Music PUB
YouTube Shorts	\$0.48	YouTube Shorts
Groove (Streaming)	\$0.00	Groove (Streaming)
Google Play	\$0.00	Google Play
Google Play All Access	\$0.00	Google Play All Access
Amazon (Downloads)	\$0.00	Amazon (Downloads)
Apple Beats 1 Radio	\$0.00	Apple Beats 1 Radio
Apple DJ Mix	\$0.00	Apple DJ Mix
Apple Fitness+	\$0.00	Apple Fitness+
Apple Music	\$1.34	Apple Music
iTunes	\$0.00	iTunes
iTunes Songs	\$0.70	iTunes Songs
iTunes Match <small>hasn't been used</small>	\$0.00	iTunes Match <small>hasn't been used</small>
Spotify	\$0.65	Spotify
Pandora	\$0.00	Pandora
Deezer	\$0.03	Deezer
Beats	\$0.00	Beats
Tidal	\$0.00	Tidal
Tidal Direct Artist Payouts	\$0.00	Tidal Direct Artist Payouts
Tidal (Downloads)	\$0.00	Tidal (Downloads)

**Figure 4.4.4.1: DistroKid royalties dashboard**

Contextualising this theme’s findings to the study’s theories, capital theory criticises the application of economic capital as something that is “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights” (Bourdieu, 1986: 281). As artistes release their music on the digital streaming platforms, the streams accumulated generate economic capital, known as 'royalties' in the music culture. McDonnell et al. (2021) share a similar view that economic capital is generated through music sales and royalties, which artistes can claim after a short while. As such, the use of capital theory in this study links what the theory explains to what this theme has revealed about the use of platformisation to generate revenue.

#### **4.5. Section D: Role of the gig economy on music artistes**

This theme addresses the second research question: *What are the roles that the gig economy plays in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes?*

In addressing the role the gig economy plays in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes, this theme delves into the many ways artistes utilise digital platforms to secure either digital or physical gig work that can be used to secure economic capital needed to produce their music and advance their music careers. The gig economy offers individuals the opportunity to be self-employed with a more flexible job structure. The sub-themes of this main theme examine the many flexible job structures that artistes have ventured into to secure decent living conditions and how effective they are in sustaining their artistic and personal lives. Platformisation is used in this theme to show its relevance in establishing the digital platforms that are then utilised to acquire gigs or digital work. Upon acquiring a gig or a digital gig, this makes musical artistes platform workers.

##### **4.5.1. Roles of 9-to-5 and freelancing**

Participants in this study navigate positively towards both the 9-to-5 job and freelancing in assisting with their rise in the music industry. Participants show that it depends on the circumstances of certain individuals in terms of the role they choose to lean towards in sourcing funds to invest in their music crafts. The advantage of working a conventional nine-to-five was pointed out by participant K: “The 9-to-5 job has its own advantages. It’s money; I know I will get it.” In support of this, participant L said that a nine-to-five job is a decent job since you earn good money to sustain yourself and fund your music. Willie (2021) relates to this view by stating that not all artistes have the financial assistance to fund their music careers – others sought assistance in different ways to accumulate capital to re-invest in their artistic goals. However, a conventional nine-to-five job structure appears to have negative effects on musicians, affecting their creativity. Participant F echoed that:

*“9-to-5 is beneficial if you’re an independent musician because you are able to fund the things you want. For example, you can buy your own laptop and studio monitors. It’s actually a good thing but at the same time you might not have the time to focus on your craft because the only time that you have it’s on weekends. During the week, you obviously come back late, depending on what you’re doing, and you would be tired. The only thing that you would want to do is to eat and rest, then prepare for the next day. So, I do not think you have enough time to work on your craft.”*

According to Bolino, Kelemen, and Matthews (2021), organisations lean towards their employees working on weekends and hours that fall outside the conventional nine-to-five structure. In addition to this, the nine-to-five sometimes turns out to be more than 8 hours of

work. Participant F adds, “There was a point when I had to leave my 9-to-5 job, but that one was actually not a 9-to-5 job; it was more than that. I used to go there at 7 am, and then my time during the week for me to knock off was supposed to be 5 pm, but then I wouldn’t knock off at 5 pm because I had other things to do there. I was doing a lot of things.”

Freelancing roles also appeared to be among the popular ways of sourcing out finance to fund music careers. Musicians do live-streaming performances to preview their upcoming music and share performances of what they have already released and earn in various ways in the absence of a physical gig performance. With the advent of social media platforms such as TikTok, participant J echoed that:

*“You see on TikTok, fans gift the people who are going live but for me I have to have internet. So, because I am not booked a lot I go live on TikTok, and my fans do send gifts during the live stream, and they follow me. And I am also able to get features from other artistes. So, I think TikTok helped me a lot because some of my gigs I got them from TikTok because I have a huge following.”*

Since crowd work can be carried out quickly in virtual space, participant A showed that by selling beats as a form of freelance work, they were able to generate funds to support their music career. Participant A said that, “I’m just going to produce, and then if I sell my beats, I sell my beats. I also make money by selling beats overseas. I have friends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom who actually buy my beats.” According to participant A, what makes freelancing work more efficient is that the work is flexible and artistes earn more quickly than in a conventional nine-to-five job. Participant A elaborated thus:

*“I know I do not have to wait up until the 15th or the 25th or month end to get my salary. I can just make it within this week.”*

A critical aspect based on what participant D echoed intrigued the researcher to do a deep critical analysis based on status-based hierarchies and overarching ideologies. Participant D said, “Because I am from a Black family and a Black child, yes.” This was in relation to whether or not, if their music career does not go according to the way they would have wished, they would then consider working a 9-to-5 job. Drawing on this, it is of paramount importance to make an analysis of status-based hierarchies which parents hold in our society and the common knowledge on “the key to success” in terms of how the system has been built to limit individuals to only have the perspective that success is measured by landing a conventional job, rather than following your aspirations. It is important to raise the fact that most Black families encourage the young ones to follow the systematic sequence of going to school and getting a conventional job. Most of the time, that is seen as Black excellence. Erigha (2021) outlines that racial inequality can also be employed to measure a person’s status and

excellence, which can be valued in a form of potential economic loss or gain. While our communities may still have these stereotypes, participants in this study showed that so long as they get financial remuneration, either in a conventional 9-to-5 or freelancing work, they are willing to tap into these markets to fund their music careers. This relates to the economic capital theory.

#### **4.5.2. Securing decent living conditions**

The majority of participants stated that they have considered working a nine-to-five job outside the music industry to secure decent living conditions. Despite some of the disadvantages of working a nine-to-five, such as having limited time for music creativity, working extra hours, and working during weekends, the majority of participants navigated towards working a conventional nine-to-five job. Regardless of this, it is of paramount importance to note that in this economic climate that South Africa is currently in with unemployment, it may be hard for these musicians, or any individual, to secure employment. As stated previously, the country currently has an astonishing unemployment rate of 33.2%, reported in the second quarter of 2025 (Statistics SA, 2025). Participant E said:

*“I have, a lot of time. Now I am an electrician. But I am still in school. Obviously, for now music can’t sustain us, so we need some cash-flow. If nothing is working well for you in the industry, you do not have a hit song, you have the songs but not hits. You need money, but the moment you’re not making any income from your music or elsewhere, you may start stealing around and at the end of the day your dreams get ruined. Obviously, you can’t sing music behind bars. You will get arrested. So, go to work and get cash-flow to balance things. The time you get them balanced, you can quit the job to follow your dreams. But for now, you need to work.”*

In support of this, participant B echoed thus:

*“Yes, at the beginning it is advisable to get it, but when your brand is starting to grow, it becomes difficult. And sometimes is a good idea to have good job, because things might not work out for you as a musician, but at the end of the day on another side it might not work for you.”*

With the advanced educational systems to access better education, resulting in immensely different qualifications and work experience that individuals have in the country, securing employment still remains challenging (De Lannoy et al., 2018). In a similar vein, individuals who have ample educational backgrounds have a chance of securing employment (Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023). Despite this, participant F advised that forming a part of a conventional nine-to-five as a musician shouldn’t be about the education musicians believe they possess;

instead, it should depend on the goals that they have as musicians. In other words, those who believe that they will find success in the music industry but lack economic capital to invest in their music career should consider working a nine-to-five job to gain economic capital. In a similar vein, participant A said that:

*“I wouldn't say I have a fixed answer, because at the end of the day, we are different people, so we all have different problems in different life situations. My way might work for me, but it might not work for you. Or your way might work for you, but it might not work for me. So, with that, I would say, trust your instincts.”*

A critical point to be viewed in this regard would be based on the economic climate in South Africa versus the probability of finding success in the music industry. As reported by Statistics SA (2020), South African youth have a better chance of being employed based on their tertiary level of education. However, it is also important to note that unemployment has been on the rise since then. In fact, the lowest unemployment rate that the country has reported was in 2014, with a rate of 24.6% (Gwala et al., 2023). The rate has since spiked up to 33.2% in the second quarter of 2025 (Statistics SA, 2025: para. 3). According to Newzroom Afrika (2025), “If we look at the official unemployment rate, it is 33.2%.” It's slightly worse for women; it's 35%, and it's much worse for the youth at 46%, and if we include those who have given up looking for work, it's 58%. That makes South Africa a big outlier compared to other countries.” While it may seem like securing employment is a bit difficult, it is important to note that finding success in the music industry is also not that easy. Participants A and B suggested that an individual should trust their instincts since what might work for a certain individual might not work for the other. Contextualising these critics with our theoretical frameworks, it is evident that participants are open to working outside the music industry to accumulate economic capital, which is in alignment with our capital theory.

