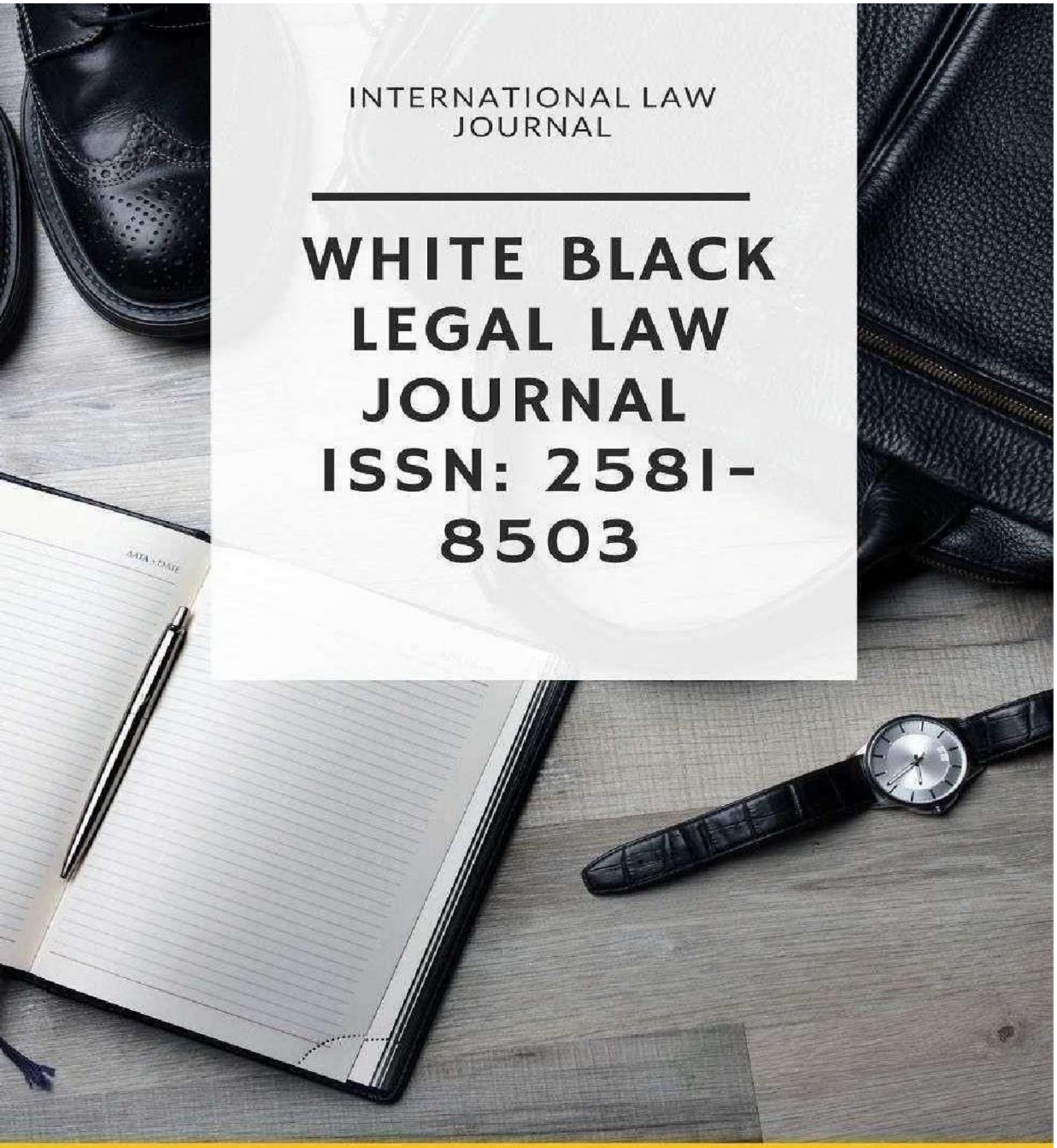


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GENDER AND GIG WORK: LABOUR PROTECTION OF WOMEN DELIVERY WORKERS IN INDIA

AUTHORED BY - SUBASHINI. S & AKHILESH. P

ABSTRACT

As the gig economy has grown, India's job market has changed with flexible jobs being offered through digital platforms. Food delivery and e-commerce logistics are now important parts of the economy. These platforms offer employment opportunities but female delivery workers may have to face several challenges related to gender discrimination, safety at the workplace, irregular income, absence of social security, absence of basic facilities and challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities. The nature of platform-based work also raises questions about the legal status of gig workers and the degree to which they are covered by existing labour laws.

The study is focused on the working conditions and labour protection of women delivering goods in India. It looks at barriers related to gender, safety, access to social welfare, awareness of employment rights and effectiveness of grievance procedures. The research employs a socio-legal methodology. Primary data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from legislation, scholarly articles, reports and other relevant publications. This research aims primarily at identifying the gaps in existing safeguards and suggesting recommendations to improve the working environment, legal protection and social security of women delivery workers. It seeks to catalyze the development of a more inclusive and gender sensitive framework for platform work in India.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The gig economy has become a major feature of today's labour market. It's a system of people working for a short period of time, or on a task or contract basis, instead of relying on traditional permanent jobs. Digital platforms are online systems and mobile applications which connect workers with clients and businesses. In India, food delivery and e-commerce delivery platforms have been the key enablers for the growth of this form of employment.

There are several potential benefits of gig work, including flexible working hours, opportunities to earn an income and relatively easy access to the labour market. This may be especially relevant for women seeking work opportunities in addition to household responsibilities. But the availability of work does not necessarily translate into safe working conditions, stable earnings, equal treatment or adequate legal protection.

The women who do the deliveries might have different challenges than the men who do the deliveries. Challenges include gender-based discrimination, harassment by clients or others, concerns about traveling late, lack of access to clean toilets and menstrual hygiene facilities, and difficulties in combining paid work with unpaid domestic and care work. These problems can impact on women's ability to enter, continue and progress in delivery work.

“Another important issue is the status of delivery workers as employees of digital platforms. Workers are often labelled as independent contractors, gig workers or platform workers instead of employees. Such a classification can create uncertainty about their access to minimum wage protections, paid leave, insurance, social security, and other employment- related benefits. Indian law is waking up to the reality of gig and platform workers but the real question is – are those protections available and adequate?

The Code on Social Security, 2020, recognizes gig workers and platform workers and lays down a framework for social security schemes for these categories. But recognition under the law doesn't always mean that all workers get all the same benefits or protections as traditional employees. The effectiveness of protection depends on the relevant legal provisions, implementation, registration, eligibility criteria and availability of welfare schemes.

