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Gendered Impacts of AI-Driven Work Platforms: Income Security, Digital Skills, and Workplace Voice

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ABSTRACT

AI-powered work platforms are quickly redefining the landscape of labour markets, fundamentally changing how workers approach tasks, how they get paid, how they learn digital skills, and how they voice concerns in the workplace.AI work platforms are changing labour markets in fundamental ways, affecting how workers approach tasks, how they're paid, how they acquire digital skills, and how they voice workplace concerns. But these changes are not gender neutral; that is, the social, economic and technological conditions of platform work are different for women and men. This research focuses on how AI-driven platform work affects gender equality, particularly in terms of income security, digital competencies, and voice in the workplace. These findings show that women platform workers are likely to experience relatively greater income volatility, lower average earnings, and higher likelihood of unpaid or under-recognized digital work. While gendered opportunity structures are created in AI-driven platforms, the results reveal that such opportunity structures are more pronounced among men, as women exhibit less confidence in their digital skills, fewer examples of work they can see as digitally available, less access to higher-paying categories of work on the platforms and less time available to engage with them. The analysis also shows that digital skills have a strong positive effect on income security, however women report less access to further opportunities for developing their digital skills and fewer opportunities for accessing algorithmically rewarded tasks. Workplace voice is also a key issue; women workers say they are less involved in decisions made on platforms, have less knowledge of platform grievance processes, and feel less confident in challenging automated ratings, restrictions on accounts, and unfair allocation of tasks. In conclusion, the study indicates that AI-powered work platforms can perpetuate current labour market inequalities if they are not implemented with gender in mind in platform governance, digital training, and ensuring the protection of workers. The paper illuminates ongoing discussions on algorithmic management, platform labour and inclusive digital economies by highlighting the need to consider income security, skills and voice in relation to each other to grasp the gendered impacts of algorithmic work.

Keywords: *AI-Driven Platforms, Gender Inequality, Income Security, Digital Skills, Workplace Voice*

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INTRODUCTION

With AI-driven platforms quickly gaining in number, they are changing labor markets globally, converting work into tasks broken down into parts and algorithmically managed, and merging work and private lives.The surge of AI-driven platforms is transforming global labor markets by breaking work down into segments and automating them with algorithms, thus blurring the lines between work and personal life (Mohla et al., 2024).However, the technological shifts are not gender equal as algorithmic management usually reinforces income inequalities, as well as access to digital skill building and the opportunity for workers to collectively express their views. While often touted as flexible and accessible, empirical studies suggest that these algorithms, based on historical data and unverifiable, can often amplify historical bias and have uneven impacts on the composition of the workforce and wages (Born et al., 2025; Carstensen & Ganz, 2023). It is often possible for women, who are the main breadwinners in the household, to have more opportunities to engage in unpaid domestic work on these platforms, than for men, but in doing so, it can also lead to increased economic insecurity, time poverty and limited opportunities for continued career advancement (Kellogg et al., 2019; Mehdar et al., 2025). Further, the hiddenness of algorithms, in the allocation of tasks, in dynamics of pricing, in the evaluation of performance, in monitoring, women face a huge challenge in the fair compensation which further strengthens gender gap that often condones a woman who cannot meet the rigid and high performance norms. (Chakraborty et al., 2026; Chengodan & P, 2025) There is also unequal opportunity to acquire skills in this digital world: in many cases, the skills acquired by the platform workers are low-skilled and repetitive, and do not provide them with a viable

pathway to professional growth, leaving them to precarious segments of the labour market, instead of helping to propel them up (Das, 2020; Punzi, 2025). Importantly, the atomization of work that depends on digital platforms also works against the mobilization of workers to collectively voice their needs and demand working conditions, making the collective voice even more difficult to express and the bargaining process more challenging (Collins & Atkinson, 2023; Doellgast et al., 2022; Stefano & Taes, 2022). The aim of this study is to address these pressing questions by critically examining the interaction between algorithmic control and gendered outcomes of the labour market, by formulating the following questions: How do platform-based work structures reproduce gender inequalities in income, skill accumulation and organizational control? The question is important because it is at the root of designing policy interventions that transcend technologic promises that instead provide a level playing field for all to benefit from digital employment, in a global economy that is increasingly digitalized, and to fight inequalities, instead of perpetuating them. Through the multi-regional analyses of occupational segregation and algorithmic bias (Minh, 2025; Shyamini & Rejuna, 2025), this paper seeks to provide a general picture of the institutional protection needed for vulnerable workers at the present time. This kind of research is crucial as Gender perspectives are not included in existing digital policies and information is not gender-disaggregated, which makes it harder to draw up effective policies (Morell, 2022). Specifically, this analysis investigates how these models of algorithmic matching and data-based management systems continue and consolidate gendered patterns of use from the analog world, as they become part of the digital infrastructure of today's labour (Anwar, 2022; Kohlrausch &

