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## Identifying Barriers to Platform Labor Regulation from the Worker Perspective

### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the perceived barriers to regulating platform-based labor from the perspective of workers in Tehran's gig economy. This qualitative study employed a descriptive-interpretive design using semi-structured interviews with 23 platform workers in Tehran, selected through purposive sampling to capture diversity across platform sectors. Participants included ride-hailing drivers, delivery couriers, domestic service workers, and freelance digital laborers, all with at least six months of experience. Interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. The data were transcribed and analyzed thematically using NVivo software (version 12). Themes were generated through open, axial, and selective coding processes to identify patterns related to regulatory challenges as experienced by platform workers. Analysis revealed four major thematic categories: legal and policy ambiguities, platform power and control, economic precarity and dependency, and social and cultural constraints. Legal uncertainties surrounding worker classification and weak enforcement mechanisms hindered regulatory clarity. Platform-controlled algorithmic systems and opaque rule enforcement limited worker autonomy and due process. Economic instability, high operating costs, and the absence of social protections further exposed workers to vulnerability. Social stigma, gendered risks, digital illiteracy, and a lack of worker community compounded these regulatory challenges. Participants consistently described feeling excluded from legal protections, invisible in policy discourse, and powerless against platform-imposed conditions. The findings underscore the inadequacy of current regulatory frameworks in addressing the lived realities of platform workers. Effective regulation must move beyond binary classifications of employment status to embrace the hybrid nature of gig work, incorporating worker voice, algorithmic accountability, and inclusive social protections. Addressing both structural and cultural dimensions of precarity is essential to creating fairer, more resilient regulatory environments for digital labor.

**Keywords:** Gig economy, platform labor, labor regulation, worker perspective, algorithmic management, legal ambiguity.

### Introduction

The global proliferation of the gig economy has transformed the nature of labor, especially in urban centers where digital platforms mediate a growing number of economic transactions. Gig work, often facilitated through apps and digital platforms, allows individuals to undertake short-term, task-based assignments with flexible schedules. While this model has offered new forms of employment, it has simultaneously generated complex legal, economic, and social challenges that remain largely unregulated or inconsistently addressed. Workers in platform-based labor models are frequently subjected to ambiguous employment relationships, algorithmic control, and limited social protections, particularly in emerging economies where state capacity to regulate platform labor remains constrained [1, 2].

In countries like Iran, where unemployment rates and informal sector employment remain high, the platform economy has emerged as both an economic lifeline and a source of precarity. Tehran, as a metropolitan hub, has witnessed a surge in

the use of digital labor platforms for services such as ride-hailing, food delivery, domestic services, and freelance digital tasks. However, despite the rapid growth of these platforms, regulatory oversight has lagged significantly, leaving workers vulnerable to exploitation, job insecurity, and legal invisibility [3, 4]. The lack of a clear legal framework governing platform labor exacerbates the structural weaknesses already present in traditional labor markets, making the experiences of gig workers a critical area for scholarly and policy-focused inquiry.

A central problem in the platform labor context is the blurring of lines between employment and self-employment. Platforms often classify their workers as "independent contractors," thereby circumventing obligations related to minimum wage, social insurance, and collective bargaining [5, 6]. This legal classification, while beneficial for the platforms, creates a regulatory vacuum for workers, especially in jurisdictions where labor laws have not been adapted to the digital economy [7, 8]. The implications are profound: without legal recognition, gig workers are denied fundamental labor protections and are exposed to systemic insecurity. As researchers have shown, the lack of legal clarity allows platforms to shift risk onto workers while maintaining tight control over task allocation, performance evaluation, and remuneration [9].

The design of platform governance systems, particularly their reliance on algorithmic management, further complicates the regulatory landscape. Algorithms determine not only the distribution of tasks but also monitor worker behavior, enforce disciplinary actions, and modulate incentives. This opaque control structure eliminates avenues for contesting unfair decisions, especially when workers are deactivated without warning or explanation [10, 11]. Furthermore, the lack of human oversight in the decision-making processes contributes to feelings of disenfranchisement and helplessness among workers. These algorithmic systems, while presented as neutral, embed power asymmetries that favor platforms and obscure accountability mechanisms [12].