#### **4.5.3. Effectiveness of 9-to-5 and freelancing**

A majority of the participants had a view that both the 9-to-5 and freelancing are effective in economically supporting young emerging music artistes. Empirical studies show that gig work provides an additional financial income for most people, generally (Kerikmä & Kajander, 2022). Participants highlighted that both these roles are a great support structure, financially since the funds they are getting from these roles can maintain them – ensuring that they have good clothing and sustainable toiletries. Moreover, participants have profoundly highlighted the importance of these roles in sourcing revenue that could be used to invest in their artistic work. Participant I said that:

*“Very effective. Very effective, like I said. The money you can use to fund almost everything to boost your career, your music and whatever. So that is very effective.”*

In a similar vein, participant B echoed that:

*“I think it will be the only thing they will be getting at the moment because remember they are not making any income. As an independent, I have been there. We can't really say we are making money. We're making income after three to six months. So, we're going to depend on that nine-to-five job. And at the end of the day, that money from nine to five job we will take it and invest in the craft or in your music. So, it's important if you're an upcoming artiste to get a nine to five job so you can be able to invest it in your music.”*

It is of paramount importance to also note that participants highlighted how advisable it is for any young upcoming artiste to form part of both 9-to-5 and gig work to secure financial support. Whilst it may be advisable to participate in either of the two roles, participants highlighted that this should only be in the beginning stage of one's artistic career – once they have secured enough funds to boost their music, they should fully invest their time into their music career. Participant E highlighted that:

*“If nothing is working well for you in the industry, you do not have a hit song, you have the songs but not hits, you need money; but the moment you're not making any income from your music or elsewhere, you may start stealing around and at the end of the day your dreams get ruined. Obviously, you can't sing music behind bars. You will get arrested. So, go to work and get cash flow to balance things. The time you them balanced, you can quit the job to follow your dreams. But for now, you need to work.”*

Similarly, participant D said, “Yes, I would advise them to be part of them because where else would they get money if they are at the beginning point?” Whilst it is made clear that both 9-to-5 and freelancing roles are effective and it would be advisable to form part of these roles to secure funds that could be used to invest in one's artistic career, it is important to note that participants' responses are based on ideological beliefs that getting a job would make it easier to boost one's music career. Moreover, these views showed that participants are aware of status-based hierarchies in the music industry in the sense that upcoming artistes are at the bottom of the hierarchy in the industry. As such, working a 9-to-5 or freelancing could be the way for them to get financial support, whilst big-name artistes are getting the support from well-established music record labels. However, participants often neglect the high rate of unemployment that South Africa has reported, especially among youths. In fact, the youth unemployment rate in the country is reported to be 46% as of the second quarter of 2025 (Newzroom Afrika, 2025). Nonetheless, the theme's findings capture the economic capital framing – as a form of capital that is in relation to the accumulation of revenue. This is brought to light when participants outline the critical role that either a 9-to-5 or freelancing job would

play in creating a great financial support structure for personal life and a music career. The revenue accumulated from a 9-to-5 or freelancing also supports participants in maintaining social obligations, such as good clothing and sustainable living expenses.

#### **4.5.4. Relevancy of record labels**

In relation to the relevancy of music record labels, out of twelve participants, six participants echoed that it's effective to release music with or without a music record label, whilst the other six showed that it's not effective. According to Afzali (2018: 13), the availability of digital music distributors such as DistroKid, Amuse, and Ditto, amongst others, has enabled independent music creators to release music "without the need of major record labels." Hviid et al (2017) had the same view that music streaming services have also accommodated independent artistes to have their music on their platforms, given how advanced technology is, without being signed by a record label. Participant F made an emphasis of how effectively this can be done remotely at any place and time:

*"Now it's very easy. I feel like now many people release many songs because if you look back then, if you wanted to release a song, you had to be in a record label. So, back it then it was hard to release songs. For example, back then a song would trend for long without having too much competition because it was not easy for someone to just wake up and drop a song. So, now it easy to just wake up and release a song. You do not have to call someone for authentication. You can just drop it, remotely so."*

In a similar vein, participant E highlighted the need to release music even when an artiste is not signed by a record label. The participant highlighted that releasing music gives artistes the opportunity to grow their profile, which may make record labels consider signing an artiste instead of waiting for a record label to sign them even when they are not growing themselves.

However, one participant echoed that regardless of any independent artiste being able to release music effectively with the assistance of a record label, one would need financial support to boost the music, which in this case artistes in a record label have. This signifies that music goes beyond just being released, but promotions are needed as well. Participant C said, "If you do not want to sign with a record label, just make sure that you have money. If you really want to put yourself at the level of someone who's in a record label but you do not have a record label, make sure you have money." An example made from this is that as an independent artiste, you would need to have money for electricity for the studio, studio monitors (speakers), cover art, music videos, and an annual subscription fee with a digital distributor. In a similar vein, participant G echoed that releasing without a record label is not effective since you would need to pay music distribution companies, and some independent musicians cannot afford those annual fees.

In a critical lens, half of participants showed music industry independency whereby their music release is not controlled by a record label in the sense that they do not need someone who has power to approve or disapprove of their releases. Moreover, this view gives independent musicians artistic freedom and self-reliance to decide when to release and when not to. In contrast, the other half of the participants showed the record label's representation as effective for artistes. These views are often economically produced since they show how record labels can play a critical role in financial and unlimited marketing resources to boost the music release. Moreover, it showed how music record labels have industry connections that can be beneficial to artistes. In support of this, participant C showed how record labels may have professional networks, such as access to radio stations, with just a click. "Remember, a record label is owned by someone that has a lot of connections and opportunities. So, if I drop a song as an independent artiste, in the first week I can get 150 streams, but if you are dropping a song as part of a record label, they already know the presenters at Thobela FM, Radio Turf, Capricorn FM, and Energy FM, for instance. They'll be taking you to these radio stations to talk about your music, and you'll even reach people in Namibia while you are in South Africa. They'll hear that the song is good, and now they'll stream the song on music platforms for real" (participant C, personal interview).

Contextualising this theme's findings within the theoretical framework, this theme captures both forms of capital – economic and social capital. This is brought to light when participants outlined the social obligations that record labels have in building strong industry connections to assist their signed artistes. In addition, these connections include big South African radio stations. In a critical lens – contextualising social capital – these professional networks need to be maintained by record labels, as connections are not naturally given but rather a product of investment strategies (Bourdieu, 1986). Moreover, record labels already have economic capital to invest in these professional networks. This makes it easier for the music of artistes who are signed to record labels to be played on big radio stations and reach a big audience.