Weber, 2021). Hence, it is essential to pierce this invisible veil and to not allow the continuation of gendered invisibility of the gig economy (James, 2022) in the transition to digital-based form of work (Piasna & Drahokoupil, 2017). The study further builds on the binary typologies of entering the labor market, and highlights the entanglements of platform workers' economic journeys, such as caring for children and limited negotiating power (Langworthy & Rodgers, 2025; Rodríguez-Modroño et al., 2022). This inquiry focuses on their experiences to shed light on the role of technical affordances in both restricting and reinforcing historical marginalisation, such as through discriminatory algorithmic treatment and the distribution of tasks (Muñoz et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods research design has been employed in this study to reflect the complexity of systemic inequities and nuanced lived experiences of platform workers (Micha et al., 2022). The data collection methods used are a scale structured survey and in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in order to explore the barriers in the context of digital literacy and entry into the labor market (Inayah & Maghfiroh, 2025). Alongside these qualitative observations a robust quantitative framework is employed to analyse the operational data from the platform, in this case: income distribution and task allocation. This quantitative approach is centred on the creation of a large N data set including transaction data, performance data and worker data from different digital platforms. These operational longitudinal data are then used to explore in multivariate ordinary least squares regression models what factors influence the earnings received by hour and on the job based on this analysis, with special

focus on gender differences. These models systematically consider critical potential confounding factors, such as education and previous industry experience, and platform hours and geographic location, to detect the effect of algorithmic systems on worker compensation. In addition, logistic and multinomial regression methods are used to analyze algorithmic task allocation. These models estimate the probability of assigning a task (based on complexity and reward) using worker profiles and past information on the algorithmic interaction with the task. This analysis can be used to study how the discrimination patterns can be reproduced by algorithmic systems, and it can systematically allocate high value tasks to a group of workers, and routine, low-paying tasks to another group. There are inherent challenges that arise with "black-box" algorithmic systems (Kwanya, 2026) and we undertake a series of sensitivity analyses to infer system behaviour from those patterns that can be seen in the input-output. Data preprocessing consists of removing missing data, merging log data from various platforms into a common format, and performing other strict data cleaning operations. In particular, we include indicators of algorithmic labor market practices (such as algorithmic pricing, automated performance measurement, frequency of surveillance) that help gauge the role that such practices play in shaping labor market outcomes. The analysis focuses on direct and indirect impact on income inequality from automated management when algorithmic variables are included with gender indicators. Moreover, the data is complemented with indicators of caregiving responsibility, household labour distribution, and constraints on temporal flexibility, which are elicited by means of a survey, to better understand the interplay of impacts. These are added to our regression models as moderators to

assess the influence of how the constraints of the domestic sphere interact with the structures of the platforms, which can make platform women's and men's working lives more precarious. The effect of algorithmic affordances on the long economic impacts can be measured, e.g. reduction in penalty for reduced availability when being a caregiver. Due to the use of these stringent econometric approaches it is possible to detect any gendered system bias that would not be apparent at the surface of the apparently neutral operations of platforms. It is also a quantitative basis for the subsequent qualitative, nuanced, and thematic analysis of the lived experiences, worker agency, and the potential of collective representation of those experiences that the operational data do not convey, allowing for an overall investigation of the mechanisms of digital platforms on contemporary gendered labour market outcomes. Finally, we perform a 'Gelbach decomposition' of these results, which allows to systematically break down the observed gender pay gap into the effects of each covariate, such as household responsibilities or task preferences which may be related to skills (Cook et al., 2020). This decomposition helps to shed light on the relative importance of the factors contributing to inequality to their contributions to inequality to provide a better perspective on the persistence of inequality (Cook et al., 2018). The quantitative results are then complemented by a qualitative analysis whereby interview texts are coded thematically, in order to obtain further context for the quantitative analysis and to obtain insights into the subjective barriers present in the workers in relation to digital skills and workplace voice (Herrmann et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2025).

