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Chapter: A Comprehensive Analysis of Leadership Skills and Navigating Employment Trends

A STUDY OF PLATFORM WORKERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL SECURITY, LEGAL REGULATION AND JOB SATISFACTION: AGE AND STATUS DIFFERENCES

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Annotation. The spread of digital labour platforms has sparked discussions about the future of work in the digital space. Improving working conditions for platform workers has become a central issue in recent research. This study aimed to examine how platform workers' attitudes towards social security and job satisfaction vary by age and social status. Additionally, it reviewed previous research on platform working conditions and remuneration. The survey, conducted between 13 November 2023 and 20 May 2024, collected 437 responses on working conditions on digital platforms in Lithuania. The research methods included systematic and comparative literature analysis, as well as statistical data analysis using the Scheirer-Ray-Hare test and variance analysis. The results showed that attitudes towards platform work vary by age and social status. Platform workers aged 18-24 in Lithuania identified lower commuting, lunch, and rental costs as key advantages of platform work. Platform workers aged 34-55 were primarily concerned about the lack of paid breaks and holidays on digital platforms. Freelancers and students were concerned about irregular working hours, fluctuating workloads, and unpaid time spent searching for tasks. Parents prioritised flexibility and autonomy when working on platforms.

Keywords: platform workers, working conditions, job satisfaction, digital labour.

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Introduction

The spread of digital labour platforms has become the basis for discussions about the prospects for work in the digital space. The combination of opportunities provided by mobile devices, information networks, and big data analytics allows platforms to act as intermediaries in matching labour supply and demand, i.e. to fulfil a function previously handled by traditional labour markets. Compared to traditional labour markets, platform work has expanded and accelerated payments for completed tasks, changed the way work is organised and transformed the worker-employer relationship. Based on innovative business models (flexible organisational structures, transformation of supply and delivery chains, competency-based human resource management, etc.), using technology as a source of comparative advantage and being focused on diversity, openness and acceptance of change, digital platforms seriously challenge the efficiency of traditional labour markets (Hetmanczyk, 2023). Improving working conditions for platform workers has become a key issue in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights (Piasna *et al*., 2022). The question remains whether platform workers' experiences and attitudes towards social security and job satisfaction vary according to their age and social status. If such differences exist, public authorities and employment services could develop targeted support measures to address the specific needs of platform workers based on their age and social status.

In the context of Internet and platform work, it should be noted that in both cases work is perceived as an activity requiring physical or mental effort to generate income (Piasna *et al*., 2022). The key distinction lies in the channels through which the income is earned. According to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (*Eurofound*) (2022), Internet and platform work differ in format, methods, and the role of a third party determining the distribution of work.

Internet and platform work have common and distinctive features. In terms of ***channelling and intermediation***, online media channels/systems and mobile applications containing a set of tools and services that allow reaching the target audience, are used in both cases (Berg *et al*., 2018; European Commission, 2021b). However, in the case of Internet work, these systems do not directly mediate between a client and a service provider; rather, they only create an environment for connection and communication, enabling audience engagement, i.e. they always operate focusing on the majority, not the individual ("Oomph", 2021). For instance, typical platform work includes transport, courier, delivery services, performing other freelance services or tasks, on-site work (caregiving, cleaning, home improvement, etc.). Meanwhile, Internet work includes influencer activities (when a person earns income through blogs, videos, social media accounts), selling self-made products or selling/reselling other products online (excluding the second-hand sale of belongings by individuals) (Piasna *et al*., 2022).

Digital platforms mediate and organise the work, and their intermediation functions begin with the establishment of an initial connection between a worker and a client and end with the conclusion and execution of a transaction (Gramano, 2020; Mutenge *et al*., 2024, etc.). The key difference is that social media channels/platforms do not participate in the contract as a third party. For instance, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Viber* and others, are intended for communication, while *Airbnb*, *Tripadvisor* and others coordinate specific services (Tusinska, 2023), while digital platforms, such as *Airtasker*, *Uber*, *Freelance*, *Amazon MTurk* and others, act as a third party by establishing the terms of service that define the conditions of service provision, as well as the obligations, responsibilities and rights of workers (Berg *et al*., 2018; Rani, Dhir, 2020). The contractual relationship in digital platform work is also highlighted by

the European Commission (2021a), whose proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving working conditions in platform work states that digital platform work is work performed "by an individual on the basis of a contractual relationship between the digital work platform and the individuals".

In both Internet and platform work, work/tasks are performed in exchange for ***payment*** (this distinguishes the use of social media, for example, for personal communication from the use for economic-commercial purposes). However, in the case of Internet work, the forms, channels and methods of payment are a matter of an agreement between a client and a service provider/seller, while digital platforms set the payment rates, working conditions and methods, determine how the work is assessed and how it is paid (Fumagalli *et al*., 2024). For example, a platform may pay workers with vouchers instead of cash (Berg *et al*., 2018).

When analysing the characteristics of the Internet and platform work in the context of regulation, it should be noted that social media regulate information content to ensure online safety and fairness and to allow individuals and companies to use their channels without violating the rights of others or being deceptive. The main regulations relate to prohibited content (discrimination, illegal activities), intellectual property protection, privacy and data protection, advertising (LinkedIn, 2023). An employee of the platform fills in the registration form and, thus, creates the account. In many cases, algorithmic management determines that a platform can deactivate or suspend a worker's account without providing any justification (ILO, ISSA and OECD, 2023). Although individual control over working conditions, tasks, tools and methods is recognised as an advantage (Torrent-Sellens *et al*., 2021; Hartmann and Shajek, 2023 and others), platforms may impose specific requirements (e.g. *Bolt* requires that a vehicle used for passenger transport shall have 4 doors and at least 4 seats (excluding the driver), must be in excellent condition with no cosmetic damage, and that the driver has at least 2 years of driving experience and speaks some foreign languages) (Bolt, 2024).

In the case of Internet work, a worker's status is not a competence of the channel/system. At the same time, digital platforms follow a particular model when a worker is considered an employee or a self-employed person when signing the terms of service (Graham *et al*., 2017; Azevedo *et al*., 2023). Both Internet and platform work use algorithmic monitoring. Still, in the first case, algorithms filter out the content noise, control the visibility of content, personalise the user experience, provide recommendations based on user data such as actions, behaviours and interests, and allocate advertising (Saurwein, Spencer-Smith, 2021), while in the second case algorithms and artificial intelligence not only allocate tasks but also perform worker control and estimate ratings (Jabagi *et al*., 2019; Rani, Furrer, 2021).

