

GIG ECONOMY IN PUBLIC POLICY AN APPLICATION OF THE DELIVERY
SECTOR IN TÜRKİYE

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ABSTRACT

GIG ECONOMY IN PUBLIC POLICY: AN APPLICATION ON THE DELIVERY SECTOR IN TÜRKİYE

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This thesis investigates the evolving dynamics of Türkiye's online food delivery sector by examining the influence of gig economy models. The central research question is: “How do gig economy models impact the online food and grocery delivery sector in Türkiye?”.

Using a qualitative case study approach focused on prominent online food delivery platforms, this study provides in-depth insights into the practices, challenges, and outcomes associated with the gig economy. The research employs the structural characteristics of the gig economy, as articulated by Ashford et al. (2018), to explore key themes such as financial and job security, independence, and flexibility. A theme focused on diverse employment models was also included to address the variations within Türkiye’s delivery sector.

The findings highlight significant differences between gig economy practices and traditional employment models, mainly regarding financial instability and job insecurity. To address these challenges, one proposed solution is developing a

comprehensive regulatory framework specifically tailored to the online food and grocery delivery sector.

Overall, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the gig economy's impact on Türkiye's online food and grocery delivery sector and offers potential regulatory solutions to ensure sustainable growth.

Keywords: Gig economy, online food delivery, employment model

ÖZ

KAMU POLİTİKASINDA GİG EKONOMİSİ: TÜRKİYE'DE POSTA SEKTÖRÜ ÜZERİNE BİR UYGULAMA

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Bu tez, gig ekonomisi modellerinin etkisini inceleyerek Türkiye'nin çevrimiçi gıda dağıtım sektörünün gelişen dinamiklerini araştırmaktadır. Temel araştırma sorusu şudur: “İş ekonomisi modelleri Türkiye'deki çevrimiçi gıda ve market teslimatı sektörünü nasıl etkilemektedir?”.

Önde gelen çevrimiçi yemek dağıtım platformlarına odaklanan nitel bir vaka çalışması yaklaşımı kullanan bu çalışma, gig ekonomisi ile ilişkili uygulamalar, zorluklar ve sonuçlar hakkında derinlemesine bilgi sağlamaktadır. Araştırma, finansal ve iş güvencesi, bağımsızlık ve esneklik gibi temel temaları keşfetmek için Ashford ve diğerleri (2018) tarafından ifade edilen gig ekonomisinin yapısal özelliklerini kullanmaktadır. Türkiye'nin yemek ve market dağıtım sektöründeki farklılıkları ele almak için farklı istihdam modellerine odaklanan temalar da dahil edilmiştir.

Bulgular, gig ekonomisi uygulamaları ile geleneksel istihdam modelleri arasında, özellikle finansal istikrarsızlık ve iş güvencesizliği açısından önemli farklılıklar olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu zorlukları ele almak için önerilen çözümlerden biri,

evrimii gıda ve market teslimat sektörüne özel olarak uyarlanmış kapsamlı bir düzenleyici çereve geliřtirmektir.

Özetle bu alıřmanın gig ekonomisinin Türkiye'nin evrimii yemek ve market dađıtımı sektörü üzerindeki etkisinin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunması ve sürdürülebilir büyümeyi sağlamak için potansiyel düzenleyici özümler sunması hedeflenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gig ekonomisi, evrimii yemek dađıtımı, istihdam modelleri

To the relentless effort, endurance, and dedication I have invested in my lifelong journey

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BTK	Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu
CJEU	Court of Justice of the EU
EU	European Union
ERGP	European Regulators Group for Postal Services
ICTA	Information and Communication Technologies Authority
METU	Middle East Technical University
NRA	National Regulatory Authorities
UK	United Kingdom

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The transformative influence of technological advancements is reshaping societal dynamics across diverse domains. Historically confined to the Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) sector, the profound integration of technology into the production, consumption, and utilization of goods and services has ushered in the era of the digital economy (Balsalobre-Lorente et al., 2023). Governments, social partners, and critical stakeholders are seeking tools to understand the impact of technology on employment.

It is considered that the focal point of employment policy will incorporate digitization. This not only entails creating employment opportunities but also increasing the quality and productivity of work. The ubiquity of digital technologies in employment practices has accelerated notable changes in job compositions and tasks, creating new opportunities while independent of the geographical distinction between task performance and service provision (Yao & Li, 2024).

Despite this paradigm shift, many nations find themselves bereft of comprehensive policy measures to create and enhance digital employment. This deficiency poses significant challenges for policymakers grappling with the intricate changes unfolding in labor markets due to the pervasive influence of digitalization. The rapid pace of technological change has outstripped the concurrent development of suitable employment policies, regulations, and institutions, thereby leaving workers—particularly those engaged in digital labor platforms—insufficiently shielded from the risks inherent in digital work (ILO, 2023).

Simultaneously, these platforms offer cost-effective services for businesses and consumers and income-generating prospects for workers (Gawer, 2021). The absence

of pertinent global and nation-specific labor regulations further propels the rising phenomenon of "platformization" in labor markets. In the context of the expanding digital economy, there is a need to adapt to the changing dynamics of digital work effectively. (ILO, 2023).

In this study, I aim to investigate the evolving dynamics of Türkiye's online food delivery sector by examining the influence of gig economy models. This examination has led to the following research question: "How do gig economy models impact the online food and grocery delivery sector in Türkiye?" I use a qualitative case study approach to focus on prominent online food delivery platforms. By doing so, I seek to provide comprehensive insights into the impact of gig economy practices on the sector, contributing to a deeper understanding of this rapidly changing phenomenon.

Previously, understanding employees' motivation levels and the variability among individuals under different circumstances was crucial. However, the focus has shifted toward understanding how motivation varies over time as individuals strive to maintain it amidst changing conditions (Ashford et al., 2018). To develop the themes of my research, I considered the structural conditions of the gig economy and how they differ from traditional employment models. This consideration was essential for utilizing employee experiences to formulate ideas about the variables in this research. During the development of the themes, I employed the structural characteristics of the gig economy as proposed by Ashford et al., 2018. This framework was instrumental in guiding the thematic analysis. This framework articulates financial instability and job insecurity through themes of financial and job security, respectively, and captures the autonomy variable through the theme of independence and flexibility. Additionally, given the diverse employment models in Türkiye's delivery sector, a theme addressing the employment model was incorporated to cover these variations.

Data collection for this study was grounded in 5 semi-structured interviews conducted with food-delivery workers, 5 platform managers, and 2 representatives from regulatory bodies, a total of 12 interviews. The interviews aim to capture a comprehensive range of experiences and perspectives within the gig economy, focusing on the online food delivery sector in Türkiye. By delving into the intricate dynamics between workers, platform management, and regulatory entities, this

research seeks to offer a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities present in the gig work landscape. Additionally, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into the motivations, concerns, and regulatory implications of gig work in the specified context. This comprehensive examination of the online food delivery sector aims to fill a crucial gap in current research by offering a nuanced perspective on the multifaceted aspects of gig work in Türkiye.

1.1. Organization of the Thesis

This study is organized into six chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings, Discussion, Policy Recommendations and Conclusion. The introductory chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the research topic, summarizing its motivation, theoretical contributions, and importance. It also outlines the general structure and organization of the thesis, providing broad background information about the research area. Furthermore, the introduction clearly articulates the research question and briefly describes the methodology employed, focusing on the specific problem the study addresses.

In the subsequent section, I commence by examining extant literature on food delivery platforms, focusing on elucidating the contractual modalities of workers, delineating their working hours, and delineating the transformative paradigm shift in employment structures. Subsequently, I elucidate practices from various European Union countries to provide a comparative analysis. This is followed by a detailed exposition of this study's qualitative methodology and analytical techniques. After this, I present my findings, accentuating the multifaceted challenges food-delivery workers encounter within the overarching thematic domains of 'Financial Security', 'Employment Models', 'Independence and Flexibility', 'Job Security.' An interpretive analysis of the insights from interviews in the findings section will succeed this. Ultimately, the paper culminates with a comprehensive discussion delineating the distinctive contributions of this research towards comprehending the ramifications of the gig economy on the delivery sector, alongside discussing potential policy implications. These insights aim to provide relevant considerations for policymakers, platform enterprises, and stakeholders involved in shaping the trajectory of gig work within the Turkish context.

1.2. Significance of Thesis

First chapter of the thesis This thesis contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, while most studies focus on platform algorithms, this thesis emphasizes the different models employed by various platforms.

Second, while most business economics literature focuses on examples such as Airbnb and Uber, this thesis distinguishes itself by examining the online food and grocery delivery business model. The pandemic has intensified the demand for home delivery of groceries and food, leading to the proliferation of unregulated delivery platforms and freelance couriers facing long working hours and unstable income. This situation has resulted in workers increasingly demanding labor rights. This thesis aims to explore these issues and proposes solutions to address the regulatory gap.

Thirdly, this thesis contributes to the literature by being written when policymakers consider revisions to the gig economy model. By employing a qualitative analysis method and conducting interviews with platform managers and workers, this thesis offers a timely and nuanced understanding of the perspectives of those directly involved in the gig economy. By capturing the voices of those who believe the model needs to be revised, the study provides valuable insights into the practical challenges and potential areas for improvement in current employment structures. This contribution is crucial for developing a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within food delivery platforms and can inform future policy and managerial strategies.

Finally, as the online food and grocery delivery model is relatively new, regulations for this sector still need to be fully established. Additionally, the appropriate authority responsible for regulating the sector remains to be determined. During the thesis writing process, it was assessed that the Ministry of Labor and Social Security might regulate independent couriers due to their working hours, the General Directorate of Highways might be involved due to the rise in traffic accidents and unregistered couriers, and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) could regulate independent couriers because products carried by them typically range from 0-30 kg and fall within the scope of postal law, which covers elements of the

postal value chain (i.e. collection, sorting and distribution excluding the transport alone)¹. This thesis aims to facilitate the harmonization of different government bodies, providing a comprehensive framework to ensure coordinated regulation and effectively address the sector's challenges.

For this reason, this thesis is unique because it is the first to highlight which institution should regulate the sector from a regulatory perspective. This study is expected to lay the foundation for future policies regarding the independent courier model in Türkiye.

¹ <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr>

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Gig Economy

The gig economy has garnered significant attention, prompting extensive scholarly exploration of its multifaceted nature (Albornoz & Chávez 2024; Keller 2023; Bunders et al. 2022). While there is a growing body of literature on this subject, further investigation into the complex dynamics of the gig economy is warranted. This includes understanding the motivations of gig workers, the challenges they face, and the broader socio-economic implications of this evolving labor market. This comprehensive literature review critically examines existing research on the gig economy, synthesizes key findings, and identifies gaps that require further exploration.

In recent years, especially after the coronavirus, the conventional structures and predominant labor markets have undergone significant transformations, mainly attributable to the widespread adoption of digital interfaces stemming from technological advancements and the ascendancy of internet-based digital platforms (Viktoria et al., 2021). Individuals engaged in the gig economy are frequently affiliated with the sharing economy or, in a broader context, the lateral exchange market. Lateral exchange markets (LEMs) are comprehensively drafted as technologically facilitated networks facilitating transactions among providers and users operating equitably (Gleim et al., 2019). Platforms within the sharing economy paradigm fall under the purview of this conceptual framework.

Conceived initially to streamline commercial transactions by bypassing traditional market dynamics, digital platforms have catalyzed the proliferation of online marketplaces like Amazon, Trendyol, and Hepsiburada, facilitating the exchange of

goods and services alongside entities such as Airbnb, offering accessible lodging alternatives, or Uber, serving as an alternative to conventional taxi services (Ünal & Temiz, 2022). This innovative approach has allowed individuals to generate income through web and app-based digital platforms, engaging in diverse short-term tasks instead of conventional employment arrangements (Ilsøe & Larsen, 2020). Consequently, the gig economy represents a model where entry barriers are alleviated, enabling some workers to stabilize their income volatility and augment their earning potential (Healy et al, 2017).

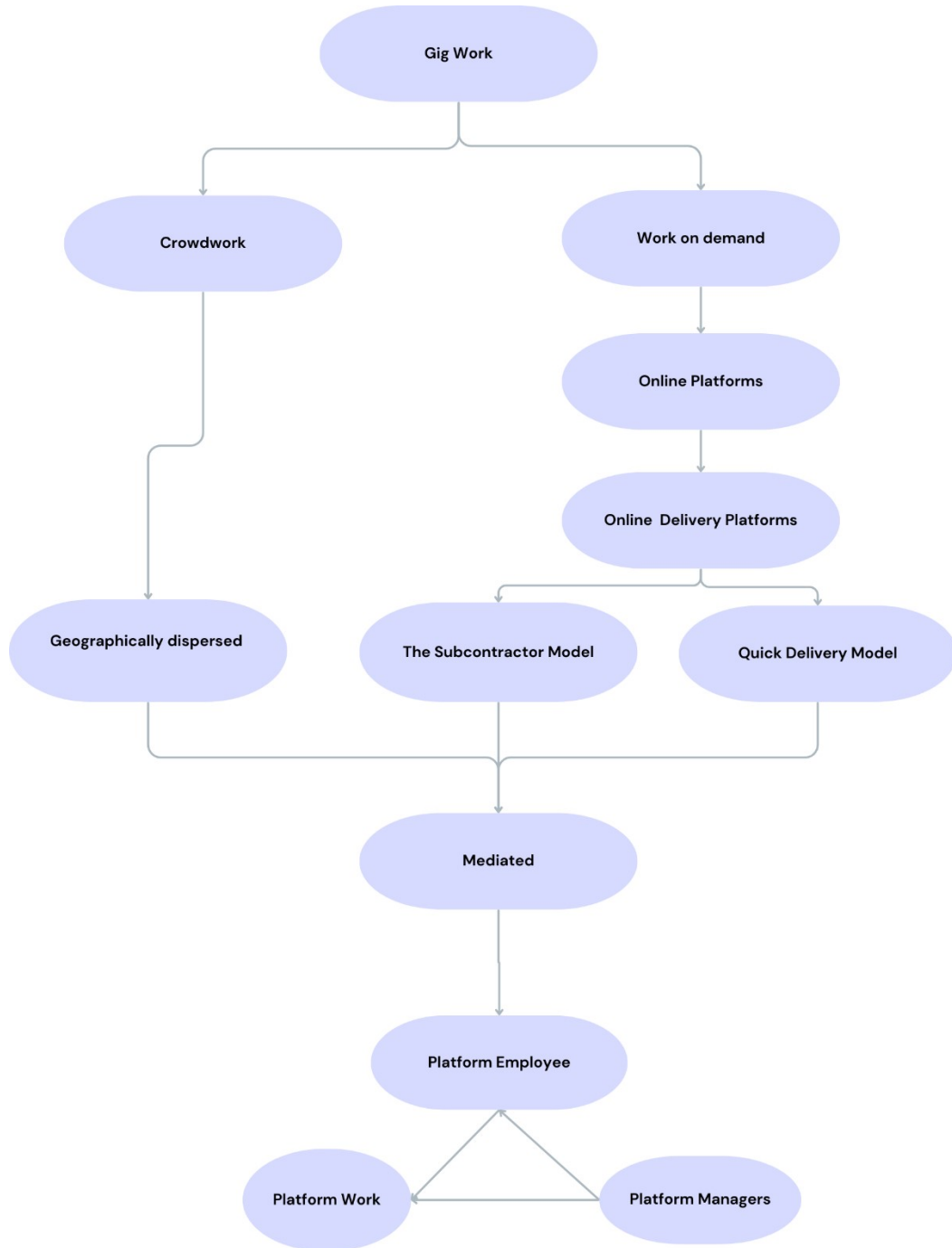
2.2. Perspectives on Platform-Facilitated Employment

In this evolving landscape, it is essential to consider the gig economy's structural framework, which digitally connects gig workers, retailers, customers, and stakeholders through online platforms. This economic model has redefined the traditional employment relationship, particularly for workers engaging with gig economy platforms. Despite no longer maintaining fixed employment ties with these platforms, workers are categorized as 'independent contractors,' gradually transitioning into a distinct category of 'users' within the platform ecosystem (Zhu et al., 2024). Building upon this understanding, it becomes evident that the gig economy operates within a dynamic framework, continually reshaping the roles and interactions of its participants.

This type of work can be broadly classified into two categories: 'Crowdwork' and 'Work-on-demand' (Watson et al., 2021). 'Crowdwork' involves online platforms that assign tasks for remote completion (James, 2023), where the platform's primary role is to connect workers with end consumers (De Stefano, 2016). Examples include well-known platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk and Freelancer (Heeks et al., 2021). Conversely, 'Work-on-demand' encompasses more traditional, physical tasks organized through online platforms but requiring local human involvement, such as ride-sharing, food delivery, and cleaning services. Companies like Uber in the USA, Just Eat and Deliveroo in the UK, and Getir, Hepsijet, TrendyolGo in Türkiye are notable examples. These platforms often retain control over critical aspects, including pricing, standards, and workforce management, especially in sectors like food

delivery. This research investigates gig work or platform-mediated work facilitated by digital intermediary platforms.

Figure 1 Overview of characteristics of platform facilitated employment



Source: Author

Additionally, within the realm of online delivery platforms, there are two primary models of operation: (i) those operated by restaurants themselves, and (ii) those

operated by third-party food delivery platforms. In the case of the latter type, restaurants collaborate with third-party platforms that offer delivery services to customers (Chan et al., 2023). In this study, the term "online delivery platform" specifically refers to the second type of distribution platform. These platforms can be characterized as four-sided platforms, facilitating connections between clients and restaurants and markets while also managing the supply of couriers for restaurants and markets through algorithmic management techniques (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020; Ji et al., 2024).

In Türkiye, two distinct gig economy models have been implemented, each prominent in different sectors. The first model is adopted by postal service providers, closely mirroring the traditional payroll employment structure. This similarity raises questions about its classification as an actual gig economy model. In contrast, the second model is embraced by companies specializing in quick delivery services, aligning more closely with the conventional gig economy model. Figure 1 provides a graphical summary of the characteristics of various gig labor categories.

2.3. Quick Delivery Model

In Türkiye's evolving gig economy, prominent companies such as Getir and Trendyol have significantly transformed the delivery services sector (BTK, Investigation report, 2023). These organizations classify their drivers as self-employed independent contractors, introducing a notable shift in employment practices.

This model is distinguished by its adaptation to Türkiye's unique conditions, diverging from conventional gig economy structures. In contrast to international counterparts like Amazon Flex and Deliveroo, this localized approach grants businesses flexibility. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this flexibility may not be uniformly extended to the workers.

Couriers within this system are required to comply with predefined order acceptance quotas and time constraints, significantly limiting their operational autonomy. Furthermore, certain companies provide motorcycle equipment and digital assistance, such as GPS programs, to couriers, a practice that appears inconsistent with their designation as independent contractors. These intricate dynamics necessitate thorough

examination, particularly concerning their implications for corporate entities and the labor force, explicitly focusing on legal considerations.

In the context of expedited delivery services in Türkiye, there is a notable absence of specialized postal service provider licenses designed explicitly for this sector. The classification of these services as postal services is an area of increasing attention within Türkiye and several European countries (De Stefano, 2016). Despite this debate, regulatory authorities are actively engaged in discussions on this issue, indicating a strong interest in addressing the regulatory landscape surrounding expedited delivery services.

Through an in-depth analysis of the various implementations and legal considerations within Türkiye's gig economy, this research aims to shed light on the overarching effects of gig work and contribute to the broader discourse on gig economy dynamics. By examining platform employees and companies' unique adaptations and challenges, the study seeks to elucidate the broader implications of gig employment and enhance our understanding of this evolving economic model.

The gig economy has emerged due to technological advancements, bringing significant changes to how people work. Online platforms now act as intermediaries, connecting job seekers and employers from various industries and skill sets (Watson et al., 2021). This digital infrastructure facilitates matching work supply and demand, transforming traditional employment structures and providing individuals with flexible opportunities to engage in short-term, task-based jobs (Spreitzer et al., 2017).