The situation of women delivery drivers needs to be analyzed from a legal and social point of view. Labour protection should not be limited to income only. It should also include safety at work, freedom from discrimination and harassment, provision of necessary facilities, transparent payment systems, effective grievance redressal and social security.

This study examines the challenges faced by women delivery workers in India and evaluates the role of law, platform policies and welfare measures in ensuring safer and fairer working conditions.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the growth and characteristics of gig work in India with special reference to food delivery and e-commerce delivery services.
2. To understand the working conditions and experiences of women delivery workers.
3. To analyze the key challenges faced by women delivery workers such as gender discrimination, harassment, safety concerns and unequal treatment.
4. To research income-related issues such as working hours, payment transparency and financial stability of delivery work.
5. To explore issues that women who are delivery workers might face in managing paid work and household chores and caregiving responsibilities.
6. To assess the availability of basic facilities such as toilets, drinking water and menstrual hygiene facilities.
7. To examine the legal framework governing gig workers and platform workers in India, particularly when considering social security and labour protection.
8. To know the knowledge of the workers about the welfare schemes, legal protection available to them and grievance redressal mechanism.
9. To recommend measures to improve the legal protection, safety, social security and general working conditions of women delivery workers.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a socio-legal research design. A socio-legal approach looks at the relationship between law and society by considering both legal rules and the actual experiences of individuals affected by them. This approach is apt as the problems faced by women delivery workers are not only related to statutory protection but also to workplace practices, gender expectations, platform policies and access to welfare measures.

The study employs both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The qualitative part helps determine trends in the responses collected through the questionnaire, like working hours, income categories, access to facilities, awareness of benefits. The qualitative part is useful to understand the personal experiences of the workers, the difficulties they face and the suggestions for improvement.

The study is predominantly descriptive and analytical. It presents the experiences reported by the respondents and analyses their significance within the framework of labour protection and

gender equality.

3.2 Primary Data Analysis

Primary data will be collected using a structured questionnaire developed in Google Forms.

The questionnaire is for women who currently or previously worked as app-based food delivery or e-commerce delivery workers in India.

The questionnaire includes personal and employment information, income and working conditions, gender-specific challenges, safety and facilities, labour rights, social security, and suggestions for improvement.

The quantitative responses will be analysed through frequencies and percentages. For example, the study may compute the share of respondents who say they received insurance benefits, felt unsafe, or knew about relevant welfare schemes.

Open-ended responses will be analysed using a thematic approach. Answers that are similar will be grouped into themes such as safety, discrimination, inadequate facilities, income insecurity, and the need for stronger legal protection. These themes will help understand the issues which cannot be fully grasped from the numerical data.

The results will be presented in tables, graphs and descriptive explanations as appropriate. The analysis will be made according to the answers that are actually received. No survey results or percentages will be assumed in advance.

3.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data will be collected from the existing legal and academic sources related to gig work and protection of women workers in India.

The study will look into relevant legislation, including the Code on Social Security, 2020, applicable provisions of other labour laws and laws relating to sexual harassment at workplace and protection of women's rights, wherever relevant to the issues under consideration.

To understand the growth of platform work, gender inequality, informal employment and social security concerns, we will draw on academic journal articles, research papers, reports, policy publications and other credible sources.

Secondary sources will also help to identify the difference between the protection recognized by law and the protection workers experience in practice. When the final analysis is completed, the applicable legal provisions, their commencement, and the availability of relevant schemes must be verified against authoritative sources.

3.4 Sampling

Purposive sampling will be used, with convenience sampling as a backup.

Purposive sampling involves choosing respondents who have relevant experience of the subject being studied. The targeted respondents in this study are women who are currently or have worked earlier as app-based food delivery or e-commerce delivery workers in India.

Convenience sampling may be used to reach eligible respondents who are accessible and willing to participate. The questionnaire can be distributed through the relevant contacts and networks depending on the availability of the respondents.

The exact sample size, geographic coverage, and period of data collection will be specified after the survey is completed. Because of the non-probability sampling, all women delivery workers in India did not have an equal chance of being selected and therefore the results may not be representative of all women delivery workers in India. This limitation will be taken into account in the interpretation of the results.

Participation should be voluntary and the respondents should be informed about the purpose of the research. Do not collect personally identifying information unless it is really necessary. Allow respondents to skip sensitive questions and treat any data collected in confidence. The study should adhere to appropriate consent and ethical practices, especially if any respondents might be under 18 years of age.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Koolanneri and Augustian (2025): "Navigating a Masculine Domain: Gender, Work, and Inequalities in India's Food Delivery Platforms"

The paper looks at gender, work and inequalities in the food delivery platform economy in India. This is relevant to the current research as delivery work has traditionally been a male occupation, particularly where the job involves traveling between locations, working irregular hours and engaging in physically demanding work.

The study's emphasis on gender and inequality provides a useful starting point for exploring the obstacles women may encounter in entering and remaining in food delivery work.

Women's participation may be affected by safety concerns, social expectations, family responsibilities and the perception that delivery work is not suitable for women.

The study is also relevant for the understanding of how the organization of platform work may reproduce existing gender inequalities. Digital platforms create new jobs, but technology alone does not dismantle social barriers or guarantee equal working conditions.

This literature provides a lens for understanding women delivery worker experiences in the broader relationship of gender norms and employment for the current study. The full bibliographic details and the findings of the article should be checked against the original publication before submission.

4.2 Ria Kasliwal (2020): "Gender and the Gig Economy: A Qualitative Study of Gig Platforms for Women Workers"

Ria Kasliwal, in a study published by the Observer Research Foundation, explores the role of women in the gig economy and the link between gender inequality and platform-based work.

The study is relevant because gig work is often presented as flexible employment which could allow women to enter the labour market. Flexibility, however, does not necessarily remove the challenges women face in getting secure and fairly paid work. Household duties, social norms, personal safety and availability of resources might affect women's employment choices.

The research offers a helpful springboard to reflect on whether digital platforms do indeed open up economic opportunities for women or whether existing inequalities are reproduced in new forms of work.

For delivery workers, these issues raise questions about women's freedom to choose their hours, their ability to refuse unsafe assignments without penalty, and whether their pay is sufficient to ensure economic independence.

The present study builds on these concerns by focusing specifically on women delivery workers and looking at their experiences of safety, facilities, payment systems, social security and grievance redressal.

4.3 Ghosh, Zaidi and Ramachandran (2022): "Locating Women Workers in the Platform Economy in India – Old Wine in a New Bottle?"

This research considers the position of women in the platform economy in India and poses critical questions regarding the convergence of emerging employment models with persistent labour inequalities.