A growing body of literature emphasizes that the regulation of platform labor must consider not only legal definitions but also the lived realities of workers who navigate daily uncertainty and exploitation. From the workers' standpoint, barriers to effective regulation are not merely institutional but also perceptual and cultural. In many cases, gig workers are unaware of their rights or lack the collective means to advocate for change. In Iran and similar contexts, formal unions are either absent or inaccessible to gig workers, further marginalizing their voices from the policy process [13, 14]. Even in countries where regulatory reforms have been attempted—such as California's Assembly Bill 5 (AB5)—outcomes have been mixed, and enforcement challenges persist [6].

Economic dependency on platform work also serves as a barrier to worker mobilization. Many participants in the gig economy turn to platforms as their primary source of income, often due to unemployment or underemployment in the formal sector. This dependency reduces their bargaining power and increases their willingness to accept exploitative conditions [15, 16]. In such contexts, questioning platform rules or demanding better terms becomes risky, as deactivation or reduced visibility on the app can result in immediate income loss. As research indicates, platform labor is often characterized by high levels of precarity, income instability, and lack of access to social protection systems such as health insurance or pensions [17, 18].

Gendered and cultural dimensions also play a crucial role in shaping regulatory barriers. Female platform workers, for example, often face additional challenges such as harassment, exclusion from certain platform sectors, or cultural stigma surrounding public work. These experiences are compounded by a lack of gender-sensitive design in platform policies and safety mechanisms [10, 19]. Moreover, the societal perception of platform labor as "non-professional" contributes to the low

valuation of such work, both economically and socially. This devaluation undermines efforts to formalize or regulate platform labor, as policymakers may dismiss the sector's significance or fail to acknowledge its distinct challenges [20].

In addition to structural and social challenges, regulatory gaps are sustained by limited state capacity and policy inertia. In many jurisdictions, existing labor laws are rooted in industrial-era assumptions of stable, long-term employment relationships and fail to capture the fluidity and fragmentation of modern digital work arrangements [3, 5]. Legal reform processes are often slow, politically contested, and lack consultation with platform workers themselves. Even when new regulations are introduced, enforcement remains a challenge, particularly when platforms operate across borders or exploit jurisdictional ambiguities [4, 7].

Given these complexities, there is a pressing need to explore platform labor regulation from the perspective of workers themselves. While existing studies have provided valuable macro-level insights into policy gaps and structural deficiencies, there remains a lack of grounded research that captures how gig workers perceive, experience, and navigate regulatory barriers in their everyday lives. Understanding these perspectives is critical for designing more inclusive, responsive, and effective regulatory frameworks. As recent scholarship emphasizes, worker voices must be central to any attempt at transforming platform labor governance [1, 13].

This study responds to this gap by examining the perceived barriers to platform labor regulation among gig workers in Tehran.

## Methods and Materials

### *Study Design and Participants*

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the barriers to platform labor regulation from the perspective of workers actively engaged in the platform economy. The research was grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, aiming to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of platform workers regarding regulatory challenges. The study focused on individuals working in various digital labor platforms such as ride-hailing, food delivery, and freelance service apps operating in Tehran, Iran. A total of 23 participants were purposefully selected to ensure a diverse range of occupational roles, age groups, and platform affiliations. The inclusion criteria required participants to have a minimum of six months of active experience working on digital platforms and be willing to share their experiences in depth. Theoretical saturation was reached when no new themes emerged in the final interviews, ensuring that the sample size was sufficient for comprehensive analysis.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face in locations convenient for the participants. An interview guide with open-ended questions was developed to steer the conversations while allowing flexibility for emergent topics. Questions focused on workers' experiences with platform rules, perceptions of legal protections, challenges in accessing labor rights, and views on existing or absent regulatory frameworks. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and was audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and pseudonyms were used to protect participant anonymity.

## Data analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, supported by NVivo software (version 12), which facilitated the coding and organization of large volumes of qualitative data. The analysis began with an initial open coding of transcripts, identifying recurrent concepts and expressions. These were then grouped into axial codes, representing broader categories of barriers. Finally, selective coding was used to refine and organize these categories into overarching themes that captured the structural, procedural, and perceptual dimensions of regulatory challenges. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the research process included peer debriefing, member checking with selected participants, and the maintenance of an audit trail documenting key analytical decisions throughout the study.