2.3.1. The Subcontractor Model

In this model, postal operators in Türkiye adopt a subcontractor arrangement where they engage individuals or entities to perform delivery services on their behalf. This subcontractor model involves postal operators outsourcing certain aspects of their operations to these subcontractors, who may hire their own employees or independent contractors to carry out the delivery tasks. This approach allows postal operators to expand their delivery capacity rapidly and efficiently, especially during peak periods or in areas with high demand.

However, this subcontractor model raises several concerns, including issues related to labor rights, working conditions, and regulatory compliance. Since subcontractors manage their own workforce and employment arrangements, there can be significant variations in how workers are treated and compensated within this system.

Moreover, postal operators must ensure that subcontractors adhere to legal and operational standards while representing their brand and meeting customer expectations. While the subcontractor model offers postal operators flexibility and scalability, it also necessitates careful management and oversight to ensure fair treatment of workers and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Using subcontractors can provide businesses with a competitive advantage through cost savings. By outsourcing specific tasks, companies can significantly reduce operational expenses, as they are not responsible for providing benefits or covering overhead costs associated with full-time employees.

The subcontractor model, being more pertinent to postal sector companies, will not be examined in this study. Instead, the focus will be on the quick delivery model, as the implementation of the gig economy can be more accurately observed and analyzed within these companies. The quick delivery model is particularly relevant to this research, as it exemplifies the core characteristics of gig economy practices, including flexible working arrangements, on-demand services, and the use of technology platforms to manage and dispatch delivery tasks.

This model provides a more precise and direct example of gig economy dynamics, making it an ideal subject for this study. Concentrating on the quick delivery model allows for a comprehensive understanding of the working conditions, challenges, and experiences of couriers in the online food and grocery delivery sector. This focus not only aligns with the primary objectives of the thesis but also contributes to the broader discourse on the gig economy by providing valuable insights into a rapidly growing and evolving sector.

Additionally, the quick delivery model's prominence in the gig economy enables an in-depth exploration of how technological advancements and business practices influence labor relations and employment standards. This analysis will highlight the

implications of gig work on job security, income stability, and worker rights, thereby enriching the academic discussion on the future of work in the gig economy.

2.4. Navigating Employment in the Gig Economy

The gig economy represents a departure from traditional employment practices characterized by stable, long-term contracts and guaranteed benefits (Lord et al., 2023). In contrast to the conventional model, where tenure and performance influence positions and earnings, gig workers are hired per job, without considering their employment history and without assuring future opportunities or career advancement (Todoli-Signes 2017; (Heeks et al. 2021)). This shift introduces a new level of flexibility into the economy, allowing employers to adjust employment levels and wages based on demand fluctuations (Hughes, 2018). However, this flexibility also transfers economic risks onto workers, as employment opportunities and wages may decrease during challenging times (Friedman, 2014).

As technology advances, the gig economy reshapes employment dynamics and compensation structures, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of its implications. The rapid growth of online platforms has played a crucial role in connecting job seekers and employers from diverse sectors and skill requirements (Broughton et al., 2018). These platforms act as intermediaries, changing traditional employment structures and allowing individuals to participate in short-term, task-based jobs through digital platforms (Jabagi et al., 2019). To fully comprehend the impact of the gig economy on workers and the broader economy, it is essential to explore its implications in terms of job quality, financial security, and the overall well-being of those involved.

On the other hand, the increasing number of temporary workers in the parcel delivery industry presents a distinct challenge for parcel operators due to the escalating volume of e-commerce parcels (Kıdak, 2021). The distribution of e-commerce purchases shows an irregular pattern over the year, with high demand observed during specific sales events like the 'Black/Great Friday' and holidays (Desilver, 2023). Additionally, there is a significant increase in returns following these periods. In response to these fluctuations, parcel operators have had to improve their capacity planning, focusing

mainly on labour-intensive tasks such as sorting and last-mile operations (Niederprüm et al., 2023).

Consequently, the employment of temporary workers has become increasingly prevalent among parcel operators and their subcontractors. This intersection of the gig economy and the parcel delivery sector has significant implications for labour market dynamics and operational strategies within the industry, shaping the way work is organized and performed (Niederprüm et al., 2023).

A comprehensive examination of postal service providers across various European countries, including Croatia, Slovakia, and Germany, reveals a diverse landscape of employment models and workforce composition. For instance, data from the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM) for the end of 2022 highlights that all postal service providers employed a total of 11,772 workers, with the universal service provider, Hrvatska pošta, employing the majority at 8,800. In Slovakia, self-employed couriers predominantly handle last-mile parcel deliveries, as noted by the regulatory authority. Similarly, postal service providers in Germany utilize a mix of their employees and subcontractors, particularly favoring the subcontractor model for last-mile delivery services (ICTA, 2023). This collective evidence underscores the prevalence of subcontractor models, especially concerning last-mile deliveries, across European postal sectors.

According to data from December 2023, the number of independent couriers in Türkiye's sector was 17,660. The growth trajectory began with 1,372 independent couriers in 2019, increasing to 7,530 in 2020, 13,426 in 2021, 14,631 in 2022, and 17,660 in 2023. This trend indicates a significant annual increase in the number of independent couriers. A major contributing factor to this growth is the operation of vertically integrated cargo and postal companies within e-commerce marketplaces (BTK, 2024).

2.5. Working Hours in Platform Companies

Nevertheless, the flexibility of working hours may vary. Although platforms promote flexible working hours as an advantage, a weekly or monthly plan is still in place (Myhill et al., 2021). On the other hand, businesses using delivery platforms, such as

grocery stores or restaurants, can have flexibility by making agreements based on high-demand periods. Depending on national regulations, couriers can enter contracts as independent or secondary contractors under different contract models (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020).

For example, the delivery company Getir in Türkiye has outsourced courier employment to third-party subcontractors while employing couriers working in their warehouses as staff with employment contracts (ICTA, 2022). This system decreases the number of couriers employed by the company and transfers the responsibility for their legal rights to subcontractors (Todoli-Signes, 2017). To illustrate the advantage for companies, when a courier establishes their business entity, they are relieved from obligations such as social security payments, employment and termination documents, and many other administrative tasks (Bertolini et al., 2021). While this reduces labor costs for companies, it also provides less protection against termination due to the nature of the contract status. Therefore, platforms appear to sidestep potential legal obligations surrounding labor security, often by employing a novel lexicon of work and employment that highlights divergence and innovation, thus potentially avoiding established employer/employee relationships (James, 2023).

Furthermore, the transition from hourly wages to pay per delivery in many food delivery platforms shifts the corporate risk to the couriers, as they may not receive payment during periods of low demand. Moreover, the fact that couriers use their own motorcycles or cars allows platforms to save on structural costs (Kıdak, 2021).

The rapid growth of e-commerce² during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand for the gig economy model, making it more attractive to many individuals. For instance, China's online food delivery market was predicted to reach about 449 billion U.S. dollars in revenue by 2024, positioning it as the largest market globally (Statista, 2024). This business model, mainly considered by those who want to earn extra money (Pew Research Center, 2021), has evolved into a different dimension as the inflationary situation in Türkiye changes³. In this model, known as flexible work

² <https://www.eticaret.gov.tr/haberler/10089/detay>

³ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/>

by its nature, there is a full-time employment situation where everyone utilizes the maximum limit of 11 hours determined by laws⁴.

2.6. Challenges in the Gig Economy

The platform and technical advancements that are taking place in the gig economy are continuing to challenge conventional organizational management theories and go beyond established business structures (Zhu et al., 2024). As previously mentioned, within the framework of the flexible economy model, characterized by the absence of traditional employee protections and precarious conditions, strikes have become prevalent. The systematic challenges and inequalities inherent in the flexible economy, including low wages, extensive working hours, the lack of benefits, and limited job security, are identified as significant contributing factors to the initiation of these strikes⁵⁶⁷⁸. Furthermore, the absence of collective bargaining power and the limited avenues available for recourse serve to exacerbate the frustrations experienced by workers (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020).

For example, digital platforms have been criticized for not providing platform workers with fundamental employment rights and decent working conditions ordinarily available in traditional employment. They also lack essential protections such as social security mechanisms and leave entitlements (Vallas & Schor, 2020).

In recent years, there has been considerable debate about how to ensure that social protections continue to be provided to workers as new forms of employment emerge (Maffie, 2020). Existing studies show that workers in non-standard employment are at significant risk of exclusion from social protections, and the rise of the platform economy has made these problems even more pronounced. Classifying platform workers as "self-employed" in their contracts exacerbates issues such as exclusion from social security and employment rights (Forde et al., 2017).

⁴ <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/>

⁵ <https://jacobin.com/>

⁶ <https://teyit.org/>

⁷ <https://www.wired.co.uk/>

⁸ <https://haber.sol.org.tr/haber/getir>

However, it is assessed that workers classified as 'independent contractors' not only lack the right to organize but also do not possess the ability to engage in collective bargaining to gain greater control over their work conditions and terms of employment (DeVault et al., 2019). This limitation significantly undermines their capacity to influence their working environment and secure improved labor rights and protections.

In other countries, digitally enabled platforms allow employees to generate income from multiple sources. A study found that approximately 15 percent of labor platform workers earn income from digital platforms more than once a month (Farrell & Greig, 2016) . In contrast, BTK (2024) reports indicate that platform workers in our country often work as if they are in full-time employment. Problems arise when these workers are compelled to rely on a single source of income and must meet the conditions typically associated with full-time employment. These findings highlight the urgent need to address the inherent issues within the gig economy to ensure fair and equitable conditions for workers.

After examining challenges within the gig economy, the subsequent section explores the diverse practices among EU members. This investigation aims to shed light on the varying regulatory approaches adopted by different countries and their impact on gig workers. By analyzing the regulatory landscape and its implications, we can better understand the factors influencing gig work conditions across different contexts. This comparative analysis sets the stage for further discussions on potential policy interventions and regulatory frameworks to ensure fair and equitable conditions for workers in the gig economy.

2.7. Diverse Practices Among EU Members

In recent years, with the development of e-commerce, there has been an increase in the number of people working in the delivery sector in Türkiye, as well as globally (ICTA, 2024). With the rise in the number of delivery workers worldwide, as seen with the expansion of e-commerce, the landscape of self-employment in the European Union has also shown notable trends. As of 2022, the EU is home to approximately 27.66 million self-employed individuals. Historically, 2007 marked the peak, with an estimated 29.2 million self-employed. The sector experienced a significant decline,

losing about one million workers during the Coronavirus pandemic. However, 2022 witnessed a robust recovery in self-employment figures, particularly among women (Eurostat, 2023).

This situation indicates that market actors, including postal services alongside e-commerce platforms, are increasingly resorting to methods like temporary employment and outsourcing to meet more flexible service demands, such as seven-day delivery, night time delivery, and overtime during peak periods. Since postal services are not only traditional mail carriers but they have also become integral players in the global e-commerce logistics chain, it is necessary to include postal services in the gig economy. As e-commerce expands, postal services increasingly handle a significant volume of parcel deliveries, which puts additional pressure on their operational and employment models (ERGP, 2019).

This shift is driven by the growing expectation for rapid delivery services fuelled by online shopping, particularly within the postal sector. As such, postal workers are at the forefront of adapting to these changing market demands, which often require enhanced flexibility and extended working hours. In this context, it is observed that working conditions, especially among postal sector employees, show significant disparities both within national postal operators and between European Union member states, particularly in terms of average and minimum wages (ERGP, 2019).

This diversity in employment conditions, characterized by different regulatory regimes among postal operators, emerges as a factor that underscores the urgency of action to create a fair, competitive environment. This situation underscores the need for intervention to standardize employment policies and labor conditions in the delivery sector, specifically focusing on postal services (ERGP, 2019). Traditionally, the postal sector has been a significant employer of the national workforce. Former postal monopolies remain some of the largest employers in their respective countries. According to the European Commission (DG GROW), the postal sector employs approximately 1.8 million people, which accounts for about 0.9% of the total employment in the EU (Dijk, Labour force flexibility, 2024).

The evolution of employment forms within the European postal sector can be primarily attributed to the liberalization processes initiated in recent decades (Campbell et al., 2004). This liberalization of postal services and the entry of new competitors into the market, including those specializing in parcel delivery, has led to significant disparities in wage and labor arrangements. Historically, postal services operated as a monopoly, which resulted in the absence of cross-sector collective agreements that could standardize conditions across different sectors. Consequently, the liberalization has introduced a more fragmented regulatory landscape characterized by uneven labor standards and wage scales (Haidinger, 2012).

While the debate on the impact of liberalization on employment continues, the consequences on employment conditions have been clearly demonstrated by the PIQUE project. The results of the study from Hermann (2013) show that the liberalization of the European postal sector has led to a significant increase in atypical and precarious forms of employment.

For these reasons, the abovementioned changes underscore a critical need for policy adjustments and regulatory interventions. In response to this pressing requirement, the European Union has initiated exploring legislative solutions to mitigate the adverse effects on workers. The solutions implemented in various countries will be detailed in this section, providing a comprehensive overview of the approaches undertaken to harmonize labor standards and protect postal sector employees throughout the Union.

Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Spain were selected for comparison because their market shares were similar to those of Türkiye (BTK, 2023). The selection criteria included these countries' postal operator authorization processes and obligations. Additionally, these countries have pioneered regulations concerning worker status, making them relevant examples for this study.

2.7.1. Switzerland

Article 61 of the Postal Services Act (Postverordnung)⁹, currently in force in Switzerland as of 29 August 2012 is titled “Determination of customary working conditions in the industry and determination of standards minimum”:

⁹ <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/f>

- 1) The Swiss Federal Postal Commission (Postcom) shall periodically analyze the usual working conditions in the sector, in particular based on the following criteria:
 - a) Remuneration, including wage supplements and payment of wages in the event of incapacity for work;
 - b) Working hours, including the organization of overtime, night work, and shift work;
 - c) Holiday entitlement.

- 2) PostCom determines typical working conditions in the sector by analyzing a weighted average of the actual annual salaries of employees in its operations sector.

- 3) Determines minimum standards.

Article 5 of the same Law, entitled "Evidence of compliance with customary working conditions in the sector," contains the following provisions.

- 1) Service providers must provide annual evidence of compliance with customary working conditions in the industry.
- 2) When a service provider has concluded a collective labor agreement in the postal services sector, they are considered to respect the working conditions customary in the industry.
- 3) The service provider commits in writing to its subcontractors, who collect more than 50% of annual revenue from the postal service that will respect the usual working conditions of the industry.

Within this framework, PostCom determined the minimum standards for working conditions, and the Postal Commission Regulation on Minimum Standards for Working Conditions in the Postal Services Sector entered into force on 1 January 2019¹⁰.

Under the specified Regulation, postal service providers are required to adhere to minimum standards in the employment contracts they establish with their employees.

¹⁰ <https://www.postcom.admin.ch/>

The preferred business model of these providers cannot serve as an excuse for failing to meet these standards. These regulations mandate a minimum gross hourly wage of 19 Swiss francs and restrict contractually agreed working hours to 44 hours per week. The Regulation applies to all postal services sector employees not part of a collective labor agreement. It also covers temporary and part-time employees working for the postal service provider. However, suppose temporary workers are covered by a collective labor agreement that offers more favorable terms than the minimum standards prescribed by PostCom. In that case, the terms of that collective labor agreement will prevail (Postcom, 2018).

With these minimum standards,

1. Protect workers who lack collective bargaining protection against wage dumping and improve working conditions in the sector,
2. Establishing fair competition among postal service providers,
3. Preventing the targeted competition in the postal sector from adversely affecting the financial rights and employment conditions of sector employees,

2.7.3. Belgium

Legislation amending postal law in Belgium will grant additional employment rights to couriers in the parcel sector. Adopted by the Belgian Parliament on November 9, 2023¹¹, the amendment will apply specifically to workers involved in the distribution segment, commonly known as the “last mile.” Its implementation will begin ten days after its publication in the official Belgian state journal, with specific provisions to be implemented gradually over the years 2024 and 2025.

A law amending the Postal Law in Belgium will grant additional labor rights to delivery workers in the parcel sector. Enacted by the Belgian parliament on November 9, 2023¹², the amendment will specifically apply to workers engaged in the distribution

¹¹ <https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/>

¹² <https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/>

segment, commonly known as the “last mile”. Its implementation will commence ten days after publication in the official journal of the Belgian state, with specific provisions phased in gradually throughout 2024 and 2025.

Under the new legislation¹³, parcel operators will be prohibited from remunerating workers delivering parcels at a wage lower than that stipulated by the collective labor agreement for the transport sector. Additionally, operators will be mandated to cover fuel, maintenance, and insurance expenses for their workers' delivery vehicles.

Furthermore, the amendment will require parcel operators to use an electronic time registration platform to track delivery work hours. Workers will be subject to limitations, not exceeding nine hours per day, 56 hours per week, or 90 hours over two weeks.

Moreover, operators will be required to designate a coordinator responsible for informing workers of their rights and formulating plans to ensure compliance with their obligations. Before commencing parcel delivery services, operators must furnish specific details to BIPT, the Belgian postal regulator, including their contact information, the anticipated commencement date of parcel delivery services, and information about any third-party contractors involved in distribution, along with their respective coordinators and their performance metrics. This information must be updated every six months to ensure its accuracy (Dijk, 2023).

2.7.3. Italy

According to Italian postal legislation, compliance with 'anticipated working conditions' is considered a fundamental requirement for both the mandatory procedure and authorization process, which must be adhered to during the execution of activities. The working conditions to be complied with include national legislation (such as working hours, maximum driving times, and rest periods) and the conditions stipulated in collective bargaining agreements applicable in the postal sector.

¹³ <https://werk.belgie.be/>

With Decision No. 94/22/CONS¹⁴ dated March 31, 2022, issued by AGCOM, the regulator of the postal sector in Italy, the following objectives were aimed at medium to large-scale operators engaged in parcel/package distribution:

- a) Verification of compliance with working conditions,
- b) Identification of operators applying contracts that cannot be attributed to the postal sector in an industry where low labor costs could affect competition dynamics,
- c) Increase in oversight of activities in the parcel/package distribution sector due to reasons such as the potential of organization types based on outsourcing, complexity (e.g., tiered subcontracting contracts), or other organizational models being less transparent, serving as obstacles to audit activities, as well as causing distortions in competition for other operators compliant with sectoral regulations and subject to restrictions arising from national labor agreements.

This decision aims to improve oversight of operations within the parcel/package distribution sector. It involves tasks like confirming adherence to working conditions, evaluating how low labor costs affect competition, and investigating how complex or opaque organizational structures might disrupt competition. Additionally, the regulation outlines specific requirements for businesses in the sector, including providing detailed information about their relationships with transport companies and addressing different aspects of service delivery and working conditions in detail (AGCOM, 2022).

The regulation above aims to foster a fair, transparent, and sustainable structure for the postal and courier sector in Italy. AGCOM's decision is a critical step towards balancing the influence of major players in the sector on market dynamics. Furthermore, this regulation facilitates effective oversight of operators with alternative business models, thereby enabling fair competition conditions for all operators. This approach prioritizes protecting individuals' rights and improving working conditions in the sector, with the ultimate goal of fostering a healthier structure for the postal and courier delivery sector in terms of society and the economy (BTK, 2022).

¹⁴ <https://www.agcom.it/>

2.7.4. Germany

Since November 2019, the Parcel Messenger Protection Act¹⁵ has been in effect in Germany, signifying an extension of subcontractor liability for accurately paying social security contributions within the parcel industry. This regulatory measure, akin to longstanding practices observed in the meat processing and construction sectors, aims to address emerging concerns related to labor practices and social security compliance within the parcel delivery ecosystem (BMAS, 2019).

