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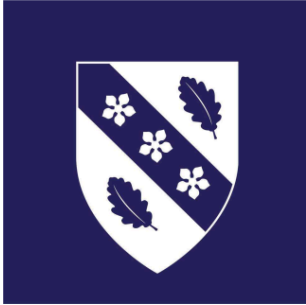
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Identity And Dignity in Platform Work: A Pilot
Study of Migrant Ride-Hailing Drivers Work
Experiences in Swansea

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REPORT

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Part A: Executive Summary

⁷⁸ The rapid expansion of the gig economy has radically transformed the modern workplace, replacing traditional employment structures with algorithmic management. According to Vallas and Schor (2020), digital labor platforms operate as "permissive potentates." They exert centralized control over workers through data tracking, ratings, and surveillance while externalizing operational and financial risks onto the individual. To survive in these precarious environments, gig workers must perform intense, commercialized emotional labor. This labor is heavily managed by platform metrics and is inherently alienating, as it commodifies the worker's authentic emotional capacity.

While existing research heavily documents the economic and logistical insecurities of platform capitalism, the psychological and identity-based costs remain under-explored. Gig workers operate in a structural vacuum without traditional workplace communities or institutional safety nets. They must continuously manage the alienation of platform-enforced emotional labor while trying to maintain a stable sense of self. This conflict creates a severe threat to the worker's psychological well-being, directly complicating their ability to construct a coherent life story.

This study investigates how digital platform workers navigate precarity to construct and maintain their narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013). By blending psychological and sociological frameworks, this research examines how workers use personal storytelling to negotiate the alienating demands of gig-based emotional labor. Ultimately, it explores the narrative strategies workers employ to reclaim personal agency, establish meaning, and build continuity under the rule of algorithmic management.

⁶⁰ This study utilized a qualitative research design, conducting semi-structured narrative interviews with active gig economy workers. The participants' accounts were analyzed using thematic narrative analysis.

The analysis revealed three primary insights:

Workers actively combat the alienating nature of platform emotional labor by framing their gig work within broader "redemption sequences." They intentionally interpret temporary precarity as a self-directed stepping stone toward future career autonomy.

True narrative agency is frequently fractured by the platform's architecture. Algorithmic changes, sudden rating drops, and uncompensated emotional labor trigger "contamination sequences" that disrupt a worker's sense of predictability and career continuity.

To protect their mental health, workers construct dual identities. They present a compliant "social actor" to the platform's customers and algorithms, while reserving their true "autobiographical author" for their private life stories.

⁷⁵ This study demonstrates that narrative identity is not just a psychological construct, but a vital mechanism for survival and resistance within the gig economy. The findings imply that addressing gig worker well-being requires moving beyond basic financial compensation models. Policymakers and platform designers must account for the invisible psychological

toll of algorithmic management and create structural safeguards that protect worker dignity, autonomy, and psychological health.

A1. Journal Choice and Metrics

Journal name and metrics: The chosen journal for this pilot study is Work, Employment and Society (WES), a leading international peer-reviewed journal of the British Sociological Association.

Following are the journal metrics and rankings for Work, Employment and Society.

Metric Type	Metric Name	Value / Ranking
Impact	2-Year Impact Factor	3.8
	5-Year Impact Factor	5.1
	H-Index	104
Ranking	SCImago Journal Rank (SJR)	Q1 (Sociology & Political Science)
	Industrial Relations & Labour	2nd globally
	Sociology	7th globally
	ABS / AJG Guide	4 (Top-tier / International Excellence)
Selectivity	Acceptance Rate	~11%
	Annual Submissions	~1,000 papers
Speed	Publication Frequency	6 issues per year

A2. Justification of Journal Choice

Work, Employment and Society is the ideal journal for this pilot study as the journal explicitly bridges the intersections of labour economics, applied psychology, and broader social structures. This pilot study captures the lived, nuanced experiences of migrant Uber drivers navigating platform capitalism within a localized UK context (Swansea). By exploring how precarious gig work shapes and is shaped by wider sociological processes, the paper directly aligns with the journal's commitment to analysing the changing nature of work and its societal impact. Furthermore, the exploratory nature of this localized British case study makes it highly suitable for the journal's "Research Notes" section, which values compact, empirical insights into contemporary employment relations

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Part B: Pilot Study Article

Title: Identity and Dignity in Platform Work: A Pilot Study of Migrant Ride-Hailing Drivers Work Experiences in Swansea

Abstract

This qualitative pilot study examines how drivers navigate their professional identity within the ride-hailing industry, specifically focusing on Uber platform. Utilizing a framework structured around four major thematic pillars, the research explores how drivers perceive their daily work, autonomy, labor value, and organizational belonging. Data was gathered through in-depth, semi-structure interviews with ride-hailing drivers to capture lived experiences and nuanced perspectives. Preliminary findings reveal a complex dual identity; drivers highly value the operational flexibility and autonomy of the platform, yet simultaneously experience feelings of precarity, alienation, and algorithmic control. These conflicting dynamics significantly shape how drivers construct their professional self-worth and status in the gig economy. Ultimately, this pilot study validates the qualitative research design and interview protocol.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The gig economy has reshaped global labor markets, offering earning opportunities that attract diverse workforces, particularly migrant workers. In the United Kingdom, the rapid expansion for ride-hailing platforms like Uber, Bolt, Veezu, FreeNow, Addison, Ola and Gett, in addition to the existing regional and local taxi apps, black-cab apps, minicab platforms, has positioned digital labor as a primary entry point for immigrants seeking low-barrier employment. However, this shift transforms traditional labor relations, replacing human management with algorithmic governance. While literature extensively explores the macro-level economics of the platform economy, there remains a critical gap in understanding how localized socioeconomic environments shape day-to-day realities and professional identity construction of these workers.

This pilot study addresses this gap by adopting a bounded case study approach focusing on migrant ride-hailing drivers in Swansea, a mid-sized Welsh city with a growing migrant workforce. Examining geographically bounded community allows deeper qualitative insight into the relational dynamics of platform work with a specific local context. Swansea presents a unique urban landscape characterized by a close-knit migrant network. By centering the research in this specific locality, the study captures how global platform mechanisms intersect with local geography and community structures.

Understanding the experiences of migrant drivers in a mid-sized city is crucial. These workers often navigate intersecting layers of vulnerability, balancing the precarity of gig work with the challenges of societal integration. Through the lens of localized workforce, the research explores how drivers negotiate professional identity and autonomy. Ultimately, this background establishes a foundation for examining the lived experiences of a demographic that is vital to urban mobility yet frequently marginalized within the broader digital economy.