As the title suggests, it addresses a core problem of the gig economy: even as digital platforms provide a new mechanism of organizing work, workers' grievances may echo older forms of informal and precarious work.

Women may face income security issues, their work may go unrecognized, they may lack social protection and may receive an unequal share of unpaid household work. Organizing work through a mobile application does not necessarily solve these problems.

This research is relevant to the present study as it encourages the analysis of the real conditions of workers, rather than only the flexibility and convenience offered by platforms.

For women delivery workers, the crucial issue is to what extent platform work can provide real economic independence and adequate protection against the risks of working life. The study therefore supports the need to investigate both the opportunities that platform work creates and the disadvantages that may remain within it.

4.4 Islam, Galeano Alfonso and Pla (2025): "A 'Working Lives' Approach to Platform Work: Accounting for Informality, Social Reproduction, and Gender Norms"

This project understands platform work as part of a broader understanding of workers' lives. It emphasizes the significance of informality, social reproduction and gendered norms in the analysis of employment conditions.

The concept of social reproduction is particularly relevant to women workers as paid work is generally coupled with unpaid work in the home, caregiving and other family responsibilities. Flexible hours may be offered but the job may still be problematic for workers expected to do most of the domestic work.

The working conditions of women delivery workers cannot be understood only by the number of deliveries made or the income they earn. This also needs to consider time spent on household tasks, availability of childcare and other support, and implications of working hours for personal safety and family life.

The methodology allows for a richer analysis of women's experiences. It also points to why labour policies should consider the social conditions around employment, rather than treating workers as just individuals providing services through a digital platform.

The study is useful for the analysis of the interaction of platform work, gender expectations and the unequal distribution of unpaid labour.

4.5 Nadagoudar and Patil (2021): "Social Security Code 2020: An Analysis"

The Code on Social Security, 2020, is important for the legal aspect of this research. The Code recognizes gig and platform workers and provides for a legislative framework for social security schemes for these categories.

This recognition is important because platform workers may not fit neatly within the traditional employer-employee relationship. How workers are classified may affect the benefits and protections they are entitled to under various legal systems.

But recognition in law and actually getting benefits are two different things. The effectiveness

of social security depends on the provisions and schemes, eligibility criteria, registration process, funding arrangements and implementation.

Social security is important for women delivery workers, who may experience road accidents, health-related costs, income interruptions, and limited access to conventional employment benefits. They may be more vulnerable when they have little savings or heavy family responsibilities.

The present research uses this legal discussion to study the awareness of workers regarding welfare schemes, the benefits they claim to be getting and their knowledge of the complaint mechanisms. The exact legal position will be determined by reference to the relevant statutory text, rules, notifications and authoritative government sources in force at the date of submission.

4.6 Workplace Safety, Discrimination, and Access to Facilities

Work safety is an important issue in research on women delivery workers. Delivery workers are different than people who work in one place. Delivery workers are moving around a lot and have to deal with customers, restaurants, businesses and people they meet.

The risks involved in this work may be unsafe routes, road accidents, harassment, unwanted behavior and concerns about late nite deliveries. Women may also be faced with additional restrictions because of family pressure or social attitudes about traveling alone.

Safety policies are thus an important aspect of platform responsibility. The following can help support safer working conditions: emergency assistance, accessible complaint channels, reliable escalation procedures, adequate training, and clear action against harassment. But having a policy is not the same as having it available and effective in practice.

Another concern is the availability of basic amenities. Delivery workers may be away from their homes for long periods of time without access to clean toilets, drinking water, rest areas or menstrual hygiene facilities. Without such facilities, women's health, dignity, comfort and ability to continue working can be compromised.

Gender discrimination may also take the form of discouragement to take up delivery jobs, unequal treatment, stereotyping or inadequate responses to complaints. Research is needed to determine whether workers experience such difficulties and how these affect employment decisions.

The present study attempts to address these issues through questions of discrimination, harassment, safety measures, access to restrooms, menstrual hygiene and social stigma. These questions are intended to assist the respondents in identifying reported practical challenges.

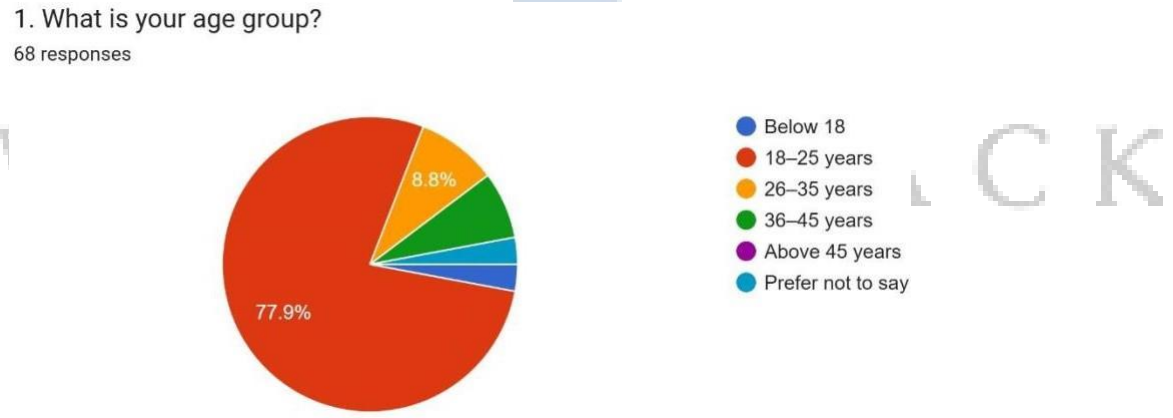
4.7 Critical Synthesis of the Literature

The literature reviewed suggests that the gig economy should not be evaluated only in terms of flexibility, technology or the creation of employment opportunities. And its effects have to be considered also in relation to: gender equality, income security, workplace safety and social protection.

The studies outlined above provide useful insights into women's participation in platform work, the persistence of informal employment conditions, the influence of gender norms and the importance of social security. They also illuminate the reasons why women's experience of employment should be viewed in relation to unpaid domestic work and social expectations.

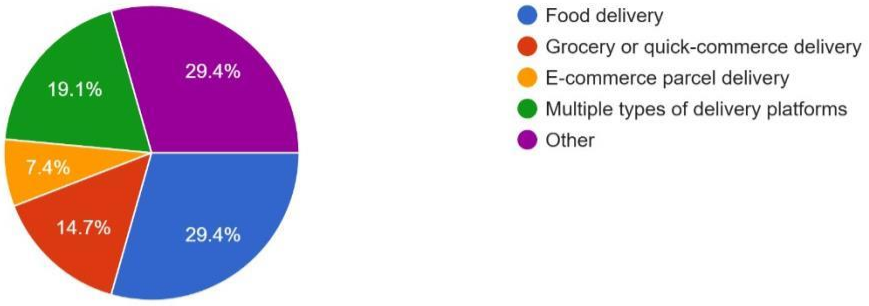
At the same time, women delivery workers represent a specific group and require focused attention to their experiences. Their work involves travel, interacting with customers, changing work locations and possible dependence on platform-based payment and rating systems. Safety, access to facilities, payment transparency and grievance redressal are thus areas of investigation that are particularly important.