The burgeoning significance of the courier, express, and parcel industry, driven by the exponential growth of online commerce, underscores the need for regulatory interventions to ensure fair and equitable labor practices. As parcel services increasingly rely on subcontractors to fulfil orders, capacity constraints have necessitated the delegation of tasks to third-party entities. However, this subcontracting practice has raised significant concerns, including instances of undeclared employment and fraudulent manipulation of social security contributions, ultimately compromising the employees' welfare (BMAS, 2019).

The introduction of the Parcel Messenger Protection Act represents a proactive response to these emerging challenges, aiming to mitigate labor exploitation and ensure compliance with social security obligations. By extending subcontractor liability, the legislation imposes accountability on primary contractors for the labor practices of their subcontractors. This regulatory framework seeks to promote transparency and accountability in subcontracting relationships, fostering fair competition and safeguarding the rights and well-being of parcel industry workers.

2.7.5. Spain

On September 25, 2020, the Spanish Supreme Court¹⁶ rendered a verdict regarding the employment status of Glovo riders, determining that they should be classified as

¹⁵ <https://www.bgbl.de/>

¹⁶ <https://www.poderjudicial.es/search/openDocument/05986cd385feff03>

employees within the organizational structure of Glovo. This classification entails adherence to directives and guidelines established by the company, rather than being considered self-employed professionals. The court's decision was grounded in its assertion that Glovo functions not merely as an intermediary facilitating connection between retailers and riders, but rather assumes an active role in organizing and coordinating a delivery service. This involves setting prices and conditions, as well as possessing essential assets necessary for the operational activity. The ruling originated from an appeal filed by a Glovo rider challenging the termination of their contract by the company. Notably, this decision resolves previous discrepancies in rulings issued by lower courts on the same matter, establishing a precedent for future disputes to be resolved in accordance with the legal principles articulated by the Supreme Court (Mateas, 2021)

The court notably rejected Glovo's request to refer the case to the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) for a preliminary ruling, stating that there were no reasonable doubts regarding the application or interpretation of EU law in this instance. Glovo, a Spanish-based on-demand delivery platform comparable to Deliveroo or Uber Eats, has been engaged in legal discussions regarding gig economy workers' employment status, reflecting similar debates in different legal jurisdictions (Dunn, 2021).

The court decision outlined various factors contributing to the categorization of workers as employees, despite their contractual designation as independent contractors. Principal factors included the limited autonomy of riders in managing their work, with Glovo exerting control over crucial aspects of service delivery and overseeing compliance through digital platforms. Furthermore, the court underscored Glovo's sole authority in making decisions regarding service pricing, receipt of payments, and setting terms for riders¹⁷.

On the flip side, the latest legislation enacted in September 2022 introduces severe penalties for employers who infringe upon workers' rights. Should an independent contractor be burdened with the duties typically associated with full-time employment,

¹⁷ <https://www.economiadigital.es/>

such transgressions could lead to imprisonment for a maximum of six years by Article 311 of the Criminal Code.

This extensive literature review has explored the complexities of the gig economy and the various approaches among EU members, particularly in the context of postal services and delivery platforms. It has highlighted the significant transformations in employment models, driven by technological advancements and the growth of e-commerce, leading to increased participation in the gig economy. The analysis indicates a spectrum of regulatory responses and labor practices across different countries, illustrating the varied approaches to managing the challenges and opportunities posed by gig work. These findings underscore the complexity of the gig economy landscape, where innovation, labor dynamics, and regulatory frameworks intersect. As such, there remains a critical need for further empirical research to address the identified gaps, particularly concerning the standardization of working conditions and the protection of gig workers' rights. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse by understanding the gig economy's evolution, its impact on labor markets, and potential policy interventions to ensure fair and sustainable employment practices.

CHAPTER 3

THEORITICAL BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Theoretical Background

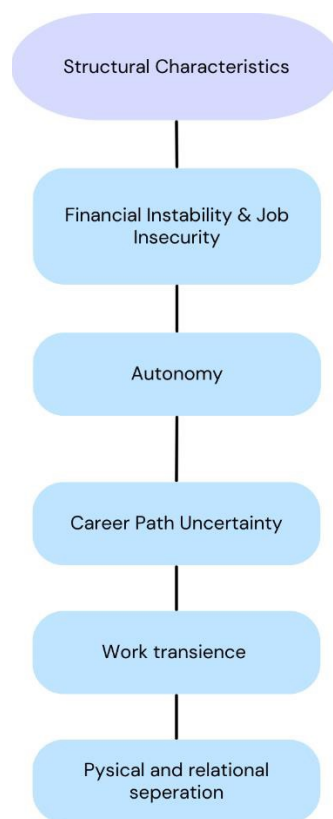
This chapter outlines the research question, the theoretical framework, and the methodology employed in this thesis. The primary focus of the study is to investigate the impact of gig economy models on the online food and grocery delivery sector in Türkiye, specifically through the lens of Ashford's (2018) structural characteristics. The research questions guiding this study are “How do gig economy models impact the online food and grocery delivery sector in Türkiye, and what are the implications for couriers in terms of financial stability, job security, autonomy, career advancement, and work nature, as analyzed through Ashford's structural characteristics?” The literature review encompasses an exploration of the gig economy, including perspectives on Platform-Facilitated Employment, various employment types within the gig economy, working hours typical of platform companies, challenges associated with gig economy models, and relevant examples from different European countries. The objective is to comprehensively understand the gig economy concept broadly and its specific applications by platforms. The methodology section details the processes of data generation, analysis, and the interview protocol, providing insights into the formulation of interview questions and their connection to the participants. This section aims to offer a thorough overview of the theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches guiding the research.

To comprehensively and timely analyze the reasons behind the variability in couriers' motivation over time, the structural characteristics proposed by Ashford were adopted. These characteristics provide a robust framework for understanding shifts in business models and the evolving nature of work dynamics. Moreover, their application

facilitates the development of new research perspectives and approaches necessary for examining these changes.

Ashford (2018) identified five structural characteristics that impact individuals' lived experiences (Figure 2). These include financial instability and job insecurity; a high level of autonomy and independence; the absence of clear, accessible, and relevant career advancement paths; the transient nature of work; and physical and relational separation from traditional employment structures.

Figure 2: Ashford' structural characteristic



Source: Ashford et al. (2018)

3.1.1. Financial instability and Job Insecurity

Financial instability and job insecurity pose significant challenges for gig economy workers, as these factors directly impact their economic viability. Job insecurity, a defining feature of an economy reliant on freelance and short-term contracts, leads workers to experience precarious financial conditions. Independent workers often

report living on the economic margin, where unpredictable job opportunities result in fluctuating incomes and cycles of feast and famine, compounding concerns about sustaining a basic income (Ashford et al., 2018).

This thesis addresses the financial instability and job insecurity experienced by online platform delivery couriers, a critical and expanding subset of the gig economy. These workers encounter distinct vulnerabilities that warrant in-depth examination due to the precarious nature of their employment, which is marked by irregular wages and a lack of formal employment benefits (Altenried, 2020). This instability is further aggravated by their dependence on a demand-driven business model, which introduces significant financial uncertainty. By delving into these issues, this study aims to illuminate the economic challenges faced by these workers and assess the current state of their job security and financial stability. This analysis not only highlights the immediate concerns of gig economy workers but also contributes to broader discussions on labor policies and protections in this evolving sector.

3.1.2. Autonomy and independence

Gig workers often operate without a traditional managerial hierarchy or set procedures, granting them autonomy over their methods, working hours, locations, and overall workflow. This independence is a critical factor in the appeal of this work model for many individuals. However, this same independence can be challenging for some, as it often entails less predictability and security (Ashford et al., 2018, Caza et al., 2018, Thomas & Baddipudi, 2022). Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that as market demands evolve, the viability of this model will need to adapt accordingly. For instance, the increase in home deliveries post-Covid-19 has led to a rise in independent couriers (Henderson, 2020).

This study compares the independent work model with traditional employment structures, drawing on Ashford's structural characteristics (2018). The analysis explores independent work's benefits and potential disadvantages, particularly for independent couriers and platform managers.

3.1.3. Career Path Uncertainty

In contrast to traditional employment, which features predictable and structured career paths, the gig economy often needs more clearly defined, available, and established career trajectories (Thomas & Baddipudi, 2022). Understanding how individuals navigate their long-term careers in such a flexible environment is crucial for analyzing the sustainability of this model. Consequently, this study aims to explore these perspectives by examining the impact of the absence of a clear career path—a structural characteristic identified by Ashford et al. (2018)—mainly focusing on employee turnover rates and the overall sustainability of the model.

Questions in this research were specifically designed to investigate whether the lack of clear career paths in the gig economy, favoured for its flexibility and autonomy, poses sustainability challenges, especially for independent workers on online food and grocery delivery platforms.

3.1.4. Work Transience

While the concept of work transience, as discussed by Ashford et al. (2018), presents significant insights into the nature of gig work, it was not included in the theoretical background of this dissertation. The primary focus of this research is on the financial instability, job insecurity, and the independent and flexible nature of gig work, particularly within the online food and grocery delivery sector in Türkiye. These aspects were deemed more critical for understanding the immediate and practical challenges faced by gig workers in this industry.

Although work transience highlights the short-term and uncertain nature of gig contracts, this characteristic does not align with the perceptions of many independent contractors in Türkiye. Unlike the typical expectation in traditional jobs, where continuity and stability are anticipated (Ashford et al., 2018), many Turkish gig workers do not view their roles as temporary. Instead, they often consider their gig work as a full-time employment solution, aiming for long-term engagement within these platforms. Therefore, the emphasis on financial and job security issues, along

with the independence and flexibility inherent in gig work, was prioritized to better reflect the realities and expectations of gig workers in Türkiye. Consequently, work transience was not included to maintain a focused and coherent theoretical framework that directly aligns with the primary objectives of this study.

3.1.5. Physical and Relational Separations

As Ashford et al. (2018) discussed, physical and relational separation highlights a significant structural characteristic of the gig economy, where work is frequently done alone, leading to feelings of loneliness and disconnection among gig workers. However, this aspect was not included in the theoretical background of this dissertation due to the unique context of gig work in Türkiye. In Türkiye, many independent contractors in the online food and grocery delivery sector do not experience the same physical and relational separation. Their work involves regular visits to warehouses or collection points, where they interact with colleagues and staff, providing them with opportunities for social engagement and support. This frequent social interaction mitigates the feelings of isolation that are more prevalent among gig workers in other regions. Including the topic of physical and relational separation would not align with the primary objectives and realities addressed in this study.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Data Generation

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to examine the phenomenon under investigation. To have a complete and detailed comprehension, structured interviews were not employed to avoid a survey-like format. Instead, open-ended questions were utilized, allowing participants to freely express their thoughts and provide detailed responses in their own words (Yin, 2015). This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the experiences and perspectives of the participants, fostering rich and insightful data. The primary method of data collection employed in this study is through semi-structured interviews, enabling the researchers to delve into the intricacies of the subject matter and gain a comprehensive understanding of the

underlying factors at play. The ethics approval of this study has been received from the METU Human Subjects Ethics Committee on 16 August 2023.

The interviews were conducted with two purposive samples: online grocery delivery couriers and key stakeholders including a government relations manager, a warehouse owner, a legal counsel, a legal director, and government regulator representatives (Table 2). Through the inclusion of multiple perspectives, the objective of this study is to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and challenges inherent in the online food and grocery delivery sector. By considering diverse viewpoints, this research aims to provide a holistic analysis that encompasses various stakeholders and their experiences, shedding light on the complexities and nuances of this industry.

The interview design comprises three sections tailored for delivery couriers and delivery platform officials. In the first part, platform officials are prompted to introduce themselves and provide insights into their work within the gig economy. The second part encompasses a series of questions designed to elicit responses about the challenges encountered and potential resolutions associated with the gig economy model. The third section focuses on open-ended inquiries concerning the security measures for delivery couriers and the anticipated evolution of the gig economy model.

In contrast, delivery courier employees are presented with open-ended questions in the initial section, which delve into their work experiences and job-related aspects. The subsequent section examines the working conditions and safety concerns that gig economy workers face, aiming to gain insights into the challenges and issues they encounter daily.

The interview questions were designed based on the themes explained in detail in the previous section, inspired by Ashford's (2018) structural characteristics of the gig economy model.

Additionally, the final part of the research explores participants' perspectives on public policy and potential improvements to the existing regulatory framework. By analyzing these aspects, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the

experiences and viewpoints of gig economy workers. This multi-faceted approach ensures that the study captures a broad range of insights from platform officials and couriers, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the gig economy's impact on employment and regulation.

The key questions used in the study are detailed below for a comprehensive understanding of the survey methodology. These questions were designed to elicit detailed responses about the challenges, experiences, and perspectives of delivery couriers and platform officials within the gig economy. Each question was crafted to address specific themes identified in the literature review, ensuring a thorough exploration of the subject matter.

Table 1: Interview Guide

Category	Question	Main Objective of Questions
Introduction	Courier and Platform Managers: Could you introduce yourself?	Gather basic personal and professional background information.
Work experience	Couriers: Can you tell us about your working experience as an online delivery courier?	Understand the background and duration of their work as a courier.
Job satisfaction	Couriers: What do you enjoy about it and what are the challenges you face?	Identify the positive aspects and challenges of the job.
	Platform Managers: What challenges do you face when managing couriers in the independent courier model?	Identify the specific challenges in managing couriers under the independent contractor model.

	Platform Managers: How do you address these challenges?	Understand the strategies used to mitigate management challenges.
Workload Management	Courier: How do you manage your workload as a courier?	Explore how couriers handle their tasks and manage time.
Autonomy and Independence	Couriers: Do you control the number of orders and hours you work?	Assess autonomy and flexibility.
Platform Interaction	Couriers: How do you connect with the platform/app for delivery requests?	Understand the technological interface and user experience.
Perpetual Strangers	Couriers: What is your communication with other couriers like?	Evaluate social and professional interactions.
Job Security	Couriers: What is your perception of job security as an online delivery courier?	Gauge perception of job stability
Safety measures	Managers: What steps ensure courier safety, given the risks involved?	Assess safety protocols for couriers
Future development	Managers: How feasible is it to build a sustainable, profitable business offering secure employment?	Assess the viability of a balanced business model
	Managers: How will the artisan courier model develop, and what implications will it have?	Explore future predictions and impacts on the industry.

	Managers: How do you see the artisan courier in the coming years?	Understand the long-term vision.
	Managers: How is your company preparing for these challenges?	Explore company strategies for future shifts.
Labor market impact	Managers: How does the independent courier model affect the labor market in Türkiye?	Evaluate the model's influence on the labor market.
	Managers: Is it creating opportunities or displacing traditional/full-time workers?	Determine the impact on traditional employment.
Public Policy	Couriers: How do you view public policy in shaping the gig economy in Türkiye?	Gain insights on public policy impact.
	Managers: What developments would you like to see in the online food delivery sector?	

Source: Author

3.2.2. Sampling Approach

This section provides an overview of the participants interviewed for this study. The experiences shared by both platform courier and platform representatives were analyzed using the theoretical framework (See Section 3.1.) and analytical process detailed in the next sections. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the gig economy in the context of online food and grocery delivery platforms.

3.2.2.1. Overview of Platform Characteristics

In Türkiye, two distinct gig economy models have been implemented, each prominent in different sectors. Postal service providers adopt the first model, which mirrors the traditional payroll employment structure. This similarity raises questions about its classification as a genuine gig economy model. In contrast, the second model is embraced by companies specializing in quick delivery services, which aligns more closely with the conventional gig economy model, as explained in the previous section (Section 2.3.1).

In order to take into account this distinction between different gig economy models, the companies to be interviewed were carefully selected, ensuring the inclusion of both companies with and without a postal service provider license. This distinction is considered crucial for analyzing how firms implement various versions of the gig economy business model in Türkiye. By examining these different approaches, the study aims to comprehensively understand the diverse gig economy landscape and its implications for workers and businesses alike.

3.2.2.2. Interview Process

I aimed to interview at least one employee and manager from each platform with some of the most significant market share (BTK, Investigation report, 2023). As the intention was not to establish statistically significant samples for each platform, the primary objective of the interviews was to elucidate, from the perspective of workers, the operational dynamics of platform-wide processes and to collect overarching perspectives on the policies or practices of each platform. To enhance the comprehensiveness of data collection, inquiries made during interviews with workers encompassed not only their individual experiences but also extended to the experiences of other workers within the network.

During my research, I conducted on-site visits to the depots where couriers are stationed, facilitating face-to-face interviews. Each interview session lasted between 29 to 52 minutes. Additionally, I conducted one telephone interview with a courier.

Platform representatives were interviewed via the Zoom platform, while interviews with regulators were conducted in person. Throughout these interviews, I meticulously documented audio recordings and notes with the explicit consent of the participants. The distribution of interviewees based on their position, gender, and organization type is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Overview of Interview

Organisation	Position	Interviewee No	Postal Operator	Gender
Online food and grocery delivery company	Field Manager	1 (i1)	Postal service provider	Male
Quick delivery service company	Government Relations Manager	2 (i2)	Not postal service provider	Male
Online food and grocery delivery company	Courier	3 (i3)	Postal service provider	Female
Quick delivery service company	Courier	4 (i4)	Not postal service provider	Male
Quick delivery service company	Warehouse Owner	5 (i5)	Not postal service provider	Male
Quick delivery service company	Legal Director	6 (i6)	Not postal service provider	Female

Quick delivery service company	Courier	7 (i7)	Not postal service provider	Male
Quick delivery service company	Courier	8 (i8)	Not postal service provider	Male
Quick delivery service company	Courier	9 (i9)	Not postal service provider	Male
Online grocery company	Legal and delivery Counsel	10 (i10)	Postal service provider	Male

Source: Author

3.2.2.3. Data Analysis

To analyze the data from the semi-structured interviews, I initially utilized an open coding approach, as Gale et al. (2013) suggested, where data is segmented into meaningful categories and concepts. This method allowed for an inductive analysis of the interviews, generating themes directly from the raw data.

Following the initial coding phase, I transitioned to a more structured deductive approach, aligning the identified themes with the theoretical framework of Ashford's model of structural characteristics of the gig economy (Ashford et al., 2018).

To ensure the accuracy and facilitate a comprehensive analysis, the interview data were transcribed in full and coded using MAXQDA, a software specifically designed for qualitative data analysis. This rigorous process allowed for the identification of key emergent themes that were of theoretical significance. By analyzing and refining the data through multiple stages, a nuanced understanding of the gig economy and its implications was achieved, providing valuable insights for both academic research and practical applications.

Initially, I refrained from applying any theoretical bias and opted for a broad perspective while coding. Using this approach, I generated 307 codes. The list of codes and their frequencies in the interviews is provided in Annex B.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Considering the themes highlighted in the structural characteristics of the gig economy proposed by Ashford et al. (2018), I formulated the research questions accordingly. The qualitative data collected from the interviews were synthesized into thematic categories that align with the theoretical framework. This approach helped us organize and interpret the data, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and patterns. We then revisited the findings in the discussion section to build arguments that support future projections and policy recommendations.

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the qualitative analyses derived from observations and interviews. By focusing on qualitative data, the chapter offers an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, enriching the discussion with nuanced interpretations and contextual understanding.

In my study, aimed at comprehensively addressing the issues within the gig economy in delivery sector, interviews were conducted with both platform employees and platform managers. This approach allowed for an analysis from diverse perspectives, enriching the breadth and depth of the insights gathered. To clearly present these viewpoints, the findings section was meticulously organized into themes. Initially, insights gathered from platform employees were detailed, highlighting their experiences and viewpoints. Subsequently, the data analysis from platform managers provided a systematic delineation of the differences and similarities in the experiences and opinions of both groups. Such a structure enhances the comparative analysis of their respective perspectives and underscores the nuanced dynamics of the delivery sector.

The structured approach facilitated the categorization of themes derived from the qualitative analysis, aligning them with the components outlined in the theoretical sections of the study. These categories included 'Financial Security,' 'Independence and Flexibility,' and 'Career Path Uncertainty' from the platform worker perspective, and 'Job Security and Career Path Uncertainty,' 'Employment Model,' and 'Independence and Flexibility' from the platform manager perspective. This dual categorization provided a comprehensive understanding of both groups' differing priorities and challenges.