1.2 Research Gap:

Although gig/platform work has grown rapidly in the recent years, much of existing studies focus on economic precarity, economic outcomes and algorithmic management. Less attention has been on the studies that have explored migrant drivers' identity and dignity, especially qualitatively and even fewer have examined smaller cities like Swansea. This research addresses this gap and explores how migrant drivers experience identity, recognition, and dignity in platform work through semi-structure interviews.

WHY THIS GAP MATTERS?

Despite the rapid growth of the platform economy, existing literature focuses heavily on algorithmic management, financial precarity, and economic outcomes. This overemphasis leaves a critical gap regarding how digital labor impacts workers on a human level, particularly concerning the identity, social recognition, and dignity of migrant workers. Furthermore, current research suffers from a geographic bias, concentrating on major global cities while ignoring smaller, mid-sized cities like Swansea.

This gap matters because worker experiences are heavily shaped by their local geographic and social geographic and social contexts. In smaller cities, drivers navigate tighter-knit communities, distinct transit demands, and different labor market limitations compared to their counterparts in mega-cities. Neglecting these areas creates a flawed, one-size-fits-all understanding of the gig economy.

By using semi-structured interviews to capture the qualitative realities of migrant drivers in Swansea, this study moves beyond mere financial metrics. It reveals the deep psychological and social negotiations of self-worth under algorithmic control, offering vital insights for localized labor policies and fairer digital workplace practices.

1.3 Research Aims

The primary objective of this pilot study is to explore the intersection of platform labor, migration, and human dignity within a localized urban environment. By centering the lived experiences of migrant ride-hailing workers in Swansea, the study provides new qualitative insights into how these individuals navigate the psychological and social complexities of the gig economy

- construct professional identity within gig work
- interpret passenger interactions and rating systems
- experience dignity, respect, or lack of recognition in platform labour.

1.3 Research Objectives

This doctoral study has the following research objectives:

1. To examine how migrant Uber drivers in Swansea construct and understand their professional identity within platform-based work.
2. To explore how drivers experience dignity and respect (or lack thereof) in their everyday work interactions with passengers, the platform, and wider society.
3. To analyze how algorithmic and platform-based management practices shape drivers' sense of identity, autonomy, and occupational status.
4. To investigate how migration background and socio-economic positioning influence drivers' identity construction and experiences of dignity in platform work.

1.4 Research Questions

This doctoral research has the following research questions:

Main Research Question:

How do migrant Uber drivers in Swansea construct and negotiate identity and dignity within platform-based work?

Sub-Research Questions

1. How do drivers describe and define their professional identity in the context of ride-hailing work?
2. How do experiences of dignity and recognition (or misrecognition) shape drivers' sense of self in their work?
3. In what ways do platform structures and algorithmic management influence drivers' identity formation and perceived status?
4. How do migration experiences and social positioning shape drivers' understanding of identity and dignity in platform work?

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research holds theoretical, geographical, and practical significance by moving beyond dominant economic narratives to center the human experience of digital labor.

Theoretically, the study shifts focus from algorithmic management and financial precarity to the qualitative realities of identity, recognition, and dignity. It provides essential insights into how marginalized workers negotiate self-worth under automated surveillance.

Geographically, it challenges the mega-city bias in current literature by bounding the case study within Swansea. This reveals how the platform economy operates within mid-sized, post-industrial urban environments where tight-knit communities and localized labor markets uniquely shape worker experiences.

Practically, by giving voice to a highly vulnerable migrant demographic, this research offers crucial empirical data. These insights are vital for local policymakers, labor unions, and digital platforms aiming to develop fairer digital workplace frameworks and inclusive labor regulations within Wales and the wider United Kingdom.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature reviews existing academic debates and empirical research to examine to the socio-economic and psychological realities of migrant ride-hailing drivers operating in Swansea. Located at the intersection of critical sociology, platform capitalism, migration studies, this chapter explores how macro-level structures of technological control and immigration policies manifest micro-level lived experiences. To analyze these dynamics, the literature review has been organized into four interconnected themes that ground the study within established literature.

2.2 Professional Identity and Narrative Construction

The construction of professional identity is increasingly understood as a dynamic and ongoing project of shaping narrative and social identities. According to McAdams and McLean (2013), narrative identity is an individual's *internalized and evolving story*. They argue that humans are natural story tellers and use personal narratives to navigate life's questions. Their past, alleged present and imagined future all play a role in building a sense of unity, meaning and moral purpose in their lives. When this internal narrative is combined with external realities, humans continuously work to shape both their narrative identity and social identity (Watson, 2008).

Nevertheless, contemporary economic landscape has significantly erupted this narrative interconnection. Murphy and Southey (1999) argue that contemporary capitalisms has eroded character, as fragmented career paths prevent workers from formulating a sustained and stable life narrative. This fragmentation is highly visible in low-status, highly-regulated, or interactive service work. According to Duffy, (1994), Robin Leidner (1993) argued in his book that service organizations commodify personal interactions and routinize self-presentations of workers. This creates a tension between institutions and workers self of self. Similarly, workers in "dirty" occupations were stigmatized and found actively *reframing, recalibrating, and refocusing to resist societal degradation and manufacture a positive self-image* (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999)

Even in professional transitions, identity remains fluid. Individuals adapt to new roles by adapting new identities based on internal comfort and external feedback. According to Ibarra (1999), this concept is called as 'provisional selves', where individuals continuously discard and adapt new identities. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) challenge traditional views of professional identity. They suggest that professional identity is often fragmented, fragile, localized self-narratives and characterized by shifting rather than a majestic cohesive trajectory.

Pratt (2012) suggests that professional identity construction is a process. This process answers the big question of 'who am I in relation to my work?'. It encompasses that professional identity is a continuous and a messy negotiation of narrative reinforcements.

2.3 Dignity at Work, Recognition, and Resistance

The preservation of dignity at work, social recognition and worker resistance form a critical triad in the sociology of employment. Axel Honneth's (1995) seminal text, *The Struggle for Recognition*, produced recognition theory. According to this, self-worth of humans is contingent on social validation and any denial leads to worker's moral injuries and professional struggles. Andrew Sayer (2005) expanded on this idea. He framed dignity as a *moral phenomenon rooted in autonomy and absence of institutional humiliation*. Since dignity requires autonomy, the workplace becomes a battleground. Hodson (2001) argues that management overwork, abuse and compromise dignity, forcing workers to engage in informal resistance to reclaim self-respect.