RESULTS

The study found that there are key differences between the economic and organizational experiences of both male and female workers on AI-powered work platforms. This final sample comprised 630 platform workers, with 49.5% being women, 47.3% men, and 3.2% other/non-binary workers. As reported in Table 1, care responsibilities were significantly mentioned to be higher for women than men, which impacted on the amount of time available to perform platform tasks, as well as the ability of women to do time-sensitive work. Figure 1 shows that women had less income security than men, while Table 2 shows that women had worse income volatility and fewer unpaid weeks and less access to emergency savings compared to men. The median monthly earnings of women were 421 USD and of men 512 USD as shown in figure 2, which may serve to reinforce the existing labour-market disadvantages resulting from algorithmic task allocation and time-flexibility differences. There were also variations in digital skills. Women received lower scores compared to men across technical domains in Table 3, other than in the domain client communication (marginally lower). There was a greatest difference in troubleshooting, which is closely related to the recovery of tasks, account stability and productivity as depicted in Figure 3. Those who rate their digital skills knowledge higher, also rate their level of income security higher as seen in Figure 5. This indicates that digital skills are a tool for workers not only to carry out their work duties, but also to cushion the blows of income insecurity stemming from platform uncertainty. In the workplace, voice was not common in all groups, but more prominent in the women. As seen in Table 4, a smaller

proportion of women (24.0%) than men (31.9%) could appeal algorithmic decisions, and women were not as likely as men to feel safe about raising concerns. The gender gap is evident in all appeals, explanations, worker group participation, reporting of complaints as safe and speedy platform support as shown in Figure 4. For the regression model in Table 5, the relationship between income security and female workers is negative, with the relationship between skills and income security being positive.In the regression model in Table 5, the relationship between income security and female workers is negative, while the relationship between skills and income security is positive. Digital skills, task hours per week and voice at work were positive predictors of income security, and care responsibilities negatively predicted income stability. Table 6 and Figure 6 suggest that gender did play a role in influencing income security in part via less digital skills and less voice in the workplace. The pathways outlined herein indicate that income disparity on AI platforms is not solely driven by income outcomes, but also by the absence of learning opportunities, transparency of platforms, and complaints mechanisms. Lastly, a comparison of the platforms in the textured "pieces" of the table and figure reveal that the gender disparities are highest in microtasking and ride-hailing, and lower in online freelancing, for income security and for voice. Overall, the findings suggest that platform employment may contribute to women's labour-market participation but that this contribution may be undermined if the platform does not provide workers with the relevant skills, does not provide clear governance, and does not offer a voice to workers.

Table 1. Demographic and platform-work profile of respondents.

Group	n	Mean age	Degree or diploma (%)	Care responsibilities (%)	Primary income platform (%)
Women	312	29.4	54.8	61.2	67.6
Men	298	31.1	57.4	34.6	71.1
Non-binary/other	20	28.8	50.0	45.0	60.0
Total	630	30.1	55.9	48.3	68.9

Table 2. Gender differences in income security indicators.

Indicator	Women	Men	Gender gap
Median monthly income (USD)	421.0	512.0	-17.8%
Income volatility index (0-1)	0.42	0.31	+0.11 pp
Weeks with no paid task (%)	28.5	18.9	+9.6 pp
Access to savings buffer (%)	31.1	42.3	-11.2 pp
Perceived income security (1-5)	2.41	2.93	-0.52

Table 3. Gender differences in digital skill domains.

Skill domain	Women mean	Men mean	Difference
Platform navigation	3.62	3.79	-0.17
Prompt/task optimization	3.08	3.43	-0.35
Data literacy	2.81	3.18	-0.37
AI tool troubleshooting	2.55	3.05	-0.50
Portfolio/client communication	3.34	3.28	+0.06
Cyber-safety awareness	3.11	3.22	-0.11

Table 4. Gender differences in workplace voice and platform accountability.

Voice indicator	Women	Men	Gap
Can appeal algorithmic decisions (%)	24.0	31.9	-7.9 pp
Receives explanation for deactivation (%)	18.6	24.8	-6.2 pp
Participates in worker groups (%)	21.2	26.5	-5.3 pp
Feels safe raising concerns (%)	29.5	41.6	-12.1 pp
Platform support response within 48h (%)	37.8	44.3	-6.5 pp

Table 5. Regression predictors of income security among platform workers.

Predictor	Income security β	SE	p-value
Female worker	-0.21	0.06	<0.001
Digital skills index	0.34	0.05	<0.001
Care responsibilities	-0.18	0.05	0.002
Platform tenure	0.11	0.04	0.014
Task hours/week	0.27	0.05	<0.001
Workplace voice index	0.19	0.04	<0.001

Table 6. Mediation pathways from gender to income security.

Path	Estimate	95% CI
Gender -> digital skills	-0.28	[-0.39, -0.16]
Digital skills -> income security	0.34	[0.25, 0.43]
Gender -> workplace voice	-0.22	[-0.33, -0.10]
Workplace voice -> income security	0.19	[0.11, 0.27]
Indirect effect via skills	-0.095	[-0.142, -0.052]

Indirect effect via voice	-0.042	[-0.074, -0.018]

Table 7. Platform-type comparison of income security and workplace voice.