1. Theoretical Part

Literature is rich with studies using a variety of methods (e.g. ethnography, worker surveys, comparative surveys) to explore the experiences of platform workers. The results show that the experiences of platform workers vary: some studies confirm that platform workers benefit from above-average or additional income (Galfalvi, 2023; McDonald *et al*., 2023 and others), flexibility and autonomy (ILO, 2018; Laursen *et al*., 2021 and others), while other researchers reveal precarious working conditions (Berg *et al*., 2018; Torrent-Sellens *et al*., 2021 and others), health and safety risks (Rani, Dhir, 2020), inadequate income levels (Veen *et al*., 2020 among others). The initiatives to improve the situation (notably the European Commission's (2021a) proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council

on improving working conditions for platform workers, and the Platform Work Directive adopted by the European Parliament on 24 April 2024) also demonstrated the relevance of the problem. The ambiguous results of previous studies show that it is relevant to carry out not only generalised research in certain regions (e.g. within the EU), but also in individual countries because they differ in their legal, economic, work culture and demographic environments, which may condition the divergence in the organisational structures of platforms, the attitudes of platform organisers towards workers, and the willingness of workers themselves to declare and defend their rights, thus determining somewhat different platform working conditions and workers' experience.

1.1 Main Sectors and Areas of Platform Work

By expanding opportunities for both location-based work, where the nature of the work requires workers to be in a particular area (e.g. delivery, care, household services) and web-based work, where workers have flexibility in terms of where they work (e.g. consultancy, software design, image review for social networks and others) (World Employment Confederation, 2022), digital platforms are becoming increasingly common in a growing number of sectors. The ILO report (2021a) suggested that platform work is common in the provision of services to individual users (e.g. media and entertainment, rental of goods and assets, communication, information and reviews and others), the intermediation of work/worker search (microtasking, programming, freelance work, taxi, delivery, domestic work, care services among others) and exchange (retail and wholesale, manufacturing marketplace and analytics, financial lending and analytics and others).

According to Brancati *et al*. (2020), the following types of services are commonly provided through digital platforms: 1) writing and translation (writing articles, proofreading, translating and others), 2) transport and delivery (driving, food delivery, moving, haulage, courier services and others), 3) creative work (digital animation, graphic design, photo editing and others), 4) professional services (accounting, legal advice, project management and others), 5) software development and technology work (data science, game development and others), 6) microtasking (object classification, tagging, content review, website review and others), 7) sales and marketing support (lead generation, advertising, social media management, search engine optimisation and others), 8) interactive services (interactive online lessons, consultations and others), 9) personal on-site services (housekeeping, care, beauty services, on-site photography and others).

Piasna *et al*. (2022) analysed the main types of platform work as a subset of Internet work. They present the survey results conducted in 14 EU Member States in 2021, i.e. during the COVID-19 crisis, which profoundly changed labour markets and channels. Piasna *et al*. (2022) found that the largest share of platform work as a subset of Internet work consists of transport services, followed by delivery services (more than 50%). Onsite work, remote clickwork, remote professional work and other work each account for less than 30% of the respective Internet work each.

1.2 Socio-Demographic Profile of a Digital Platform Worker

Age. The survey by Pesole *et al*. (2018) showed that platform workers are about 10 years younger (average age 34) than workers in other sectors of the economy (average age 44). Piasna *et al*. (2022) provided the data which indicated that 24 percent of platform workers are 18-24 years old. Statistics from the European Commission (2023) showed that young people aged 15-29 make up 30.6% of platform workers. As platform work offers flexibility, it is often chosen by young people with no previous work

experience. The shares of 45-54 and 55-65-year-olds for whom platform work is their main job are 19 and 11%, respectively. The smallest age variation is observed in the transport sector, with workers aged 39.4-42.3 and the widest in the delivery and other freelance sectors, where the age of workers varies between 33.6 and 42.4 (Piasna *et al*., 2022).

Gender. According to Pesole *et al*. (2018) and Brancati *et al*. (2020), the typical platform worker is a male. This was confirmed by the statistics from the European Commission (2023), which showed that platform work involves 3.2% of all men aged 15-64, compared to 2.8% of all women of the same age. The results of Piasna *et al*. (2022) showed that platform work involves 54% of men, while women account for only 35% of main platform workers. Nevertheless, as the intensity of platform work is growing, the number of women is gradually increasing, with an average of 47.5% of women working on platforms globally (Pesole *et al*., 2018). According to the European Commission (2023), 32.8% of platform workers are women aged 30-64 and 36.6% are men. Men dominate transport, remote professional, and other freelance activities, including IT. The share of women is higher in on-site service provision and remote work (55 and 52% of women, respectively).

Family status. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2023) provided the data from its survey of around 5,000 platform workers, which showed that flexibility is a motivating factor for platform work for 43% of women and 36% of men with a partner and children (compared with 31 and 27% respectively for couples without children). Approximately 57% of women and 50% of men doing platform work have childcare responsibilities (EIGE, 2023). The survey by Piasna *et al*. (2022) showed that almost 34% of women and 28% of men have children aged 12 or under. The largest number of parents with children (both men and women) work as sellers and renters (38 and 32%, respectively), and the smallest number work as remote professional workers and other freelancers (both 28%), and transport sector workers (30%) (Piasna *et al*., 2022).

Education. The pilot data collection by *Eurostat* (2022) in 16 EU Member States and 1 EFTA country showed that the majority of platform workers have a tertiary level education (3.9 and 4.7% of women and men aged 15-64 with a tertiary level education, respectively, compared to 3% or less of those with a medium or low level of education). These data are in line with ILO (2021c) statistics, which showed that platform work tends to involve educated persons, even if work requires low skills to perform simple tasks.