#### **4.5.5. Business ventures in the music industry**

The majority of participants in this study stated that they have ventured into other businesses in the music industry as a way of sourcing for income streams. The business that proved to be the best was selling beats online. This has been made possible by the digital advancements, allowing musicians to be entrepreneurs in the music industry. Willie (2021) also showed, in their study, that digital advancements have opened doors for DIY musicians to be self-governed and become music industry entrepreneurs. Participant E said that:

*“The business side of the music industry I’m currently running at this moment is producing and selling my beats. When someone calls me and they need beats for their upcoming music, I will produce, and I get money.”*

In a similar vein, participant E echoed that:

*“Everything I ever did to earn money besides from the 9-to-5, it’s always been music. Whether I record people or sell beats.”*

Another particular aspect that participants in this study had ventured into as a form of business in the music industry was opening and running public relations (PR) companies, whereby they assist other musicians in marketing their music through radio interviews and getting them live physical performances, ‘gigs.’ Participant G explained how these PR companies work:

*“It is like they are marketing your music. They have to find gigs and push your music on social media. They have to make sure that everything you need it’s okay, because what I know is that you are paying them. And you going to benefit from them, especially with gig performances. They find gig performances for you and obviously both of you will benefit.”*

South African musicians, in general, are attempting to reach global markets – not only with their music but also with their statuses to refine their brands. Participants showed that they are trying to climb the status-based hierarchies and have stronger power dynamics in the music industry and outside the industry. Participant E showed that they are venturing into entrepreneurship sectors by monetising their creative work. Ramnandan and Mbhele (2023) outlined that digital disruption has produced new cultural entrepreneurs, enhancing the new digital economy. The creation of cultural entrepreneurs shows the aspiration to create cultural and financial wealth – both of which are driven by a highly driven mission (Aageson, 2008; Towse & Hernández, 2020 as cited by Willie (2021)). The scholar further argues that the conversion of cultural capital, such as natural skills (beat production) into a brand and product that can be financially monetised would result in economic gains. Participants are motivated by financial remuneration in exchange for their creative work. Thus, this contextualises well with economic capital theory since participants are able to generate financial income from using digital platforms to sell beats online. Moreover, diffusion of innovation theory, in this regard, blends in with the provision and continuous modification of the digital platforms facilitating the commodity exchange.

#### **4.6. Section E: Difficulties faced in their music journey**

This theme addresses the second research question: *What are the challenges that young Amapiano music creators face in their music journey in general and specifically also as platform workers?*

This theme presents an analysis of the challenges young Amapiano music creators face in their musical journey, in general and specifically as platform workers. Platformisation has enabled musicians to release music on digital platforms, making a meaningful change in music culture. Nonetheless, that has also created space for distracting features in the digital space. In an attempt to identify these challenges, platformisation guides this theme and its sub-themes to delve into them, uncovering deeper causes and the coping mechanisms that artistes utilise in their musical careers.

##### **4.6.1. Music industry challenges in the age of platformisation**

Among the countless challenges that many artistes might face in the music industry, participants in this study argued that the most challenging issue in the music industry that they are facing is music piracy, which comes in many forms. Kgasago (2022) argued that the music industry is facing a non-stopping dilemma of music piracy whereby music is downloaded on illegal websites such as Fakaza.com, MyMp3, and Tubidy.mobi, to mention a few. Participants in this study echoed that they would sometimes discover their fans playing their music directly from their mobiles instead of streaming, which raises a question of how they downloaded the music to play off any streaming platforms. Participant J said the following:

*“Lot of times, because sometimes someone would play my music, and I'd wonder how they got it; but I do not mind because I am not famous yet. So, I just appreciate the moment. But I haven't earned anything, and haven't earned much, to a point where I would have much problem with it.”*

While music piracy emerged to be the most stressful challenge in the music industry, three participants argued that another pressing challenge they are facing is how expensive and challenging it is to distribute their music to the digital music streaming platforms. Participant E said that “the first challenge with DistroKid would be securing a release deal with DistroKid. The money to pay the subscription for releasing would be the challenge.” Participant G had the same view that independent artistes do not have the capital to keep up with distribution fees charged by music distributing companies. Moreover, these music distribution companies have hidden extra fees, which lead to artistes being charged more than expected. Participant B said that:

*“I think those are the things that must be on the front line because there are no terms and conditions about it; to say when you do this, you have to expect this. Just like when you pay, they do not tell you that when you are going to withdraw your money, you will be getting certain amount. That's the hardest thing about these distributing companies. They do not tell you the whole information about what you are getting yourself into.”*

These extra fees that they charge have led to participant G experiencing money being deducted from their banking accounts: “I do not think I had challenges. The only challenge that I had was the time I was using DistroKid. Money was being deducted from my account every time.”

Whilst music piracy is not a new issue in the music industry, with countries such as Nigeria, India, South Africa, and the United States, etc., being affected (Borja & Dieringer, 2022; Kgasago, 2022). From the responses of participants, it would be appropriate to critically make an analysis on the structure of the music industry in terms of who's benefiting the most from the challenges that the industry is facing. According to reports by Tjiya (2020), it is evident that the most highly pirated artistes in the music industry are well-known musicians. Tjiya outlined that artistes such as Kabza De Small, Master KG, DJ Maphorisa, Sha Sha, and MFR Souls, etc., were greatly affected by music piracy, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. With these reports, it can be concluded that even the Amapiano genre is affected by music piracy – although music piracy is not limited to specific genres.

To narrow down the main analysis in hand, Kaushik (2024: 114) argues that the biggest victims of music piracy benefit from it. As such, does this mean the well-known artistes are benefiting from music piracy? Participants in this study outlined that music piracy boosts the music of well-known artistes because it promotes the music to a larger audience. “The impact on us, I do not think it's the same, because for them, even their name and the songs are just another thing – it contributes to the promotion. But for us, where we are just starting, your name does not count” (Participant I). In a similar vein, participant J continued to say that while upcoming artistes are suffering from music piracy, even though it is not that noticeable, well-known artistes are failing them in tackling music piracy. While it may be like that, Hassan et al. (2019) argue that music consumers who practise music piracy are unconscious of this challenge, as there is limited knowledge on music piracy. Well-known artistes continue to benefit financially from live physical performances since their music is getting boosted and heard by concert promoters and booking agents, while young upcoming artistes suffer greatly and continue to struggle in getting remunerating live physical performances.

#### 4.6.2. First music release experience

A majority of participants echoed that their first music release was exciting, as they were looking forward to reaching a new milestone and validation in their artistic career. It has been mentioned many times that DistroKid was used as their music distribution service to digital streaming platforms. According to Tschmuck (2016), the establishment of electronic publishing companies such as DistroKid, Ditto, Amuse, and CD Baby, etc., has given even young independent music creators the opportunity to present their artistic work on the digital platforms. However, since independent artistes are self-reliant music creators (Drijver & Hitters, 2017), they may not have all the critical knowledge to properly facilitate their music from being released to earning through music sales and streaming royalties. Participant B explained that:

*“When you release music for the first time, you do not have information about all those things. Remember, you are still excited that it is for the first time making a song from scratch. So, you do not really know much about what is happening in the industry or after making a song. It was a little bit challenging, I was over excited, I didn't know lot of things about releasing my first song.”*

Despite not having all the information, participants echoed that the experience of releasing music for the first time is always exciting. Participant K said, "It was exciting; I'm not going to lie to you. It was exciting because it was the first time. And you know at first when you start releasing on the DSPs (digital streaming platforms), everything will start falling into place. It's not that easy, though. There's promotion; there are a lot of things to get a lot of numbers. But yeah, it was exciting." However, it is also important to bring out that a majority of participants have not earned from these first music releases. Participants further echoed that there are factors that have affected their earning their royalties with their artistic work. This view signals a disconnection between creative labour and economic return in the music industry for these independent young music creators. Participant C said:

*“The streams are way too low to even get a significant amount of money. Considering all the people that took part in the creation of the album, if I just decided to withdraw it, we would be getting R5 each, I think.”*

Critical analysis of participants' responses reveals the dedication in their artistic work to reach industry milestones. However, the deep dedication and passion for releasing music often neglect economic gains in exchange for creative labour due to limited visibility, algorithm inequalities, and low streaming numbers. Moreover, music platforms often tend to reward songs that are already popular, making it difficult for new artistes to find visibility. As a result, this creates an unfair system for young independent music creators to earn through royalties

and music sales, even when they put effort into their creative work. In a similar vein, Hesmondhalgh, Campos Valverde, Kaye, and Li (2023) explain that music algorithms continue to favour superstar music creators, neglecting less-exposed artistes, making it hard to earn a living. Overall, music algorithms neglect the latest music creators whilst giving much visibility to big-name artistes. Moreover, since superstar music creators are already signed by well-established music record labels, the music record labels put funds into promoting the music even more, making it easier for big-brand musicians to have increased visibility. A majority of the time you would find that big-brand artistes are signed by record labels such as Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group, and Sony Music Group, which are the top three record labels that control 68.6% of the market share (Watson et al., 2023). This makes it easier for these record labels to invest money in increasing visibility of their artistes since they would be getting their revenue shares for the music. Whilst it is like this, it makes it harder for the music algorithms to identify independent talents, making it impossible to earn through music streams and sales.