During my research, I conducted several interviews in the warehouses of online food and grocery delivery platforms, where products are stored for ordering. Through these observations, I noted that couriers picking up orders from the warehouse have designated waiting areas, providing them a space to socialize. Given this social aspect within the warehouse setting, I concluded that the online food and grocery delivery sector does not fully align with the theme of isolation described by Ashford et al. (2018).

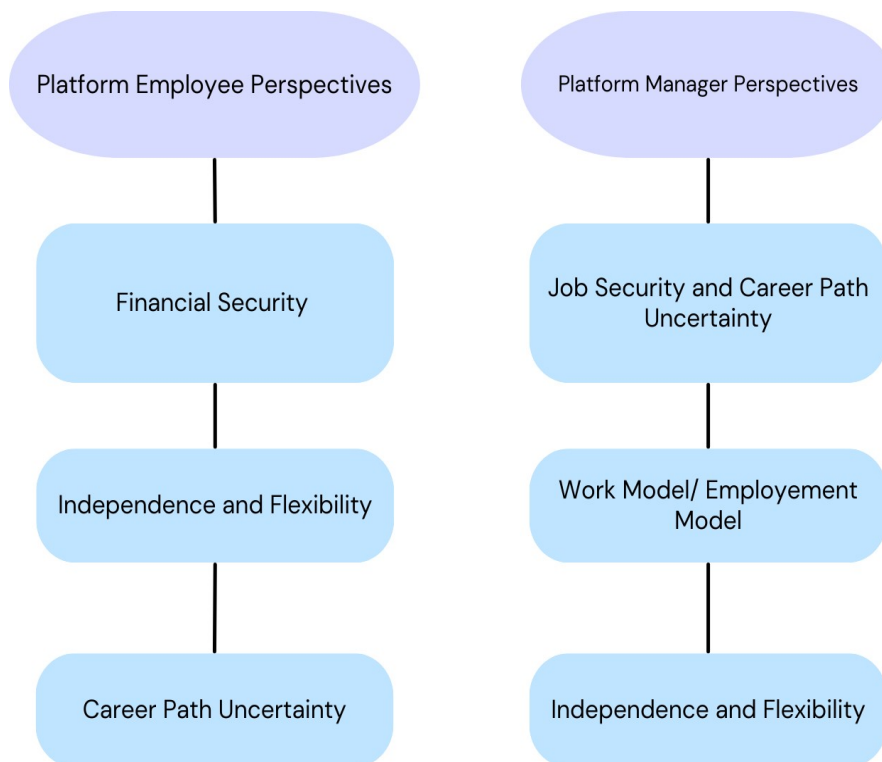
Ashford et al. 's (2018) fourth structural characteristic, "work transience," underscores the short-term nature of gig work, wherein workers typically engage in brief contracts without the assurance of future employment. However, the gig economy model implemented in Türkiye diverges from this characteristic due to specific cultural and operational factors. In Türkiye, gig workers, particularly in the online food and grocery delivery sector, often experience more stable and continuous work arrangements resembling traditional employment. Many couriers work approximately nine hours per day, aligning with the standard work hours of traditional jobs, thereby reducing the transience commonly associated with gig work in other contexts (BTK, 2023). Furthermore, cultural, and economic expectations in Türkiye emphasize long-term employment relationships and job stability, further mitigating the transient nature of gig work. Therefore, given these distinctive attributes, the characteristic of work transience does not accurately reflect the reality of the gig economy in Türkiye and is thus excluded from this analysis.

Conversely, given that the gig economy model in Türkiye operates under varying business models across different online delivery platforms, it is essential to consider

both the work and employment models in this analysis. This approach will facilitate a more comprehensive examination of the system in relation to these models. Addressing the diverse work and employment models will provide valuable insights into the research question, “How do gig economy models impact the online food and grocery delivery sector in Türkiye?”

While Ashford et al. (2018) uses his proposed structural characteristics to analyze the gig economy in a general sense, this study considers the perspectives of both platform employees and managers. By grouping each theme concerning the other and according to the title, the analysis ensures a thorough examination of the two distinct groups. This approach allows a nuanced understanding of how the gig economy's structural characteristics manifest differently across various stakeholder perspectives.

Figure 3: Structural characteristics of platform workers and representatives



Source: Author

Figure 3 illustrates the six elements of the proposed model. The subsequent sections of this report then present the findings within this carefully crafted framework, ensuring that each category is explored thoroughly and cohesively. This methodical organization supports a deeper understanding of each thematic category and aligns the

empirical data with theoretical constructs, facilitating a robust analysis of the sector's complexities.

4.1. Result

As outlined in section 3.2.2, this research aims to gain a thorough understanding of the gig economy by examining the perspectives of platform workers and managers through separate interview sessions. The interviews were designed to capture these two groups' distinct experiences and insights. The results are segmented into two sections to effectively present the findings, each focusing on one of these perspectives. This method ensures a detailed analysis, highlighting platform managers' and workers' unique experiences and insights.

4.1.1. Platform employee perspectives

Within the framework of delivery platforms, this crucial chapter focuses on the experiences of platform delivery employees. This study utilizes comprehensive qualitative interviews to reveal the complex interplay between platform operational policies and the lived experiences of independent couriers. These findings demonstrate how operational decisions, workplace challenges, and strategic responses significantly affect labor dynamics within the gig economy. This analysis emphasizes the role of delivery employees in adapting to flexible working conditions, navigating various employment models, and securing their financial and job stability. Furthermore, this section explores the themes of "worker autonomy," "job security," and "financial security," each providing profound insights into the conditions that shape the professional lives of couriers. Through this exploration, I aim to understand better the balance delivery employees maintain between independence, flexibility, and security in their roles.

4.1.1.1. Financial Security in the Gig Economy

The first theme includes findings on how platform workers can earn a good income through the courier profession, cover expenses, and ensure financial security. Independent couriers emphasized that their earnings are good and highlighted that their main motivation for doing this job is a decent income. They argue that it is possible to

earn a good income depending on the working hours, as explained by an independent courier below. The comments of I3 can be instantiated here.

If we consider the conditions of that time, I believe the minimum wage was around 3.000,00 Turkish liras in 2021. For example, I know that I earned three thousand liras in three days, and then I didn't work for three days. So, there are workers who invoice up to 40.000,00 Turkish liras.

I7 expressed a supportive comment indicating that the income of independent couriers is sufficient by saying, *“I am satisfied with my income.”*

However, when participants were asked which is more advantageous in terms of income between working as an insured employee and working as a freelance courier, I3 responded as follows:

Financially, of course, working as a courier is more advantageous... Financially, the income I earn as an insured worker in the warehouse cannot be compared to working here as an independent courier.

On the other hand, I8, who worked as a full-time employee in the same company, commented when asked why he stopped working as a full-time employee and worked as an independent courier:

Let me tell you frankly, I would rather do a regular job outside with that money than take this risk. You do the same job but earn less than those working as independent couriers.

In my observations during the research, it became evident that financial motivation is a central factor influencing the decision to work as an independent courier. The significant income disparity between insured employees and freelance couriers emerged consistently, highlighting the economic incentives that drive workers toward the gig economy. For instance, I3's experience underscores the potential for high earnings within a short period, contrasting sharply with traditional employment's relatively lower and more consistent income. This aligns with the broader trend observed in the gig economy, where workers are attracted by the possibility of higher, albeit less stable, income.

However, the reliance on the pay-per-delivery system introduces a layer of financial unpredictability. My observations revealed that the income of independent couriers is directly tied to their workload, which can fluctuate based on demand, personal capacity, and external factors such as weather or traffic conditions. This pays structure incentivizes longer working hours and increased productivity but also exposes workers to risks due to the lack of guaranteed income or benefits typically associated with full-time employment.

Moreover, I8's comment reflects a critical perspective on independent contractors' financial risks and rewards. While independent couriers may earn more, the lack of job security, benefits, and protections available to full-time employees poses significant risks. This trade-off between higher immediate earnings and long-term financial stability is a crucial consideration for workers in the gig economy.

In conclusion, financial security emerges as a complex and multifaceted theme in gig work. The potential for high earnings attracts workers, but the associated risks and the need for sustained high performance to maintain income levels present challenges. This dynamic underscore the need for a balanced approach that considers immediate financial benefits, long-term security, and well-being for gig workers. The following sections will present platform managers' comments on couriers' financial motivations, providing a complementary perspective on this issue

4.1.1.2. Independence and Flexibility

Independent and flexible working models of self-employed couriers were also investigated during the interviews. The codes obtained from the interviews with the participants are flexible working hours, freedom of schedules, self-employed person, and independent working.

I7 mentions that as an independent courier, they have control of their working hours:

There is no boss; you do your work and set your working hours.

I3 said the following about their freedom in working hours;

For example, I could start any time I wanted and choose my working hours. However, I do not know what other independent couriers think. I was earning as much as I worked.

However, I9 responded when asked about the motivation for working as a courier:

Comfort, earnings etc... The reason why I prefer this job.

I9 also made the following comment comparing full-time work with working flexible hours as an independent courier:

Before, when I worked as an independent courier, my working hours were more flexible. Now, I have to be in the warehouse full-time.

As the quote above highlights, food delivery work is a job with freedom and liberty that allows workers to determine how and when they work and ultimately, their income.

It is considered to be characterized by flexibility in planning when and where one wants to work.

Moreover, location independence in the gig economy enables workers to perform their duties from various locales without the constraints of a fixed workplace. This flexibility is exemplified by the operations of gig-based couriers, who, unlike traditional employees constrained to specific business locations, can commence their work in one district and continue their duties anywhere throughout the day as long as they fulfil their scheduled commitments.

A courier (I3) working in a completely independent model has expressed her support for the independent working model, emphasizing its flexibility. I3 underlines a sense of ownership over all aspects of the job, reinforced by regulatory requirements such as possessing a tax plate, which further binds them to their responsibilities.

For example, you decide the hours you work and the money you earn. We work on our motorbike. We pay for the fuel ourselves. We cover the maintenance ourselves. When we have an accident, the costs belong to us. Everything else belongs to me. I determine my earnings and my working hours. We are

considered self-employed because we already have a tax plate and so on. We own our own business.

My observations show that while the promise of flexibility is a significant attraction for many couriers, it is essential to scrutinize these promises critically. Independent work often entails a heavy burden of responsibility and self-reliance. For instance, couriers must cover operational costs, including fuel, maintenance, and accident expenses, which employers typically cover in traditional employment settings. While providing flexibility, this independence also imposes a significant financial and operational risk on the workers.

Furthermore, the gig economy's promise of flexibility must be understood within the context of worker heterogeneity. The workforce is diverse, with some individuals working full-time and others part-time, each with varying experiences and perceptions of their employment model. This heterogeneity necessitates a nuanced understanding of how different employment models are perceived and experienced by workers in the gig economy, which will be examined in the next section.

In conclusion, the gig economy's theme of independence and flexibility reveals a complex interplay between autonomy and responsibility. While the freedom to set one's working hours and conditions is a significant benefit, it comes with substantial financial and operational burdens. The following section will further explore these dynamics, considering the diverse experiences of gig workers in the online food and grocery delivery sector.

4.1.1.3. Career Path Uncertainty

In this section, the interview questions focused on evaluating the impact of the absence of a clear career path, a characteristic inherent in the gig economy model, on the sustainability of this employment framework. Generally, individuals working as motor couriers emphasized the challenging nature of their work and the essential role of motivation. It was posited that the model's sustainability is contingent upon such motivation. For instance, one female interviewee (3) highlighted the difficulties of working as an independent courier, stating the importance of passion for the job:

If you really want to do it, you can do it. However, apart from that, there is no situation like it rained, I cannot work...you cannot do this job then. You need to love it a little bit. It would be best if you wanted to work in this job.

However, the words of another courier (I4) who continues to work as an independent courier regarding his motivation to work are as follows:

The work can be really demanding, especially in bad weather. Also, there's a lot of uncertainty. Some days are great, and I make a lot of deliveries and good money. Other days, not so much. There's no steady pay check, and that can be stressful.

I4 also made following comment;

The reason why I continue to work is firstly because I like motorbikes and secondly because of the earnings from this job.

Through my observations, the absence of a clear career path in the independent contractor model may influence the sustainability of this employment model. It is also observed that the motivation to continue working as an independent courier stem primarily from personal interests and financial incentives. On the other hand, this lack of a defined career progression can be seen as both a challenge and a unique feature of the gig economy. On the one hand, it may deter individuals seeking long-term career development; on the other hand, it may attract those who value flexibility and immediate financial rewards over traditional career advancement.

The findings indicate that the motivation to persist in this model is driven by intrinsic factors, such as a passion for the job, and extrinsic factors, such as financial remuneration. For example, having a genuine interest in the work to withstand its challenges is crucial for independent couriers. This illustrates that a personal passion for the work is essential for overcoming the inherent difficulties associated with being an independent courier.

Similarly, financial incentives and personal enjoyment play a significant role in sustaining their engagement in the gig economy. The dual motivations of personal

interest and financial gain reflect the importance of these factors in maintaining their commitment to this employment model.

In conclusion, the sustainability of the gig economy employment model, particularly in motor couriers, heavily depends on the workers' motivation. The absence of a clear career path necessitates a strong personal drive and financial incentive to maintain engagement in the job. Overall, the motivation of independent contractors is multifaceted, balancing the desire for financial stability with the need for personal fulfilment and flexibility. The subsequent section will delve deeper into these motivational aspects from the perspective of platform managers.

4.1.2. Platform Manager

Within the intricate landscape of delivery platforms, this pivotal chapter directs our attention to the perspective of platform managers. Through a rigorous exploration grounded in qualitative interviews, we illuminate the multifaceted relationship between platforms and the experiences of independent couriers. These findings provide a nuanced understanding of the managerial decisions, challenges, and strategic manoeuvres that shape the gig economy. As I delve into the pivotal role of platform managers, I unravel the delicate balance they strike between operational efficiency, equitable practices, and the well-being of couriers. In line with this approach, the following themes are presented under this element: “turnover rate” and “flexibility”.

4.1.2.1. Job security and Career Path Uncertainty

Characterized by a dynamic and decentralized workforce, the gig economy presents unique challenges related to job security. Within this environment, independent couriers hold a crucial position, yet they are often affected by high turnover rates, which concern workers and employers. In interviews conducted with managers, it was reported that couriers typically do not view this type of work as a long-term and secure employment option and often engage in it out of necessity. Moreover, a general analysis of the responses from managers suggests that a relationship exists between job insecurity and the absence of a clear career path, with both issues being discussed under the same thematic category. Managers provided varying perspectives on the implications of high turnover rates and job security. For instance, I6 acknowledged the

flexibility of the gig economy model but emphasized the sector's high turnover rate, suggesting that this dynamic nature might both attract and repel couriers:

It is possible to work with different companies; it is a flexible model, but at the same time, it is a sector with very high turnover. It has incredible employment potential.

I10 elaborated on the operational challenges posed by high turnover, highlighting the continuous cycle of onboarding new couriers due to dissatisfaction or competitive pressures:

Many couriers do not select slots without informing us. Instead of these couriers, new people register and sign up for the app. As a result, labor turnover is very high. Some couriers leave due to dissatisfaction, while others take up different activities, sometimes even working for competitors. Our competitors sometimes impose mandatory 10-hour working days, limiting the couriers' ability to work for our company and choose slots.

Field staff manager I1 provided a pragmatic view, noting that the independent contractor status of couriers allows them to easily switch employers, impacting their commitment to any single platform:

These people are not on our payroll. Therefore, when they are overwhelmed, they can say, "I am not working; I will leave, and I will work with other companies tomorrow.

However, companies have acknowledged the potential adverse ramifications of high employee turnover rates in numerous industries. Within this context, companies have asserted their proactive efforts to retain independent couriers despite their status as independent contractors. This endeavor is driven by the recognition of their long-standing collaboration, familiarity with the company culture, adeptness in business operations, and accumulated experience over the years. I1 emphasized the value of experienced couriers familiar with the company's operations and culture, underscoring efforts to cultivate long-term relationships despite the independent nature of the work:

Each company has its own cultural structure and working model. We want to work with experienced people as much as possible. We want an employee to work for at least 4 and 5 years. We are building a system in this way. We prefer to work with more experienced people who know our system, know our working method and are happy to work with us.

Conversely, other platform managers expressed optimism regarding the sustainability of the gig economy model. I6 projected ongoing demand for couriers, linking the sector's robustness to the country's economic conditions and the perpetual need for reliable income sources:

I think that the courier sector will continue to be in demand; that is, this transport sector will continue to be in demand.

I6 also argued that economic instability drives individuals to persist in this line of work, suggesting that the gig economy's flexibility and financial opportunities make it an enduring option:

I do not foresee that, even if the independent courier model is banned or the demand in this labor market decreases, these individuals will stop being couriers because the question arises of whether there is something else they can do instead.

However, another manager, when discussing the sustainability of this model, argued that given its flexibility and other advantages, workers will continue to participate in this model in the future. He highlighted that the inherent flexibility allows couriers to balance their work with personal commitments, making it an attractive option despite potential challenges. Additionally, he mentioned that the financial incentives and the opportunity for autonomy contribute to the model's enduring appeal. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the demand for delivery services, as more people prefer to have their shopping delivered to their homes. I10' statement is as follows:

Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, the delivery sector has started to shift towards this model. I believe that all sectors will now move in this direction. Even in the white-collar sector, the dominant thought has become that I will no longer work for a single employer; instead, I will decide how I will operate, what tasks I will engage in, where I will provide support, and how much I will earn.

Overall, the managers' perspectives reveal a nuanced understanding of the job security and career path uncertainties inherent in the gig economy. While high turnover and lack of a clear career trajectory pose challenges, the model's flexibility, financial incentives, and adaptability offer significant advantages that sustain its appeal. The following section will delve into the various employment models within the gig economy, examining how they impact platform managers.

4.1.2.2. Work Model

As revealed through interviews, platform managers occupy a critical role as intermediaries within the gig economy. These entities serve as vital connectors, seamlessly linking advanced technology solutions with the practical execution of courier services. Beyond mere software provision, platforms orchestrate logistics, payments, and operational efficiency. Their function extends beyond code; they embody the fusion of digital innovation and real-world impact. By facilitating interactions between couriers, customers, and the broader ecosystem, platforms bridge the digital and physical realms, ensuring the smooth functioning of the gig economy. In accordance with the results, the themes to be addressed within this category are “carrier, transport and regulatory”.

As I6 delivery platform legal counsel succinctly put it:

We actually see transportation as a side business. We see ourselves as a technology company that brings the customer and the product together, so everything related to logistics, including warehousing, handling processes, and so on, is done by third parties from whom we get services.

I10, which is also legal counsel of another platform, has a similar view:

The company generally sees itself as a technology provider and a platform. The company has no interest in being a carrier. i.e., of course, it has a transport organizer certificate from the Ministry of Transport, but this is actually a bit of a regulatory requirement. There are a lot of carriers already doing the transport business. They can do it much better. The company is interested in providing the platform and the technology.

Online food delivery platforms are known for providing technological solutions that have become immensely popular among restaurants and customers. A prospective consumer can choose the food or grocery products they want, compare options, research deals from different restaurants, place orders, and securely pay without using cash by using a smartphone application. The ordering and delivery system for food is supported by intelligent planning systems that use artificial intelligence to organize, plan, and deliver prepared meals based on the geographic locations of restaurants and customers. Delivery personnel are compensated based on the number of orders and the quality or speed of delivery.

However, it is not appropriate to consider these companies independently of the postal or logistics sectors merely because they position themselves as intermediaries. Most online food and grocery deliveries fall within the 0-30 kg range, so they can be considered postal items under Law No. 6475¹⁸. However, for the "riders/couriers" who take part in the transportation of these deliveries, issues such as whether they comply with the traffic rules and whether the clothes, they wear comply with the rules will fall within the scope of the Ministry of Transport Road transport legislation¹⁹.