Income. According to Pesole *et al*. (2018), 61.8% of platform workers earn more than 25% of their income, and 24% earn more than 50% of their income from platform work. The ILO's (2021b) World Employment and Social Outlook 2021 suggested that the average hourly earnings from platform work in a typical week was $3.4, but half of workers earn less than $2.1 per hour. Workers on freelance platforms tend to earn $7.6 per hour, while workers on micro-task platforms tend to earn $3.3 per hour. Workers on online web-based platforms work an average of 27 hours in a typical week, including both paid and unpaid work. Taxi and delivery workers on location-based platforms tend to work more intensively and for longer hours, on average 65 hours per week in the taxi sector and 59 hours per week in the delivery sector. The income gap is wider for couples with children, where twice as many women as men are in the lowest income bracket (30 and 15%, respectively). The higher total income of men living in couple households with children can, at least in part, be explained by the combination of platform work with other jobs (EIGE, 2023).

Residence. The typical platform worker lives in an urban environment (Pesole *et al*., 2018; ILO, 2021c). Despite the fact that many platforms are of international origin (e.g. *Amazon Mechanical Turk*, *Uber*,

Deliveroo, *Upwork* among others), the presence of foreign workers in 16 EU Member States ranges from only 0.9% in Romania to 28.3% in Ireland, according to the study by Brancati *et al*.'s (2020). Piasna *et al*. (2022) found that in some countries with low immigration rates (e.g. Estonia with net migration rate of -0.759 per 1000 inhabitants ("Macrotrends", 2024a), Greece with net migration rate of -0.778 per 1000 inhabitants in 2022 ("Macrotrends", 2024b)), the foreign-born population is less likely to engage in platform work than the native population, i.e. platform work is dominated by the native population. Even when platform work is carried out by migrants, it becomes unclear in the international context which laws should be applied and to which jurisdiction the labour transactions should be assigned. According to Aleksynska *et al*. (2019), digital platforms essentially serve the local market, so it is logical that national laws should apply to their regulation. The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) left it to Member States to define the status of platform workers in their national legislation (Eurofound, 2019). All this supports the assumption that the national legal frameworks, economic, demographic and work culture conditions may have a greater impact on the working conditions in platform work than the international factors. It is, therefore, relevant to analyse the working conditions on digital platforms at the national level.

1.3 Platform Work Conditions and Remuneration

Eastern European countries are characterised by different levels of the development of their social security systems. The countries that have joined the EU (including Lithuania) have already reformed their labour law and social security systems in accordance with the EU requirements, making their labour and social security systems have become more sustainable and inclusive. EU decrees and regulations related to digital work have become an important source of law in regulating the practice of digital work. Nevertheless, the literature review showed that working conditions on digital platforms can be treated in two ways – either as empowering or as exploitative (T*able 1*).

Legal regulation. When working through digital platforms, a worker can be treated as an employee or as a freelancer. The experience of the *Hilfr* platform showed that an agreement between a platform and a worker could provide workers with an unlimited choice as to whether they are covered by an employment contract. *Hilfr's* cleaners automatically become employees after 100 hours of work, unless they decide otherwise. Freelancers who wish to acquire employee status earlier or who wish to remain freelancers after 100 hours of work must notify *Hilfr* before completing 100 hours of work (Munkholm and Schjoler, 2018). However, this example is an exception rather than the norm. The European Parliament (2017) highlighted that there is a serious lack of adequate legal regulation of platform work to protect workers from poor employment practices and job insecurity. According to Forde . (2017), problems arise when the platform economy is treated as a continuation or extension of traditional long-term arrangements, even though the worker-employer relationship falls completely outside the traditional approach to employment arrangements. With a considerable degree of uncertainty about traditional laws, minimum standards and remedies, platform work is often based on arrangements that do not meet the legal standards for labour relations (Berg *et al*., 2018; Pesole *et al*., 2018).

Social protection. Platform work is often seen as a second job, an additional source of income next to the main job (Piasna *et al*., 2022; Tusinska, 2023). In this context, social security issues are not focused on because it is assumed that full social security is provided in a person's primary job (the "pin money" argument) (Berg *et al*., 2018). If a person has a second job and pays additional social security contributions, it is assumed that social security increases because of the higher contributions paid. Lenaerts *et al*. (2021) argued that platform workers are exposed to similar occupational and health risks

as workers in the traditional labour market, i.e. platform work is not associated with lower social security of a person. However, many previous studies and surveys show the opposite: the lack or absence of social protection is one of the main challenges for platform workers (Rani and Dhir, 2020; Torrent-Sellens *et al*., 2021). As platform workers have the status of self-employed or independent contractors, they fall outside the scope of the traditional labour and social security law and are therefore deprived of comprehensive social protection (sickness or maternity/paternity benefits, paid leave, regulated working hours, minimum wages and so on).

Table 1. Review of Previous Findings Regarding Working Conditions on Digital Platforms

Major factors	Empowering features	Exploitative features	Author(s), year
Legal regulation	Workers can have a choice regarding their employment status	Work arrangements do not meet the legal standards of labour relations; a serious lack of legal regulation to protect workers from faulty employment practices and job insecurity	European Parliament, 2017; Forde *et al*., 2017; Berg *et al*., 2018; Pesole *et al*., 2018
Social protection	Full social protection in a person's main job; risks are not higher than in traditional labour markets	Status of the self-employed or independent contractors leaves social security a concern of workers themselves	Rani and Dhir, 2020; Lenaerts *et al*., 2021; Torrent-Sellens *et al*., 2021
Wages (payment)	Potentially higher wages than in other available jobs, especially for the youth, female, service providers with low wages	A significant part of the work time, which is spent searching for tasks and responding to requests, is unpaid	ILO, 2018; Berg *et al*., 2018; Veen *et al*., 2020; Galfalvi, 2023; McDonald *et al*., 2023
Working hours	Innovative working time arrangements can shorten working hours through higher productivity	Working hours may be too short to generate sufficient income, or work can require overtime, unsocial hours	Forde *et al*., 2017; Lehdonvirta, 2018; Wood *et al*., 2019; ILO, 2023
Flexibility and autonomy	A person can select a schedule, a convenient work location, tools, intensity, adjust work strategies	Flexibility is traded off for lower employment security, economic instability and discrimination; digital architecture of platforms reduces worker autonomy	Jabagi *et al*., 2019; Laursen *et al*., 2021; Thomas, 2022; EIGE, 2023b; Galfalvi, 2023
Management	Digital platform work eliminates the hierarchy typical of traditional organisations	Algorithms do not provide clear criteria for task assignments and work evaluation; workers do not have access to the data which are related to their work	Cramer and Krueger, 2015; European Commission, 2021a; ILO, ISSA and OECD, 2023;
Work-life balance	Lower emotional stress and disturbance, enhanced flexibility	Blurred boundaries between work and personal time and space; technostress, caused by the intensive use of technologies	Forde *et al*., 2017: Berastegui, 2021; Koc and Gasimov, 2023

Source: compiled by the authors.