In service-related work, these dynamics are often misused and commodified. Merak Korczynski (2005) pinned the term "customer-oriented bureaucracy", where management pressurizes workers to tolerate customer hostility. Arlie Russel Hochschild (1983), an American sociologist considered this as "emotional labor". He suggests that commercialization of human feelings for corporate gains leads to alienation in workers. Regardless, workers are not passive victims. Building on Hochschild's emotional labor, Brook (2009) says that emotional labor is a deeply alienating, intrinsic component of commercial wage-labor that commodifies workers' emotional capacity. Contrary to this, Sharon Bolton (2009) suggests that workers bypass corporate mandates to preserve their dignity by offering emotional gifts.

This tension between structural control and agency is deeply rooted in capitalist labor process. The aim to maximize profits creates antagonism between management and employees (Smith, 2001). Today this antagonism is starkest in gig/platform economy. These digital platforms in gig economy often serve as exploitive '*arrival structure*' for vulnerable migrant workers, subjecting them to intense algorithmic degradation. This creates unrest in platform labor (Umney and Kretsos, 2015).

2.4 Migrant Precarity and the Gig/Platform Economy

The intersection of international migration and digital platform capitalism has engineered a highly volatile employment landscape characterized by hyper *flexibility, structural vulnerability, and systematic insecurity*. To understand this shift in the contemporary labor market, Guy Standing (2011) identified this global rise of "precariat", a distinct socio-economic class that lacks stability, occupational identity, and social protection. They face lives of insecurity while doing work without a past or future. Within this class, migrant workers are disproportionately represented. Datta et al. (2011) term this as "*subcontracted capitalism*" and *localized regimes of low-paid, hyper-precious urban labor*. Bridget Anderson (2015) sheds a light on how immigration policies actively manufactures precariousness, transforming migrants into 'manageable' and highly exploitable labor pools whose legal right to remain within the country is often fluctuating.

Digital labor platforms seamlessly exploit these pre-existing structural inequalities. Vallas and Schor (2020) argue that gig/platform economy functions as a hybridized model of control, dualistically combining extreme algorithmic subordination with absolute market

dependence. Rather than democratizing work, digital platforms shift all operational risks onto the workers. Van Doorn (2017) openly critiqued platform capitalizations. He argues that gig economy works as an extractive regime that reorganizes low-wage service work by stripping away traditional employer liabilities while *absorbing vulnerable, racially minoritized population into its orbit*.

Consequently, gig economy works as an important junction where fluid migration paths and precarious platform mechanics creates compounding forms of socio-economic insecurity. In real, platforms capitalize on the intersecting realities of legal precarity and a lack of alternative employment options. Furthermore, this structural insecurity impacts the overall well-being of migrant workers. The absence of minimum wage protections, sick leave and pay, or institutional safety nets leads to *severe mental exhaustion and material deprivation* (Pulignano et al., 2022). At societal level, this exploitation is intensified by localized austerity measures and structural racism. The drastic austerity measures taken by local municipalities and councils further strips away the safety nets that might otherwise shelter newly migrated population (Chakraborty, 2020). On top of all this, digital platforms further act as powerful catalyst in generating inequality and further trapping migrant gig workers at the very bottom to the contemporary labor hierarchy (de Kadt and Simkins, 2013).

2.5 Algorithmic Management and the Labor Process

The rise in the digital platforms have fundamentally transformed the workplace control, replaced human supervisors and automated decision-making. To understand this shift, contemporary platform research is built upon Labor Process Theory (LPT). Braverman's (1974; 1998) work on degrading of work under monopoly capitalism argues that management systematically de-skills workers to maximize managerial control. Burawoy and Giddens (1981) expanded on LPT and show workplace control is gained through consent. They suggest that workers are encourage to *compete against quotas, like a series of games, which obscures their exploitation and co-opts them into their own subordination*.

This deskilling and gamified consent is intensified through 'algorithmic management' is constantly executed in the contemporary gig economy. Rosenblat and Stark (2016) conducted a study on uber drivers. They suggested that platforms operate through asymmetric information, hiding critical data related to pricing and destination in order to manipulate driver behavior and manufacture compliance. Wood et al. (2019) identified labor market regimes where spatial distance allowed platforms to exert extreme corporate control over geographically dispersed workers while evading local employment liabilities.

Kellogg, Valentine and Christin (2020) categorized the practical mechanisms of this digital control through a framework of algorithmic "direction, evaluation and discipline." They suggested that platforms continuously discipline workers through user rating systems and automated notifications altogether bypassing the traditional managerial hierarchies. This automated governance system compromises the worker autonomy. Lee and Lee (2015) observed that algorithms eliminated any chance of human flexibility while leaving working feeling helpless and commodified as they adjust their life around the demands of an invisible app interface. Mohlmann and Zalmanson (2017) emphasized that algorithmic management

creates “algorithmic surveillance and automated discipline,” where drivers face sudden and automated penalization or account deactivation without any human avenue for appeal. This continuous digital surveillance disregards the traditional boundary between work and life balance, leaving digital workers into a state of permanent availability. Fleming (2017) argues that platform capitalisms exploits labor rights under the disguise of modern entrepreneurial freedom. However, the entire digital landscape has become a permanent site of struggle. Woodcock (2016) sheds some light through worker-inquiry lens. Over time gig workers decode app logic, share data maps, and organize digital resistance to disrupt algorithmic control and claim their agency within the labor process.

2.6 Professional Identity Construction Among Drivers

Understanding how drivers professionally perceive themselves requires shifting away from traditional models of organizational belonging toward more fluid, narrative-drive frameworks of self-conception, in the context of platform capitalism, a driver’s professional identity is rarely tied to a stable corporate structure; instead, it operates as a continuous, individualized project of “identity work” (Watson, 2008). Drivers are forced to constantly negotiate the tension between internal self-worth and the external realities of an automated, low-status occupation. Following McAdams and McLean (2013) model, humans naturally strive to build a more cohesive and purposeful narrative of their lives. Yet, the extreme flexibility and precarity inherent to ride-hailing platforms actively breaks this continuity, reinforcing Sennett (1998) assertion that contemporary capitalism eliminates workers ability to maintain a linear life narrative.

As a result, the core question of “who am I in relation to my work?” (Pratt, 2012) becomes totally fragmented and contradictory for app operators Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003). Since the platform interface standardizes human contact and enforces rigid metrics, drivers experience organizational constraints that limit authentic self-expression (Leidner, 1993). In order to continuously fight against the stigma of “dirty work” or low-tier service labor, drivers must perform intensive narrative maintenance, actively reframing their role from a inferior worker to an autonomous entrepreneur or an essential service provider (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999).