Classifying these online delivery platforms as merely technological intermediaries shapes their operational strategies. This classification allows them to navigate regulatory environments more flexibly, with a focus on technological innovation and enhancing user experience.

¹⁸ <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/>

¹⁹ <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/>

4.1.2.3. Employment Model

In the multifaceted gig economy, the employment landscape for independent couriers significantly differs across companies. Some organizations adopt hybrid structures, engaging both payroll employees and independent couriers, while others rely solely on independent contractors. For example, I10, a representative of a company that delivers food and groceries by only independent couriers explained the model as follows:

From the beginning, we have preferred the model in our company where the work is carried out only by independent contractors with such micro-transportations. therefore, from the beginning, there are no contractor at all.

One noted drawback of the hybrid model is the potential for demotivation among salaried employees who witness independent couriers performing similar tasks, possibly under different work conditions. As an example of this, I5, the warehouse manager of a company working with the hybrid model, stated that a full-time employee courier expressed the desire to become an independent contractor as follows:

For example, a man working as a full-time worker receives a salary of 25.000,00 TL, and a person working as a courier has the possibility of earning a salary of 50.000,00 TL when we subtract his expenses. Why should he work full time? He doesn't work anyway.

This issue is further compounded by Türkiye's current transportation legislation, which challenges the employment model of delivery platforms, particularly in micro transport. Regulations designed for large companies require extensive documentation and vehicle ownership, hindering small-scale couriers. However, e-commerce has increased demand for short-distance deliveries, emphasizing the need to update laws to support this trend. One manager stated about this as follows:

There is no such thing as micro transport in Türkiye's transport legislation, but micro transport should come. Unfortunately, when you want to be a carrier

in Türkiye, you need to get documents and be a very large company in some things, such as transport documents. It would help if you made integrations. There are conditions for purchasing self-owned vehicles and so on.

In the interview, it was pointed out that the existing legislation in Türkiye is outdated and imposes significant burdens on transport companies. Such issues are particularly evident in the context of micro transport, a concept that has yet to be formally recognized in regulatory frameworks. As e-commerce grows, the demand for micro transport, where goods are delivered over short distances, will inevitably increase. The same manager expressed this need as follows:

I think our legislation is slightly behind in this regard because it imposes solemn obligations on carriers. This will also come because, with the development of e-commerce, the need for micro transport will increase. A concept called local commerce has emerged. You can order from a few kilometers away. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out micro transport from an origin point to a destination point a few kilometers away. People working for these services are also needed.

In conclusion, the gig economy presents a diverse landscape of employment models for independent couriers, each shaped by organizational strategies and regulatory frameworks. While some companies opt for a streamlined approach relying solely on independent contractors, others navigate hybrid structures that blend salaried employees and independent couriers. This diversity reflects varying approaches to balancing operational efficiency, workforce motivation, and compliance with existing regulations. As Türkiye's transportation laws evolve to accommodate the burgeoning demand for micro transport driven by e-commerce, there is a pressing need for regulatory updates that support the flexibility and scalability inherent to modern delivery platforms. Addressing these regulatory challenges is essential to creating a conducive regulatory environment that supports the sustainable growth of micro-transport services, fostering opportunities for both businesses and couriers within Türkiye's evolving e-commerce landscape.

4.1.2.4. Independence and Flexibility

To comprehensively understand the approach towards employee flexibility within companies, detailed questions about this subject were posed to managers during the interviews. This targeted inquiry was essential for several reasons: it aimed to uncover the underlying principles and strategies that companies employ to foster a flexible work environment and to evaluate the effectiveness of such policies in enhancing job satisfaction. By soliciting insights directly from managerial staff, the study seeks to gather authoritative perspectives on the implementation and outcomes of flexibility initiatives within the workplace.

An interview with the manager of a company (I10) utilizing this flexible system revealed significant insights. It was noted that such autonomy enhances job satisfaction and facilitates dynamic adaptation to real-time demands and opportunities, highlighting a crucial advantage of these work environments.

But they can't do it that efficiently as far as I know. Because we see that those couriers sometimes wait in front of some restaurants. We don't have such a thing, you know, the courier can be wherever he wants. They start working in the morning at the time they have committed to. But during the day he can be anywhere during the time he is active.

On the other hand, an interview with government relations manager (I2) provided insights that challenged the notion of complete flexibility within the system. The manager pointed out that despite the perceived advantages of a flexible work environment, the company must maintain a structured schedule and ensure a minimum number of couriers are available at all times, which imposes significant constraints. The manager claimed that this requirement was essential to ensure the smooth running of operations and underlined the inherent limitations of the flexible working model, stating:

You are flexible within a specific plan. A daily plan is communicated to you; you work there that day. So, it is not fully flexible. There is not fully 100 percent flexibility.

Conversely, another field manager (1) within the company, who operates exclusively with independent couriers and has no contracted employees, perceives flexible working arrangements as beneficial, particularly in enhancing the couriers' earnings. According to this manager, the dependency of the couriers on the flexible schedule contributes positively to their financial outcomes. The manager's observations on financial flexibility are articulated as follows:

For example, today, a courier works until 4 p.m. A courier also finishes his work at 2 p.m. and leaves. They have records in the system. We also have a courier that distributes until 11 p.m. This system is directly proportional to your ambition to make money. Therefore, young employees at work, those around the age of 22 and 23, "Let there be more work, give me 5 more packages, and I will go everywhere, "while more experienced couriers may think that less work is enough. This is a flexible system.

According to semi-structured interviews, these contrasting perspectives illustrate how flexibility manifests differently across various managerial contexts within the gig economy, impacting operational efficiency, job satisfaction, and financial outcomes for couriers. Some platforms claim to implement a model where flexibility is within the employer's and work plan's constraints, while other companies allow employees to choose. It has also been revealed that differing views exist regarding the classification of independent contractors, who are expected to work flexible hours, compared to traditional full-time workers, reflecting ongoing debates within the industry.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter conducts a comprehensive review of the findings, integrating insights from various academic studies on the topic and incorporating the researcher's perspective, as informed by current literature.

The discussion begins with an examination of Ashford et al.'s (2018) structural features, which constitute the foundation of this research. The findings for each feature are presented and critically analyzed, incorporating feedback from other academic studies on the topic. The data obtained from the interviews with platform employees and platform representatives, which were previously detailed separately, are also presented separately in the discussion to maintain clarity and provide distinct insights from each group. The chapter concludes by addressing the study's limitations and comprehensively evaluating the research scope and constraints.

5.1. Platform Employee Perspective

5.1.1. Financial Security

The findings on financial security among couriers in the gig economy reveal a delicate landscape where significant financial risks and instability temper the allure of high earnings. Independent couriers emphasized that the potential to earn a good income is an essential motivation for engaging in gig work. This sentiment is reflected in I3's account of earning substantial income quickly, demonstrating the appeal of gig work's financial rewards compared to traditional employment.

On the other hand, these findings regarding financial advantages diverge from the existing literature on the gig economy, which often cites flexibility and social reasons as primary drivers for gig workers (Dey et al. 2022; Rosenblat, 2016; Gleim et al.,

2019). According to Moroane (2023), the perception that food delivery gig workers have control over their earnings is a component of the freedom ideology promoted by platform companies. This principle motivates workers to consent to the platform's terms by creating an illusion of autonomy. Nevertheless, this perceived control covers the instability in working hours, and wages are inherently a result of the platform's design rather than a true reflection of the worker's effort and input.

However, this potential for high earnings is not without its challenges. The pay-per-delivery system introduces a degree of financial unpredictability that can significantly impact couriers' economic stability. The fluctuating workload, influenced by demand, personal capacity, and external conditions like weather or traffic, means that income is inherently variable. This variability incentivizes longer working hours and increased productivity but also exposes couriers to the risk of inconsistent earnings and the absence of guaranteed income or benefits typical of full-time employment.

The comparative perspective between independent couriers and full-time employees further illuminates the financial trade-offs in the gig economy. I3's observation highlights the significant income disparity favoring independent couriers, while I8's comment underscores the perceived financial disadvantages of full-time employment. However, I8 also points out the critical risks associated with gig work, such as the lack of job security, benefits, and protections. This contrast reveals a central tension in the gig economy: while the prospect of higher immediate earnings is attractive, it comes at the cost of long-term financial stability and security.

These insights align with Ashford et al.'s (2018) theoretical framework on the economic viability of gig economy workers. The precarious financial conditions and the cycle of fluctuating incomes highlighted in the findings are consistent with the broader challenges faced by independent workers. The reliance on a pay-per-delivery system exemplifies the instability inherent in gig work, where the ability to sustain a basic income is continually at risk due to unpredictable job opportunities.

The findings also underscore the importance of considering both immediate financial benefits and long-term economic security when evaluating the impact of gig economy models on workers. While the potential for high earnings is a significant draw, the

associated risks and the need for sustained high performance to maintain income levels present ongoing challenges.

In conclusion, financial security within the gig economy is a complex and multifaceted issue. The appeal of high earnings is counterbalanced by the significant risks and instability associated with gig work. This underscores the need for policies and practices that support the financial well-being of gig workers, ensuring that the economic benefits of gig work do not come at the cost of long-term financial stability and security.

5.1.2. Independence and Flexibility

Exploring independent and flexible working models among self-employed couriers reveals a dynamic landscape shaped by autonomy and responsibility. Couriers underscored the appeal of flexible working hours and the freedom to determine their schedules, highlighting these aspects as pivotal in their choice to engage in gig work. As articulated by I7 and I3, the absence of traditional managerial oversight allows couriers to exercise control over when and how they work, influencing their earnings directly through their efforts and availability. This flexibility is particularly valued in contrast to more rigid full-time positions, as noted by I9, who transitioned from independent courier work to warehouse employment, citing a shift from flexible to fixed working hours.

Moreover, location independence emerged as a significant advantage in the gig economy. Couriers are not bound to specific physical locations, enabling them to operate across different areas throughout the day, aligning with demand fluctuations and personal preferences (Dey et al., 2022). This operational freedom underscores the gig economy's capacity to adapt to diverse consumer needs and geographical dynamics, enhancing its appeal to workers and consumers alike.

However, alongside these perceived benefits of independence and flexibility, a notable trade-off exists in financial and operational responsibilities. Self-employed couriers like I3 highlighted the burdens of covering operational costs such as fuel, maintenance, and accident expenses, which employers typically shoulder in traditional employment arrangements. This financial self-reliance underscores the precarious nature of gig

work, where income stability is contingent upon individual productivity and market conditions. As Ashford et al. (2018) stated, as workers gain more independence, they often encounter economic uncertainty and challenges in maintaining a cohesive work identity as they strive to achieve financial stability.

Furthermore, the diversity within the gig workforce complicates the narrative of independence and flexibility. While some couriers embrace the autonomy afforded by gig work, others may find themselves navigating the challenges of fluctuating income and uncertain work conditions without the safety nets of traditional employment benefits. This heterogeneity underscores the need for tailored support mechanisms and regulatory frameworks that address gig workers' diverse needs and experiences.

However, this assumption overlooks that some workers favor routine, predictable, and fixed-schedule employment over flexibility. Ignoring this aspect can lead to a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of the workforce (Tan et al., 2021). Therefore, while the gig economy's flexible nature is a key advantage for many, it is crucial to recognize and address the needs of those who prefer more conventional employment arrangements. Balancing these differing preferences should be carefully considered to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

In conclusion, while independence and flexibility are significant attractions for gig economy couriers, these benefits accompany significant responsibilities and potential financial burdens. The heterogeneous nature of gig work further complicates understanding these employment models, highlighting the need for a nuanced analysis. Future research should explore strategies to support couriers in managing these responsibilities, ensuring that the benefits of independence and flexibility do not come at the expense of financial and job security.

5.1.3. Carrier Path Uncertainty

The analysis of the interview data reveals that the need for a clear career path is a significant concern for couriers working within the gig economy. This characteristic,

inherent to the gig economy model, challenges the long-term sustainability of such employment frameworks. The absence of structured career progression can affect workers' motivation and ability to see a future in their roles (Permana, 2023). As posited by Ashford et al. (2018), the gig economy's structural characteristic of ambiguous career trajectories poses significant implications for workers' long-term engagement and satisfaction.

Independent couriers frequently emphasized the demanding nature of their work and the essential role of personal motivation in sustaining their involvement in the gig economy. Strong intrinsic motivation is crucial, as the job requires high commitment and resilience, particularly in the face of adverse conditions such as inclement weather. This necessity for passion and dedication to the work underscores the difficulty in maintaining a consistent and reliable workforce within the gig economy, where traditional career advancement opportunities still need to be improved.

Furthermore, the interviews highlighted that many couriers are driven by a love for motorbiking and the financial incentives provided by the job. This dual motivation points to a blend of personal interest and economic necessity that sustains their participation in the gig economy. However, this model's reliance on individual passion and financial motivation can be precarious. Workers who do not share this intrinsic motivation or encounter significant challenges may find it difficult to remain in the gig economy long-term, leading to high turnover rates.

The lack of career progression opportunities also means that couriers are less likely to view their roles as long-term career options. This perception can lead to a transient and unstable workforce, which challenges the sustainability of gig economy models. Therefore, companies relying on gig workers must consider how to support their workers' career aspirations and provide pathways for growth, even within the flexible structures of gig work.

The findings align with broader concerns in the literature regarding career development within the gig economy (Çiğdem, 2022). The lack of clear advancement opportunities can decrease job satisfaction and higher turnover rates as workers seek

more stable and rewarding career paths. Addressing this issue is critical for improving the sustainability and attractiveness of gig economy jobs.

In conclusion, career path uncertainty remains a significant challenge in this model, impacting worker motivation and the long-term viability of this employment model. Future research and policy initiatives should focus on creating supportive structures that offer career development opportunities for gig workers. By addressing these concerns, it is possible to enhance the stability and appeal of gig economy roles, ensuring that they provide both flexibility and financial benefits and a sense of long-term career fulfilment.

5.2. Platform Manager Perspective

5.2.1. Job security and Career Path Uncertainty

The gig economy, characterized by its dynamic and decentralized workforce, presents unique challenges related to job security and career path uncertainty, particularly from the perspective of platform managers. According to Ashford et al., (1989) workers in this sector face severe hurdles to their survival, including job uncertainty and unstable finances. The high turnover rates among independent couriers are a significant concern for workers and employers. Managers reported that couriers often engaging in it out of necessity rather than choice. This perception contributes to the high turnover rates, which challenge the sustainability and efficiency of the gig economy model.

A critical issue platform managers highlight is the direct link between job insecurity and the absence of a clear career path. Couriers often move between companies for better opportunities or higher earnings, indicating a lack of loyalty or long-term commitment to any platform. This behavior underscores the gig economy's inherent instability, where workers prioritize immediate financial gain over long-term career development. Managers noted that the flexibility of the gig economy allows couriers to balance their work with personal commitments, which is attractive but also leads to frequent job changes and a transient workforce.

Despite these challenges, some platform managers believe that the gig economy model is sustainable and will continue to thrive. They argue that gig work's flexibility and financial incentives significantly attract workers. The ongoing demand for delivery services, significantly heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, supports this view (Henderson, 2020). Due to economic instability and the need for reliable income sources, the pandemic has underscored the importance of delivery services, driving more individuals to seek employment in this sector. Managers suggest that the gig economy provides a viable option for many workers struggling to find stable employment.

However, the high turnover rates and lack of job security necessitate proactive efforts from companies to retain independent couriers. Managers recognize the value of long-standing collaboration with experienced couriers who are familiar with the company's culture and operations. Efforts to retain couriers include building systems that encourage longer tenures and offering support that aligns with the couriers' needs. The goal is to balance the flexibility that attracts workers with stability measures that reduce turnover and enhance job satisfaction.

The findings indicate a nuanced perspective on the sustainability of the gig economy model. While the inherent flexibility and financial incentives are significant attractors, the lack of job security and career path uncertainty are substantial challenges. Platform managers must navigate these complexities by implementing strategies that retain workers while maintaining the model's inherent flexibility. This balancing act is crucial for the long-term viability of the gig economy.

In conclusion, platform managers' perspectives highlight the gig economy's dual nature: its ability to provide flexible and financially rewarding opportunities, coupled with the significant challenges of job security and career path uncertainty. Addressing these issues through strategic management practices and supportive policies can enhance the sustainability of the gig economy model, benefiting both workers and employers.

5.2.2. Work Model

As revealed through interviews, platform managers primarily identify as technology providers, highlighting their position in connecting customers and products while outsourcing logistics. Transport and logistics firms handling goods over 30 kg are regulated by the Ministry of Transport²⁰ (Road Transport Regulation), while deliveries between 0-30 kg fall under the postal regulations governed by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (Postal Law)²¹. Currently, there is no specific regulation for the business models of online delivery platforms. Consequently, companies' tendency to describe themselves as technology providers may be driven by a desire to remain outside these existing regulatory frameworks. This strategic self-identification not only shapes their operational strategies but also enables them to navigate regulatory environments more flexibly, focusing on technological innovation and user experience enhancement.

Moreover, this emphasis on technology over direct logistical control could significantly impact the working conditions of couriers, who are often the most vulnerable in this employment model. The lack of direct oversight can lead to inconsistencies in working conditions, impacting the overall sustainability and appeal of gig economy jobs for couriers.

In order to provide customers with comparable protection when interacting with online platforms, the majority of members of the European Regulators Group for Postal Services (ERGP) also supported the application of the postal regulatory framework to these platforms. A few National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) questioned whether this would really make an impact, pointing out that general horizontal EU legislation already provided consumer protections in e-commerce (Dunn, 2022).

5.2.3. Employment Model

As revealed from interviews, platform managers play a distinct role in the gig economy by acting as intermediaries that link advanced technology solutions with the practical execution of courier services. Platform managers claim they bridge the gap between

²⁰ <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/>

²¹ <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/>

the digital and physical realms by facilitating interactions between couriers, customers, and the broader ecosystem, thereby maintaining operational flow.

Similar example can be given from Indian food delivery platform. Food delivery platforms in India claim no employer-employee relationship because the partners are independent contractors, and the platform merely serves as an intermediary. Therefore, a local food delivery job can be classified as a gig because local food delivery platforms in India do not recognize any traditional employment relationship with delivery workers (Sinha & Pandit, 2023).

The classification of gig workers as independent contractors, as seen with Indian food delivery platforms, presents significant disadvantages from both regulatory and worker perspectives. From a regulatory standpoint, platforms operating solely as intermediaries can evade accountability for labor standards and working conditions, potentially leading to exploitation and abuse. This lack of accountability makes it challenging for regulatory bodies to enforce labor laws and ensure workers receive fair wages, benefits, and protections (Sinha & Pandit, 2023). In addition, enforcement of existing labor laws becomes problematic, necessitating new legal frameworks to adapt to these non-traditional work arrangements.

Furthermore, by avoiding the responsibilities associated with traditional employment, these platforms gain an unfair competitive advantage over businesses that adhere to standard labor regulations (Economie, 2024). This can lead to a race to the bottom, where companies may cut corners on worker protections to remain competitive.

From the gig worker's perspective, the absence of a formal employer-employee relationship means they are typically ineligible for employee benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, retirement plans, and job security. They also face income instability due to irregular and unpredictable earnings, making financial planning and stability difficult. With limited bargaining power and legal recourse, gig workers often struggle to negotiate better pay or working conditions. They may need more protection in cases of disputes or unfair treatment.

The employment landscape for independent couriers varies significantly across companies within the gig economy in Türkiye. Some platforms adopt hybrid models that include payroll employees and independent couriers, while others rely solely on independent contractors. This diversity presents some challenges and opportunities. For example, hybrid models can lead to potential demotivation among salaried employees, who may perceive a disparity in earnings compared to independent couriers performing similar tasks. This perception can drive full-time employees to consider transitioning to independent contractor roles, affecting workforce stability and morale.