Wages (payment). Platform work can contribute to earning higher wages than in other available jobs, as shown by the ILO's (2018) survey. Platform work also generates a significant income potential for young people (students, people with no previous work experience), whose competitiveness, and therefore remuneration, in the traditional labour market is low (Galfalvi, 2023). McDonald *et al*. (2023) found that digital platforms generate potentially higher incomes for female care service providers, whose traditional wages are generally low. On the other hand, platform workers often earn low wages and suffer from overwork, as part of the working time, which is spent on searching for tasks and responding to requests, is unpaid (Veen *et al*., 2020). Berg *et al*. (2018) found that a significant proportion of platform workers are paid below the average for their occupational category, or below the established minimum monthly or hourly wage.

Working hours. According to the ILO (2023), platform work offers innovative working time arrangements that can help reduce working hours compared to the standard eight-hour day/40-hour working week. The theoretical analysis by Lehdonvirta (2018) suggested that platform workers have full control over their time as one of the major resources. On the other hand, working hours may be too short to generate sufficient income (for instance, the global survey by the ILO (2018) found that 88% of the respondents would like to work more; on average, they would like to work 11.6 more hours per week), or platforms may require overtime, unsocial hours or night work (workers may be expected to be available more or less around the clock (24/7) (Forde *et al*., 2017; Wood *et al*., 2019).

Flexibility and autonomy. Flexibility and autonomy are the main motives for choosing platform work. People can work according to their own schedules and choose convenient locations, tools and intensity (ILO, 2018; Galfalvi, 2023). Laursen *et al*.'s (2021) survey of 12 Danish adults under the age of 30 found that platform workers have the autonomy in choosing when to work, they can set a price for the service and can adjust their work strategies. However, as noted by Thomas (2022) and EIGE (2023b), platforms often trade off flexibility for less job security, economic instability and discrimination. In addition, workers are monitored and controlled by algorithms and do not have full control over their schedules and the diversity of their tasks (Berg *et al*., 2018). A study by Jabagi *et al*. (2019) revealed that the digital architecture of platforms is characterised by a high degree of surveillance, which reduces workers' autonomy.

Management. According to Cramer and Krueger (2016), platform work eliminates the hierarchy typical of traditional organisations, which frees workers from the traditional managerial approaches, reduces transaction costs and minimises the risk of market failure. On the other hand, platforms are managed by using machine learning algorithms that do not provide clear criteria for task allocation and work evaluation (worker ratings), workers do not have access to the data related to their work (ILO, ISSA and OECD, 2023). The need to increase the transparency of algorithms on digital platforms and to establish the right of workers to challenge automated decisions was highlighted in the European Commission's (2021a) proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving working conditions in platform work.

Work-life balance. Forde *et al*.'s (2017) survey showed that platform work helps to achieve a positive work-life balance, as workers do not experience noticeable levels of stress or emotional disturbance. Work-life balance is improved by the sense of freedom that is enhanced by the flexibility of platform work. However, platform work can blur the boundaries between work and personal time and space (Berastegui, 2021). Because platform work requires the intensive use of technology, platform workers are exposed to technostress, which worsens their work-life balance, as Koc and Gasimov (2023) found in their survey of 30 *Amazon MTurk* workers.

Based on the above findings, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

H1: The benefits of platform work differ by age, with younger workers are more concerned about the cost of traditional work.

H2: Attitudes towards platform work vary according to social status, with freelancers and students showing different patterns compared to parents.

H3: Irregular working hours, cost reduction and paid rests pose the greatest risk to platform work.

2. Aim, Methodology and Data

The major aim of this research is to assess the differences in platform workers' attitudes towards social security and job satisfaction, with a particular focus on the influence of age and social status. The following objectives were set out to achieve this purpose: 1) To provide an overview of digital platform work differentiating it from Internet work and outlining the main sectors, areas and a socio-demographic profile of a platform worker; 2) To review the findings of previous studies regarding platform work conditions and remuneration; 3) To substantiate the methodology of the empirical research; 4) To present the results of the empirical research regarding the differences in platform workers' attitudes towards the conditions of platform work in Lithuania as related to the respondents' age and social status.

This research involved a survey of 437 respondents, who answered the questions in a pre-designed questionnaire regarding working conditions on digital platforms in Lithuania. The respondents were required to engage in platform work during the survey period. The survey was conducted between 13 November 2023 and 20 May 2024.

The research methods include a systematic and comparative literature analysis, and statistical data analysis with the Scheirer-Ray-Hare (SRH) test, which is an equivalent of a parametric one-way ANOVA test. The parametric ANOVA (analysis of variance) test is a statistical tool used to evaluate differences between the means of multiple groups of data sets (e.g. responses to survey questions). The primary benefit of ANOVA is that it enables the simultaneous comparisons of arithmetic means across groups. It categorises the observed aggregate variability present in a data set into two distinct categories: systematic factors and random factors. By comparing means and partitioning variance, ANOVA provides a robust method of understanding the relationships between variables and identifying significant differences among groups. The technique, therefore, allows us to ascertain whether the differences observed in particular data sets are due to random chance or whether they reflect genuine, meaningful differences.

The ANOVA test is conducted by calculating the F-statistic as follows:

$$F = MS_b/MS_w \quad (1)$$

$$MS_b = SS_b/ df_b \quad (2)$$

$$MS_w = SS_w/ df_w \quad (3)$$

In formulas (2) and (3), dfb and dfw represent the degree of freedom. The number of groups minus one is denoted by df_b, and df_w is the number of cases minus the number of groups. SS_b represents the sum of squares attributed to the grouping variable, while MS_b denotes the mean sum of squares between the groups, measuring the extent of between-group differences. The term SS_w is used to denote the sum of squares due to error, while MS_w represents the mean sum of squares within the groups (within group differences). The ANOVA test offers several significant advantages, including eas of use and suitability for analysing small samples, including respondent groups.