This research brings these concerns together by examining both the lived experiences of women delivery workers and the legal framework regulating their protection. Using primary data and secondary legal research, the study seeks to understand the relationship between workers' reported experiences and the protections available under law and platform policies.



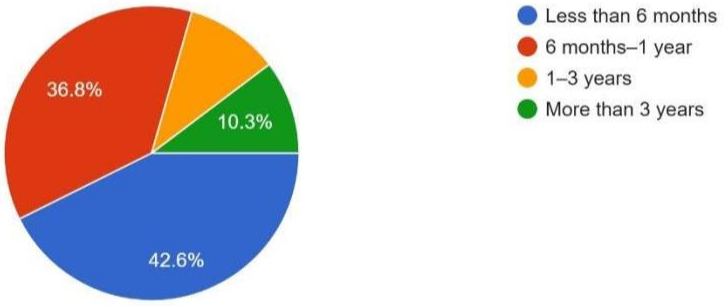
2.Which type of delivery service do you work for?

68 responses



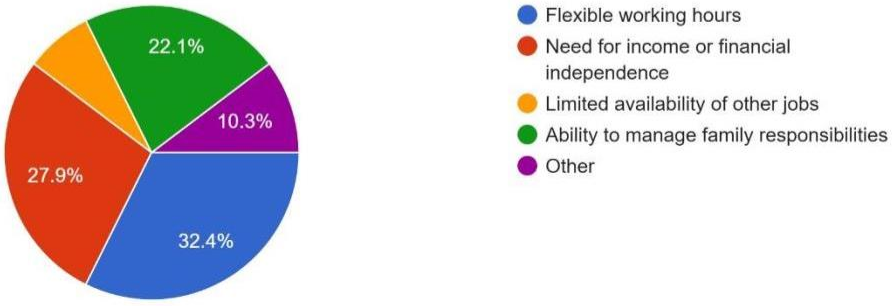
3. How long have you worked as a delivery worker?

68 responses

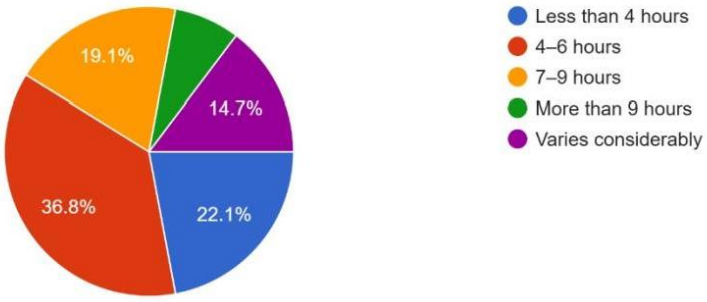


4. What is your primary reason for choosing delivery work?

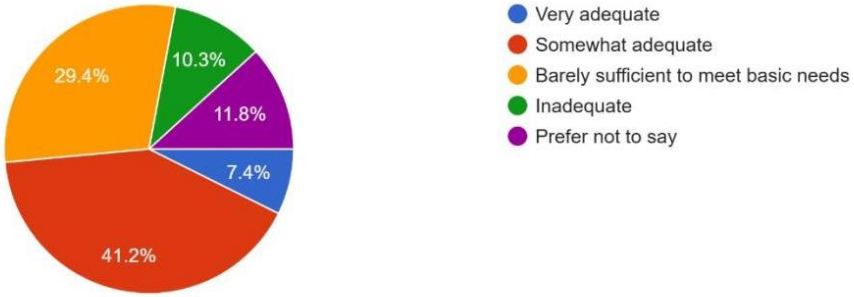
68 responses



5. Approximately how many hours do you work per day, including waiting time?
68 responses



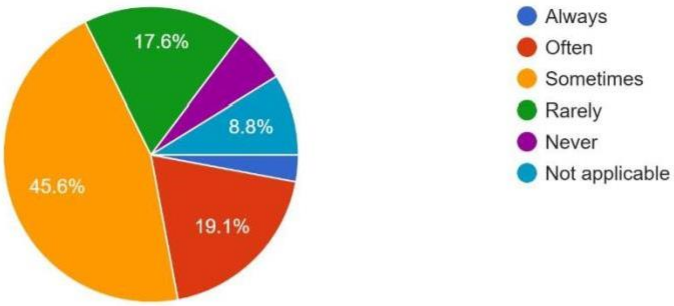
6. How would you describe your earnings after deducting work-related expenses such as fuel, vehicle maintenance, and mobile data?
68 responses



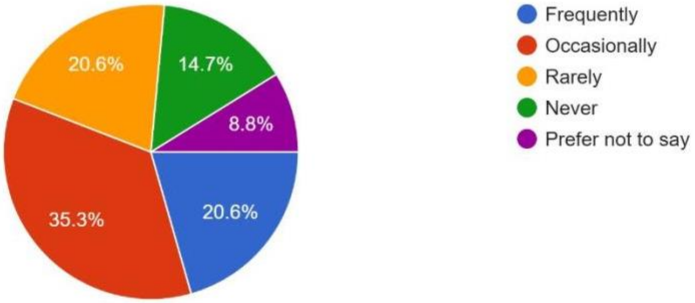
7. Do you feel that the platform provides fair payment and transparent information about incentives, deductions, and penalties?
68 responses



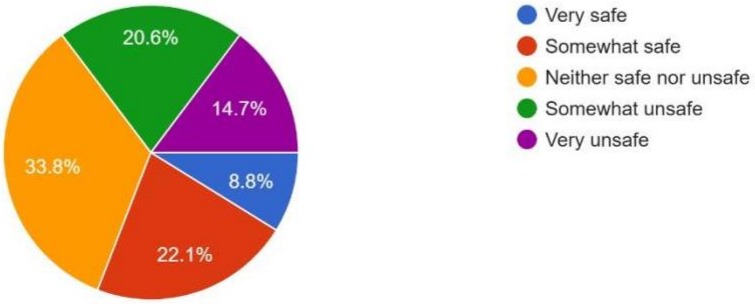
8. Does delivery work allow you to balance your work and family responsibilities?
68 responses



9. Have you experienced gender-based discrimination, harassment, inappropriate comments, or unwanted attention while delivering orders?
68 responses



10. How safe do you feel while delivering orders, particularly at night or in isolated locations?
68 responses



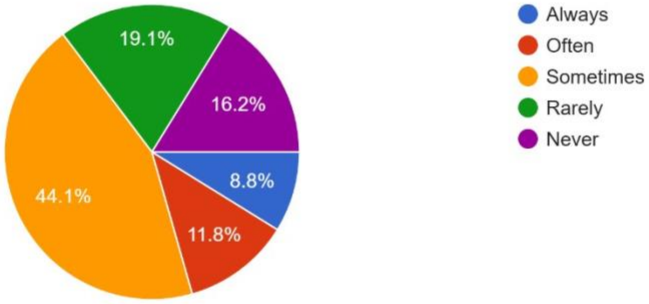
11. Does your delivery platform provide adequate safety measures, such as emergency assistance, a reliable complaint mechanism, and support in unsafe situations?