#### **4.6.3. Streaming royalty compensations**

The primary reason for artists to invest their money into putting their music on online streaming platforms is to generate economic capital in the form of streaming royalties. McDonnell et al. (2021) elaborate that artistes can also earn these royalties through the sales which their music generates when fans buy the music. The majority of participants in this study elaborated that, with their first official music release, they had not earned any royalties. However, some participants echoed that they started to earn when they made their second music release in the form of an album and the rest that followed. Participant G said that, “No, most of the time I earn from my albums. When I release a single, I do not earn that much. But then, albums – at least they are bringing up something.” While royalties are paid to any musician in any category, be it in music record labels or independent, these rates are calculated on a *pro rata* basis (Antal, Fletcher & Ormosi, 2020). Participant L explained that although they have not received royalties for their first official release, the royalties they received for recent songs, they were fairly compensated considering the number of views their music reached. Sharing the same view, participant D said the following:

*“I would say I was compensated fairly even though I’ll never get enough. If YouTube says 1000 streams is equivalent to \$1 for instance, who am I to come and say I want to change their terms. So, if it’s like that then I would say it’s fair because automatically that thing counts itself. I would say it’s fair.”*

A majority of participants said they believe streaming platforms fairly pay artistes based on how many streams their music gets. The view is solidified by participant D showing that there

is no challenge that can be made against the fractions of a cent per stream. Moreover, participants imply that successful fair pay is earned through hard work, talent, and popularity. In a nutshell, the more effort an artiste puts into their music, the more streams the music will generate, which will thus result in financial gain. This common belief shows that art is measured by metrics. However, this view overlooks the fact that music streaming services and music labels take a large share of the money, leaving many artistes with very little income. It also ignores the advantages that well-known artistes and music labels have in marketing and platform support since these big-name artistes are signed under major record labels such as Sony Music Group, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group. These record labels control an estimated 68.6% of the market share globally from physical to digital revenues (Watson et al., 2023). These responses reflect a belief in fairness that does not fully consider the hidden power structures and inequalities in the music industry. While major record labels and big-name artistes earn the most, young upcoming and independent artistes get a fraction of their creative work. As a result, this leads to a common desire that independent artistes have in wanting to be signed by a major record label.

#### **4.6.4. Coping mechanisms to challenges**

With the music industry facing illegal music downloading websites such as Fakaza.com, MyMp3, and Tubidy.mobi, participants in this study highlighted that there are no coping mechanisms for this global phenomenon, except for admitting defeat. Scholars such as Sahin and Gupta (2019) and Sadiku, Ashaolu, Ajayi-Majebi, and Musa (2021) highlighted the critical damage that illegal music downloading brings to the industry, particularly to the musicians, damaging their creative efforts. It is generally known that music composition, distribution, and consumption existed during the compact vinyl record era (Arditi, 2019). Sharing the same view as Chimbudzi, Muranda, and Maguraushe (2021) and Nyathi and Maguraushe (2023), participants in this study echoed that stopping music piracy has been an ineffective coping mechanism in the music industry since music pirates are pirating CDs even though they are not durable. Participant E echoed thus:

*“I honestly do not know how to stop that one. I guess it’s part of hustling. It’s very hard to stop music piracy. I feel like there’s nothing they can do now to stop music piracy. Perhaps they should have tried a while ago.”*

Participant C expressed a view that shows how music piracy may still exist in the long run:

*“We can report the illegal websites that have this music, but you know how they are; you take one down, five pop-ups. It’s going to take a very long time for that to be effective.”*

While music distribution companies offer different subscription deals for artistes to choose from, participants in this study highlighted that with the challenges they are facing with different companies, their coping mechanism has been moving between companies. Participant B said, “I was expecting something. Maybe you're going to withdraw \$500 to share with the people I worked on the song with, and then things like that happen. It is very hard. If music is really in your blood, you will keep on pushing. You will just find a better distribution company.”

Many participants said they do not believe that music piracy can be stopped, regardless of any attempt, since when they report one illegal website, five new illegal websites are created. This is a common ideological belief that has resulted in most participants giving up on their creative work to music pirates. Piracy is not only common in the music industry but also widely spread into many industries such as film, media broadcasting, and computer software, causing harm of billions of dollars (Nnamani, 2016). These beliefs often neglect the fact that big-name artistes are benefiting from this. The more digital technologies become advanced, the more these pirates develop complicated illegal websites that turn a simple download into capital for their benefit. This may become even harder to prevent in the near future, neglecting young upcoming artistes in misery amid even higher unemployment rates among youths. While upcoming artistes lack financial support to fight music piracy, this belief ignores the big-name assistance that can be given through awareness campaigns by those who are not signed by the major record labels. These responses also reflect the power dynamic at play in the music industry among major record labels.

#### **4.7. Section F: The emotional labour associated with the music industry**

This theme addresses the second research question: *What kind of emotional labour do young Amapiano music creators face during their creative work?*

This theme delves into the emotional labour young Amapiano music creators face during their creative work. With a wide range of emotions being involved in the creation of music, this theme delves in discovering these emotions — in guidance of sub-themes and how digital platforms make a contribution to these emotions directly and indirectly. Hochschild (1983), cited by Pettinger (2015) and Frost (2025), defines emotional labour as a means of managing your feelings and emotional states. Musicians are exposed to a wide range of scenes on the digital platforms, which can sometimes motivate or hinder their creative work. In an attempt to discover these emotions, platformisation guides this theme and sub-themes acknowledging its existence and the promotion of creative scenes from well-known musicians that emerging artistes look up to.

#### 4.7.1. Time invested in music creativity

The music industry is an industry that involves a lot of dedication, hard work, discipline, and emotions. Keller (2023) argued that workers who are involved in any work that is directly and indirectly facilitated or ends up on the platforms face a wide range of emotions. This is due to the uncertainty of their creative work in terms of its being successful or unsuccessful. All participants in this study outlined that the music industry is an industry that is seen as a 24/7 job. They echoed a notable view that since music is and can be released on a daily basis, it becomes hard for an artiste to remain relevant in the long run. As such, working 24/7 as an artiste helps to cement their relevancy. According to participant A:

*“It's 24/7 because with the other genres now that people are paying attention to Amapiano and as we're living in this generation where we listen for hype, you can make a hit song within a month of listening to your song, the next month they're listening to another song. There's another hit. So, most of the time it's a matter of they listen to the hype, and then you as an artist, you get to lose your status, because now they already moved on from you or from your music.”*

In a similar vein, participant E echoed:

*“But truly speaking when you sleep, you're killing yourself because if you want to be special and for us to know you're special for something, you must overwork yourself. You must be the hardest worker until you're stable. So, will you be the hardest worker if you're sleeping? You have to push. I do not think even the most famous artistes such as 'Kabza De Small and DJ Maphorisa' sleep, because you can see their live streams at 3AM producing music. How do you feel when you're sleeping as an upcoming artiste and do not have much?”*

Additionally, participants explained that even when they are investing a lot of time and effort in the music industry whilst busy with academic work and side hustles, the music industry teaches them how to manage time. Participant I explained that they divide their time so they can manage both worlds. Moreover, time management and self-discipline have taught them to take breaks in between their music creativity to be a student. Participant D said, “I have time for everything. I can manage time. You know there will be peak hours for studio sessions, and there will be times when they will slow down because I will be having tests and assignments.”

Participants expressed a view of the music industry as a 24/7 commitment, where continuous time investment in creative work is believed to directly enhance results. This theme reflects a broader cultural narrative of relentless productivity in creative labour, which blurs the

boundaries between work and personal life. While such a mindset can drive discipline, motivation, and perseverance, it often neglects the structural inequalities that influence success in the music industry. In addition, it neglects the support that big-name artistes are getting from record labels they are signed under that provides countless structural benefits ranging from capital that can be used to purchase ownership rights of beats from freelance beat makers to marketing agencies that assist in promotional campaigns for upcoming releases. Moreover, the assumption that more time put into creative work yields fruitful creative outcomes neglects the importance of rest, emotional wellbeing, and mental health – factors widely acknowledged in creative research. Musgrave, Gross, and Carney (2024) argue music creators face intense mental health and subjective wellbeing pressures. In fact, this is due to undertaking multiple roles and multiple creative projects, which can be overwhelming and exhausting (ibid.). While music is used as a free tool to play, express, and have positive wellbeing benefits for music consumers, its creation is therapeutic, while building the career can be traumatic (Gross & Musgrave, 2020). Overall, this theme highlights the tension between perseverance in achieving artistic commitments and potential mental breakdown in the demands of economic capital. This could expose artistic work to the music industry's overwork and exploitations, which are often portrayed as hard-earned rewards.