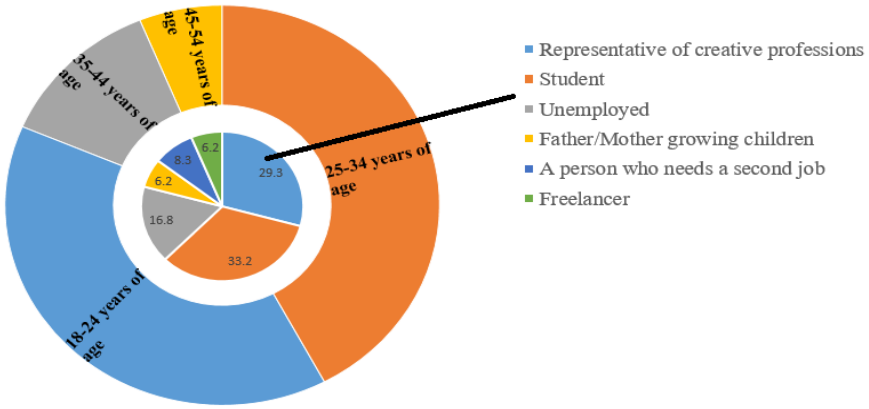
The Scheirer-Ray-Hare (SRH) test is based on ranks and is, therefore, suitable in any situation where ordinal data are used. Furthermore, the test does not require the data to be normally distributed. The test is considerably more conservative than the parametric ANOVA. The following is a step-by-step guide to the SRH test procedure (Dytham, 2011):

1. Carry out a standard parametric ANOVA
2. Calculate the total mean square (MS_T) is calculated by dividing the total sum of squares ($SS_T = SS_b + SS_w$) by the total degrees of freedom ($df_T = df_b + df_w$).
3. The relevant sum of squares (SS_b) of a given factor should be divided by the total mean square (MS_T) and the so-called $H = SS_b/MS_T$ statistic is calculated for each factor.

The relevant H statistic of a given factor can be used as a chi-squared value, and with the between-group degree of freedom (df), modified p-values can be obtained for the F-statistic.

3. Results and Discussion

The sample consisted mainly of younger platform workers, with 39.2% aged 18-24 and 42.2% aged 25-34. The 34-44 age group accounted for 12.4%, while the oldest group (45-54) accounted for 6.2% of the sample (*Figure 1*). In terms of social status, students accounted for 33.2%, creative professionals for 29.3% and the unemployed for 16.8% of the sample. Persons in need of a second job made up 8.3% of the sample, while freelancers and parents made up 6.2% each.



Source: authors' own construction.

Figure 1. **Distribution of the Sample by Age and Social Status**

Both SRH and ANOVA analyses were carried out to identify statistically significant differences in respondents' responses regarding their attitude to platform work. The differences were found to be related to the age and social status of the respondents. The authors tested the differences in the respondents' answers regarding their attitudes towards the motives for digital platform work, the factors that indicate exploitation of workers on digital platforms, the opportunities for digital platform workers, and the factors related to platform work that may hinder sustainable development in the European Union.

3.1 Differences as Related to the Age Groups of the Respondents

The first step in the analysis was to test for the homogeneity of variance across all age groups. If the level of significance for Levene's test was greater than 0.05, the assumption of the homogeneity of variance was met. *Table 2* shows the results of testing the homogeneity of variance tests for the statements with an estimated level of significance greater than 0.05.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Homogeneity of Variance Test for the Differences Related to Age

Statements from the questionnaire	Mean (s.d.***)	Levene's statistic	df_b*	df_w**	p-value
10.3. Digital platform work helps reduce the costs of commuting, lunch at work, renting an apartment near the workplace, etc.	3.80 (1.31)	2.26	3	432	0.081
11.4. When working on digital platforms, I am not entitled to paid rest or vacation time.	3.60 (1.33)	1.06	3	432	0.366
11.8. There is no communication among workers, clients and platform organisers, the activities of workers are practically left to self-management.	2.94 (1.42)	2.4	3	432	0.061
12.1. Social security is sufficient, I am entitled to social benefits	3.28 (1.30)	2.21	3	432	0.087
12.5. I have a lot of freedom of action, I can manage my career	3.15 (1.33)	0.71	3	432	0.548

Note: * df_b is the degree of freedom obtained by calculating the number of groups minus one; ** df_w is the degree of freedom obtained by calculating the number of cases minus the number of groups; *** standard deviation.

Source: compiled by the authors.

The statistical significance of the differences was then tested for the statements listed in *Table 3*. The SRH and ANOVA statistical tests were used to simultaneously compare the arithmetic means across the respondent groups (*Table 3*).

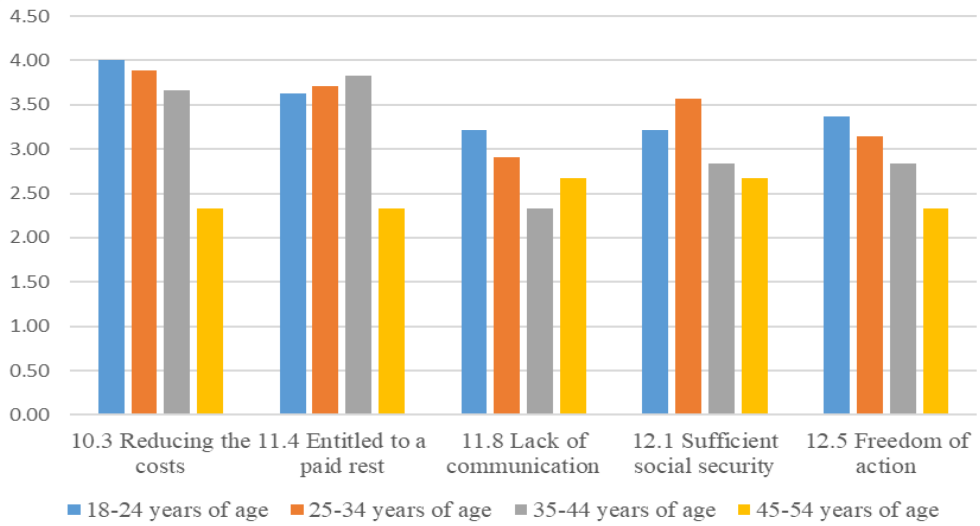
Table 3. The SRH and ANOVA Test Results Related to the Age of the Respondents