68 responses



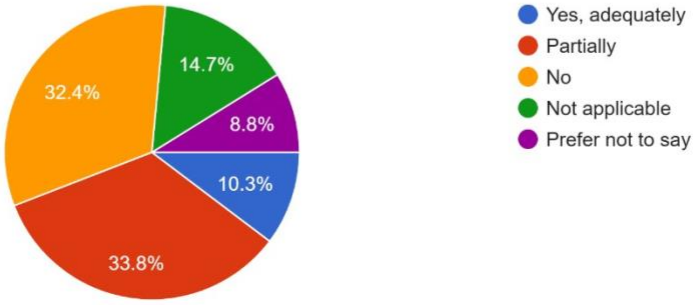
12. Are adequate restroom facilities and suitable places to rest or take breaks accessible to you during work?

68 responses



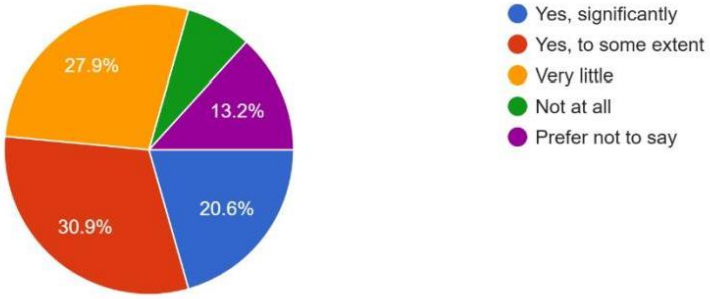
13. Are adequate menstrual hygiene facilities, including accessible toilets and opportunities to take necessary breaks, available during your delivery shifts?

68 responses



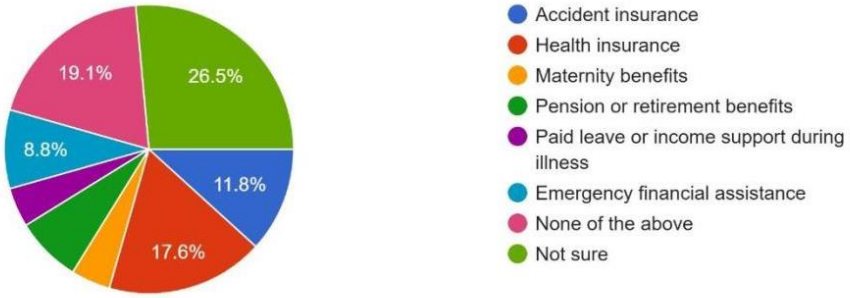
14. Have social stigma, family restrictions, or negative public attitudes towards women delivery workers affected your ability to work?

68 responses



15. Which of the following benefits do you currently receive through your delivery platform?

68 responses

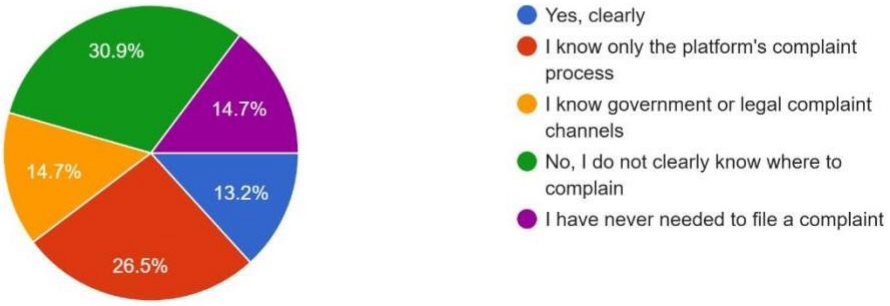


16. Are you aware of any government laws or schemes intended to protect gig and platform workers, including social security benefits?

68 responses



17. If you face harassment, unfair payment, unsafe working conditions, or wrongful account deactivation, do you know where and how to file a complaint and seek redress?
68 responses



18. What is the biggest challenge you face as a woman delivery worker, and what changes would you recommend to improve your working conditions and legal protection?

- **Safety Concerns:** Personal safety, night deliveries, and overall unsafe environments are major challenges, with recommendations for better security measures, safety tracking, emergency SOS features, and assistance.
- **Basic Infrastructure and Facilities:** A severe shortage of clean, accessible public restrooms and safe resting zones during long shifts creates health hurdles, leading to recommendations for hygienic restroom provisions.
- **Wages, Incentives, and Benefits:** Challenges include low wages and physical differences requiring consideration, with recommendations for fair pay, higher incentives, insurance, maternity benefits, and awareness of welfare schemes.
- **Legal Protection and Discrimination:** Facing gender discrimination and harassment leads to recommendations for stronger legal protections and anti-discrimination measures.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SURVEY DATA

5.1 Analysis of the Age Group of the Respondents

The survey results indicated that 77.9% of the respondents were from the age group of 18–25 years, which is the highest proportion of participants. About 8.8% fell in the 26–35 years age bracket, and the remaining respondents were in other age categories or chose not to reveal their age. This spread suggests that the survey is largely reflecting the experience of younger women in delivery work. The over-representation of younger respondents may be because young women are over-represented in flexible and platform-based forms of employment.

However, the limited number of older age groups means that the findings cannot be used to

explain differences in working experiences between age categories to any great degree.

5.2 Analysis of the Type of Delivery Service

The responses show that 29.4% of the respondents are involved in food delivery, 14.7% in grocery or quick-commerce delivery, and 7.4% in e-commerce parcel delivery. While 19.1% work across multiple delivery platforms, 29.4% opted for other categories. The results show that the respondents are involved in various segments of the delivery industry. However, women's experiences are unlikely to be completely homogenous as the nature of work, customer interaction, delivery schedules and occupational risks may vary across sectors. Thus the findings suggest the need to explore working conditions across various delivery services instead of considering the sector as a monolithic category.