## Findings and Results

A total of 23 participants (16 men and 7 women) took part in this study, all of whom were currently engaged in platform-based labor in Tehran. The age of participants ranged from 21 to 49 years, with the majority ( $n = 14$ ) falling within the 25–35 age bracket. Educational backgrounds varied: 6 participants had completed high school, 10 held associate or bachelor's degrees, and 7 had postgraduate qualifications. Participants represented a variety of platform sectors, including ride-hailing ( $n = 9$ ), food delivery ( $n = 7$ ), domestic services ( $n = 4$ ), and freelance digital work such as content writing and design ( $n = 3$ ). Most participants ( $n = 17$ ) relied on platform labor as their primary source of income, while the remaining 6 engaged in it part-time or as supplementary work. Years of experience ranged from 6 months to 4 years, with 12 participants reporting more than 2 years of continuous platform work. This diversity in demographic background and platform engagement provided rich, multifaceted insights into the challenges of platform labor regulation.

**Table 1**

*Themes, Subthemes, and Open Codes on Barriers to Platform Labor Regulation*

Category (Main Theme)	Subcategory (Subtheme)	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Legal and Policy Ambiguities	Lack of Legal Definition for Platform Work	Undefined worker status, no employment contract, unclear labor classification, absence of labor protections
	Inconsistent Regulatory Coverage	Different treatment across platforms, fragmented oversight, loopholes in labor law, confusion over jurisdiction
	Ambiguity in Rights and Responsibilities	Unclear tax obligations, undefined employer duties, no clarity on social insurance, uncertainty in complaint procedures
	Weak Enforcement of Existing Laws	No inspections, rare penalties for violations, low state oversight, legal gaps exploited by platforms
	Absence of Worker Representation in Policymaking	No unions allowed, exclusion from labor councils, lack of collective voice, decisions made without consultation
2. Platform Power and Control	Algorithmic Management and Surveillance	Task assignment by algorithm, lack of human oversight, hidden performance metrics, constant monitoring
	Unilateral Rule Changes by Platforms	Sudden pay cuts, arbitrary deactivation, no negotiation channels, inconsistent rule application, lack of transparency
	Lack of Appeals and Redress Mechanisms	No grievance process, blocked access to support, non-responsiveness, fear of retaliation
	Incentive Manipulation and Penalty Systems	Fluctuating bonuses, penalized for canceling tasks, unfair rating system, forced acceptance of tasks
	Exploitative Contract Terms	No right to negotiate terms, complex legal jargon, one-sided agreements
3. Economic Precarity and Dependency	Data and Privacy Exploitation	Tracking of location, collection of personal data, misuse of reviews, no consent for data sharing
	Income Instability and Unpredictability	Irregular pay, inconsistent demand, surge-based pricing, delayed payments
	High Operating Costs for Workers	Fuel expenses, platform commissions, maintenance costs, purchase of required tools
	Lack of Benefits and Social Protection	No health insurance, no pension contributions, no paid leave, exclusion from unemployment support, absence of injury compensation
	Dependence on Platform as Sole Income	No alternative job options, financial pressure, long work hours, overreliance on bonuses

4. Social and Cultural Constraints	Absence of Financial Literacy and Support	No budgeting skills, unaware of tax obligations, lack of savings, no access to credit
	Stigma and Devaluation of Platform Work	Seen as "non-professional," lack of respect, perceived as low-skill work, negative family perception
	Gendered Barriers in Platform Labor	Harassment on the job, exclusion from certain platforms, safety concerns for women, cultural taboos, gender-biased app features
	Digital Literacy and Access Inequality	Difficulty using app features, low smartphone skills, language barriers, lack of training
	Fragmentation and Isolation Among Workers	No sense of community, rarely meet coworkers, competition over collaboration, no peer support
	Public Unawareness of Worker Conditions	Customers unaware of conditions, lack of sympathy for delays, blame workers for app policies

Participants' perspectives on barriers to platform labor regulation were classified into four major categories: legal and policy ambiguities, platform power and control, economic precarity and dependency, and social and cultural constraints. Each category encompassed several subthemes that revealed the multifaceted nature of regulatory challenges from the standpoint of workers.

In relation to the first category, *Legal and Policy Ambiguities*, many workers highlighted the lack of legal definition for platform work as a major obstacle. They described their ambiguous status as neither formal employees nor fully independent contractors, which left them without a clear legal identity. One participant explained, "They say we are freelancers, but we don't get the freedom of freelancers or the rights of employees—we are in limbo." This confusion often led to the denial of basic protections such as minimum wage or job security.