From a managerial perspective, this dynamic necessitates careful consideration of workforce composition and its impact on employee motivation. Companies that rely solely on independent contractors benefit from greater flexibility and reduced overhead costs (Communities, 2009) but face challenges in ensuring consistent service quality and managing high turnover rates. Managers should navigate these complexities to maintain a stable and motivated workforce.

Türkiye's current transportation legislation poses significant challenges for the employment models used by delivery platforms, particularly in micro transport. Regulations and authorizations²² designed for large companies require extensive documentation and vehicle ownership, hindering the operations of small-scale couriers and limiting the flexibility that gig economy models rely on. The outdated EU regulatory framework fails to recognize the unique needs of the gig economy, necessitating updates to support the growing demand for short-distance deliveries driven by the rise of e-commerce (Dieke et al., 2021).

Platform managers advocate for legislative changes to better accommodate micro transports. They emphasize that the current legal requirements impose significant burdens on couriers and companies, which can stifle innovation and efficiency in the sector.

Despite the challenges, platform managers remain optimistic about the sustainability of the gig economy model. They argue that gig work's inherent flexibility and

²² <https://www.btk.gov.tr/posta-yetkilendirmesi-icin-basvuru-adimlari>

autonomy will continue attracting couriers. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the importance of delivery services, accelerating the shift towards gig economy models (Dunn, 2022). The increased demand for these services highlights the sector's robustness and potential for continued growth.

Managers recognize that economic instability often drives individuals to seek reliable sources of income, making the gig economy an appealing option. As recommended in Ashford et al.'s study (2018), without the support and accountability that comes from being part of a stable organization, individually derived job and career persistence is foundational for gig work resilience. However, the high turnover rates and job insecurity require proactive strategies to retain couriers. Managers are implementing systems to encourage longer tenures and provide support that aligns with couriers' needs. By fostering a supportive environment and offering opportunities for skill development, companies aim to balance flexibility with stability.

5.2.4. Independence and Flexibility

The analysis of the interview data reveals that platform managers perceive the implementation of flexible working models as both advantageous and challenging within the gig economy. Flexible working arrangements are designed to enhance job satisfaction by providing couriers with autonomy over their schedules. This flexibility allows couriers to adapt dynamically to real-time demands and opportunities, which is seen as a significant advantage of the gig economy model.

Platform managers highlight that autonomy and flexibility contribute positively to couriers' job satisfaction and financial outcomes. The ability to choose working hours and locations enables couriers to optimize their earnings according to their availability and ambition. Younger couriers, in particular, take advantage of this flexibility to maximize their income by taking on more deliveries. In contrast, more experienced couriers may prefer a balanced approach that suits their lifestyle.

However, the notion of complete flexibility is challenged by the inherent operational requirements of delivery platforms. Managers acknowledge that while couriers enjoy independence, the company must maintain a structured schedule to ensure operational

efficiency. This means couriers are “flexible within a specific plan”, as one manager said. The necessity of having a minimum number of couriers available at all times imposes constraints on the purported flexibility, indicating that the system is only partially without structure. This balance between flexibility and structure is crucial for maintaining smooth operations and meeting customer expectations.

Moreover, the flexibility model's effectiveness in enhancing job satisfaction is not uniform across all workforce levels. While field managers working exclusively with independent couriers recognize the financial benefits of flexible schedules, the government relations manager pointed out that the need for a reliable and predictable workforce sometimes limits flexibility. This dichotomy underscores the complexity of implementing flexible working arrangements in a way that satisfies both operational needs and worker preferences.

The interview findings suggest that the success of flexible working models in the gig economy is closely tied to the individual motivations and circumstances of couriers, aligning with insights from Rawat & Kandari's (2024) research. The ability to control one's work schedule and location is a significant draw for many couriers, contributing to the appeal of gig work. However, this flexibility must be managed within the constraints of ensuring adequate service coverage and operational efficiency.

In conclusion, the perspectives of platform managers on independence and flexibility highlight the nuanced nature of these working arrangements within the gig economy. While flexibility is a crucial attractor for couriers and can enhance job satisfaction and earnings, it must be balanced with the need for operational structure and reliability. Future research should explore strategies to optimize this balance, ensuring that flexible working models provide tangible benefits to couriers without compromising the efficiency and sustainability of the gig economy model.

CHAPTER 6

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Regulatory Perspective

Platform work fundamentally challenges the traditional classification of workers, particularly regarding the distinction between independent contractors and employees. The degree of control platforms exert over their workers often sparks debate regarding the appropriate classification. According to Kilhoffer and Lenaerts (2017), this debate is intensified because platform work needs to be toned to fit uniformly within the traditional employment frameworks. Moreover, the diversity of operational models across platforms and the variations in national laws across jurisdictions suggest no single answer to this question (OSHA, 2015). Each case may require a nuanced understanding and application of local laws about the specific work conditions.

Many argue that platform workers, due to the level of control and dependence on the platform, should be considered employees of the companies for which they provide services. Recognizing platforms as employers in this context would address several pressing issues, including job and financial insecurity (Healy et al., 2017). As employees, gig workers would gain access to benefits such as minimum wages and Social Security, which are typically unavailable to independent contractors (Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2017; Harris & Krueger, 2015).

On the other hand, working as a contract under the gig economy model offers more flexibility than traditional employment (Golden, 2001). Specifically, gig workers can select their working hours, choose their tasks, and engage with multiple platforms simultaneously. However, transitioning from an independent contractor to an employee status would likely restrict these freedoms (Reynolds & Renzulli, 2005). As employees, platform workers would have to adhere to more structured work schedules

and conditions, potentially sacrificing the flexibility that originally attracted many to platform work. This shift underscores a significant trade-off between security and flexibility in the gig economy.

Governments globally, including Türkiye, are evaluating regulatory frameworks for gig economy platforms due to societal concerns regarding the compensation and benefits of employees (Kilhoffer & Lenaerts, 2017) . This assessment includes redefining the relationship between platforms and freelancers as employer-employee and exploring several alternative approaches. According to researchers (Drahokoupil and Piasna, 2017; Frenken, 2017; Prassl and Risak, 2017), five potential solutions have been identified:

1. **Intermediary Classification:** Designate online platforms as intermediaries while recognizing platform workers as independent contractors.
2. **Employer-Employee Relationship:** Treat online platforms as employers and platform workers as employees.
3. **Intermediate Category:** Establish a third category for gig workers between traditional employees and independent contractors. Workers in this category would maintain their status as independent contractors. However, they would also be free to choose their working hours and tasks, alongside additional social rights such as social security and protection against unjust platform bans.
4. **Competition Law Amendment:** Modify competition laws to allow independent contractors to engage in collective bargaining with online platforms, particularly concerning issues like minimum wages, social security, and working conditions.
5. **Hourly Wage Criterion:** Use hourly wages as a criterion for employment status. For instance, if an individual's earnings fall below 150% of the minimum wage for a period of one month, their status as an independent contractor would automatically convert to that of an employee.

These proposals aim to balance the flexibility desired by gig workers with the security traditionally afforded by employee status, addressing critical issues within the gig economy.

6.2. Proposed Regulation for Independent Contractors

The absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework for independent courier in Türkiye has highlighted the urgent need for legislation tailored to address the unique challenges of this sector. With the rise of independent couriers and the gig economy, it has become crucial to establish guidelines that ensure fair working conditions, safety, and accountability. Recognizing these needs, discussions with regulatory authorities have been initiated to explore potential provisions for future legislation.

Interviews were conducted with two representatives from the regulatory authority to explore the potential regulation of gig economy delivery services within Türkiye. These discussions aimed to gather their general perspectives on the subject and their insights into possible provisions for future legislation. Drawing from these conversations, a draft regulation was developed to capture the regulatory stance, ensuring that the proposed rules align with the informed viewpoints of the authority representatives.

As part of the working group tasked with drafting this regulation, I collaborated with the representatives from the Regulatory Authority, given my employment within the same institution. The draft regulation we formulated was explicitly tailored for postal items under the jurisdiction of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK). However, as there is currently no existing regulation for online food and grocery delivery, which falls within the scope of this thesis, I utilized the postal item draft regulation as a framework. This framework served as the foundation for developing a proposed regulation specifically adapted to address the complexities and requirements of the online food delivery sector, thereby aligning it with the focus of this research.

As outlined in the literature review, it is evident that there is a pressing need to regulate independent couriers, with several nations (Belgium, Spain, Italy, Germany) having already enacted specific regulations. However, within our country, there exists no comprehensive regulatory framework for motor carriers, which extends to the absence of regulations concerning independent couriers.

The organization of independent couriers in Türkiye is more complex than in European countries. Compared to their Western counterparts, postal couriers in Türkiye have not gained the status of a prestigious profession. Low wages and difficult working conditions have continued to be the two opposing factors that used to characterize postal courier work. The fact that the postal sector operates with low-profit margins also contributed to this situation. However, with the impact of the pandemic and the rapid development of e-commerce, it is seen that the sector has significantly increased its profitability rates. Postal couriers have also started to share in this prosperity with the independent contractor model, and conditions have emerged to increase their material and moral satisfaction. As stated in this study's findings, an arrangement for employee hours may be considered to ensure this financial security in the long term.

On the other hand, the independent contractor model is physically demanding and involves many risks, especially for moto-couriers. It is considered essential to implement the laws on occupational health and safety and to ensure the working environment for those working in the independent courier model with an adequate supervision system. For this reason, an article can be added to the proposed regulation of working conditions.

However, for the issue of job security and career path uncertainty, it is considered that necessary measures should be taken, and necessary improvements should be made to ensure that all employed employees receive a fair and equitable wage supported by social protection tools for themselves and their families and that they can work in this model for a long time. When the model applied in Türkiye is evaluated, it should be considered that companies employing workers with the independent contractor model do not prefer the contracted employee model in any way for the so-called white-collar employees. In contrast, almost all blue-collar employees are built on this model. Thus, all the risks arising from doing the job are basically on the workers on whom the entire distribution supply chain is built. For this reason, with the proposed regulation, minimum compensation for independent contractors can be provided to eliminate this risk and ensure a stable life for employees.

Considering all these evaluations, the proposed regulation has been prepared by including the following factors:

- Distinguishing between the so-called gig economy model, which is a delivery model based on non-professional distributors operating through algorithms on platforms such as Amazon Flex, and the independent contractor model applied in Turkey, which is not much different from the working conditions of payroll distributors and only relieves companies from some responsibilities towards workers,
- Independent contractors should be prohibited from delivering parcels at a wage lower than that stipulated by the collective labor agreement for the transport sector.
- Initiate a coordinated effort among the relevant public institutions to enforce the laws on occupational health and safety and to ensure that an adequate inspection system secures the working environment for those working in the artisan courier model.

Considering all these factors and following extensive consultations with representatives of regulatory authorities, as well as analysis of international precedents, a draft legislative regulation tailored specifically for motor couriers operating predominantly as independent contractors has been developed. This draft directive addresses the legislative gap by offering a structured framework that aligns with global standards while responding to local needs. The draft is intended as a recommendation for policymakers in anticipation of future regulations concerning online food and grocery delivery, which is the focus of this thesis.

However, it is proposed that the following additions be made to the draft legislation under the 'Definitions' section:

Article 1 sets the foundational definitions and roles within the courier service structure, delineating the relationships between principal businesses, subcontractor

businesses, digital applications, couriers, and regulatory bodies like the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure. These definitions directly affect Ashford's structural characteristics, impacting job autonomy, work environment, performance measurement, and organizational integration.

The specific definitions included in Article 1 are as follows:

- **Principal Business:** A company that receives courier services through an independent employment contract or subcontractor businesses.
- **Subcontractor Business:** A company that provides courier services in response to the demands of one or more principal businesses.
- **Ministry:** Refers to the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure.
- **Digital Application:** A digital platform established to facilitate, manage, and monitor all tasks necessary to improve the working conditions of couriers.
- **Courier:** An individual or driver acting on behalf of the principal business that transports courier shipments within the same province to a maximum distance of 30 kilometers.
- **Courier Shipment:** Shipments that are transported, stored, or distributed without undergoing any sorting/transferring processes and are not additionally packaged by the carrier.
- **Professional Competency Certificate:** A certificate issued by the Professional Competency Authority to couriers, enabling them to provide courier services.

Article 2 establishes the general principles for applying the proposed regulatory framework, highlighting the need to enhance service quality, ensure equality and transparency, consider national and international standards, and balance security and sustainability.

The specific definitions included in Article 2 are as follows:

Article 2 – In the application of these Procedures and Principles, the following fundamental principles shall be observed:

- a) Enhancement of service quality.
- b) Ensuring equality, transparency, and competition.
- c) Consideration of national regulations and national and/or international standards.
- d) Balancing security and sustainability.

By defining the principles of equality, transparency, and competition, Article 2 promotes a framework where couriers have more precise guidelines and expectations about their work. This reduces ambiguity and allows for greater autonomy in how couriers meet service standards. Couriers can leverage their independence to optimize their routes and work methods, which aligns with the characteristics of job autonomy.

Article 3 establishes the requirement for couriers to obtain a personal operating permit from the Ministry to operate within provincial boundaries. This article outlines a process where the Ministry evaluates each courier's operation before granting permission, ensuring compliance with specific criteria.

Article 3 provides the following specific definitions:

Article 3 – (1) Couriers must obtain permission from the Ministry to operate within the same provincial boundaries.

(2) Permission is granted if the Ministry deems the courier's operation appropriate.

(3) The permission is personal and cannot be used by anyone other than the permit holder.

Clear guidelines have been established to streamline the process of obtaining the necessary permissions for courier operations. These requirements are designed to ensure that all applicants meet the standardized safety, efficiency, and compliance criteria before being granted a permit to operate.

In this context, the requirement of a personal permit to operate underscores the transient nature of courier work, as it acknowledges the possibility of frequent changes in employment status and job roles. The regulation seeks to provide a stable framework

within which couriers can operate despite gig work's naturally temporary and fluid nature.

Article 4 of the proposed regulation aims to address the Ashford et al.'s characteristics in the following ways:

Article 4 – The following conditions are required for couriers to obtain an activity license from the Ministry

- a) Commercial or private motorcycles, mopeds, or automobiles are used in the delivery process.
- b) Motorbikes or mopeds must be ten years old at most.
- c) Automobiles must be at most 20 years of age during the first application and activity period.
- ç) To have a Vocational Qualification Certificate issued by the Vocational Qualifications Authority.

The proposed regulation supports couriers' autonomy by allowing them to choose between commercial or private vehicles for their delivery activities, giving them flexibility in how they manage their operations. However, the defined conditions also ensure that couriers stick to a standardized set of criteria, balancing their independence with the need for compliance within a regulatory framework.

In addition, Article 4 formalizes the separation between couriers and traditional employment structures by setting specific standards and conditions for independent operators. This regulatory distinction emphasizes the unique role of couriers in the gig economy and reinforces their separation from traditional employment frameworks, highlighting the distinct nature of gig work.

Article 5 provides the following specific definitions:

Article 5 – The duration of the permit issued under these Procedures and Principles is one year. The permit can be renewed upon the holder's application and subject to

meeting the conditions specified in Article 6, starting from the expiration date of the current permit.

A fee structure is implemented to facilitate the management and administration of permits. This section details the fee requirements for the issuance of permits and outlines any exceptions to these charges.

Considering this, Article 5 addresses financial instability and job insecurity by establishing a one-year permit duration with a structured renewal process. This provides couriers with a predictable regulatory framework, reducing the uncertainty associated with permit status and associated costs. By implementing a transparent fee structure, it helps couriers manage their financial planning more effectively

Article 6 – (1) Couriers' daily working hours shall not exceed eleven hours.

(2) A courier may not be active for at least twenty-four hours within seven days.

This proposal addresses several of Ashford's structural characteristics. By setting limits on daily working hours and mandating rest periods, Article 6 aims to mitigate financial instability and job insecurity by providing a more predictable work schedule. The regulation also affects job autonomy and independence by defining specific work-hour constraints, influencing couriers' control over their working time. Furthermore, establishing clear boundaries seeks to reduce the transient nature of work and provide a stable framework for managing working conditions.

Article 7 – (1) The couriers' working hours are monitored through a digital application established by the Ministry.

(2) The principal or subcontractor business must report the planned working hours for couriers via the digital application at least one week before the work commences.

This proposed regulation addresses several of Ashford's structural characteristics. By implementing a digital application for monitoring working hours, Article 7 aims to reduce job insecurity and financial instability by ensuring transparency and adherence to working hour standards. This system enhances oversight and provides a structured

framework for managing work schedules, contributing to a more predictable work environment. The requirement for advance reporting of working hours supports greater organizational integration and compliance, reducing uncertainty about work conditions. Furthermore, the outlined penalties for non-compliance emphasize the importance of adhering to these regulations, reinforcing work stability and consistency within the courier sector.

Article 8 – (1) If a courier fails to comply with the provisions contained in these Procedures and Principles, they may be warned once.

(2) If the violation recurs, the permit issued by the Ministry may be revoked.

(3) A penalty will be applied if the principal business or subcontractor business fails to comply with the provisions contained in these Procedures and Principles.

This proposed Article 8 aims to enhance accountability and reduce job insecurity. This structured approach to enforcement supports a more stable work environment by clearly defining the consequences of non-compliance, thereby mitigating the unpredictability of regulatory adherence.

In summary, the policy recommendations outlined in Articles 1 through 8 comprehensively address the key structural characteristics of the gig economy, as identified by Ashford (2018). By targeting issues such as financial instability, job insecurity, autonomy, career advancement, and operational standards, these recommendations aim to provide a framework for regulating moto-courier and online platforms. They are designed to contribute significantly to the development of future regulatory studies and practices, enhancing both the effectiveness and fairness of the gig economy landscape.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis provides a comprehensive examination of the gig economy, explicitly focusing on the online food and grocery delivery sector in Türkiye. Exploring different business models employed by various platforms highlights the unique challenges and opportunities presented by this rapidly evolving industry.

Exploring the gig economy has shed light on its profound impact on the labor market and the broader socio-economic landscape. The rapid growth of online platforms has revolutionized how people work, offering flexible opportunities and connecting job seekers with employers across various sectors. This transformative shift, facilitated by technological advancements, has disrupted traditional employment structures and introduced new paradigms of work organization. However, as exemplified by the case study of food delivery platforms and the analysis of labor market dynamics in the parcel delivery sector, the gig economy also presents significant challenges.

The rise of temporary workers and the cyclical nature of demand in specific industries have increased flexibility in capacity planning and the utilization of temporary labor. While the gig economy has shown a potential to enhance productivity and employment, its impact on dependent employment and wages remains limited. As policymakers strive to promote market competition and improve working conditions for platform workers, it is crucial to adapt policy settings in both product and labor markets to accommodate the needs of the digital economy.

One of the proposed solutions in this study to address the regulatory gap involves the development of a comprehensive regulatory framework specifically tailored to the online food and grocery delivery sector. This framework aims to harmonize the efforts

of various regulatory bodies, such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the General Directorate of Highways, and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority. By incorporating insights from platform managers and workers, as well as lessons from international precedents, the proposed regulation seeks to ensure fair labor practices, protect gig workers, and align with global standards while catering to local needs.

Additionally, considering the increasing prevalence of the gig economy, it is crucial for policymakers at the national level to assess the necessity of a revised minimum wage policy. Given the unique characteristics of the gig economy, determining an hourly minimum wage is more beneficial than the traditional daily minimum wage. This approach is exemplified by Switzerland, where regulations mandate a minimum gross hourly wage of 19 Swiss francs and restrict contractually agreed working hours to 44 hours per week. Similarly, Belgium's new legislation prohibits parcel operators from remunerating workers delivering parcels at a wage lower than that stipulated by the collective labor agreement for the transport sector. The legislation also requires using an electronic time registration platform to track delivery work hours, with limitations set at nine hours per day, 56 hours per week, or 90 hours over two weeks.