#### **4.7.2. The impact of time investment on musical growth**

A majority of participants consistently described the effect of seeing the music industry as a 24/7 job as having a productive impact on their artistic work. Most importantly, participants highlighted that if music lives in you, there will not be a specific time schedule for music production – instead, at any time of the day or night when an idea comes up, you have to produce music. Participant C echoed that:

*“There is no rest. Yesterday I slept at 4 am, today I slept at 2 am. So, there’s no specific time to make music. Whenever you feel like you’re inspired enough to make music, just make music. There’s no specific time of the day to make music because you might sit down in front of your studio but still do not find inspiration. Then maybe, when you’re talking to someone over the phone, then an idea come and hit you like that, and you go make it happen. The idea can hit you at 3 am while you’re busy scrolling on TikTok, and you get the idea that you can sample the sound on the video. You can wake up at 3 am and make music up until 6 to 7 am.”*

In support of this, participant G said, "I think with music, you just have to love what you're doing. For me, I love music. I can even wake up at 11 pm and go to studios for music production and leave the studio at 5 am the following morning. There are those who aren't famous and might say that the music industry is tiring; at the same time, you will find those

who are in love with the music industry and enjoy music production and are not worried about a lot of the negative and a lot of things.”

Whilst these responses showed how participants often neglect their mental health, emotional wellbeing, and the importance of rest, which are important to all humans, as empirical studies showed previously (Musgrave et al., 2024), participants showed perseverance in achieving their artistic goals, especially since these “sleepless nights” produce satisfactory results. Through a critical lens, the “24/7” often hides the fact that artistes feel pressured to work non-stop to stay relevant. As participant A said, “It’s 24/7 because with the other genres now that people are paying attention to Amapiano, and as we’re living in this generation where we listen for hype, you can make a hit song within a month of listening to your song; the next month they’re listening to another song. There’s another hit...” In conclusion, while seeing the music industry as a 24/7 job shows perseverance, at the same time, it is worrying.

#### **4.7.3. Music industry stereotypes**

Looking at the stereotypes that the music industry portrays on social media with endless luxurious materialistic assets for enhancing public image and branding, participants in this study echoed that such stereotypes do not have much of an effect on their personal lives – particularly when they have not built a solid reputation in the industry. While they have the desire to build well-known brands for their names in the music industry, particularly inspired by well-known musicians, participants echoed that the effects are fewer in their lives. Participant E said, “I do not know if I’m speaking because I do not have the money yet, but what I know is that I won’t buy expensive brands, perhaps costing R30 000, while I do not have a house to sleep in or my mother does not have that house as well. Unless I have accomplished all those things, then yes – maybe I will buy them, but as for now, I will wear affordable clothes.” In support of that, participant J said:

*“No. I do not have a pressure. I’m old enough to have a pressure and I have my own style. I wear what I afford. Perhaps wait until I get where I want to get, maybe I will be like them. For now, I am wearing what I can afford. So, once I have money, it’s going to be way more. So, I do not have pressure.”*

An effect that the music industry has on young musicians in this study is that these stereotypes motivate them to invest more in their creative crafts. While what’s being portrayed on social media may or may not be intended to put pressure on young musicians, looking good as a musician helps to enhance your brand. Participant K echoed that, “For me, I’m a person who always likes to look good, not because I’m a musician. So, this stereotype pushes me to look even more. I’d already created myself an image before that. So, the music industry is actually

helping me to see the 'drip', and then I also get ideas to dress myself. I do not think I feel the pressure.”

In support of that, participant F said:

*“With me, I’m not too much into brand clothes. I just like to look clean and nice. When it comes to copying other people’s style, that’s not who I am. I like to make my own combinations because there are certain things that I wore that look good on me because we obviously have different bodies. I wouldn’t want to go to a point where I buy fake sneaker. I’m just a simple person.”*

Participants showed that there is a desire to always look good and clean for brand development and growth – particularly being inspired by big-name artistes. However, the extent to which they have to wear counterfeit brands to self-portray as a big-brand artiste is not what they are willing to do. These responses, however, do not neglect the importance of branding in the music industry. Instead, they show that the music industry has status-based hierarchies (standards) whereby big-name artistes are expected to wear fancy clothing, better known as ‘drip.’ While participants do not show the need to fake their lifestyles to ‘fit in’, it is of paramount importance to ask why these stereotypes exist. The music industry has normalised wearing stylish clothes as a reputational building tool, especially since the mainstream media often focuses heavily on visuals. As a result, many big-name artistes are expected to keep up with the stylish lifestyle. Whilst not all young upcoming music creators may be affected by these stereotypes, those who just entered the music industry may feel the pressure to ‘fit in’.

With young artistes wanting to build strong, well-known brands for their names in the music industry, with the inspiration from well-known musicians, it is of paramount importance to note how platformisation and emotional labour are contextualised in creating many unwanted music industry stereotypes. With young artistes looking up to big-name artistes, digital platforms where music and music videos are deposited on a daily basis play a role in creating mixed emotional and psychological effects for young musicians. The pressure to ‘fit in’ lies in how big-name artistes portray themselves in digital music videos – with participants in this study outlining that these portrayals motivate their creative work. However, as per previous sub-themes’ findings, they have revealed that artistes often neglect their emotional well-being by tackling multiple projects in hopes of finding success. Tackling multiple projects is what is being portrayed on digital platforms by big-name artistes, which thus creates stereotypes of ‘hard work and sleepless nights’ leading to abandoning emotional well-being and psychological needs. These stereotypes contribute to the emotional labour that young Amapiano music creators face during their creative work in general and as platform workers.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented findings from the data collected. Presenting a detailed analysis of the opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy for young emerging South African Amapiano music creators. The study's key research questions were addressed through four primary themes. In the next chapter, I will provide a summary of the findings, draw conclusions based on the research, reflect on the research process and limitations encountered during the research, and present recommendations for future researchers.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the study on the opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy for young emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa. It provides a summary of the key findings and the concluding thoughts, discusses the limitations of the study, presents recommendations for future research, and reflects on the entire research process. The chapter highlights the importance of digital technology and how it is used by South African Amapiano music creators to promote their artistic work. In addition, it highlights the importance of the gig economy to substitute the absence of employment amongst the youth. Moreover, the recommendations aim to improve the presence and practice of gig work amongst artistes in the music industry, especially independent artistes who may or may not have the financial support to invest in their music careers.

### **5.2 Summary of key findings**

The study intended to answer the following research questions:

- What are some of the ways that Amapiano artistes utilise digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment?
- What is the role of the gig economy in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes?
- What are the challenges faced by young Amapiano music creators in their music journey in general and specifically also as platform workers?
- What kind of emotional labour do young Amapiano music creators face during their creative work?

#### ***5.2.1 Research question one: What are some of the ways that Amapiano artistes utilise digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment?***

The findings revealed that the digitalisation of music has created a huge stepping stone for the careers of South African music creators. This comes after participants revealed that digital technology has made it easier for their music to be digitally accessible on digital streaming platforms. Moreover, they revealed that it is more affordable, and the distribution of music is more convenient as compared to the traditional distribution methods. Participants pointed out that traditional distribution methods were inconvenient, as they would require an artiste to be in big cities such as Johannesburg to distribute music with CDs for music to sell, which all these were eliminated by digital technology, as artistes could distribute music remotely from any location they would be at. Moreover, music collaboration was also frequently pointed out as a tool that digital technology has made accessible for artistes, eliminating geographic

constriction to connect and collaborate effortlessly. These findings resonate with recent research on collaborative accessibility on digital platforms which enhances skill and idea development amongst musicians (Park, 2023; Dantas, 2024). The diffusion of innovation theory proves helpful in describing how innovative technology has been introduced, utilised and kept from being modified yet is still very efficient in numerous ways across different industries, especially the music industry.

With music being accessible on digital platforms, the findings also revealed live physical performances were the most reliable method to generate income. While it is arguably agreed that live physical performances are done in a physical setting, the findings revealed that participants put their music and recorded compilation of mixtapes on digital platforms with the intention of securing live physical performances. This significantly revealed the role that digital technology played in scoring artistes live physical performances. In addition, live physical performances have been frequently pointed out as the top revenue generation tool in the music industry. These findings resonate with findings revealed by Massarotto (2021) outlining the significant value in revenue accumulation that live physical performances have. However, my study's findings also revealed that a majority of participants were not remunerated for their first live physical performance, and this is mainly because they are not known and do not have a strong brand yet.

On royalties accumulated from digital music releases, the findings reveal that participants were satisfied with music royalties generated from music streaming platforms. Whilst previous studies show that music streaming platforms remunerate artistes a fraction of income, participants revealed that they were satisfied with their remuneration based on the streams that their music generated. This also revealed that if an artiste wants to accumulate more royalties from their music, it would mean they have to put more effort into promoting and getting more streams on their music. Nonetheless, the capital (economic) theory also proves helpful in explaining that when artistes release their music on the digital platforms, they can accumulate revenue in the form of royalties and music sales.