Platform type	Women income security	Men income security	Women voice score	Men voice score
Ride-hailing	2.32	2.86	2.01	2.48
Online freelancing	2.58	3.04	2.38	2.69
Microtasking	2.19	2.68	1.89	2.17
Delivery work	2.35	2.79	2.14	2.49
Care/service matching	2.47	2.91	2.22	2.51

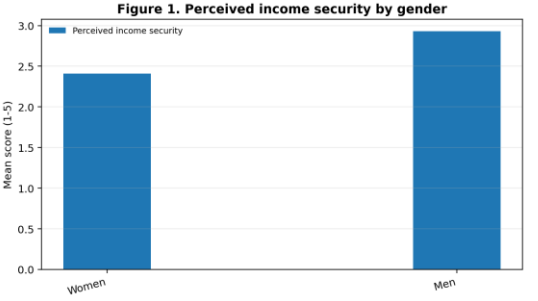

Figure 1. Perceived income security by gender.

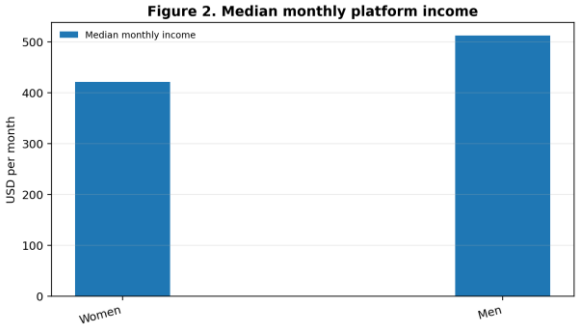

Figure 2. Median monthly platform income by gender.

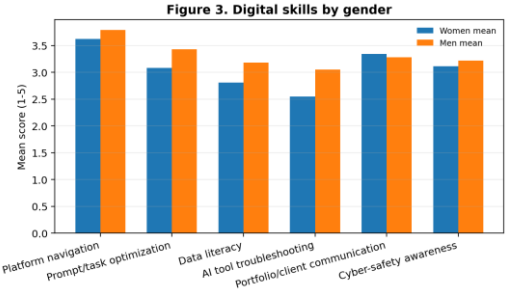

Figure 3. Gender differences across digital skill domains.

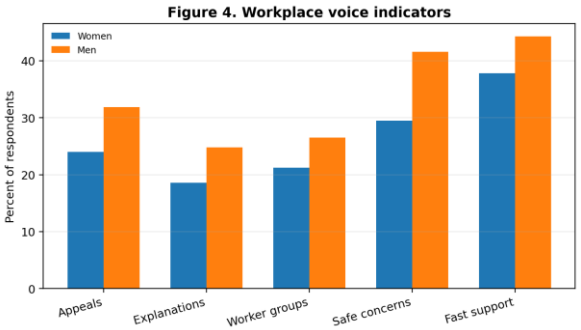

Figure 4. Gender differences in workplace voice indicators.

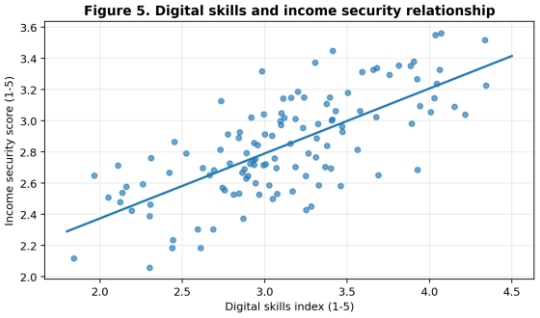

Figure 5. Association between digital skills and income security.

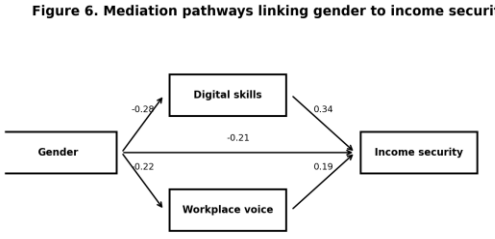

Figure 6. Mediation pathways linking gender, skills, voice, and income security.