Drawing insights from international precedents, it could be advantageous for Türkiye to consider implementing a comprehensive regulatory framework tailored to its gig economy. This framework could explore the feasibility of an hourly minimum wage, promote fair labor practices, and safeguard gig workers' rights. It is also essential to carefully balance wage calculations to ensure affordability for the end consumer. By fostering collaboration among different regulatory bodies, Türkiye has the potential to develop a resilient system that not only meets global standards but also adapts to local contexts.

However, extending the current standard minimum wage to temporary workers could result in substantial financial ramifications for platform companies employing such workers (Sinha & Pandit, 2023). Consequently, policymakers must endeavor to strike a balance that enhances the profitability of flexible working arrangements without significantly impacting the cost structure of currently provided services.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULANAL: ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu 16 AĞUSTOS 2023

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Arsev Umur AYDINOĞLU

Danışmanlığınızı yürüttüğünüz Betül YILMAZ'ın "*Kamu Politikasında Gıg Ekonomisi: Türkiye'de Teslimat Sektörü Üzerine Bir Uygulama*" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0351-ODTÜİAEK-2023 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Doç. Dr. / Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. CODEBOOK

Financial Security

Employment type

employee status by different companies

full-time employee

subcontractors

self-employed (+)

the courier pays all his own expenses

accident

couriers working on different jobs at the same

time

no fixed employees with payroll

equipment cost

fuel, maintenance, insurance

pay per delivery

performance measures

earn as you work

Courier as a profession

Profession

Sole proprietorship

TrendyolGo kuryesi

Local commerce

Micro transport

Regulatory proposals

Regulation of working conditions

Working conditions

Employee responsibilities

obligaiton to use helmet

sanctions for couriers who do not comply with
the rules

private health insurance

speed limit

Financial Instability and Job Security

Job Insecurity

integrate into a common system

Communication between couriers

social life

couriers support each other

Communication between employee and company

warning/fine

route tracking with GPS

courier support with customer service

continuous order drop

hazardous work

heavy orders

location independence

women courier

Comfortable working conditions

preference for independent work over full-time work

love motorbike riding

licensing of couriers

transport organiser certificate (TIO)

work safety

legal framework

labour law

safety standards

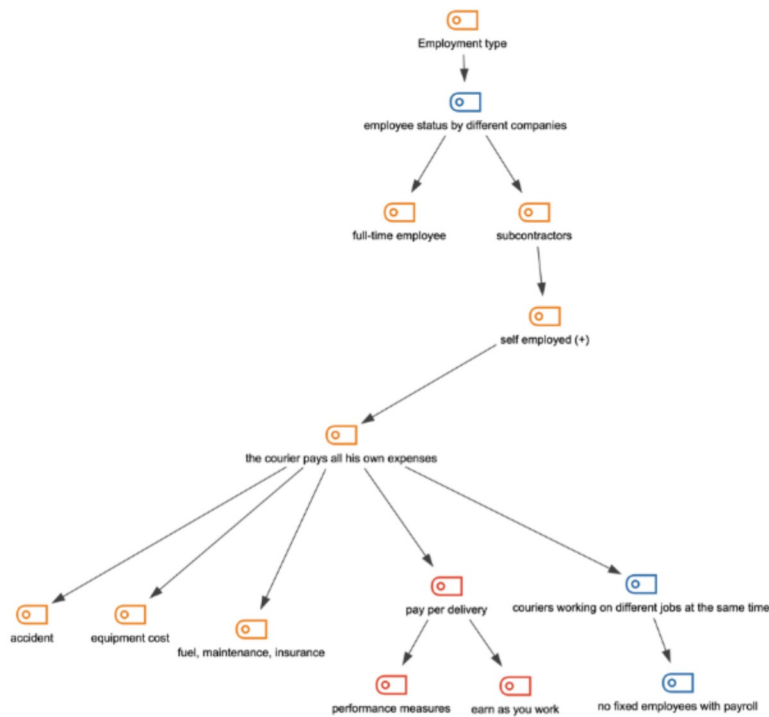
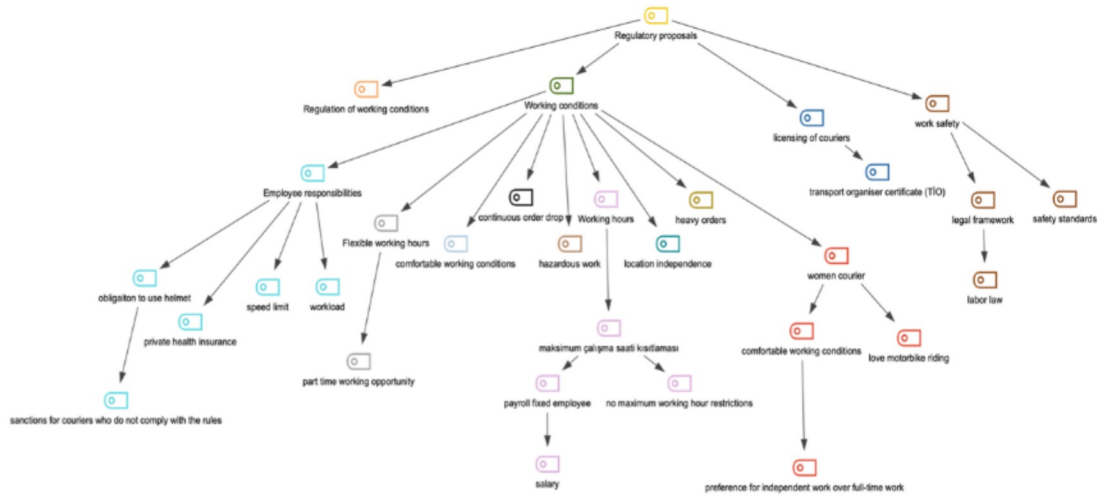
Career Path Uncertainty

Turnover

extra working hours

the problem of belonging

C. CODE MAP



D. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Courier Employees

1. Could you introduce yourself?
2. Can you tell us about your working experience as an online delivery courier?
3. What do you enjoy about it and what are the challenges you face?
4. How do you manage your workload as a courier?
5. Do you have control over the number of orders you accept and the hours you work?
6. How do you connect with the platform or app you use to receive delivery requests?
7. What is your communication/interaction with other couriers?
8. What do you think about the job security you have as an online delivery courier? Can you explain why you have such a perception or idea?
9. How do you assess the role of public policy in shaping the gig economy model in Turkey? What changes or improvements would you like to see in this model?

Questions for Platform Managers

1. Can you introduce yourself?

2. How do you balance the needs of your platform or company with the needs of online delivery couriers?
3. How feasible do you think it is to build a sustainable and profitable business that offers equal and secure employment opportunities?
4. What challenges do you face when managing couriers in the artisan courier model?
5. How do you address/resolve these challenges?
6. How do you think the artisan courier model will develop in the future and what implications will this have for workers and businesses?
7. How do you think the artisan courier model affects the labour market in Turkey?
8. Is it creating new opportunities or taking jobs away from traditional/full-time workers?
9. What steps does your company take to ensure that delivery couriers are safe while working, especially given the risks involved?
10. What developments would you like to see in this type of employment, especially in this online food delivery sector?
11. How do you see the artisan courier in the coming years?
12. How is your company preparing for these changes?

E. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

KAMU POLİTİKASINDA GİG EKONOMİSİ: TÜRKİYE'DE POSTA SEKTÖRÜ ÜZERİNE BİR UYGULAMA

Çalışmanın Amacı ve Önemi

Teknolojik gelişmelerin dönüştürücü etkisi, farklı alanlardaki toplumsal dinamikleri yeniden şekillendirmektedir. Tarihsel olarak Bilgi, İletişim ve Teknoloji (ICT) sektörüyle sınırlı olan teknolojinin mal ve hizmetlerin üretimine, tüketimine ve kullanımına derinlemesine entegrasyonu dijital ekonomi çağını başlatmıştır (Balsalobre-Lorente vd., 2023). Hükümetler, sosyal ortaklar ve kritik paydaşlar, teknolojinin istihdam üzerindeki etkisini anlamak için araçlar aramaktadır.

İstihdam politikasının odak noktasının dijitalleşme olacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu sadece istihdam fırsatları yaratmayı değil, aynı zamanda işin kalitesini ve verimliliğini artırmayı da gerektirmektedir. Dijital teknolojilerin istihdam uygulamalarında yaygınlaşması, iş kompozisyonlarında ve görevlerde kayda değer değişiklikleri hızlandırmış, görev performansı ve hizmet sunumu arasındaki coğrafi ayırmadan bağımsız olarak yeni fırsatlar yaratmıştır (Yao & Li, 2024).

Bu paradigma değişimine rağmen, pek çok ülke dijital istihdam yaratmak ve geliştirmek için kapsamlı politika önlemlerinden yoksundur. Bu eksiklik, dijitalleşmenin yaygın etkisi nedeniyle işgücü piyasalarında ortaya çıkan karmaşık değişikliklerle boğuşan politika yapıcılar için önemli zorluklar teşkil etmektedir. Teknolojik değişimin hızlı temposu, uygun istihdam politikaları, düzenlemeleri ve kurumların eş zamanlı gelişimini geride bırakmış, böylece işçiler -özellikle de dijital emek platformlarında çalışanlar- dijital çalışmanın doğasında var olan risklerden yeterince korunamamıştır (ILO, 2023).

Aynı zamanda, bu platformlar işletmeler ve tüketiciler için uygun maliyetli hizmetler ve işçiler için gelir yaratan beklentiler sunmaktadır (Gawer, 2021). İlgili küresel ve ülkeye özgü işgücü düzenlemelerinin yokluğu, işgücü piyasalarında yükselen “platformlaşma” olgusunu daha da ileriye taşımaktadır. Genişleyen dijital ekonomi bağlamında, dijital çalışmanın değişen dinamiklerine etkili bir şekilde uyum sağlama ihtiyacı vardır. (ILO, 2023).

Bu tez çalışması, Türkiye'nin hızla gelişen çevrimiçi yemek dağıtım sektörünü gig ekonomisi modellerinin etkileri üzerinden incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Gig ekonomisi, çalışanların kısa vadeli sözleşmeler veya serbest çalışma esasına dayalı olarak iş gördüğü, iş güvencesinin sınırlı olduğu bir iş modeli olarak tanımlanabilmektedir. Türkiye'de bu sektör, e-ticaret ve dijital platformların hızla gelişmesiyle birlikte önemli bir yer edinmiştir. Bu tezin temel amacı, gig ekonomisinin Türkiye'deki çevrimiçi yemek ve market dağıtım sektörünü nasıl etkilediğini derinlemesine analiz etmek olup araştırma sorusu da buna göre belirlenmiştir.

Araştırma, Ashford ve diğerleri (2018) tarafından ortaya konan gig ekonomisinin yapısal özelliklerini ele alarak, finansal istikrarsızlık, iş güvencesizliği, bağımsızlık ve esneklik gibi temaları detaylandırmıştır. Ayrıca, Türkiye bağlamında dağıtım sektöründe yer alan farklı istihdam modellerinin sektöre etkileri de bu temalar arasına eklenmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın özgünlüğü, Türkiye’de gig ekonomisinin yapısal özelliklerini inceleyerek sektörel etkilerini ortaya koymasında ve çalışanların deneyimlerini merkeze alarak, gig ekonomisi ile ilgili farklı değişkenler hakkında kapsamlı bir anlayış sunmasında yatmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye’de çevrimiçi yemek dağıtım sektöründe çalışan bireylerin ekonomik ve mesleki deneyimlerini anlamak için nitel bir vaka incelemesi yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Yöntem

Türkiye'de, her biri farklı sektörlerde öne çıkan iki farklı iş ekonomisi modeli uygulanmaktadır. Posta hizmeti sağlayıcıları, geleneksel bordrolu istihdam yapısını

yansıtan ilk modeli benimsemektedir. Bu benzerlik, gerçek bir gig ekonomisi modeli olarak sınıflandırılması konusunda soru işaretleri yaratmaktadır. Buna karşılık, ikinci model hızlı teslimat hizmetlerinde uzmanlaşmış şirketler tarafından benimsenmekte olup, geleneksel gig ekonomisi modeline daha yakındır.

Farklı gig ekonomisi modelleri arasındaki bu ayrımı dikkate almak amacıyla, görüşme yapılacak şirketler özenle seçilmiş ve hem posta hizmeti sağlayıcı lisansı olan hem de olmayan şirketlerin dahil edilmesi sağlanmıştır. Bu ayrımın, firmaların Türkiye'de gig ekonomisi iş modelinin çeşitli versiyonlarını nasıl uyguladıklarını analiz etmek için çok önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Çalışma, bu farklı yaklaşımları inceleyerek, farklı gig ekonomisi ortamını ve bunun hem çalışanlar hem de işletmeler için sonuçlarını kapsamlı bir şekilde anlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışmanın araştırma tasarımı, Türkiye'deki çevrimiçi yemek dağıtım sektöründeki gig ekonomisi modellerini derinlemesine incelemek amacıyla nitel bir vaka çalışması yöntemi üzerine kurulmuştur. Araştırmanın veri toplama süreci, sektörün önde gelen platformlarında çalışan kuryelerle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlara dayanmaktadır. Bu mülakatlar, kuryelerin gig ekonomisi çerçevesinde karşılaştıkları zorlukları, avantajları ve genel iş deneyimlerini anlamak amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Çalışmada en yüksek pazar paylarına sahip her platformdan en az bir çalışan ve yöneticiyle görüşme yapılması hedeflenmiştir. Amaç, her platform için istatistiksel olarak anlamlı örneklem oluşturmak olmadığından, görüşmelerin birincil amacı, çalışanların perspektifinden platform genelindeki süreçlerin operasyonel dinamiklerini aydınlatmak ve her platformun politikaları veya uygulamaları hakkında kapsayıcı perspektifler toplamaktır.

Çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemi üzerine kurulmuştur. Gig ekonomisinin çalışanlar üzerindeki etkileri, kişisel deneyimlerle şekillenen karmaşık ve çok boyutlu bir konudur. Nitel araştırma yönteminin bu tür karmaşık sosyal olguları, çalışanların bakış açılarını ve deneyimlerini anlamak için en uygun yaklaşım olacağı değerlendirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, kuryeler ve yemek ve gıda dağıtım platformlarının yöneticileri ile

yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlar aracılığıyla toplanan veriler, kuryelerin gig ekonomisi çerçevesinde karşılaştıkları zorlukları, avantajları ve genel iş deneyimlerini ele almaktadır. Bununla birlikte platform yöneticilerinin mevcut istihdam yapısındaki pratik zorluklar ve potansiyel iyileştirme alanları hakkında görüşlerini analiz ederek gelecekteki politika ve yönetim stratejilerini belirlemek adına veri elde etmek amaçlanmıştır.

Doğruluğu sağlamak ve kapsamlı bir analizi kolaylaştırmak için görüşme verileri eksiksiz olarak yazıya dökülmüş ve nitel veri analizi için özel olarak tasarlanmış bir yazılım olan MAXQDA programı kullanılarak kodlanmıştır. Bu süreç, ortaya çıkan ve teorik öneme sahip kilit temaların belirlenmesine olanak sağlamıştır.

Bulgular

Bu araştırma, platform çalışanlarının ve yöneticilerin bakış açılarını ayrı mülakat oturumları aracılığıyla inceleyerek gig ekonomisi hakkında kapsamlı bir anlayış kazanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Görüşmeler, bu iki grubun farklı deneyimlerini ve içgörülerini yakalamak üzere tasarlanmıştır. Bulguları etkili bir şekilde sunmak için sonuçlar, her biri bu perspektiflerden birine odaklanan iki bölüme ayrılmıştır. Bu yöntem, platform yöneticilerinin ve çalışanlarının benzersiz deneyimlerini ve içgörülerini vurgulayarak ayrıntılı bir analiz yapılmasını sağlamaktadır.

Platform Çalışanlarının Perspektifi

Finansal Güvenlik

Finansal güvenlik taşeron işçiliğinde karmaşık ve çok yönlü bir tema olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Yüksek kazanç potansiyeli çalışanları cezbederken, ilişkili riskler ve gelir seviyelerini korumak için sürekli yüksek performans ihtiyacı zorlukları da beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu dinamik, anlık finansal faydaları, uzun vadeli güvenliği ve gig çalışanları için refahı göz önünde bulunduran dengeli bir yaklaşıma duyulan ihtiyacın altını çizmektedir.

Bağımsızlık ve Esneklik

Gig ekonomisinin bağımsızlık ve esneklik teması, özerklik ve sorumluluk arasında karmaşık bir etkileşim olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Kişinin çalışma saatlerini ve koşullarını belirleme özgürlüğü önemli bir avantaj olsa da önemli mali ve operasyonel yükleri de beraberinde getirmektedir.

Kariyer Yolu Belirsizliği

Özellikle motorlu kuryelerde iş ekonomisi istihdam modelinin sürdürülebilirliği büyük ölçüde çalışanların motivasyonuna bağlıdır. Net bir kariyer yolunun olmaması, işe bağlılığı sürdürmek için güçlü bir kişisel dürtü ve finansal teşvik gerektirmektedir. Genel olarak, bağımsız yüklenicilerin motivasyonu çok yönlüdür ve finansal istikrar arzusu ile kişisel tatmin ve esneklik ihtiyacını dengeler.

Platform Yöneticisi Perspektifi

İş Güvencesi ve Kariyer Yolu Belirsizliği

Genel olarak, yöneticilerin bakış açıları, gig ekonomisinin doğasında bulunan iş güvencesi ve kariyer yolu belirsizliklerine ilişkin incelikli bir anlayışı ortaya koymaktadır. Yüksek işgücü devri ve net bir kariyer yörüngesinin olmaması zorluklar yaratsa da modelin esnekliği, finansal teşvikleri ve uyarlanabilirliği cazibesini sürdüren önemli avantajlar sunuyor. Aşağıdaki bölüm, platform yöneticilerini nasıl etkilediklerini inceleyerek, gig ekonomisi içindeki çeşitli istihdam modellerini inceleyecektir.

Çalışma Modeli

Online yemek dağıtım platformları, restoranlar ve müşteriler arasında son derece popüler hale gelen teknolojik çözümler sunmalarıyla bilinmektedir. Potansiyel bir tüketici, bir akıllı telefon uygulaması kullanarak istediği yiyecek veya market ürünlerini seçebilir, seçenekleri karşılaştırabilir, farklı restoranlardan fırsatları araştırabilir, sipariş verebilir ve nakit kullanmadan güvenli bir şekilde ödeme yapabilir. Yemek siparişi ve teslimat sistemi, restoranların ve müşterilerin coğrafi konumlarına göre hazırlanmış yemekleri organize etmek, planlamak ve teslim etmek

için yapay zeka kullanan akıllı planlama sistemleri tarafından desteklenmektedir. Teslimat personeli, sipariş sayısına ve teslimatın kalitesine veya hızına göre ücretlendirilmektedir.

Ancak, bu şirketleri yalnızca kendilerini aracı olarak konumlandıkları için posta veya lojistik sektörlerinden bağımsız olarak değerlendirmek uygun değildir. Çevrimiçi gıda ve market teslimatlarının çoğu 0-30 kg aralığındadır, bu nedenle 6475 sayılı Kanun kapsamında posta gönderisi olarak kabul edilebilirler. Ancak bu teslimatların taşınmasında görev alan “sürücüler/kuryeler” için trafik kurallarına uyup uymadıkları, giydikleri kıyafetlerin kurallara uygun olup olmadığı gibi hususlar Ulaştırma Bakanlığı Karayolu taşıma mevzuatı kapsamında girecektir. Bu sebeple bir düzenleme yapılması halinde Kurumların iş birliği içerisinde olması gerektiği değerlendirilmektedir.