### ***5.2.2 Research question two: What is the role of the gig economy in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes?***

Findings in this study showed that both conventional 9-to-5 and freelancing have an impact on the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes. Participants expressed that for an individual in general to decide which role they lean towards would depend on their circumstances since both roles have the potential of revenue accumulation that would be used to invest in their individual crafts. However, a 9-to-5 job appeared to have some minor challenges for artistes. Findings show that this role would be overwhelming since they would

work extra hours, which would then make this role fall outside its 9-to-5 structure. In addition, when faced with extra hours, the second challenge would be their creativity suffering since there would not be enough time to rest and make music in the fewer remaining hours. Despite these challenges, participants expressed that in order to secure decent living conditions, a 9-to-5 would still be their source of income. However, this neglects the high unemployment rate that South Africa has recorded, 33.2%, whilst amongst youths it is 46%, and the majority of the youth having given up looking for work is reported to be 58%. This makes South Africa a big outlier compared to other countries. For young South African music creators, it becomes a challenging decision to make on whether or not they are leaning towards a conventional 9-to-5 job for securing funds to be used in investing in their music career. Securing employment is not as easy as it seems to be, and generating revenue through music as an independent musician also becomes a challenge. This would generally mean that artistes might have to lean towards what they can be resilient on for economic capital gains.

In a similar vein, participants expressed that the freelancing role also had potential for revenue accumulation. Findings revealed two main revenue accumulation streams: (a) artistes doing live streaming performances to share their unreleased music while receiving gift tokens, and (b) artistes producing and selling their beats overseas, which has been revealed to be quicker to earn income than a conventional 9-to-5 job. Moreover, it would seem necessary for young emerging artistes to form part of both 9-to-5 and gig work. Both these findings – on 9-to-5 and freelancing – proved that the economic capital theory was helpful to theoretically explain how young emerging Amapiano music creators would accumulate revenue.

With artistes being signed by record labels, while some remain independent, findings revealed that half of the participants were of the view that it would still be effective to release music without a record label, while the other half revealed that it would not be effective. Releasing music without a record label proved that artistes have ownership and control of their music, and they can release it anytime without the need for a superior to authenticate the release. However, this option would require an independent artiste to have funds to pay for annual subscription fees with a digital distributor, studio production equipment, music videos, cover art, and marketing. In a turn of events, findings revealed that releasing with a record label would only leave an artiste with few tasks in hand, such as focusing on the production of music and keeping up with the latest industry music trends to stay relevant.

Participants showed that they have ventured into running public relations (PR) companies, forming part of the music industry businesses. These would be usable in assisting other artistes in getting radio interviews and gigs to promote their music. Moreover, platform work

has also been revealed as a music business that participants ventured into, particularly selling beats online.

### ***5.2.3 Research question three: What are the challenges faced by young Amapiano music creators in their music journey in general and specifically also as platform workers?***

Music piracy and expensive digital distribution deals proved to be the prominent challenges that young Amapiano music creators face in their music journey. The findings on music piracy show how challenging it is to prevent music piracy since it has been a challenging factor even before music became digitally distributed. In fact, Kirui (2023), in his report, highlighted that music piracy started when Napster was released in 1999. As Slabykh (2019: 98) highlighted, "There is no special act that will combat piracy. Only regular activities in different directions will help weaken the issue." Participants also highlighted how trying to report illegal websites that provide free downloading of their music may result in the explosion of more websites.

In addition to music piracy as a challenge even in the modern world, the findings revealed that digital music distribution services are costly. Moreover, some services have extra fees that are hidden, which trap artistes to either removing their music from digital platforms to avoid being charged the following year or continuing to pay the extra fees. While digital distribution services such as DistroKid charged \$19.99 in 2022 and \$24.99 in 2025, most industry musicians may not see these annual subscription fees as costly, but considering that independent musicians are not guaranteed to make large sums of royalties, participants revealed that these annual fees are costly. In addition, findings revealed that these extra fees are being deducted from artistes' accounts without their authentication. In other words, the deduction is automated.

Moreover, findings revealed that artistes are dedicated to reaching industry milestones with the release of their first official music. However, the deep dedication and passion for releasing music often neglect economic gains in exchange for creative labour due to limited visibility, algorithm inequalities, and low streaming numbers. Moreover, music platforms often tend to reward songs that are already popular, making it difficult for new artistes to find visibility. As a result, this creates an unfair system for less-exposed artistes to earn through royalties and music sales, even when they put effort into their creative work. Big-brand artistes that are signed by well-established record labels that control 68.6% a majority of the market share, such as Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group, and Sony Music Group, are being promoted, making the music algorithms favour them.

With less visibility on the music platforms, findings revealed that artistes often do not earn from their first music release, with a few artistes earning only on their second music release. Since

earning a generous sum of revenue from music that is released relies on the number of streams the song has received, with the music algorithms not identifying new independent artistes, the dream of generating economic capital vanishes even more. However, findings also revealed that artistes believe that successful fair pay is earned through hard work, talent, and popularity. This view often neglects the hidden power structures and inequalities in the music industry. Less-exposed artistes earn a fraction of their music release, while major record labels and big-brand artistes earn the most.

To cope with these challenges, the findings revealed music piracy should be admitted as a defeat to the music industry. Participants highlighted that industry experts should have tried stopping music piracy a while ago, as at this point it is becoming more and more difficult to stop. To cope with the demanding, costly annual subscription fees from music distribution companies and their extra hidden fees, participants expressed that they have moved between music distribution companies to save on the demands of fees.

#### ***5.2.4 Research question four: What kind of emotional labour do young Amapiano music creators face during their creative work?***

Participants expressed that the music industry should be seen as a 24/7 job, as it requires a lot of dedication, hard work, discipline, and emotional labour. Findings revealed that young independent artistes find motivation from big-name music industry artistes which thus results in enhanced artistic hard work so that they can be financially stable to reinvest into their artistic goals just like those industry idols. While seeing the music industry as a 24/7 job, it is also of paramount importance to reveal that this 24/7 commitment blurs the boundaries between work and personal life. In addition, since music is and can be released on a daily basis, participants expressed the frustrations that they go through in the music industry since it is becoming hard for an artiste to remain relevant in the long run. These pressures thus force them to take on multiple projects, as it is uncertain which project will make them stand out. As such, working 24/7 as an artiste helps to cement their relevancy. Although working on multiple projects at any given time, as per this study's findings, might suffocate the importance of rest, which may lead to exhaustion, stress, anxiety, depression, and mental health issues, participants expressed that they have seen a huge growth and improvement in their journey to becoming better artistes. The most significant impact on artistes of seeing the music industry as a 24/7 commitment is being productive in their artistic creativity, which has been frequently pointed out by the majority of artistes.

Whilst artistes may become more productive in their artistic journey by taking on multiple projects and neglecting the importance of sleep, it is important to reveal that their music does not get enough streams to generate enough economic capital gain. This reveals the harsh

realities of the music industry whereby sleep and emotional well-being are being exploited by the music industry with the hope of financial gain. As a result, this may lead to frustrations, depression, and mental health issues, especially because these young music creators are looking over at big-brand artistes. In addition, these pressures neglect that big-brand artistes may be having multiple income streams and are getting support from record labels they are signed under. As a result, these big-brand artistes do not have plenty of work in their hands compared to young independent music creators. Although they are striving to get to that level, they are neglecting how the music industry and music streaming platforms' algorithms favour certain individuals who are already having traction in the music industry.

While the music industry has a lot of stereotypes that are portrayed on social media, whereby big-name artistes may show a stylish look, findings from this study revealed that participants are not affected by any of those stereotypes in their personal lives. Participants highlighted the desire to build a solid reputation through brand development. However, they highlighted that wearing counterfeit luxurious clothing is not the way they would prefer to build their brands. The only effect that these stereotypes have had on them was motivating them to invest more in their creative crafts.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

A substantial number of young individuals now possess diverse qualifications in the context of South Africa's educational system. Despite this, they continue to face challenges in securing employment, contributing to the high youth unemployment rate in the current economic climate. This leads them to finding other streams of income using digital resources. The prevalence of gig work has been observed across various countries and industries, such as the music and transport industries, with independent contractors capitalising on this opportunity to generate income. This has resulted in around 64 million individuals in the United States and European Union engaging in platform work to supplement income. Furthermore, these individuals often find success in securing a livelihood through freelance work, facilitated by technology. The shape that the gig economy has taken is impactful to many gig workers' lives and the labour market (Kerikmä & Kajander, 2022). From being considered a 'side hustle' for supplementary income to a main-income digital job for many, the gig economy has created an enormous impact.