Ultimately, drivers do not maintain a singular professional identity. In fact, they navigate their daily routines by testing with “provisional slaves” (Ibarra, 1999), shifting between the identities of a self-employed entrepreneur and that of an algorithmically exploited laborer. Their professional self-perception is a messy, dynamic and localized narrative constructed daily at the intersection of algorithmic control and personal agency.

3. Methodology

3.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

This pilot study has assumed an Interpretivist approach while focusing on understanding lived experiences and subjective meanings associated to professional identity of workers in gig/platform work such as uber. According to Creswell (2018), an interpretivist approach focuses and understands the world through a subjective lens, that has multiple realities, where knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and participants. This research framework underlines an inductive process, that has open-ended questions and reflexivity to interpret data within specific context (Margarethe Kusenbach and Pfadenhauer, 2025).

THE INTERPRETIVIST FRAMEWORK	
ONTOLOGY	Multiple, subjective realities
EPISTEMOLOGY	Knowledge is co-constructed
AXIOLOGY	Reflexive and value bound

Ontology

The interpretivist approach rejects the notion that of a single, objective reality. As an alternative, it assumes that, there are multiple and subjective realities. Every participant is an individual with a valid reality that is socially constructed and shaped by their background, language, and meaning-making experiences.

Epistemology

Furthermore, interpretivist approach assumes that the knowledge is actively co-constructed when researcher and participants engage and dialogue occurs. The nature of the knowledge is *transactional and subjective*.

Axiology

This research is value-bound. It acknowledges that the researcher's values and past experiences impact the data collection and data analysis process. Instead of eliminating the researcher's bias, the researcher aims to practice reflexivity to understand how values and past experiences can impact the interpretation of the meaning-making experiences of participants.

3.2 Research Design and Pilot Study

In order to capture the subjective realities and address the core research questions, this pilot study has utilized the qualitative research design featuring a pilot study

What a Pilot Study is

Pilot study is a feasibility study, conducted to do a preliminary investigation to design and test a more comprehensive study. The objective of a pilot study is to ensure the *feasibility, risks, time, costs and overall management parameters* are at a maximum level so that

undertaken research has a high chance of success (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2024).

This pilot study has been conducted to test specific research instruments, refine methodology, sample size calculations, sample recruitment strategies and protocols are all practical and scalable (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

3.3 The Operational Timeline: “Standing on the Shoulders of Giants”

In order to ensure this research had structural rigor, carefully sequenced steps have been taken to build and establish a sound methodology framework.

Phase 1: Research Proposal Submission

The first formal milestone of this investigative study was the preparation and submission of the formal research proposal. The research proposal required a conceptually sound, socially justified and methodologically viable title, research scope and aim, research objectives and questions and methodological feasibility.

Phase 2: Ethical Clearance

Following the proposal approval, ethical clearance was formally secured by the ethics committee. Because this study engages a vulnerable demographic; migrant workers in precarious gig/platform economy, adherence to strict ethical mandate was paramount. Necessary forms were carefully filled out detailing each and every aspect of the study. The forms included participation information sheet, consent forms and ethics form.

This ensured that participants fully comprehended their voluntary participation and absolute right to withdraw from the study at any moment. Furthermore, it ensured anonymization and safeguarding of the participant identities via removing all identifiable details. Lastly it ensured that any data collected was handled and stored under the strict data protection laws.

Phase 3: Interview Question Matrix

Before conducting the field study. A structured interview matrix was designed, in qualitative research, a semi-structured interview format is highly effective. It provides a uniform framework while giving the possibility to probe further and deeper based on participant responses. The matrix included introductory, core questions, probes and closing questions. These interview questions covered the core objectives of the research. These questions provided a conceptual clarity, conversational flow and open-ended framing, while maintaining the standard of qualitative instrument (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

The question matrix balanced thematic focus. Each interview question was linked directly back to the core research questions of this study. Kvale (2007) suggests that this thematic focus ensures that dialogue between the researcher and participants remains aligned to the research to research objective while avoiding leading words and letting the participants to dictate the direction of their narration.

Phase 3: Accessing the Filed via gatekeepers

It requires strategic access to recruit hard-to-reach population. In order to reach the field safely and effectively, the researcher negotiated access through a gatekeeper to local multicultural community groups where ride-hailing workers informally meet and discuss their work. It is necessary to mitigate and anxiety or suspicion that migrant workers might naturally feel toward an academic researcher. They were informed about total anonymity, safeguarding, voluntary consent, absolute right to withdraw from participation and deletion of data after transcription.

Phase 4: Participant Recruitment

After building a transparent and trusting relationship with a gatekeeper, active recruitment process was initiated. Purposive and snowballing techniques was applied to recruit a total of 6 participants (Ting et al., 2025). The participation inclusion criteria were:

1. self-identified migrant background
2. currently working as ride-hailing driver
3. actively operating within the geographic boundaries of Swansea
4. aged 21 and above

Phase 5: Analytical Framework: Thematic Analysis

Once the pilot interviews were conducted and transcribed, the data was analyzed Braun and Clarke (2006) Thematic Analysis (TA). This framework has six phases.



Figure 1 Phases of Thematic Analysis - Braun & Clark (2006)

Familiarization with the data: It involves immersion in data by repeatedly reading the transcripts. This allows to become thoroughly acquainted with the data and make initial impressions.

Generating the initial codes: This involves assigning of meaningful codes to specific segments of the data that highlights an interesting or meaningful concept.

Searching the themes: Previously produced codes are put into clusters to develop themes and sub-themes.

Reviewing the themes: The themes are checked against the codes to ensure a coherent pattern within the data set. Any theme that lacks data support is discarded to maintain analytical validity.

Defining the themes: the themes are refined to articulate the what specific aspect of the data it captures. Each theme is given a distinct name and explained in detail.

Producing the report: the final phase of Braun & Clark (2006) Thematic Analysis involves weaving together narrative argument, data findings and existing literature into a cohesive analysis. This report is a cohesive and trustworthy account of lived and meaning-making experiences of migrant ride-hailing drivers in Swansea.

4. Findings

This findings chapter presents a qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of migrant ride-hailing drivers navigating platform within Swansea. By exploring the data gathered through semi structured-interviews, the section uncovers how global algorithmic mechanism work and intersect with local socio-economic structures to shape driver identity, relational dignity and structural precarity.