5.3 Analysis of Work Experience

According to the survey, 42.6% of respondents are delivery workers for less than six months and 36.8% of respondents are delivery workers for six months to one year. The remainder of the respondents fall into the longer experience categories. The relatively high share of workers with shorter length of service suggests that a number of participants are relatively early on in their journey into the delivery sector. This points to the need for orientation programs, safety training, clear payment information and knowledge of grievance procedures. But the survey does not establish whether the large share of new workers is due to recent recruitment, employee turnover or other factors.

5.4 Analysis of the Reasons for Choosing Delivery Work

Results indicate that 32.4% of respondents identified flexible working hours as the primary reason for getting into delivery work. 27.9 percent of the people said they needed financial independence or income and 22.1 percent said they needed to be able to take care of family responsibilities. Other respondents gave reasons such as limited employment opportunities.

The results show that flexibility and economic reasons are important factors for women to be involved in the delivery sector. The results also suggest that delivery work may represent an employment option for women seeking to balance income generation with personal responsibilities. But the option of flexible hours does not necessarily guarantee economic security or good working conditions.

5.5 Analysis of Daily Working Hours

While the survey found that 36.8% of respondents work between four and six hours a day, 22.1% work for less than four hours. It is estimated that 19.1% work for between seven and nine hours and 14.7% of respondents reported a significant variation in their working hours. A smaller percentage work for over nine hours. This distribution shows variation in length and organization of work among participants. Such variations may affect earnings, rest, family obligations and exposure to occupational risks. Moreover, the focus on waiting time in the question emphasizes the significance of taking into account the total time spent on delivery work, rather than measuring working hours in terms of the number of deliveries made. Further investigation would be needed to determine the relationship between hours worked and actual earnings.

5.6 Analysis of Income Adequacy

The results show that 41.2% of the participants believe that their earnings are somewhat adequate when work-related expenses are deducted. However, 29.4% say their earnings are just enough to cover basic needs and 10.3% say they are not sufficient. 7.4% consider their earnings very adequate, while 11.8% do not want to disclose their assessment. These results indicate that a considerable number of respondents still worry about the sufficiency of their income. Expenses for fuel, vehicle maintenance, mobile data, and other work-related requirements may eat into what workers take home from their earnings. The results underscore the importance of considering net earnings and not just gross payment figures. However, the survey cannot determine the precise degree of financial hardship, as it does not provide exact data on income and expenditure.

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5.7 Analysis of Payment Transparency and Incentives

Some 47.1% of respondents said they were only sometimes provided with fair payment and clear information about incentives, deductions and penalties. Another 19.1% chose often, 16.2% chose rarely and 11.8% chose never. Always selected a smaller proportion. The findings indicate that respondents' experiences of payment transparency are not uniform.

Uncertainty about deductions, incentive conditions, and penalties may mean that workers are unable to predict their earnings and whether payments are correct. The results emphasize the importance of clear payment statements, accessible explanations of incentive structures and effective channels for disputing deductions.

5.8 Analysis of Work–Family Balance

Forty-five point six percent of respondents can sometimes manage work and family responsibilities, the survey finds. About 19.1% said they did this often and 17.6% said they rarely did this. The other responses varied across other options such as always, never and not applicable. Findings suggest that the flexibility that comes with delivery work does not necessarily translate into a good work–family balance. Irregular working hours, waiting time, income related pressures and unpredictable delivery demands may interfere with family and personal commitments. The findings point to the necessity of studying how platform-based work arrangements influence women's capacity to balance employment and domestic responsibilities.

5.9 Analysis of Gender-Based Discrimination and Harassment

The survey finds that 35.3% of respondents have sometimes experienced gender-based discrimination, harassment, inappropriate comments or unwanted attention during delivery. Some 20.6% reported frequent experiences and another 20.6% chose rarely. Approximately 14.7% indicated that they had never experienced such incidents and 8.8% did not want to discuss their experiences. Results suggest that gender-related issues comprise an important part of working experiences reported by participants. Such experiences can undermine personal dignity, confidence and perceptions of workplace safety. The responses emphasize the necessity of having accessible complaint mechanisms, proper investigation procedures and protection against retaliation. However, the findings are based on a self-reported experience and should not be regarded as a verified measure of the prevalence of harassment across the entire delivery industry.

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5.10 Analysis of Perceived Safety During Deliveries

The results indicate that 33.8% of the respondents are neither safe nor unsafe in making deliveries especially at nite or in isolated places. Somewhat safe – 22.1% Somewhat unsafe – 20.6% Very unsafe – 14.7% Just 8.8% said they felt very safe. The proportion of respondents who reported feeling insecure to some degree demonstrates that personal security is an important issue for the population surveyed. Nite deliveries, unfamiliar locations and limited access to immediate help may be factors contributing to workers' concerns, but the survey did not independently establish the causes of these perceptions. The results highlight the need to further evaluate safety procedures, emergency response systems, location-tracking capabilities and measures to address potentially unsafe delivery situations.

5.11 Analysis of Safety Measures Provided by Delivery Platforms

45.6% of respondents said that their platforms do have some safety measures, but these measures are not adequate. Another 19.1% said that adequate safety measures are not provided and 16.2% were not aware of the measures available. Adequate measures were provided according to approximately 19.1%. These responses suggest a perceived gap between the support of safety provided and the degree of protection workers feel is needed. The lack of awareness reported by some respondents also suggests that communication of safety policies may need to be addressed. Safety procedures should be available, clearly explained and backed up by practical mechanisms for responding to incidents on platforms. However, the survey does not measure the actual effectiveness of the individual platform safety systems in isolation.

5.12 Analysis of Restroom Facilities and Resting Areas

The survey also shows that 44.1% of respondents sometimes have access to adequate toilet facilities and appropriate resting places. Approximately 19.1% chose rarely, 16.2% chose never and 11.8% chose often. Only 8.8% said these facilities were always available. The findings show that access to basic infrastructure is a major concern for the surveyed workers.

Delivery work usually includes travel between locations and waiting, making access to sanitation and rest facilities crucial for comfort, health and dignity. The results indicate that the availability of clean public restrooms, resting areas, and reasonable opportunities for breaks during working hours should be explored.

5.13 Analysis of Menstrual Hygiene Facilities

The survey shows that 33.8% respondents claimed that there was partial availability of menstrual hygiene facilities, while 32.4% said such facilities were unavailable. Adequate availability was reported by about 10.3%, 14.7% chose not applicable, and 8.8% chose preferred not to answer. These findings indicate that many participants are concerned about access to appropriate facilities for menstrual hygiene. Lack of clean restrooms and proper facilities may cause additional problems during working hours. The findings emphasize the need for gender-sensitive infrastructure and reasonable break access. But the replies don't go into detail about what specific facilities are needed or differences between locations and platforms.