Statements, No.	Differences	Sum of Squares (SS)	df*	Mean Square (MS)	F and H statistics	p-values
10.3.	Between Groups	67.21	3	22.40	14.39	<0.001
	Within Groups	672.60	432	1.56		
	Total	739.82	435	**1.70**	39.54	<0.001
11.4.	Between Groups	48.49	3	16.16	9.76	<0.001
	Within Groups	715.44	432	1.66		
	Total	763.93	435	**1.76**	27.55	<0.001
11.8.	Between Groups	34.56	3	11.53	5.95	0.001
	Within Groups	837.85	432	1.94		
	Total	872.45	435	**2.01**	17.19	0.001
12.1.	Between Groups	36.72	3	12.24	7.54	<0.001
	Within Groups	701.14	432	1.62		
	Total	737.86	435	**1.70**	21.60	<0.001
12.5.	Between Groups	31.57	3	10.52	6.21	0.001
	Within Groups	731.62	432	1.69		
	Total	763.18	435	**1.75**	18.04	0.001

Note: * df denotes the degree of freedom; bold figures denote the total mean squared value (MS_T).

Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 4 shows that all the differences are statistically significant. The differences are visually presented in *Figure 2*.



Source: Authors' own construction

Figure 2. **Mean Values of the Studied Factor by Social Status**

The results show that young platform workers in Lithuania (18-24 years old) see the advantage of platform work in reducing the costs of commuting, lunch at work, renting an apartment near the workplace, etc. These findings are in line with global trends. For example, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) (2022), which is a democratic affiliate-led global federation of 670 trade unions in 147 countries representing 18 million working men and women in all transport sectors, presents the results of a global survey of 1.9 billion people aged 18 and over in 15 countries. The results show that young workers (18-35 years old) in the transport sector are most concerned about rising fuel and transport costs. Remote service delivery can, therefore, help reduce their concerns and minimise or eliminate the travel, fuel, transport and commuting costs.

The majority of respondents expressed concern about the lack of paid breaks and holidays when working on digital platforms. This factor was cited as important by both 18-24- and 25-34-year-old platform workers, while for respondents aged 34-55, it was the most important of all age groups. Paid rest and vacation time is a worker's right that is usually associated with traditional employment contracts (Van Doorn, 2017; Rani and Dhir, 2020). As platform workers are treated as self-employed, they do not have this right. As 34-55-year-olds are a group that usually has a lot of family responsibilities (raising children, caring for elderly parents), paid rest and leave is a way for them to have more free days, for which they can receive the same pay as if they were working. There is no case law on the issue of whether platform workers are employees in Lithuania, but it is worth recalling the probably best-known UK case, Uber BV v Aslam, in which the London Employment Tribunal ruled that the two Uber drivers were 'workers' and, therefore, entitled to the minimum wage and holiday pay (London Employment Tribunal, 2016).

Respondents aged 18-24 said that when working on digital platforms, there is a lack of communication between workers, clients and platform organisers and that workers' activities are practically left to self-management. This circumstance is also important for the group of respondents aged 25-34. This finding is in line with the results of some previous studies. For instance, the ILO survey (2018) found that digital platforms are often characterised by problems of communication between workers, customers and platform managers: respondents indicate that this communication is poor or non-existent. In addition,

58% of digital platform workers (in the ILO's representative survey (2017)) state that they do not know of any online forums or groups, where they could follow the discussions on the most common crowdsourcing problems and receive relevant advice. Due to the lack of effective communication, platform workers are isolated when carrying out their tasks and do not have any support from their colleagues and managers (Berastegui, 2021). This is extremely important for young workers who do not have any previous digital or other work experience. For those older than 34, this may be less important, as they already have work and life experience and are better able to organise their work independently.

The survey in Lithuania showed a positive trend, with respondents aged 24-35 thinking that social security is sufficient when working on digital platforms and that they are entitled to social benefits. This was also noted by a significant number of respondents aged 18-24. This finding confirms the results of the ILO, ISSA and OECD reports (2023), which suggests that the G20 countries have already taken measures to develop social security for digital platform workers, using both contributory (mainly social insurance) and non-contributory (tax-funded) mechanisms. The assessment by Spasova et al. (2017) also shows that the self-employee's access to health care is rated high in all EU Member States, as the self-employed are covered by social protection through compulsory insurance, universal benefits or means-tested benefits. Respondents aged 35 and above disagree with the aforementioned statement, perhaps because the social security system for platform workers that currently exists in Lithuania does not clearly indicate the possibility of self-employed people being entitled to retirement benefits at an older age.

The survey also found that young (18-24 and 25-34 years old) digital platform workers in Lithuania are motivated by freedom of action and the ability to manage their careers while working through digital platforms. This is in line with the findings of Tusinska (2023), where 50% of the respondents indicated that freedom and autonomy are very important or important motivators for working on digital platforms. Freedom is associated with the ability to freely choose the time, duration, place, means, etc. of work (Al, 2020), optimise available resources (e.g. time, technological tools and other assets) (Burtch et al., 2018), combine work with other activities, such as another job, studies, hobbies (Forde et al., 2017), which is common among young people. Based on the results of the age analysis, H1 can be accepted.

3.2 Differences as Related to the Respondents' Social Status

The same analysis was conducted in relation to the respondents' social status. *Table 4* presents the results of testing the homogeneity of variance for the statements with an estimated level of significance higher than 0.05.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics and Homogeneity of Variance Test for the Differences Related to Social Status

Statements	Mean (s.d.***)	Levene's statistic	df_b*	df_w**	p-value
11.7. Irregular working hours, uneven workload, I spend a lot of unpaid time looking for tasks	3.70 (1.22)	1.18	5	428	0.317
12.6. My work week is shorter than the usual 40-hour work week; I have more time for family obligations and leisure time	3.09 (1.36)	0.90	5	428	0.481
15.8. Flexibility and autonomy actually mean uncertainty and insecure working conditions	3.01 (1.39)	2.17	5	428	0.056

Note: * df_b is the degree of freedom obtained by calculating the number of groups minus one; ** df_w is the degree of freedom obtained by calculating the number of cases minus the number of groups; *** standard deviation.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Subsequently, the statistical significance of the differences was evaluated for the statements presented in *Table 5*. The SRH and ANOVA statistical tests were employed for a simultaneous comparison of the arithmetic means across the respondent groups (*Table 5*).