Participant Profile

To ensure the trust worthiness and transparency of this qualitative inquiry, this section outlines the profiles of the six migrant ride-hailing drivers who participated in the pilot study in Swansea. In accordance with the interpretivist paradigm, these profiles provide essential contextual boundaries, allowing the reader to understand backgrounds and structural constraints that shape each participants subjective reality.

To protect the anonymity and legal safety of this potentially vulnerable workforce, all real names have replaced with self-selected pseudonyms, and highly specific institutional identifiers have been removed.

Overview of Participants:

The sample consists exclusively of male migrant drivers aged between 25-60, reflecting the gendered demographic realities of the UK ride-hailing sector. The participants primarily represent South Asian (Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and West Asian (Afghani) migrant backgrounds. Their engagement between the platform is split between those replying ⁴¹ on it as a primary and full-time source of income and those using it part-time to supplement other income.

Furthermore, their previous professional backgrounds vary significantly; ranging from fresh university graduate to a current government employee, which directly impacts how they navigate around identity and self-worth on the app.

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Pseudonym	Razz	Raf	Jay	Shah	Sam	Omar
Age bracket	25-30	30-35	35-40	35-40	35-40	55-60
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Ethnicity	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi	Afghani
Weekly working hours	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Full-time
Shift patterns	Day/Night	Night	Day/Night	Night	Day/Night	Day/Night
Previous professional background	Fresh graduate	Care-worker	Fresh Graduate	Government employee	Delivery	Cab Driving

Narrative Participant Vignettes

Razz (25–30, Pakistani): Operating as a full-time driver across both day and night shifts, Razz entered the gig economy as a fresh university graduate. He uses platform labor to navigate the immediate post-graduation transition, balancing high economic dependence on the app with the narrative challenges of underemployment.

Raf (30–35, Bangladeshi): Raf drives part-time, exclusively during night shifts in Swansea city centre. He balances ride-hailing with his primary employment as a care worker, exposing him directly to the dual strains of public-facing emotional labor and customer hostility.

Jay (35–40, Bangladeshi): A full-time driver working irregular day and night shifts, Jay is also a fresh graduate. His professional self-perception is highly fluid as he continuously tries to reframe his current platform labor against his long-term academic and professional aspirations.

Shah (35–40, Bangladeshi): Shah works part-time on night shifts. He currently works as a government employee. This stark shift occupations forces him to engage in intensive, continuous identity work to protect his dignity.

Sam (35–40, Bangladeshi): Sam is an experienced gig worker who transitioned into full-time ride-hailing after working in the food delivery sector. Working mixed day and night shifts, his narrative centers on navigating evolving forms of algorithmic control.

Omar (55–60, Afghani): The senior member of the sample, Omar drives full-time on flexible day and night shifts. Having previously worked in traditional, human-dispatched cab driving, his profile offers an invaluable comparative lens on the shift from human management to automated, algorithmic control.

Discussion

The thematic framework developed from the six pilot interviews reveals how migrant ride-hailing drivers in Swansea navigate the complexities of platform capitalism. Based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) method, the raw codes were clustered into three overarching themes and 12 sub-themes.

	THEME	SUB-THEME	INITIAL CODES
1	Professional Identity and Worker Status	• Strategic Autonomy • Instrumental Income • Career Captivity • Worker Ideology Rejection	Independence, control over work, extra financial support, time flexibility, family time, flexible work, easy work, working as uber driver, service provider, good driver, respectful, skills and qualities

2	Relational Dynamics and Experiences of Dignity	• Asymmetric Interpersonal Dependency • Prosocial Uncompensated Labor • Behavioral Degradation and Intoxication • Self-Exploitation	Passenger interactions, unfair treatment, misbehave, felt valued while working, good customer experiences, customer treatment, public views and family's view about uber driving,
3	Algorithmic Governance and Structural Precarity	• Digital Capital Validation • Punitive Rating • Operational Overhead Compression • Automation Anxiety	Relationship with uber, ratings, trip assignments, cancellations, active user, inactive user, working hours, control over work, working hours, choice of rides, income

Theme 1: Professional Identity and Worker Status

This theme captures the internal "identity work" (Watson, 2008) performed by drivers as they negotiate their professional status. It illustrates how drivers actively reframe their positions to preserve their self-worth against platform boundaries.

- **Strategic Autonomy:** Drivers emphasize their independence and control over working hours to preserve their dignity (Sayer, 2005). For part-time drivers like Raf and Shah, selecting specific night shifts allows them to balance work with family time or primary occupations, transforming a precarious job into a space of flexible, self-directed labor.
- **Instrumental Income:** The platform is viewed purely as a tool for extra financial support. Fresh graduates like Razz and Jay treat the app as an accessible, easy income source during post-graduation underemployment, focusing strictly on its economic utility to distance their core self-image from the status of service workers.
- **Career Captivity:** This sub-theme highlights a deep narrative crack (Sennett, 1998). Highly qualified migrants, such as Shah (a current government official), feel trapped in low-status platform labor. They experience an ongoing financial struggle.
- **Worker Ideology Rejection:** Drivers actively resist the subordinate identity of an "exploited worker" (Braverman, 1974). They reframe themselves as professional

service providers who possess high skills and qualities. By demanding respect and focusing on being "good drivers," they challenge the social stigma attached to taxi work.

Theme 2: Relational Dynamics and Experiences of Dignity

This theme details the micro-level interpersonal interactions inside the vehicle. It shows how customer dynamics threaten or validate the moral self-worth of migrant workers (Honneth, 1995).

- **Asymmetric Interpersonal Dependency:** Drivers are structurally exposed to unfair treatment due to the asymmetrical power dynamics built into the app. Participants describe a constant vulnerability to misbehavior, where the platform automatically prioritizes passenger accounts over the driver's word.
- **Prosocial Uncompensated Labor:** Despite structural control, drivers use personal agency to perform uncompensated emotional tasks (Bolton, 2004). They intentionally provide comforting, respectful customer experiences to generate moments where they feel valued, turning a cold business transaction into a meaningful interaction.
- **Behavioral Degradation and Intoxication:** Drivers working night shifts in Swansea city centre face severe behavioral degradation from intoxicated passengers. This exposure to public hostility and racialized or linguistic friction results in direct injuries to their personal dignity (Hochschild, 1983).
- **Self-Exploitation:** Drivers face a painful tension between societal views and their own self-respect. To protect their families from the perceived stigma of low-tier gig labor, drivers often hide their working conditions, internalizing the stress and overworking to maintain financial expectations.