İstihdam Modeli

Gig ekonomisi bağımsız kuryeler için her biri kurumsal stratejiler ve düzenleyici çerçeveler tarafından şekillendirilen çeşitli istihdam modelleri sunmaktadır. Bazı şirketler yalnızca bağımsız yüklenicilere dayanan kolaylaştırılmış bir yaklaşımı tercih ederken, diğerleri maaşlı çalışanlar ile bağımsız kuryeleri harmanlayan hibrit yapılaraya yönelmektedir. Bu çeşitlilik, operasyonel verimliliği, işgücü motivasyonunu ve mevcut düzenlemelere uyumu dengelemeye yönelik farklı yaklaşımları yansıtmaktadır. Türkiye'nin taşımacılık yasaları, e-ticaretin yol açtığı mikro taşımacılığa yönelik artan talebi karşılamak üzere evrilirken, modern teslimat platformlarının doğasında var olan esneklik ve ölçeklenebilirliği destekleyen mevzuat güncellemelerine acil ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Bu mevzuat zorluklarının ele alınması, mikro taşımacılık hizmetlerinin sürdürülebilir büyümesini destekleyen ve Türkiye'nin gelişen e-ticaret ortamında hem işletmeler hem de kuryeler için fırsatları teşvik eden elverişli bir mevzuat ortamının yaratılması için elzemdir.

Bağımsızlık ve Esneklik

Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlara göre, bu zıt bakış açıları esnekliğin iş ekonomisi içindeki çeşitli yönetim bağlamlarında nasıl farklı şekillerde ortaya çıktığını ve kuryeler için operasyonel verimliliği, iş memnuniyetini ve finansal sonuçları nasıl

etkilediğini göstermektedir. Bazı platformlar esnekliğin işverenin ve çalışma planının kısıtlamaları dahilinde olduğu bir model uyguladıklarını iddia ederken, diğer şirketler çalışanların seçim yapmasına izin vermektedir. Ayrıca, esnek saatlerde çalışması beklenen bağımsız yüklenicilerin geleneksel tam zamanlı çalışanlara kıyasla sınıflandırılmasına ilişkin farklı görüşlerin mevcut olduğu ve sektörde devam eden tartışmaları yansıttığı ortaya çıkmıştır.

Tartışma

Araştırmanın tartışma bölümünde, elde edilen bulgular platform çalışanları ve yöneticilerinin perspektiflerinden ele alınmıştır:

Platform Çalışanlarının Perspektifi

İş Güvenliği ve Kariyer Yolu Belirsizliği

Gig ekonomisinin dinamik iş gücü yapısı, özellikle platform yöneticileri açısından iş güvenliği ve kariyer yolu belirsizliği gibi zorluklar ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bağımsız kuryeler arasında yüksek iş gücü devri, bu modelin istikrarsızlığını vurgulamaktadır. Kuryeler genellikle daha iyi fırsatlar için iş değiştirirken, anlık finansal kazançları uzun vadeli kariyer gelişiminin önüne koymaktadırlar. Yöneticiler, bu kariyer yollarının eksikliğinin iş güvensizliğine ve sık iş değişikliklerine yol açtığını kabul etmektedir. Ancak, tüm bu zorluklara rağmen gig işlerinin esnekliği ve sunduğu finansal teşvikler hala cazip bulunmaktadır. Özellikle COVID-19 sırasında teslimat hizmetlerine olan talebin artması, daha fazla kişinin gig ekonomisine yönelmesine neden olmuştur.

Yine de kuryeleri elde tutabilmek için şirketlerin esneklikle birlikte istikrar sağlayıcı önlemler sunması gerekmektedir. Kuryelerin ihtiyaçlarıyla uyumlu sistemler oluşturmak ve onları daha uzun süreli çalışmaya teşvik etmek, bu modelin sürdürülebilirliği açısından kritik önemdedir.

Yöneticilerin, gig ekonomisinin sürdürülebilirliğini sağlamak için iş güvencesi ve kariyer yolu sorunlarını ele alacak stratejiler geliştirmeleri gerekmektedir. Bu stratejik

uygulamalar hem çalışanlar hem de işverenler için gig ekonomisinin yaşanabilirliğini artıracaktır.

Çalışma Modeli

Yöneticilerle yapılan görüşmeler, platform yöneticilerinin genellikle kendilerini teknoloji sağlayıcısı olarak tanımladıklarını ve müşterileri ürünlerle buluşturma görevine odaklandıklarını göstermektedir. Bu sırada lojistik hizmetlerini dışarıdan temin etmekte ve bu sayede düzenleyici çerçeveleri daha esnek bir şekilde yönetmektedirler.

Özellikle 30 kg üzeri teslimatlar Ulaştırma Bakanlığı tarafından düzenlenirken, 0-30 kg arası teslimatlar posta düzenlemelerine tabidir. Çevrimiçi teslimat platformları için spesifik bir düzenleme bulunmamakta, bu nedenle şirketler kendilerini teknoloji sağlayıcısı olarak konumlandırarak bu çerçeveler içinde esnek hareket edebilmektedirler. Ancak, bu strateji, kuryeler için çalışma koşullarında tutarsızlıklara yol açabilmekte ve gig ekonomisinde iş sürdürülebilirliğini etkileyebilmektedir.

İstihdam Modeli

Düzenleyici perspektiften bakıldığında, platformların aracı olarak işlev görmesi, iş gücü standartlarından sorumlu olmaktan kaçınmalarına olanak tanıyabilir, bu da potansiyel sömürüye yol açabilir. Bu boşluk, geleneksel olmayan iş düzenlemelerine uyum sağlamak için yeni yasal çerçevelerin geliştirilmesini gerektirmektedir.

Ayrıca, bu tür platformlar, iş kanunlarına uyan işletmelere karşı haksız bir avantaj elde etmekte ve işçi haklarının tehlikeye atıldığı bir rekabet ortamı yaratma riski taşımaktadır. Gig çalışanları için, resmi bir işveren-çalışan ilişkisinin olmaması, genellikle sağlık sigortası, ücretli izin ve iş güvencesi gibi sosyal haklara erişimi engellemektedir. Bu durum, gelir istikrarsızlığına ve pazarlık gücünün sınırlı olmasına neden olarak, çalışanlar için finansal planlama yapmayı ve haksız muameleye karşı korunmayı zorlaştırmaktadır.

Türkiye'de gig ekonomisi, kuryeler için farklı istihdam modelleri sunmakta, bazı platformlar hibrit modeller kullanırken diğerleri tamamen bağımsız yüklenicilere

dayanmaktadır. Bu çeşitlilik hem zorluklar hem de fırsatlar yaratmaktadır. Hibrit modeller, maaşlı çalışanların, gelir farklılıklarını algılamaları durumunda motivasyonlarının düşmesine ve bağımsız rollere geçmelerine neden olabilir. Platformlar, iş gücünün motivasyonunu ve istikrarını korumak için iş gücü bileşimini dikkatlice değerlendirmelidir.

Mevcut düzenlemeler, daha büyük şirketler için tasarlandığından, küçük ölçekli kuryeler için geniş belge gereksinimleri getirmekte ve bu da gig modellerin benzersiz ihtiyaçlarını desteklememektedir. Bu nedenle, kısa mesafeli teslimatlar ve e-ticaretin yükselişine uyum sağlamak için yasal çerçevelerin güncellenmesi gerekmektedir.

Bu zorluklara rağmen, platform yöneticileri gig ekonomisinin sürdürülebilirliği konusunda iyimserdir ve esneklik ile özerkliğin bu modelin cazibesini artırdığına inanmaktadırlar.

Bağımsızlık ve Esneklik

Platform yöneticileri ile yapılan görüşmeler, gig ekonomisinde esnek çalışma modellerinin hem avantajlar hem de zorluklar sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Esneklik, kuryelerin programlarını seçmelerine ve anlık taleplere uyum sağlamalarına olanak tanıyarak iş tatminini artırmaktadır. Ancak, operasyonel gereksinimler nedeniyle tam esneklik sınırlı kalmaktadır. Şirketler, verimlilik için yapılandırılmış bir programa ihtiyaç duymaktadır.

Esnekliğin etkinliği, iş gücü içinde değişiklik gösterebilmektedir. Bazıları finansal faydalar elde ederken, diğerleri öngörülebilirliğin esnekliği sınırladığını ifade etmektedir. Bulgular, gig ekonomisinde esnek çalışma modellerinin başarısının, kuryelerin bireysel motivasyonları ve koşulları ile yakından bağlantılı olduğunu göstermektedir.

Politika önerileri

Düzenleyici Perspektif

Platform çalışması, özellikle bağımsız yükleniciler ile çalışanlar arasındaki ayrımı göz önünde bulundurarak geleneksel işçi sınıflandırmasını temelden zorlamaktadır.

Platformların işçiler üzerindeki kontrol derecesi, çalışanların uygun sınıflandırılmasıyla ilgili tartışmaları sıkça tetiklemektedir. Kilhoffer ve Lenaerts'e (2017) göre, platform çalışmasının geleneksel istihdam çerçevelerine tam olarak uymaması bu tartışmayı daha da derinleştirmektedir. Ayrıca, platformlar arasındaki operasyonel model çeşitliliği ve ulusal yasalar arasındaki farklılıklar, bu soruya tek bir yanıt verilmesini zorlaştırmaktadır (OSHA, 2015). Her bir vaka, belirli çalışma koşullarına ilişkin yerel yasaların ayrıntılı bir şekilde anlaşılmasını ve uygulanmasını gerektirebilir.

Birçok kişi, platform işçileri üzerinde uygulanan kontrol seviyesi ve platforma bağımlılık nedeniyle bu işçilerin, hizmet verdikleri şirketlerin çalışanları olarak kabul edilmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda platformların işveren olarak tanınması, iş ve finansal güvenlik gibi acil sorunları ele alacaktır (Healy et al., 2017). Çalışan olarak kabul edilmeleri durumunda, gig işçileri genellikle bağımsız yükleniciler için geçerli olmayan asgari ücret ve sosyal güvenlik gibi avantajlardan yararlanabileceklerdir (Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2017; Harris & Krueger, 2015).

Öte yandan, gig ekonomisi modeli altında bağımsız yüklenici olarak çalışmak, geleneksel istihdamdan daha fazla esneklik sunmaktadır (Golden, 2001). Gig işçileri, çalışma saatlerini seçebilir, görevlerini belirleyebilir ve aynı anda birden fazla platformla çalışabilir. Ancak bağımsız yüklenici statüsünden çalışan statüsüne geçmek, bu özgürlükleri muhtemelen sınırlayacaktır (Reynolds & Renzulli, 2005). Çalışan olarak kabul edilmeleri durumunda, platform işçileri daha yapılandırılmış çalışma saatlerine ve koşullarına uymak zorunda kalacaklar, bu da gig ekonomisine çekici gelen esnekliğin kaybına yol açabilir. Bu değişim, gig ekonomisinde güvenlik ile esneklik arasındaki önemli bir dengeyi vurgulamaktadır.

Türkiye dahil olmak üzere dünya genelindeki hükümetler, gig ekonomisi platformları için düzenleyici çerçeveleri değerlendirmektedir. Bu değerlendirme, platformlar ve serbest çalışanlar arasındaki ilişkiyi işveren-çalışan ilişkisi olarak yeniden tanımlama ve çeşitli alternatif yaklaşımları keşfetmeyi içermektedir. Araştırmacılara (Drahokoupil ve Piasna, 2017; Frenken, 2017; Prassl ve Risak, 2017) göre, beş olası çözüm tanımlanmıştır:

1. **Aracı Sınıflandırması:** Çevrimiçi platformları araçlar olarak tanımlamak ve platform işçilerini bağımsız yüklenici olarak kabul etmek.
2. **İşveren-Çalışan İlişkisi:** Çevrimiçi platformları işveren, platform işçilerini ise çalışan olarak kabul etmek.
3. **Ara Kategori:** Geleneksel çalışanlar ve bağımsız yükleniciler arasında bir üçüncü kategori oluşturmak. Bu kategorideki işçiler, bağımsız yüklenici statülerini koruyacak, ancak ek sosyal haklarla (sosyal güvenlik ve adaletsiz platform yasaklarına karşı korunma gibi) birlikte çalışma saatlerini ve görevlerini seçme özgürlüğüne sahip olacaklardır.
4. **Rekabet Hukuku Değişikliği:** Bağımsız yüklenicilerin özellikle asgari ücret, sosyal güvenlik ve çalışma koşulları gibi konularda çevrimiçi platformlarla toplu pazarlık yapmalarına olanak tanımak için rekabet yasalarını değiştirmek.
5. **Saatlik Ücret Kriteri:** İstihdam statüsü için saatlik ücreti bir kriter olarak kullanmak. Örneğin, bir kişinin gelirleri bir ay boyunca asgari ücretin %150'sinin altına düşerse, bağımsız yüklenici statüsünden çalışan statüsüne otomatik olarak geçecektir.

Bu öneriler, gig işçilerinin istediği esneklik ile çalışan statüsünün sağladığı güvenlik arasındaki dengeyi sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bağımsız Yükleniciler İçin Önerilen Düzenlemeler

Türkiye'de bağımsız kurye hizmetleri için kapsamlı bir düzenleyici çerçevenin bulunmaması, bu sektörün benzersiz zorluklarını ele alacak şekilde mevzuatın geliştirilmesi gereğini acil bir hale getirmiştir. Bağımsız kuryelerin ve gig ekonomisinin yükselişiyle birlikte, adil çalışma koşulları, güvenlik ve hesap verebilirlik sağlayacak yönergelerin oluşturulması önemli hale gelmiştir. Bu ihtiyaçları göz önünde bulundurarak, gelecekteki mevzuat için potansiyel hükümlerin tartışılması amacıyla düzenleyici yetkililerle görüşmeler başlatılmıştır.

Türkiye'de gig ekonomisi teslimat hizmetlerinin olası düzenlenmesini araştırmak amacıyla, düzenleyici otoritenin iki temsilcisi ile görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu görüşmelerin amacı, genel perspektiflerini ve gelecekteki mevzuat için olası hükümler hakkındaki görüşlerini toplamak olmuştur. Bu konuşmalardan yola çıkarak,

düzenleyici duruşu yansıtan ve yetkili temsilcilerin bilgilendirilmiş görüşleriyle uyumlu olan bir taslak düzenleme geliştirilmiştir.

Literatür taramasında belirtildiği üzere, bağımsız kuryelerin düzenlenmesine yönelik acil bir ihtiyaç olduğu açıktır ve birkaç ülke (Belçika, İspanya, İtalya, Almanya) bu alanda özel düzenlemeler yapmıştır. Ancak, ülkemizde bağımsız kuryelerle ilgili bir düzenlemenin yanı sıra moto kuryeler için kapsamlı bir düzenleyici çerçeve bulunmamaktadır.

İş güvenliği ve kariyer yolunun belirsizliği konusunda, istihdam edilen tüm çalışanların kendileri ve aileleri için sosyal koruma araçlarıyla desteklenen adil ve makul bir ücret almalarını sağlamak için gerekli tedbirlerin alınması ve gerekli iyileştirmelerin yapılması gerektiği düşünülmektedir.

Sonuç:

Bu tez, özellikle Türkiye'deki çevrimiçi gıda ve market teslimat sektörüne odaklanarak, gig ekonomisinin kapsamlı bir incelemesini sunmaktadır. Çeşitli platformlar tarafından kullanılan farklı iş modellerinin araştırılması, hızla gelişen bu sektörün sunduğu benzersiz zorlukları ve fırsatları vurgulamaktadır.

Gig ekonomisinin araştırılması, işgücü piyasası ve daha geniş sosyo-ekonomik manzara üzerindeki derin etkisine ışık tutmuştur. Çevrimiçi platformların hızlı büyümesi, esnek fırsatlar sunarak ve iş arayanları çeşitli sektörlerdeki işverenlerle buluşturarak insanların çalışma biçiminde devrim yarattı. Teknolojik gelişmelerin kolaylaştırdığı bu dönüştürücü değişim, geleneksel istihdam yapılarını bozmuş ve yeni iş organizasyonu paradigmasını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bununla birlikte, yemek dağıtım platformları vaka çalışmasında ve paket teslimat sektöründeki işgücü piyasası dinamiklerinin analizinde örneklendiği üzere, gig ekonomisi aynı zamanda önemli zorlukları da beraberinde getirmektedir.

Geçici işçilerin yükselişi ve belirli sektörlerdeki talebin döngüsel yapısı, kapasite planlamasında ve geçici iş gücü kullanımında esnekliği artırmıştır. Geçici iş ekonomisi üretkenliği ve istihdamı artırma potansiyeline sahip olsa da bağımlı istihdam ve ücretler üzerindeki etkisi sınırlı kalmaktadır. Politika yapıcılar piyasa rekabetini teşvik

etmeye ve platform çalışanları için çalışma koşullarını iyileştirmeye çalışırken hem ürün hem de işgücü piyasalarındaki politika ayarlarını dijital ekonominin ihtiyaçlarına göre uyarlamak çok önemlidir.

Bu çalışmada mevzuat boşluğunu gidermek için önerilen çözümlerden biri, özellikle online gıda ve market dağıtım sektörüne özel kapsamlı bir düzenleyici çerçevenin geliştirilmesini içermektedir. Bu çerçeve, Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, Karayolları Genel Müdürlüğü ve Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu gibi çeşitli düzenleyici kurumların çabalarını uyumlaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Platform yöneticileri ve çalışanlarının görüşlerinin yanı sıra uluslararası emsallerden alınan dersleri de içeren önerilen düzenleme, adil iş gücü uygulamalarını sağlamayı, gig işçilerini korumayı ve yerel ihtiyaçları karşılarken küresel standartlara uyum sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Ayrıca, gig ekonomisinin artan yaygınlığı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, ulusal düzeydeki politika yapıcılarının yenilenmiş bir asgari ücret politikasının gerekliliğini değerlendirmesi büyük önem taşımaktadır. Gig ekonomisinin kendine has özellikleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, saatlik bir asgari ücret belirlemek, geleneksel günlük asgari ücretten daha faydalıdır. Bu yaklaşım, düzenlemelerin asgari brüt saat ücretini 19 İsviçre Frangı olarak belirlediği ve sözleşmeyle kararlaştırılan çalışma saatlerini haftada 44 saatle sınırladığı İsviçre'de örneklenmektedir. Benzer şekilde, Belçika'nın yeni mevzuatı, paket operatörlerinin paket teslimatı yapan işçilere taşımacılık sektörü için toplu iş sözleşmesinde öngörülenden daha düşük bir ücret ödemesini yasaklamaktadır. Mevzuat ayrıca, günde dokuz saat, haftada 56 saat veya iki haftada 90 saat olarak belirlenen sınırlamalarla birlikte, teslimat çalışma saatlerini takip etmek için elektronik bir zaman kayıt platformunun kullanılmasını gerektirmektedir.

Uluslararası emsallerden yola çıkarak, Türkiye'nin gig ekonomisine özel kapsamlı bir düzenleyici çerçeve uygulamayı düşünmesi avantajlı olabilir. Bu çerçeve, saatlik asgari ücretin fizibilitesini araştırabilir, adil iş gücü uygulamalarını teşvik edebilir ve gig çalışanların haklarını koruyabilir. Ayrıca, son tüketici için satın alınabilirliği sağlamak amacıyla ücret hesaplamalarının dikkatli bir şekilde dengelenmesi de önemlidir. Türkiye, farklı düzenleyici kurumlar arasında iş birliğini teşvik ederek,

yalnızca küresel standartları karşılamakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda yerel bağlamlara da uyum sağlayan esnek bir sistem geliştirme potansiyeline sahiptir.

Bununla birlikte, mevcut standart asgari ücretin geçici işçileri de kapsayacak şekilde genişletilmesi, bu tür işçileri istihdam eden platform şirketleri için önemli mali sonuçlara yol açabilir (Sinha & Pandit, 2023). Sonuç olarak politika yapıcılar, halihazırda sunulan hizmetlerin maliyet yapısını önemli ölçüde etkilemeden esnek çalışma düzenlemelerinin kârlılığını artıracak bir denge kurmaya çalışmalıdır.

F. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

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