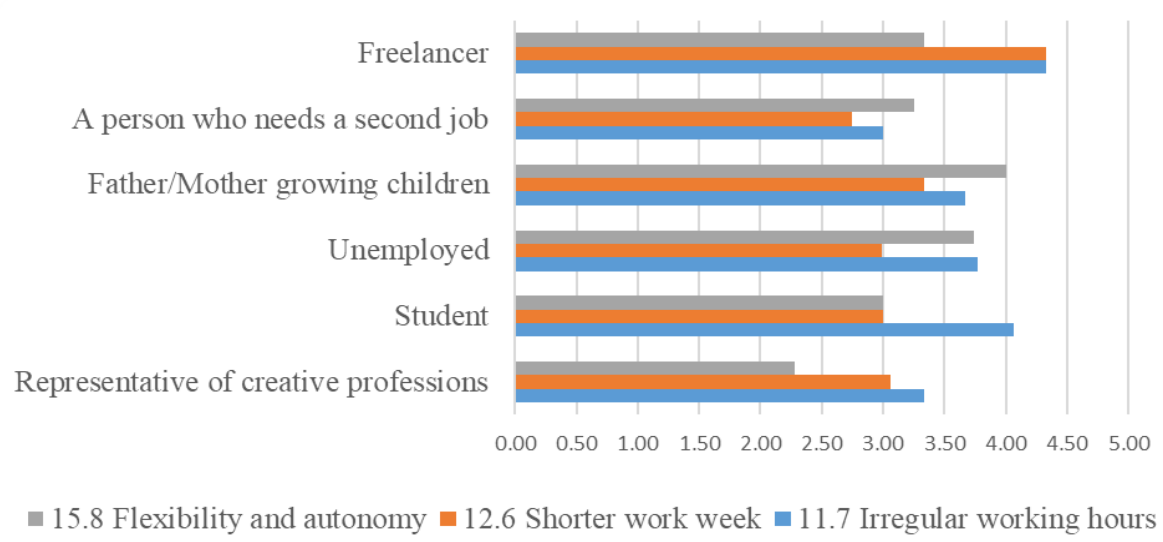
Table 5. The SRH and ANOVA Test Results as Related to Social Status

Statements	Differences	Sum of Squares (SS)	df*	Mean Square (MS)	F and H statistics	p-values
11.7	Between Groups	64.33	5	12.87	9.60	<0.001
	Within Groups	573.92	428	1.34		
	Total	638.25	433	**1.47**	43.76	<0.001
12.6	Between Groups	49.51	5	9.90	5.66	<0.001
	Within Groups	749.23	428	1.75		
	Total	798.74	433	**1.84**	26.85	<0.001
15.8	Between Groups	138.73	5	27.75	16.91	<0.001
	Within Groups	702.16	428	1.64		
	Total	840.89	433	**1.94**	71.44	<0.001

Note: * df denotes the degree of freedom; bold figures indicate the total mean squared value.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 6 demonstrates that the observed differences are statistically significant for statements 11.7, 12.6, and 15.8. The differences are presented in *Figure 3*.



Source: authors' own construction.

Figure 3. **Mean Values of the Studied Factor by Social Status**

It should be noted that the results of the survey in Lithuania revealed that the respondents' indications regarding statement 11.1 "When working on digital platforms, I do not have social security, I cannot receive social benefits (sickness, maternity, unemployment benefits, etc.)" were not found to be statistically significant as related to the respondents' social status. This finding contradicts the results of many studies conducted on a global scale (e.g. European Commission, 2017; Torrent-Sellens et al., 2021; Muldoon and Apostolidis, 2023 among others). Conversely, given that platform workers in

Lithuania are classified as freelancers or self-employed, this aligns with the findings of Spasova et al. (2017). These indicate that the self-employed in the EU Member States, including Lithuania, have adequate access to social security. This is because the self-employed are covered by compulsory health insurance and are entitled to maternity/paternity benefits, old age pensions and so on.

The respondents, who are freelancers and students, have expressed their concerns regarding irregular working hours, unequal workloads, and the time spent searching for tasks without compensation. The time spent searching for assignments represents hours of work that are not remunerated. Therefore, to generate an income, freelancers are required to work longer hours than traditional employees, who are compensated for activities such as information search, customer acquisition, and supply sourcing (Aloisi, 2015). For the same reason, platform workers who already have a main job as employees and undertake platform work as a second job are less likely to be affected by the aforementioned issue.

The respondents who identified as freelancers reported that their work weeks were shorter than the typical 40-hour workweek, allowing them more time for family obligations and leisure activities. This is consistent with the findings of numerous previous studies (e.g. Rani and Furrer, 2021; Torrent-Sellens et al., 2021, etc.), which indicate that the ability to control working time independently, workload and responsibilities is a significant advantage of platform work. Additionally, freelancers often possess entrepreneurial skills that can be effectively utilised and developed when working through digital platforms. This characteristic is less prevalent among traditional employees (Tunisia, 2023). Those engaged in platform work as a secondary occupation do not benefit from a reduction in working hours to the standard 40-hour work week. When undertaking two roles, their total working time is typically longer, leaving less time for family commitments and leisure.

The respondents with parental responsibilities expressed concern that flexibility and autonomy in platform work can actually result in uncertainty and insecure working conditions. This demonstrates that platform workers with family obligations in Lithuania prioritise job security and social guarantees over the benefits of autonomy. This finding differs from the results of previous international studies (e.g. De Stefano, 2016; Rani and Furrer, 2021; Torrent-Sellens et al., 2021 etc.), which suggest that parents with young children often view digital platforms as a more accessible avenue for finding work than the traditional labour market. This is because they frequently face discrimination from traditional employers who perceive them as less reliable due to childcare responsibilities. In light of the findings from the analysis pertaining to social status, H2 can be accepted. Tables 3 and 5 show that irregular working hours, cost reduction and the right to a paid rest are the main factors influencing platform work. Therefore, H3 can be accepted.

This research has shown that freelancers and students, who often seek flexible forms of employment, value the shorter working week and more free time that working on a platform allows them. However, they express concern about irregular working hours and insecure working conditions. Interestingly, the finding that workers with children who could benefit from flexibility express concerns about this flexibility contrasts previous studies that highlight the benefits of flexible working for parents. This suggests that job security and social guarantees are more important to workers with family responsibilities than autonomy.