In the context of the music industry, platformisation of the recorded music industry gives artistes greater distribution options and access to international markets than pre-digitalisation business models. This comes after the significant transformation in which music is created, shared, and consumed, which changed the structure of the industry. Music was shared and consumed in hard physical material such as compact discs (CDs), long plays, and tapes, or

by attending live concerts. However, with technological innovations and the internet throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the music industry saw a change from the way music is produced all the way to the consumption of music (Akil et al., 2024; Rosenblatt, 2024). This change came with the appearance of many music streaming services, such as Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Tidal, to name a few. To make ends meet financially, music creators monetise their music through official music streaming platforms, live streaming performances, live physical performances, brand partnerships, and selling beats in exchange for economic capital. While the procedures may seem easy, the music industry has some inequalities, such as unfair music algorithms, monetary exploitation among industry musicians, and uneven securing of live physical gigs.

The disruption of digital media also emerged with challenges, not only in the context of the music industry but also across various industries whose products relied on digital space. This includes video games, software, movies, and music, to name a few. With many countries being affected by music piracy, such as the United States, India, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, to name a few, the music industry is among the top pirated industries, with 10.8 billion visits in India as of 2022 (Naik, 2023). Illegal websites such as Tubidy.mobi, Fakaza.com, MyMp3, and mp3juices.cc are the hosts for pirated music.

Findings from this study have revealed that platformisation and the gig economy have created a huge stepping stone for the careers of South African music creators in putting their music on digital music streaming platforms. With music being accessible on digital platforms, this has scored artistes live physical performances, especially since live physical performances have been revealed as the top revenue generation tool in the music industry. However, it is most likely, as per the study's findings, that the first live physical performances do not yield financial gain for young independent artistes. While artistes show deep dedication and passion for releasing music, this neglects economic gains in exchange for creative labour due to limited visibility, algorithm inequalities, and low streaming numbers. Moreover, music platforms often tend to reward songs that are already popular, making it difficult for new artistes to find visibility. Thus, this creates exploitative revenue practices for young independent music creators. With superstar music creators already signed by well-established music record labels, their visibility continues to grow while casting a shadow on young independent artistes. Moreover, the prevalence of the gig economy has been shown to have a profound impact on the emergence of young Amapiano music creators. Artistes are doing live streaming performances to share their unreleased music while receiving gift tokens, and also, they are producing and selling their beats overseas for economic capital gains.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the study**

While this study provides valuable insights, there are some limitations; these are outlined as follows. The study included young, emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa only, regardless of geographic location within the country. However, music creators that accepted the invitation to participate were mostly not Amapiano music creators that have had their music industry breakthrough – regardless of invitations being sent to any young South African Amapiano music creator falling between the ages of 20 and 35, well-known or not. This limitation is mainly because big-name music creators are not easily accessible to the general public. To access them, communication would be facilitated by their record labels, PR companies, road managers, or managers, which the researcher did but could not access them. This process would take a longer time whilst being unsure whether or not the artiste would agree to participate or not.

The study accommodated individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds with different linguistic diversities. As such, some participants expressed themselves in languages they felt comfortable with and languages that they felt they would be able to explain their experiences with. This became a limiting factor to me because I had to translate and transcribe the interviews, which might have led to a potential loss of critical words that were said; perhaps I would have more easily identified “repetition and forcefulness” if they were said in a language that I had a complete understanding of word-for-word. However, since I was familiar with the different languages used by participants, although not 100%, I was able to seek clarity and verify what I had translated and transcribed, then apply CTA to identify repetition and forcefulness.

#### **5.5 Recommendations**

As a young, independent Amapiano musician who resides in South Africa, I am aware of some challenges and opportunities we face in the music industry and how music distribution has shifted drastically from traditional methods to digital spaces. Drawing from the study’s findings, I propose the following recommendations:

The study found that live physical performances are a fast tool for revenue generation in the music industry. I recommend that future research should explore more on this, particularly exploring perspectives of booking agencies and concert promoters/organisers on how independent musicians that are not signed by music record labels could navigate this challenge of securing gigs at established music concerts and music clubs. This could shed light and give independents a stepping stone to generate income amid their artistic ambitions. Moreover, the artistes could also build relationships with concert promoters and get booking

agencies to assist in getting more live physical performances to enhance more revenue accumulation.

Future studies could focus on including musicians that are above this study's age group, 20 to 35. While this study's age group provided valuable personal experiences of the music industry, age groups above 36 could provide a broader experience, which may include the young artistes whom they have brought and mentored in the music industry. Including record label owners who were or are music artistes could also be a beneficial exploration for future studies.

Future studies could include more female artistes in their study. While this study tried to accommodate a gender balance, it has not been a simple task considering that the music industry is largely dominated by male artistes. This may be due to societal expectations, historical gatekeeping, and industry bias. This could be something that future studies could focus on to discover why the music industry is mostly prominent with males rather than females and if this narrative is improving to accommodate females as well. Moreover, invitations to participate in this study were sent evenly to both genders; only a few female artistes (2/12) accepted the invitation. With future studies, I would recommend ensuring that 50% of the study's participants are males and females, respectively.

I recommend that creative industry bodies and higher education institutions invest in building programmes that could teach emerging musicians the business side of music in South Africa as well as equip these music creators with marketing skills and music trend analytical tools. This could help emerging artistes read and possibly follow music trends in a way that they would be able to create music that sells without the need for independent artistes investing generous amounts of money on promotional content since the music itself would be what the audience is looking for.

While findings showed that there are young emerging music creators that engage in entrepreneurial opportunities in digital spaces, such as selling beats and engaging in live streaming performances in their comfort zone while receiving gifts online, I would recommend that digital platforms that offer such opportunities create awareness campaigns that could encourage more emerging artistes to take part and perhaps accumulate revenue that could be reinvested into their creative work. These could be platforms such as the well-known BeatStars, including SoundClick, that allow music creators to sell beats online and accumulate revenue.

The reliance on regular 9-to-5 jobs to generate revenue has been beneficial to music creators in this study. As such, I would recommend that young music creators learn more about how to save capital generated from salaries. Moreover, young music creators could take short

courses that deal with the business of music and investment markets. Whilst they may be fully occupied with their 9-to-5 jobs, which sometimes become more than 9-to-5 as per the study's findings, online short courses that can be completed at any given time of the day would be practical for young music creators. This would be beneficial to them in putting aside some money from their salaries that could be used to reinvest in their artistic careers. In addition, looking up the big-name music industry artistes that have various businesses could help motivate young music creators to venture into businesses for future return on investment that could be used for their music careers.

Future research studies could expand this study by exploring how African music creators – especially emerging Amapiano music creators – navigate digital inequalities, music platform algorithms, and the influence that record labels have in turning their signed artistes into superstars while independent artistes are looked down upon by the algorithm's exposure. To make this more effective, comparative studies between African countries could help demonstrate a broader perspective.

For future studies that would have interest in exploring more on this study's limitations, I would recommend they do a comparative study focusing on the data recorded before the explosion of digital media to date, primarily focusing on digital music piracy. This would be helpful to discover how rapid music piracy has grown or slowed to date. Moreover, findings would help to shed light on whether or not big-name industry creatives and record labels have made efforts to prevent music piracy that is still experienced to date. The study could navigate through all music genres, record labels, and well-established and independent artistes to get their perspectives on how they have been affected and how they are living with it.

The time invested in the music industry by artistes showed the perseverance that they have to find artistic success. However, it does show that there may be huge negligence on mental health, emotional wellbeing, and the importance of rest. As a result, I would recommend future research work to explore more on the mental health and emotional wellbeing that may come into play in artistes' navigation of platform work and the gig economy. This would be helpful to young upcoming artistes that may have the same perception that, to succeed, you need to see the music industry as a 24/7 job and neglect the importance of rest and self-care, taking care of your mental health, and emotional wellbeing.