The issue of inconsistent regulatory coverage also emerged strongly, with workers noting that different platforms applied rules unevenly and exploited legal loopholes. Several participants reported being treated differently across apps, especially in cases of disputes. "On one app, you can at least talk to someone. On another, you just get kicked off with no reason," one interviewee shared, pointing to the fragmented nature of regulation.

Another key barrier was ambiguity in rights and responsibilities, where workers felt unclear about both their own obligations and those of the platform. Questions about tax liabilities, social insurance eligibility, and even dispute processes were raised. "I don't even know if I'm supposed to pay taxes or if the app does. No one tells you anything," said one delivery worker.

Weak enforcement of existing laws was cited by numerous participants who felt that platforms operated with impunity. They mentioned a lack of inspections or penalties for labor violations, which emboldened platforms to continue exploitative practices. "The government only regulates us when we protest, not the platform," complained one driver, frustrated by the perceived absence of state oversight.

Additionally, the absence of worker representation in policymaking was a concern. Workers felt excluded from decisions that directly affected them. "When they make new rules, no one asks us. We just see it on the app," a participant said, emphasizing the top-down nature of rule implementation without any consultation with workers.

The second main category, *Platform Power and Control*, revealed that algorithmic management and surveillance contributed to a significant loss of autonomy. Workers felt that their every move was monitored and controlled by opaque algorithms. "You don't know why you got fewer orders today. The system controls you but never tells you why," explained one worker.

Participants also described the frequent unilateral rule changes by platforms, which included sudden reductions in bonuses, abrupt changes to working hours, and arbitrary deactivation. "They changed the commission rates overnight. No warning, no explanation," recounted one delivery worker, illustrating the unpredictable environment they navigate.

The lack of appeals and redress mechanisms further compounded the problem. Workers reported being blocked or deactivated without justification, with no way to contest decisions. “There’s no one to talk to. If something goes wrong, you just lose your account,” stated one participant, pointing to the absence of due process.

Incentives were also weaponized through manipulative bonus and penalty systems, as workers were lured by unstable bonuses or punished for rejecting tasks. A participant noted, “If I don’t accept a ride in 10 seconds, I get fewer offers later. It’s like they’re punishing us for being human.”

Finally, the theme of exploitative contract terms emerged, with workers stating they had no say in the terms and conditions they agreed to upon registration. “You just click ‘I agree’ or you don’t work. Who reads that stuff? And if you do, it’s all in legal language,” said one frustrated worker. Concerns around data and privacy exploitation were also raised, with participants noting that platforms collect large amounts of personal data without clear consent or explanation. “They know where I am every second. But I have no idea what they do with that data,” one participant reflected.

Under the third category, *Economic Precarity and Dependency*, workers emphasized income instability and unpredictability as a core issue. They described fluctuations in earnings due to changing demand, unpredictable working conditions, and delayed payments. “Some days I make enough; some days, nothing. There’s no way to plan,” said one interviewee.

The burden of high operating costs was also significant. Participants spoke of the expenses involved in keeping their vehicles running or maintaining equipment required by the platforms. “By the time I pay for gas, maintenance, and the platform cut, I’m left with almost nothing,” one ride-hailing driver lamented.

A widespread grievance was the lack of benefits and social protection, with workers stating they received no health coverage, sick leave, or pension support. “If I get sick, I don’t get paid. If I crash my bike, it’s all on me,” one delivery worker explained, highlighting the complete absence of safety nets.

The theme of dependence on the platform as a sole income source emerged in stories of workers who felt trapped in the platform economy. “This is my only income. I can’t afford to quit, even when it gets worse,” said one participant, reflecting economic entrapment and vulnerability.

Finally, absence of financial literacy and support was identified as a barrier. Participants shared that they lacked the resources or knowledge to manage the irregular income or plan for the future. “No one teaches you how to save or pay taxes. We just survive day to day,” said one worker.

The final category, *Social and Cultural Constraints*, began with workers discussing the stigma and devaluation of platform work. Many felt their work was not respected or viewed as legitimate labor. “My family thinks I failed in life because I’m a rider. They don’t see it as a real job,” shared a participant.