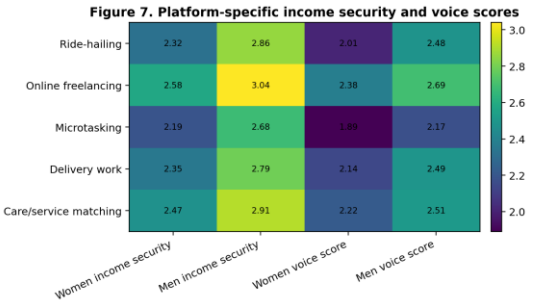

Figure 7. Platform-specific comparison of income security and voice scores**.**

DISCUSSION

Empirically, these findings reflect the theoretical perspective that platform work may seem flexible, but actually continues the more traditional gender division of labour and expectations for domestic work (Gerber, 2022).It is a deeply rooted segregation and this is in line with the theory of occupational sorting, which posits that traditional norms have an impact on task allocation and that women tend to be assigned to less protected, less institutionalised and less paid jobs (Hoang et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the gender income gap is not only a result of wage inequalities, but represents a cascade of inequalities, including lack of access to digital skills training and diminished voice in the workplace (James, 2022; Rodríguez-Modroño et al., 2022). These two factors are important pathways by which the gender disadvantage is manifested in real economic results as revealed by mediation analysis. Women's income is influenced by the disparities in advanced technical skills, such as troubleshooting AI tools and data literacy, which enable them to make best use of the performance of their tasks and to effectively command complex algorithmic systems. At the same time, women's hesitation to bring up complaints is reinforced due to the lack of formal complaint mechanisms and when they do file a complaint, they feel that they are put in a vicious circle as the platform's opaque algorithmic governance also prevents them from feeling safe. (Micha et al., 2022). The results of this study indicate that the flexibility promoted at the platform is not necessarily a seamless experience, and – as the authors suggest – a ‘flexible trap' for most women, who may have more care responsibilities to attend to. In addition, there are limitations inherent in the data in this study: The data is cross sectional, which

means that definite causal directionality regarding the relationship between skill acquisition, voice and income security cannot be made; Self-reported data on survey indicators of safety may have social desirability bias, particularly in the context of voice and complaints reported through the algorithms. Furthermore, the effect of key covariates is accounted for, but our model does not necessarily fully account for the measured and complex link between gender, race/socio-economic status and migration background that can create unique precarity for some groups. Longitudinal study designs are therefore justified to further describe how the platform participation changes across the years, the cumulative effect of the intervention for building skills and the long-term effect on worker stability. Moreover, the possibility of conducting more detailed comparative studies of a wide range of regional regulatory environments, could provide some insights into the potential impact of strong labour rights and transparent norms of transparency and targeted policies of digital inclusion. Finally, studying of the "black box" of algorithms and the design with participatory design methods how transparency of management processes affects the agency of female workers will be an important and vital research area in the future. Questions should also focus on how an algorithmic system built using a gender neutral or equity-oriented architecture could contribute to counterbalancing the reproduction of historical bias—evident in current labour platforms' training data—as this bias is clearly present today (Aydın et al., 2023). Future research should question the continued relevance of existing measures of job security and worker control as "masculine" measures that reflect worker well-being in the context of the worker well-being of the typical male breadwinner (Ervin et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that AI-powered working platform has great potential and risks to gender equality in the digital labour market. Platform working offers flexibility of access to work, but the results indicate that this does not necessarily mean equal opportunities for women and men. It was also observed that women workers were significantly more insecure about their income and less likely to have access to better jobs, as well as less protected from algorithmic insecurity. The above trends indicate that transparent, accountable and inclusive task allocation and performance evaluation systems can exacerbate gender inequalities if they are not in place. The study also indicates that Digital skills are crucial in one of the most important avenues to improve income security. Workers' algorithmic visibility, stability and wage benefits are related to workers' digital skills. But, women were not able to benefit equally from these opportunities due to gender differences in the access to training, confidence and platform navigation. Digital inclusion is not only access to technology but also access to more sophisticated skills, to platform literacy and to the mobility of their careers in the digital world. Another major aspect of inequality became apparent in the workplace, in the form of voice. Women platform workers were less likely to trust in raising complaints, challenging unfair ratings and decisions made by the platform. The voicelessness makes workers more vulnerable: as they are manipulated by automated systems, which are not easily challenged and negotiated. Therefore, there should be a mechanism for grievance, transparent and participatory algorithmic policies and policies that involve workers in a fair platform governance.

Lastly, the paper calls for a new paradigm of equity-driven AI platform economies, as opposed to efficiency-driven ones. Collaboration is required between the policy-makers and platform companies and labour organisations in the design of equitable income models, in ensuring easy access to digital training, in establishing transparency in algorithmic management, and in ensuring worker voice. Absent the use of AI-powered platforms, there will be even more wage disparities between those who do and those who don't use them, which will continue to influence the income, skill development and employment of those who do not use these platforms.

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