## **5.6 Reflection on the research process**

Conducting this study has been challenging yet interesting, especially during the fieldwork. While finances were a bit of a constraint for the fieldwork, I had the opportunity to travel to different provinces and cities in the country to conduct face-to-face interviews with artistes. This was interesting because I got to experience different music production energies at

different music production studios. Most importantly, I got to hear songs that no other person has heard before, as they were made on the spot, at that particular time. That was exceptional for me as a music artiste myself. Whilst literature was getting me equipped with knowledge of industry opportunities, challenges, and the overall view of how music can have an impact on musicians and audiences, getting the knowledge from the musicians as first-hand information was even more fulfilling. I had anticipated that it would be easier to invite a well-known young music creator for an interview. However, it turned out to be a time-consuming procedure, ultimately resulting in a failed invitation attempt. Another reflection is the recruitment procedure I had used. Asking the first participant after an interview to nominate one possible participant had led to a time-consuming waiting period since I was not certain that the nominee would eventually accept the invite. As such, making a small adjustment to ask one participant to nominate as many participants as they can proved to be very effective, as while I was waiting for other nominees to accept, the other ones had already accepted, and interviews were being conducted, resulting in a sped-up recruitment and fieldwork process.

While conducting this study, I was anticipating that digital distribution companies would be affordable and not have any challenges. However, a challenge that was revealed was that there are hidden fees that are charged, making it hard for artistes to keep up with those charges charged annually. Moreover, I was anticipating that music piracy would not be a huge problem in these modern days since technology has evolved significantly and that there would be prevention methods that are already known by the majority of artistes to this challenge. The responses from the participants highlighted how ineffective it would be to stop music piracy, stressing that when one illegal website is shut down, five more would be developed.

While these are the reflections of the experiences I have had while conducting this study, my experience prior to conducting this study was a little bit different yet similar to some parts of the study. Starting off with the initial stage of the music industry, which is securing a music distribution company, at first it was exciting and seemed affordable. My anticipations were that my first music would generate me enough economic capital to reinvest again with the annual subscription fees. However, that was not the case. My first official music release did not earn me enough royalties to even pay for the next music cover art. However, that did not seem to bother me much, as I have always seen that as an artistic milestone: to release music that is officially released on music streaming platforms that have big-name artistes that are my music industry role models.

Hidden extra fees that distribution companies charge per year were also something that I have experienced, which is similar to what this study has revealed. However, after conducting deep research on how to cancel these extra fees, the stress of money being deducted from my bank

account eased, but it dragged me down a little bit since I knew I would have to take down the music and re-release it again. With music piracy as a challenge, my music got downloaded illegally and was shared amongst friends on social media and played in live physical performances, and the artistes that played the music made me aware of that. I had no issue with that since I have seen that as an opportunity for new audiences to hear my music without me pushing it live at those particular venues. This would mean zero promotion effort from me as the copyright owner against a 100% promotion effort from other performers.

I have not seen a conventional 9-to-5 job as a possible source of income that could be utilised to reinvest economic capital into an artistic career prior to conducting this study. This was so because I have always been a student with volunteering jobs to gain working experience prior to looking for paying employment opportunities after completion of my studies. This study's findings on this matter were a surprising discovery for me. However, I have not neglected my emotional well-being and the importance of resting in between musical creativity, as compared to the study's findings. In addition, it always surprised me when my music industry role models were producing music late at night, especially at times when it may be generally expected to be a resting time for most people. However, the study's findings made me aware that to stand out amongst the many music industry creatives, one has to be the hardest worker, which would often lead to neglecting the importance of rest and taking care of mental well-being resulting in exhaustion and mental breakdown.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview**

#### **Interview Questions**

**How are the artistes utilising digital platforms to generate income amid high unemployment?**

Tell me about your first music release.

How did you feel with that first release?

Tell me more about your first live physical performance. How did you get that slot?

How did performing live at a venue feel for you on the first time?

What would you say are the opportunities that music streaming platforms created for you?

How effective do you think it is for musicians to release music with or without record labels?

Given that anyone can release music independently, do you think it is relevant to be part of a record label nowadays?

What would you say is the effective way of generating revenue on the platforms?

Comparing the number of streams/views from each platform with the amount you have earned, do you think that amount was reasonable? Elaborate

**The roles that the gig economy plays in the emergence of young Amapiano music artistes.**

What role do you think a 9 to 5 or freelancing job plays in the emergence of young Amapiano musicians?

Based on the irregularities in the music industry, have you considered or worked a 9-to-5 job outside the music industry to secure decent living conditions?

How effective do you think it is for a 9-to-5 job or any other freelancing job to economically support young emerging Amapiano music artistes?

Do you think it would be advisable for musicians to also work a 9-to-5 job, considering the unpredictability of being in the music industry?

We have experienced a Covid-19 pandemic in the country since early 2020. So, has that been negatively/positively impactful towards your music career?

How did you manage to ensure that your music career survives through the pandemic?

Apart from creating, releasing, and earning from your music, did you venture or are you venturing into any businesses in the industry?

### **Challenges that young Amapiano music creators face in their music journey.**

What would you say were the challenges that these music streaming platforms created for you?

Did you earn from your first music release?

In terms of your earnings from these platforms, would you say you have been compensated fairly or unfairly? Elaborate

How are/did you coping/cope with the challenges that these music streaming platforms have?

### **Emotional labour of the Amapiano music creators face during their creative work**

When you look at the music industry, do you see it as a 24/7 job for you?

What effect does that have on you as a musician?

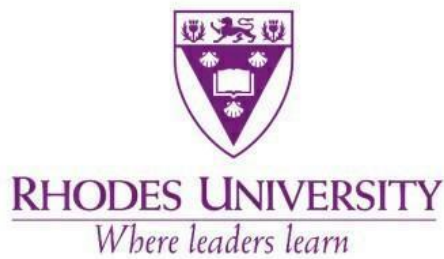
What effect does the stereotype of 'musicians must always look good for image branding and for media' have on you from a personal perspective?

Is there anything else you wish to tell me with regard to your work and life as a young emerging Amapiano artiste that we didn't get to cover in this interview?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY. YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.

**----the end---**

## Appendix 2: Ethical clearance



**Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee**  
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa  
t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727  
f: +27 (0) 46 603 8822  
e: [ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)  
NHREC Registration number: RC-241114-045  
<https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>

29 September 2024

Mr David Kgwete

Email: [g24k9802@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:g24k9802@campus.ru.ac.za)

Review Reference: 2024-8098-9104

Dear Mr Kgwete,

**Title:** The opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy on emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa.

Researcher: Mr David Kgwete

Supervisor: Dr Chikezie E. Uzuegbunam

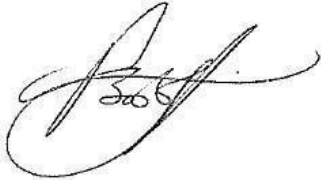
This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee (HF-REC). Your Approval number is: 2024-8098-9104

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the Humanities Faculty REC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the Humanities Faculty REC should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from

this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Boshoff', with a date '2006' written below the signature.

**Dr Priscilla Boshoff**

**Chair: Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee**

## Appendix 3: Letter of participation in research



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

*Where leaders learn*

### **PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER**

**Project Title: The opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy on emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa.**

#### **Summary**

David Moemedi Kgwete from the Journalism and Media Studies Department, Rhodes University, has received ethical clearance [2024-8098-9104] to conduct a study on the opportunities and challenges of platformisation and the gig economy for emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa. This study delves into the impact of platformisation and the gig economy on emerging Amapiano music creators in South Africa. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and qualitative interviews with Amapiano artistes and industry professionals, this research examines how platformisation has transformed the music industry landscape in South Africa. It also discusses how the gig economy has influenced the livelihoods and careers of Amapiano music creators, shedding light on issues such as income stability, exposure, and artistic independence.

#### **Benefit to participants**

Participating in the study will assist the study to discover findings that will shed light on the inner workings of the culture industries, specifically the music industry, which is crucial for researchers and young musicians in South Africa and across Africa, especially in light of the high youth unemployment rate and the present economic situation. While your experience in the cultural industries is valuable to this study, there will not be direct benefits from participating in this study. However, participants will benefit from the study's findings through the opportunities and some of the challenges that may create success or hinder their music career. This will further assist other young musicians to make better choices in the music industry. As such, your lived experiences are of great value to this study.

#### **Your participation**

Participation is voluntary and all responses will be kept strictly confidential. You may withdraw from the research study at any stage.

This study will require about 30 minutes to 1 hour of the participant's time to explore their lived experience in the cultural industries. This will require the participant to be open about their lived experience, outlining the challenges and opportunities that the platforms and gig economy have brought to their music career. Participants may be questioned on their earnings from their music royalties. However, participants do not necessarily have to give the exact figures but a range for their music royalty earnings.

### **How do you become a participant**

Respond to this email: davidkgwete02@gmail.com

A separate consent form will be provided to you, and once you have signed the consent form, you will be a participant in the study.

**If you require further information, please contact** David Moemedi Kgwete or the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (details below).