Analysis of work on digital platforms reveals a complex picture that varies according to age, social status and the specific needs of individuals. While young people value flexibility and the opportunity to earn extra income, older workers and parents with children are more concerned about social security and job

stability. These findings highlight the need for a differentiated approach in policy-making for platform workers. In conclusion, working on digital platforms is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon that requires continuous research and debate.

Employee care is a key area of corporate governance because it affects employee performance, commitment and satisfaction, which prevents employee turnover and promotes employee innovation (Machova et al., 2023). In this context, firms' commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (Betakova et al., 2023; Metzker, 2024), business ethics (Belas et al., 2024), building a culture within the firm (Lorincova et al., 2024; Belas Jr. et al., 2024) and engaging with the Environmental, Social and Governance concept is important (Kubalek et al., 2024).

Conclusions

The literature analysis revealed that the concept of Internet work is broader than that of digital platform work. This is because digital platforms do not necessarily act as intermediaries and only a portion of Internet work is performed through digital platforms. The key characteristics of Internet and platform work are the use of online media channels and systems, mobile applications, the use of tools and services to reach target audiences, work in exchange for payment, regulations on information content, and algorithmic monitoring. Transport and delivery services represent the most significant portion of platform work, comprising over 50% of all platform work. The key factors influencing the degree to which platform work is empowering or exploitative are legal regulation, social protection, wages (payment), working hours, flexibility and autonomy, management practices, and work-life balance.

The results of the SRH and ANOVA analyses revealed statistically significant differences in the respondents' attitudes towards platform work as related to their age and social status. The findings indicate that young platform workers in Lithuania (18-24 years of age) view the reduction in commuting costs, lunch expenses, and rental costs as key advantages of platform work. The respondents aged 34-55 are most concerned about the lack of entitlement to paid rest and vacation time when working through digital platforms. This factor is also important for younger platform workers (18-24 and 25-34 years old). The majority of respondents aged 18-24 highlighted a lack of communication among workers, clients and platform organisers when working on digital platforms. Additionally, they noted that workers' activities are primarily self-managed. This is also a significant factor for the 25-34 age group.

The survey also revealed that younger digital platform workers in Lithuania (aged 18-24 and 25-34) are motivated by the freedom of action and opportunities to manage their careers while working on digital platforms. This result is in line with the findings of previous international studies. However, the result that 24-35-year-old respondents believe that social security when doing digital platform work is sufficient and they are entitled to social benefits, as noted by a substantial number of 18-24-year-old respondents, is in contradiction with the findings of a large number of international studies which reveal precarious social security conditions for digital platform workers. This result confirms the findings of the ILO, ISSA and OECD report (2023), which suggests that G20 countries have already taken measures to develop social security for digital platform workers. These measures utilise both contributory (mainly social insurance) and non-contributory (tax-financed) mechanisms.

The differences in the respondents' answers as related to their social status revealed that freelancers and students express their concern regarding irregular working hours, uneven workload, and unpaid time spent looking for tasks. However, they enjoy the benefits of a shorter work week than the traditional 40-

hour work week and more time for family obligations and leisure. Parents are concerned about flexibility and autonomy in platform work, which could actually mean uncertainty and insecure working conditions.

In conclusion, if workers have the option to choose their employment status, are covered by comprehensive social protection, have the potential to earn high wages, select their working time, location, tools, and intensity, adjust work strategies, are free from an inflexible managerial approach and can improve their work-life balance through lower emotional stress and disturbance, platform work can be considered an empowering proposition. However, the lack of legal standards for labour relations and social protection, the time spent searching for and responding to requests without compensation, the insufficient working time to generate adequate income or the pressure for overtime, the flexibility traded off for lower employment security, economic instability and discrimination, the violations of workers' data access rights caused by algorithmic management and the blurred boundaries between work and personal time pose a risk to platform work.

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PLATFORMŲ DARBUOTOJŲ POŽIŪRIS Į SOCIALINĘ APSAUGĄ, TEISINĮ REGULIAVIMĄ IR PASITENKINIMĄ DARBU: AMŽIAUS IR STATUSO SKIRTUMAI

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Santrauka. Skaitmeninių darbo platformų plitimas skatina diskusijas apie darbo skaitmeninėje erdvėje perspektyvas. Pastaruoju metu platformų darbuotojų darbo sąlygų gerinimas tapo pagrindiniu mokslinių tyrimų klausimu. Pagrindinis šio tyrimo tikslas buvo įvertinti platformų darbuotojų požiūrio į socialinę apsaugą ir pasitenkinimą darbu skirtumus, susijusius su jų amžiumi ir socialiniu statusu, taip pat apžvelgti ankstesnių tyrimų apie platformų darbuotojų darbo sąlygas ir darbo užmokestį rezultatus. Tyrime dalyvę 437 respondentai pateikė atsakymus į klausimus apie darbo sąlygas skaitmeninėse platformose Lietuvoje. Tyrimas buvo atliktas nuo 2023 m. lapkričio 13 d. iki 2024 m. gegužės 20 d. Tyrimo metodai apėmė sisteminę ir lyginamąją literatūros analizę, statistinę duomenų analizę – pateiktas Scheirer-Ray-Hare testas ir atlikta dispersinė analizė. Rezultatai atskleidė, kad požiūris į darbą platformose skiriasi atsižvelgiant į amžių ir socialinį statusą. Jauni (18–24 m.) platformų darbuotojai Lietuvoje pagrindiniais darbo platformose privalumais laiko mažesnes važiavimo į darbą, pietų ir nuomos išlaidas. 34–55 metų amžiaus asmenys labiausiai nerimavo dėl to, kad, dirbdami per skaitmenines platformas, negauna apmokamų pertraukų ir atostogų. Laisvai samdomi darbuotojai ir studentai nerimavo dėl nereguliaraus darbo laiko, netolygaus darbo krūvio ir neapmokamo laiko, praleidžiamo ieškant klientų. Asmenims, auginantiems vaikus, labiau rūpėjo lankstumas ir savarankiškumas dirbant per platformas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: platformų darbuotojai; darbo sąlygos; pasitenkinimas darbu; skaitmeninis darbas.