Theme 3: Algorithmic Governance and Structural Precarity

This theme examines how automated software restructuring replaces human management, enforcing absolute market dependence while stripping away worker security (Vallas & Schor, 2020).

- **Digital Capital Validation:** Drivers continuously analyze app logic to understand trip assignments, cancellations, and active user statuses (Woodcock, 2016). They build "algorithmic literacy" to figure out how the platform distributes work, turning data tracking into a gamified survival strategy (Burawoy, 1979).
- **Punitive Rating:** The user-rating system serves as an automated disciplinary tool (Kellogg, Valentine and Christin (2020). Drivers live with continuous anxiety over fluctuating ratings, knowing that malicious customer feedback can lead to sudden algorithmic deactivations without human appeal (Mohlmann and Zalmanson (2017).
- **Operational Overhead Compression:** Compounded by local economic pressures, drivers face severe compression of their actual take-home income. Rising fuel costs

and vehicle maintenance, mixed with the platform's changing commission rates, force drivers to extend their working hours simply to stay afloat.

- **Automation Anxiety:** This sub-theme highlights the absolute lack of control over ride choices and income streams (Lee and Lee (2015)). Experienced operators like Omar, who transitioned from traditional dispatched cabs, feel a profound sense of helplessness when facing an invisible, unyielding software interface that dictates their economic survival.

5. Conclusions

Contributions

By focusing specifically on Swansea, this research moves beyond hyper-urban metropolises (like London or Manchester) to document how platform capitalism operates within a secondary UK city. It provides a localized account of how migrant drivers navigate a distinct post-industrial geography, regional transport networks, and localized weekend night-economy dynamics.

The inquiry successfully integrates Labour Process Theory (LPT) with Professional Identity Theory. It advances sociological debates by demonstrating that algorithmic deskilling (Braverman, 1974) and gamified compliance (Burawoy, 1979) do not completely crush worker subjectivity. Instead, the study shows how personal agency is maintained as drivers actively construct "provisional selves" and deploy narrative adjustments to retain their workplace dignity.

Limitations

Gender Homogeneity: The pilot sample consisted entirely of male drivers. While this accurately reflects the heavily gendered demographic realities of the UK ride-hailing sector, it overlooks the unique safety concerns, spatial anxieties, and specific identity negotiations faced by female migrant platform workers.

Geographic Specificity: The research was strictly bounded within the geographic and economic confines of Swansea. The specific regional tariff structures, passenger demographics, and local regulatory frameworks mean that the findings may not directly represent the experiences of drivers working in larger, more densely populated urban economies.

Cross-Sectional Timeframe: The data collection captured a specific snapshot in time. Because the research did not track the drivers longitudinally, it cannot evaluate how prolonged exposure to algorithmic management, cumulative inflation, or fluctuating UK visa policies dynamically alters a migrant's professional identity over a multi-year period.

Recommendations

For Academic Research: Future investigators should conduct comparative, cross-regional studies matching secondary cities like Swansea against major metropolitan centers to map spatial variations in algorithmic control. Furthermore, longitudinal qualitative studies are needed to track how highly qualified migrants (such as former government officials or fresh graduates) transition out of or remain trapped within platform labor over time.

For Policy and Regulation: Local municipalities and national regulatory bodies must mandate greater algorithmic transparency from tech platforms. Policy interventions should focus on enforcing clear "algorithmic accountability" standards, which include outlawing arbitrary, automated account deactivations and ensuring drivers have a legally protected right to human arbitration and appeal processes.

For Grass-Roots Practice: To mitigate the isolation caused by automated management, migrant workers should be supported in developing localized digital mutual aid networks. Building horizontal communication channels outside the official app infrastructure allows drivers to share strategies, warn each other of hostile operational zones, and collectively foster the social recognition denied to them by the platform interface

Part C: Reflections

This pilot study has been a valuable learning experience in understanding how research is translated into practice, particularly in relation to ethical design, participant engagement, and methodological decision-making. Through the process of designing and refining my ethics application, I developed a clearer understanding of how theoretical research plans must be adjusted to meet real-world ethical standards and institutional expectations.

49 One of the most important lessons I learned was the significance of ethical reflexivity. Initially, I viewed sampling and recruitment as largely practical decisions, but feedback from my supervisor helped me recognise the ethical complexity embedded in seemingly simple interactions. For example, approaching an Uber driver during service appeared to be an efficient opportunistic sampling method, but I learned that this interaction introduces a potential power imbalance. This highlighted the importance of considering how participants may perceive pressure to participate, even in informal settings, and how easily ethical concerns can be overlooked when recruitment is embedded in everyday contexts. This has strengthened my awareness of researcher responsibility and the need to critically reflect on power dynamics throughout the research process.

Another key learning outcome was related to data protection and participant anonymity. Working through the ethics form required me to think more carefully about what constitutes identifiable information and how digital communication platforms complicate confidentiality. I had initially assumed that not collecting names would be sufficient for anonymity, but I learned that contact details, platform logins, and even contextual descriptions could indirectly identify participants. This has improved my understanding of data minimisation, secure storage practices, and the importance of aligning research design with institutional data protection policies such as UWTSO guidance.

The pilot study also enhanced my practical research skills, particularly in participant communication and informed consent procedures. I learned how to clearly explain research aims in accessible language and ensure participants understand their rights, including withdrawal timelines and confidentiality limits. This process improved my ability to translate academic research requirements into clear, participant-friendly information.

In addition, I developed stronger skills in critically responding to feedback. The iterative process of revising my ethics application based on supervisor comments helped me see academic feedback not as correction alone, but as an essential part of strengthening research quality. It improved my ability to justify methodological decisions more clearly and ensure consistency across different sections of my research documentation.

Finally, this pilot study has helped me better understand the relationship between research design and real-world implementation. It highlighted that converting research into practice is not linear, but involves continuous reflection, ethical negotiation, and adaptation. I now feel more confident in designing research that is both methodologically sound and ethically responsible, particularly when working with vulnerable or marginalised groups such as migrant workers.

Overall, this experience has strengthened my research skills, ethical awareness, and ability to apply academic knowledge in practical settings.