Gendered barriers were a major concern, particularly for female workers who faced harassment, platform bias, and exclusion. “I had to quit food delivery because I didn’t feel safe. Men stare, and some customers make rude comments,” recounted a former worker.

Participants also identified digital literacy and access inequality as obstacles. Some workers struggled with the technical aspects of the app or lacked the training to navigate its features. “I didn’t know how to update my bank info. It took me two weeks to figure it out,” said one worker.

The experience of fragmentation and isolation among workers was common. Interviewees described the lack of social cohesion or community support in platform work. “We don’t even know each other. Everyone works alone,” noted one participant, emphasizing the absence of collective organization.

Finally, public unawareness of worker conditions was highlighted. Participants felt that users of the platforms often misunderstood the challenges they faced. “Customers think we’re lazy if we’re late. They don’t know we waited an hour for the order,” one delivery worker explained.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed four overarching themes that encapsulate the perceived barriers to platform labor regulation from the worker perspective: legal and policy ambiguities, platform power and control, economic precarity and dependency, and social and cultural constraints. Across all categories, participants consistently described feelings of legal invisibility, economic vulnerability, and powerlessness in the face of opaque platform governance systems. These insights underscore the disconnect between existing labor regulatory frameworks and the realities of digital labor in emerging economies such as Iran.

The first major theme, *legal and policy ambiguities*, captures how platform workers in Tehran perceive their employment status as undefined and unprotected. Most participants reported that they were uncertain whether they were considered employees or independent contractors. This ambiguity allowed platforms to deny them basic labor rights, such as minimum wage guarantees, social insurance, and due process in cases of disputes. These findings align with prior studies that have emphasized the inadequacy of legal definitions in the gig economy, particularly where traditional labor classifications fail to capture the hybrid nature of platform work [2, 5]. The blurring of legal boundaries has been shown to systematically disadvantage workers by shifting legal responsibility away from the platforms [7].

Inconsistent regulatory coverage was also highlighted as a barrier. Participants noted that legal protections varied not only across platforms but also depending on informal negotiations or enforcement gaps. These findings mirror earlier research demonstrating that fragmented regulatory efforts often result in a patchwork of protections that are both difficult to enforce and inadequate in scope [4, 8]. In contexts where labor laws are outdated or not digital-ready, platforms often exploit loopholes to evade oversight. Moreover, weak enforcement mechanisms—as noted by participants—render even existing protections ineffective. Workers’ narratives of inspections being rare and state intervention being absent echo observations made in other regulatory environments, such as Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, where the state has yet to establish a coherent response to digital labor [3, 15].

A particularly salient finding was the *absence of worker representation in policymaking*. Participants expressed frustration at being excluded from the regulatory conversation despite being most affected by it. The absence of unions or collective bodies for platform workers in Iran mirrors similar challenges found globally, where unionization efforts are either restricted or undermined by platform fragmentation [10, 13]. The literature has emphasized that regulatory efforts tend to be top-down and technocratic, rarely integrating worker input or lived experience [1]. Without representation, regulations fail to address core concerns such as algorithmic control, deactivation procedures, and platform accountability.

The second main theme, *platform power and control*, emphasized the profound impact of algorithmic management on workers’ autonomy and agency. Participants described how algorithmic systems dictated task assignments, monitored



performance, and enforced penalties without providing transparent criteria or appeals mechanisms. These findings are in direct alignment with recent literature highlighting the rise of "digital Taylorism" in platform labor, where surveillance and automated decision-making replace human oversight [9, 11]. Workers felt disempowered by their inability to understand or contest algorithmic decisions, a phenomenon described in the literature as a "black box" governance model that systematically erodes worker rights [6, 12].

Furthermore, the lack of effective grievance and redress mechanisms compounded workers' sense of isolation and vulnerability. Participants described instances of being deactivated or penalized without explanation and with no channels for appeal. These experiences align with Peetz's (2023) findings on the structural imbalance between gig workers and platforms, where workers lack meaningful ways to challenge decisions [4]. In contrast to traditional employment relationships, the absence of labor dispute resolution mechanisms in platform work leaves workers with little recourse.