5.14 Analysis of Social Stigma and Family Restrictions

The responses indicate that 30.9% of the participants have been affected in some way by social

stigma, family restrictions or negative public attitudes toward women delivery workers. Some 27.9 per cent said there was very little impact, while 20.6 per cent said these factors had a big impact on them. Another 13.2% didn't share their experience. The rest of the respondents said that there was no impact. These findings suggest that social expectations and family attitudes might influence women's participation in delivery work. Negative perceptions of women's mobility, working in public spaces and working hours can add additional barriers. The findings emphasize the importance of looking at social attitudes as well as economic and workplace factors in evaluating women's employment experiences.

5.15 Analysis of Social Security Benefits

The survey found that 26.5% of respondents indicated they did not know what benefits they were entitled to through their delivery platforms, while 19.1% reported that they did not receive any of the listed benefits. Of those surveyed, 17.6% reported having health insurance and 11.8% reported having accident insurance. Other responses included emergency financial assistance, pension or retirement benefits, maternity benefits and paid leave or income replacement during illness. These results indicate that some participants may have limited knowledge of or access to social security benefits. The proportion of respondents who do not know what their entitlements are is particularly relevant as a lack of information may prevent workers from understanding or accessing available support. The findings show the importance of clear information on eligibility for benefits, insurance cover and any welfare schemes that may be relevant. They do not, however, determine the legal eligibility of each respondent for particular benefits.

5.16 Analysis of Awareness of Laws and Government Schemes

The survey finds that 41.2% of the respondents are aware of laws or schemes on gig and platform workers but do not have in-depth knowledge. About 36.8 percent said they were not aware, while 22.1 percent said they were well aware of such measures. The findings suggest a discrepancy between general knowledge and knowledge of details of legal and welfare provisions. Limited knowledge about eligibility criteria, application procedures and benefits available may constrain workers' ability to seek assistance. This highlights the necessity of readily available legal awareness programs, information in languages that workers understand and straightforward interaction through delivery platforms and relevant authorities. Further legal research is needed to determine the precise protections that apply to the various categories of delivery workers.

5.17 Analysis of Knowledge of Complaint Mechanisms

The survey found that 30.9 % of the respondents do not know where to go to complain or seek redress. 26.5% know only the internal complaint procedure of the platform, 14.7% are aware of the government or legal complaint channels. Another 13.2% reported that they had clear knowledge of how to seek redress, and 14.7% stated that they had never needed to file a complaint. The findings imply that knowledge of grievance mechanisms is not uniformly distributed among the workers surveyed. Information about how to complain can be limited and this can make it difficult to tackle harassment, payment problems, unsafe working conditions or other workplace issues. The findings suggest a need for clear information on internal grievance procedures and on the relevant external authorities or legal remedies available in particular circumstances.

5.18 Analysis of Major Challenges and Suggested Improvements

The last question deals with four major areas of concern: personal safety, basic infrastructure, wages and benefits, and legal protection against discrimination. Responses highlight concerns around nite deliveries and unsafe conditions, lack of access to clean restrooms and resting areas, low pay and benefits, and experiences of gender discrimination and harassment. The suggested improvements are better safety measures, emergency help, hygienic facilities, adequate remuneration, insurance, maternity-related benefits, improved awareness about welfare schemes and stronger anti-discrimination protections.

This qualitative information supplements the above survey results by identifying the practical changes the participants see as necessary. The responses underscore the interdependence of women delivery workers' experiences. Poor infrastructure, for instance, can affect health and comfort; uncertain earnings and limited access to benefits can lead to economic insecurity. Similarly, concerns about safety and discrimination may impact women's ability to undertake deliveries with confidence. The findings therefore support a comprehensive strategy to improving working conditions, rather than isolated interventions.

6. Limitations

The present study has some limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. The base data was collected from a small sample of 68 participants, it may not be sufficient to represent the experiences of all female delivery workers in India. Secondly, the results are based on survey respondents and may reflect the individual experiences, perceptions

and awareness of the participants and not the actual working conditions of the entire gig workforce. The research covers different categories of delivery services and personnel with different experience, working hours and employment circumstances which can affect their reaction. First, the survey is based on self-reported data about gender discrimination, harassment, earnings, workplace safety and benefit access, without independent validation through platform records, employment documentation or formal complaints. Fifthly, the study is limited to differences in respondents' knowledge of labour legislation, government programs, social security provisions and grievance mechanisms that might have an impact on their perception of the legal protections to which they are entitled. Furthermore, the results may not fully capture the regional variations in employment conditions, platform regulations and availability of basic amenities such as toilets and menstrual hygiene provisions. "The study is, in the end, largely about the experiences and views of women delivery workers and does not provide comprehensive data from delivery platforms, employers, labour authorities or policymakers." More research with a larger and more geographically diverse cohort, along with interviews and official statistics, would therefore provide a fuller understanding of the challenges female delivery workers face and the effectiveness of labour protections in India's gig economy.

7. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations and advice are given to improve the employment conditions and legal protections of women delivery personnel in India.

7.1 Strengthening Legal Protection

The government must ensure that the legal framework for gig and platform workers provides real protection in practice. Existing legal regulations and welfare schemes need to be implemented effectively with transparent information on eligibility, enrollment, benefits and grievance redressal mechanisms.

Platform workers must be told in simple terms what their legal status is, so they know their rights and entitlements. Reform efforts should consider the unique risks female delivery workers face due to gender discrimination, harassment, and unequal domestic responsibilities.

7.2 Improving Social Security Benefits

Female delivery workers should be genuinely entitled to relevant social security benefits such

as accident insurance, health assistance and other benefits provided by relevant programs. The platforms and the relevant authorities should clearly explain the registration process and the process of benefit.

The administrative processes should be easily accessible and not create unnecessary obstacles for the employees who are not digitally savvy or do not have access to documentation.

Employees should be promptly notified as to their eligibility and the status of applications or claims.

7.3 Ensuring Fair and Transparent Payments

Platforms must specify details for calculation of delivery fees, incentives, deductions and penalties. Employees should know what they are being paid and why money is deducted or changes are made to their remuneration.

All disputes related to payment should be solved through a clear and open procedure.

Incentive frameworks should be communicated transparently and employees should be given a fair opportunity to understand the consequences of those changes to their compensation.

Fair and transparent pay practices can reduce uncertainty and enable female delivery workers to make better-informed decisions about their working hours and household spending.