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Appendix I: Interview Question Matrix

Theme	Research Questions	Core Interview Questions	Deeper Probes
		Warm-up / Background (to build rapport) 13 1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and how you came to work as an Uber driver? Probe: How long have you been doing this work? Probe: What did you do before this? Probe: Why did you choose this type of work?	
Professional Identity Construction	RQ1: How do drivers describe and define their professional identity in ride-hailing work?	1. How would you describe your work as an Uber driver to someone who doesn't know much about it? Probe: Do you see it as a job, a profession, a business, or something else? 2. How do you see yourself in this role? Probe: Do you consider yourself a driver, service provider, entrepreneur, or something else? Probe: Has this changed over time? 3. What does being a "good driver" mean to you? Probe: What skills or qualities are important? Probe: Where did those ideas come from?	1. Do you feel this work reflects who you are as a person? Why or why not? 2. How do others (family, friends, community) see your work? Probe: Does that affect how you see yourself?
Dignity, Respect, and Recognition	RQ2: How do experiences of dignity and recognition shape drivers' sense of self?	39 1. Can you describe a time when you felt respected or valued while working? Probe: What happened? Probe: How did that make you feel about your work? 2. Can you describe a time when you felt disrespected or treated unfairly? Probe: What made that experience stand out? Probe: How did you respond?	1. What does "being treated with dignity" mean to you in this job? 2. Do these experiences affect how you see yourself or your work? How? 3. Do you ever feel invisible, undervalued, or stereotyped?

		3. In your daily work, do you feel that people treat you with dignity? Probe: Passengers? Probe: The company/platform? Probe: The public or society more broadly?	Probe: Can you give an example?
Platform & Algorithmic Management	RQ3: How do platform systems shape identity, autonomy, and status?	1. How would you describe your relationship with the Uber platform? Probe: Do you feel like you work for Uber, with Uber, or independently? 2. How do things like ratings, trip assignments, or app decisions affect your work? Probe: Do they influence how you behave with passengers? Probe: Do they affect how you see yourself as a driver? 3. Do you feel you have control over your work? Probe: Working hours? Probe: Choice of rides? Probe: Income?	1. How do ratings or feedback impact your confidence or sense of worth? 2. Do you ever feel monitored or judged by the system? Probe: How does that influence your behaviour? 3. Do you think this type of work has a certain status compared to other jobs? Probe: Has Uber changed how you feel about your occupational status?
Migration, Social Positioning & Identity	RQ4: How do migration experiences shape identity and dignity in platform work?	1. Can you tell me about your journey to the UK and how you came to work in this job? Probe: What challenges did you face entering the labour market? 2. Do you think your background as a migrant affects your experience as a driver? Probe: In what ways? Probe: With passengers? With the platform? 3. Do you feel your qualifications, skills, or past experience are recognised in this work? Probe: Why or why not?	1. Have you ever felt treated differently because of your background? Probe: Can you describe a situation? 2. Does this job provide you with a sense of dignity or stability as a migrant? Probe: Why / why not?

			3. How does this work fit into your longer-term goals or identity? Probe: Is it temporary, permanent, or something else?
		Closing Questions (Important for Reflexive Depth) 1. Is there anything about your experience as a driver that we haven't talked about but you think is important? 2. If you could change one thing about this work, what would it be? 3. How would you like people to understand your work better?	

Pilot Study Interview - Participant 4

Date: May 8, 2026

Time: 12:00 pm

Microsoft Teams

Researcher:

Hello?

Participant 4:

Salaam alaikum.

Researcher:

How are you?

Participant 4:

I'm good, Alhamdul, are you okay?

Researcher:

I'm good. Thank you. Thank you for giving me time.

Participant 4:

No, what is a tool?

Researcher:

Okay, you don't mind if I record this interview, right?

Participant 4:

Yeah, yeah, sure, sure you can. You can carry on whatever you need. I don't have any problem at all.

Researcher:

Okay, so I'm going to ask you a few questions. I have already shared, like, you know, the layout of my questions. There are going to be a few probe questions in the middle. So my core questions are going to be, you know, regarding your work as an Uber driver, your background, how you find this work, and you know, if you have any, like,

Participant 4:

Mmh.

Researcher:

I have anything that you want to say about, you know, how this work relates to you and, you know, your engagement with the consumers, with the customers, and how do you recognize this platform, you know, as part of your professional identity. So I'm going to ask you a few questions related to your background. Can you tell me a few things about yourself? How did you come to work as an Uber driver?

Participant 4:

Okay, so myself, I'm SHAH. I'm originally from Bangladesh. I moved to the UK about 17 years ago. And

Participant 4:

educational background is I got a master's degree in finance and professionally full-time. I'm a civil servant working for HMRC and I do Uber as a part-time as a

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

no additional income support. That's why I do Uber as a part-time. And also, yeah, yeah.

Researcher:

How long have you been working as a part-time Uber driver?

Participant 4:

I've been working Uber for almost...

Just over 2, just over 2 years, yeah, and before that I did, before that I did Uber Eats for a few years as well.

Researcher:

Oh.

You do you see? Yeah.

Wow, okay, that's great. So do you see Uber, you know, driving Uber as a job or as a proper profession or you think it's kind of a business that you're doing because, you know, you're kind of self-employed here? How do you see this?

Participant 4:

Yes, honestly, in UK there are the in hundreds of thousands of people do Uber as a full time. You know, they do their, you know, living hood and everything doing by Uber full time. But personally, I feel like Uber.

Participant 4:

It's kind of a thing you cannot do part-time. In that sense, to make good money, you have to work long, long hours. There will be not...

Participant 4:

effective doing Uber, doing part-time at the second job is the best option.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Yeah, okay, that's great. So how do you see yourself in this role? Do you think you are just an Uber driver or you're providing some kind of service, service provider? Or do you see yourself an entrepreneur that, you know, you have invested yourself in Uber, you're paying for it and now you're getting money out of it? How do you see yourself in this role especially?

Participant 4:

Um, wanted to do um.

you know, I see myself as, you know, a kind of a service provider helping people at

the same time making some additional money from my perspective. So making some extra money and it's kind of a flexible as well so that

Researcher 10:54

Yeah.

Participant 4: 11:09

I can log in anytime, I can log out anytime, I can work whenever in my spare times. So, same as, you know, I feel like, you know, is a service provider helping people and at the same time, you know, making some extra cash.

Researcher:

Yeah, so do you think you are like a good service provider, like a good driver, a good Uber service provider? Do you see yourself like that?

Participant 4:

I think so. I think that.

Researcher:

Did you have like a good experience?

Participant 4:

I do have a good experience. I can see my rating is almost five out of five. So I've been working for over 2 years. You know, I didn't have any official complaints or in any company from the customers. So

Researcher:

Wow, yeah.