Participants also criticized the exploitative nature of incentive and penalty systems. While platforms advertised flexibility and independence, workers reported that these mechanisms actually coerced them into accepting unfavorable conditions. This contradiction between the rhetoric of flexibility and the reality of algorithmic coercion has been documented in prior studies, which argue that the notion of worker autonomy in the gig economy is often illusory [10, 13]. Similarly, the lack of consent regarding personal data use and tracking was another form of structural disempowerment. Workers expressed discomfort about being constantly monitored but felt they had no alternative if they wanted to remain on the platform—reflecting the broader privacy concerns raised by digital labor scholars [18].

The third theme, *economic precarity and dependency*, revealed that gig work in Tehran is often the primary or only source of income for many participants, who face fluctuating earnings and unpredictable demand. These findings support earlier research that positions economic necessity as a major reason for entering the gig economy, particularly in contexts of high youth unemployment or underemployment [16, 19]. Participants frequently mentioned that they could not afford to challenge unfair practices or leave the platform due to financial insecurity. This dependency on unstable income mirrors broader global trends in which gig workers—despite working long hours—remain economically fragile [3, 17].

High operating costs further worsened their economic conditions. Workers cited expenses such as fuel, equipment maintenance, and commissions as eroding their already limited earnings. The findings reinforce arguments made in comparative studies that the "entrepreneur" label is often misleading, as workers bear operational costs without receiving the autonomy or reward typically associated with self-employment [2, 5]. This economic burden also intersects with the lack of access to social protection. Participants noted that they received no health insurance, paid leave, or retirement support, leaving them exposed to financial ruin in the event of illness or injury. As Khanal and Khanal (2024) argue, without access to institutional safeguards, platform workers are effectively excluded from the formal economy [15].

The final theme, *social and cultural constraints*, demonstrated that regulatory barriers are not only institutional but also embedded in local social norms. Many participants described the stigma associated with platform work, which was often viewed by family or society as inferior or temporary. This social devaluation discourages workers from organizing or demanding rights, as the work itself is seen as unworthy of formal recognition [14, 20]. Female workers, in particular, reported gender-specific challenges such as harassment, exclusion from certain jobs, and lack of safety measures. These findings resonate with studies emphasizing the intersectional disadvantages faced by women in platform labor, especially in conservative or patriarchal settings [10, 19].



In addition, many participants mentioned difficulties with digital literacy and access, especially among older or less educated workers. Inability to navigate app features, change payment settings, or read platform announcements contributed to miscommunication and vulnerability. This digital divide has been recognized in literature as a barrier to equitable participation in the gig economy, especially in developing regions where internet access and tech fluency are unevenly distributed [9, 18]. Lastly, the lack of worker community or collective identity was seen as a major hindrance to mobilization. Participants reported feeling isolated and in competition with one another, echoing prior observations that platform design intentionally prevents solidarity and discourages unionization [1, 3].

This study, while offering rich and detailed insights into the regulatory barriers of platform labor, is not without limitations. First, the sample was restricted to workers based in Tehran, which may not reflect the full diversity of experiences in rural areas or other cities with different platform penetration or socioeconomic dynamics. Second, as a qualitative study, the findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized to the entire gig worker population. Third, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants may selectively recall or interpret experiences. Lastly, the study focused only on worker perspectives and did not include interviews with platform representatives or policymakers, which could have offered a more balanced view of the regulatory environment.

Future research should consider expanding the geographical scope of analysis to include smaller towns and rural regions where platform labor may operate under different conditions. Comparative studies across countries with varying regulatory frameworks would also be valuable in identifying best practices and transferable policy solutions. Moreover, longitudinal research could help track how workers' perceptions of regulation evolve over time, especially in response to policy changes or platform innovations. Lastly, incorporating perspectives from other stakeholders—such as platform companies, policymakers, and labor advocates—could provide a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities for regulating digital labor.

Regulatory reform must begin with a clear legal definition of platform work that recognizes its hybrid nature and extends basic labor protections to all workers, regardless of classification. Governments should create transparent and enforceable guidelines that limit the discretionary power of algorithms and ensure due process in cases of deactivation or dispute. It is also essential to invest in the creation of accessible grievance mechanisms and foster conditions that allow for worker representation and collective bargaining. Public awareness campaigns can help destigmatize platform labor and inform both workers and consumers about rights and responsibilities. Finally, platforms must be held accountable not only for economic outcomes but also for data transparency, equitable treatment, and worker well-being.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### **Declaration of Interest**

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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