7.4 Strengthening Safety Measures

Services should use reasonable safety measures for riders including accessible emergency assistance, effective complaint systems and timely responses to safety complaints.

Clear instructions should be given to employees about how they can report harassment, threatening behavior, dangerous tasks and other incidents. The treatment of grievances shall be governed by discretion and equity, including suitable safeguards against reprisals.

Platforms should assess whether their allocation systems, expectations of working hours and performance criteria create avoidable safety risks. Safety must be seen as a core component of employment and not just the responsibility of the individual.

7.5 Preventing Gender Discrimination and Harassment

Platforms should have clear policies against gender discrimination and harassment. They should outline prohibited behaviors, reporting channels, investigative procedures and consequences for misconduct.

“Women workers should be able to lodge complaints without the fear of being dismissed unjustly, losing job opportunities or other forms of retaliation. Platforms should have a clear

reporting and escalation process for issues involving customers, restaurant staff or other external parties.

Training and awareness programs should promote treating female delivery personnel with dignity. Platforms should regularly assess the effectiveness of their policies and check that employees are aware of the complaint procedures that exist.

7.6 Providing Access to Basic Facilities

Access to sanitary toilets, drinking water, resting facilities and menstrual hygiene facilities should be improved for delivery personnel.

Businesses, platforms and relevant government bodies should explore possible solutions for employees' access to key amenities while working in different sites. Collaborations with eateries, retail establishments, public amenities and designated rest areas may improve accessibility.

The establishments shall be safe, sanitary, and accessible without undue stipulations. These provisions are important for the respect and welfare of all delivery personnel and may be especially important for women.

7.7 Supporting Work-Life Balance

Platforms should take into account the impact of working-time requirements and performance targets on workers with care and household responsibilities. Flexible scheduling must be substantial and not undercut by too many penalties or vague performance standards.

Where appropriate, female employees should be provided with transparent information on the consequences of accepting or not accepting employment. Platforms should consider whether their policies inadvertently disadvantage workers with family responsibilities.

Enhancing awareness of existing childcare and family-support initiatives is needed wherever such provisions exist. In policy terms, the aim should be to encourage more sustainable involvement in delivery work, without reinforcing the idea that domestic tasks are the preserve of women.

7.8 Improving Awareness of Rights and Welfare Schemes

Many employees might not be aware of the benefits or grievance processes available to them. Platforms and relevant government bodies must provide information in plain language and in formats that are accessible to people of varying literacy levels.

Details should include relevant welfare programs, procedures for enrollment, insurance claims,

safety incident reporting, disputes over payments, and legal recourse available. Employees who are having trouble with online platforms need to have support options available alongside digital information.

Awareness-raising campaigns can be implemented by labour collectives, communication platforms, legal aid services and other relevant organizations.

7.9 Establishing Effective Grievance Redressal Mechanisms

Platforms must establish a transparent, user-friendly and speedy redressal mechanism for complaints on payments, harassment, safety, discrimination and unfair deactivation.

Employees should be informed of the process for filing grievances, the time period to expect for the process and how they can appeal an unsatisfactory decision. Complaint mechanisms must be built so that employees don't have to rely on automated responses when raising important issues.

Staff should know where to turn to for assistance where an issue is within the remit of a statutory body or other legal entity. The procedures for handling grievances at the platform level should not be described as a substitute for legal recourse under relevant legislation.

7.10 Encouraging Worker Participation and Consultation

Women delivery workers should be part of the conversation when platforms are creating or changing policies that impact their safety, pay structures, work allocation and access to amenities.

Consultation can provide insight into issues which may be invisible to platform administrators. Policies need to be developed with input from employees and platforms need to be transparent about how issues are managed.

Collective representation and access to relevant worker organizations can assist female delivery workers to express common concerns and seek improvements in their working conditions.

7.11 Strengthening Monitoring and Accountability

Relevant legal mandates and welfare programs should be implemented under the supervision of the appropriate agencies. The reporting and review systems should ensure that employees get the benefits promised to them and grievances are addressed in a timely manner.

Platforms should have appropriate procedures for dealing with safety incidents, payment disputes, and claims of discrimination or harassment. Protocols should protect personal data and prevent complainants from facing undue risks.

Regular reviews can identify issues that exist and assist to improve regulations and processes. Oversight should focus on both the existence of formal policies and their actual effectiveness.

7.12 Promoting Further Research

Future research should explore the experiences of women delivery workers in other cities, platforms, age groups and employment backgrounds. More diverse and larger samples would help to identify differences in safety concerns, income patterns, access to amenities and awareness of social security.

Future research might also compare experiences of food delivery workers with those of e-commerce delivery workers. These kinds of investigations can help distinguish the common difficulties from those linked to a particular kind of platform work.

The findings of the present study should be interpreted with caution due to the sample size, the sampling technique, the geographic scope and other limitations. Ongoing research can support evidence-based changes to laws and better regulation of platforms.

Taken together, these efforts are intended to move beyond recognition of gig employment, toward real protections. To protect labour effectively, government bodies, digital platforms, employees and other organizations concerned must collaborate.

8. CONCLUSION

The gig economy has generated new job opportunities in India, especially for women looking for work as food and e-commerce delivery personnel. But employment alone does not ensure equality, security, regular income or adequate legal protection.

Women delivery personnel face manifold and interlinked challenges including gender bias, harassment, safety issues, fluctuating income, lack of access to basic amenities and the challenge of balancing paid work and household work. These challenges should be seen in a wider context of gender inequality, and the informal nature of many platform-based employment arrangements.

The inclusion of gig and platform workers under the Code on Social Security, 2020 is a great step forward. However, actual protection depends on the implementation of the relevant laws, the availability of social protection schemes, awareness of rights and the existence of effective grievance mechanisms. The reality of female delivery workers needs to be understood against the existing legal framework.

This study explores female delivery workers' experiences and their knowledge of protection

laws using socio-legal analysis and new data collection. The survey is a structured way to review employment conditions, safety concerns, gender-specific challenges, social security and recommendations for improvement The final conclusions should be based on the actual responses received, and should not be generalized beyond the boundaries of research design and sample.

It is important for labour protection to be gender-responsive, so that women can engage in platform work with dignity and safety. Transparent payment systems, strong safety procedures, the availability of basic amenities, good social security and effective grievance redressal can improve working conditions.

Ultimately, the gig economy should not be judged solely on its flexibility or digital innovations. Its success also needs to be measured by whether it offers equal opportunity, protects workers from unnecessary hazard, and respects their dignity. Strengthening legal and practical protections for women delivery workers is a critical step toward a more inclusive and equitable labour market in India.

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