Participant 4:

I feel like, yes, I'm not, I don't know of a great driver, but probably a decent driver.

Researcher:

That's amazing. Okay, so one question related to this, but you know, in terms of your community, your friends, your family, how do they feel or, you know, how do they feel about you working as, well, I know you're not working full time, but you're

working part time. In our communities, we know, you know, some jobs, you know, they are taken not seriously, not because they're bad, It says that they're not taken as proper professions. So how do they take it in like in your community, like for you or generally, how do they consider Uber driving?

Participant 4:

In the sense, to be honest with you, in the UK, probably if you think about if it is in Bangladesh or Pakistan or India, people think this is an odd kind of job, not respectable, not professional. In the UK,

Researcher:

Yeah, not professional basically, because we have this mindset of nine to five job and any other job, let it be a delivery job or a sexy driver or something like that, they don't consider it like, you know, a professional job. Yeah.

Participant 4:

Still not, yeah.
Yeah.

Professional job, yeah. In this, in the UK or probably, you know, first world countries, I would say, this is a, this job can be very respectful. People do respect what you do. About my family or friends,

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

I don't see any issues or any problem or their mindset thinking that this job is odd. I mean, I think mindset in different countries or different areas is different. People vary people to people. But from my understanding and my experience, I would say

Participant 4:

doing work as an Uber driver or taxi driver, it's not, there's nothing wrong or they don't see this as a odd job, they see as a normal, you know, professional job. Not like a professional means, you know, you know, not a 9 to 5 job or not a,

Researcher:

No, yeah.

Participant 4:

you know, doctors or solicitors, but a decent, respectable job, I feel like.

Researcher:

Yeah. Okay, that's amazing. Thank you

Participant 4:

And also, this is not only not only the not only family or friends, even from the customer perspectives. I did find when you speak to the customers while you are on the job, people do, mostly people do respect and people do

You know, you know, appreciate the job we do.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah, that's amazing. Okay, so that means that you have had good experiences working, you know, while working for Uber, right?

Participant 4:

Yeah, I mean, yes, job wise, yeah, I mean, I didn't have any kind of issues or any problems or I didn't have any situation where I felt like, oh, it's not respectable. I didn't feel it.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Okay, did you have any bad experience with any customer where you were like disrespected or maybe treated unfairly? Or you know, when you're...

Participant 4:

Not in that sense, you know, someone, you know, disrespected or said anything racially. I didn't have, I didn't experience that, but from my you know, I spoke to some of the boys, some of my friends, colleagues, they did sometime face a lot of different kind of racial abuse or sometimes verbal abuse and stuff like this. But well, Alhamdulillah, I never had any experience yet. But sometimes you do get, you know, customers where they are, you know, not

respectful in that sense. When they come into the car, you know, they slam the door or sometimes they put the foot fit in the front and, you know, not appropriate sitting, no stuff like this.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

I had few of some issues, but not something that, you know, causes major, major issues. No, I haven't issued yet. But yes, there are so many stories you might have heard, so many different things happened. But from my

My own experience, I haven't had any.

Researcher 16:56

That's amazing. What about Uber as a platform? Did you have any bad experience with them? How is your relationship with Uber platform? Are they treating you fairly and, you know, properly?

Participant 4:

To be honest, honestly, it's functional. In that sense, you know, it gives me work. As I said, I'm A part-time Uber driver. I don't do full-time. And as I mentioned, if a lot of people do Uber full-time,

Once you do full time, it is the work life balance become very hard because honestly, you have to put a lot of hour to make a decent amount of money because expenses are high. So if you do part time and work, only the hours are really busy, especially weekends.

Researcher:

Yes.

Participant 4:

early morning or late night shifts, they are, you can make a good money. So it's

completely functional. It gives me work, you know, and, you know, same time, but I have a little influence over how it operates as well. For example,

The majority, the main issue with every single driver with Uber is the amount of commission they take from our fare. I just give you a little example. For example, if Uber takes around, don't quote me, but you can double check it,

Researcher:

Yes.

Participant 4:

as far I know, Uber takes 30 to 49 percent commissions from a trip. So for example, if, yes, this is a, they don't, they didn't fix it. This is the main issue. They don't take the commission fix rate. They just

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

fluctuate depends on how busy Uber is and how much is demand. So, for example, if it is if it is less busy or average busy time, if I receive a if I receive a 15 pound trip, Uber probably charge customer 25 pound and they give 15 pound to the driver and they keep 10 pound commission from one trip, which is absolutely horrible because driver, they're giving the time, they, you know, they're using the fuel, they're using their own car.

Participant 4:

They're giving their own time, but still they're getting 15 pound and Uber can get the commission of 10 pound from the, so which is absolutely wrong. Everyone think this is wrong and also I think as well, taking 33 to 49% commission from one trip. It's a killer.

This is the this is the only thing.

Researcher:

Any other apps in Swansea?

Researcher:

Is there any other app like Uber in Swansea? So Uber is like playing like a monopoly, isn't it?

Participant 4:

No.

Like Uber, obviously, we have private hires. We have Yellow Cab, Western Cab, and Data Cab. They are private hire same as Uber. The functionality is exactly the same, but only difference is Yellow Cab or...

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

data cab, they have their office, they, you know, they receive the jobs from phone, can get from app and all this different thing. But Uber, there is no physical office in Swansea. There are, there is one, they come and go once or twice a week, but not like proper.

you know, like phone operators and stuff like this in Swansea or anywhere. So it's only operated by app. So in that sense, Uber is the only app-based company, gig-based company in Swansea, but in Cardiff we have...

Researcher:

Right.

Participant 4:

Bold, um, yeah, and so on.

Researcher:

Oh, you do have Bolton, because I did use Bolt in London and I was wondering if Swansea had Bolt now.

Participant 4:

Yeah, no, no, no, you don't have Bolt, but Cardiff we have Bolt, and that's it. I think

these are the two we have in Wales. Well, obviously not in Swansea. Swansea only Cardiff, only Uber.

Researcher:

Yeah. Okay. So one more question related to Uber. You know, the [REDACTED] that you get, the trips that are assigned to you, or, you know, anything that comes from the Uber side, does it affect your work? Like how you're going to decide for the next ride or, you know, next passenger? Does the rating or trips, you know, assigned to you. How does that work that out?

Participant 4:

Like.

So basically, rating system works for both sides, for the driver and for the customer. Okay. So basically, this is again, depends person to person. I have a lot of friends working for Uber in Swansea, in London or somewhere other places. When they accept

Researcher:

Right.

Thank you.

Participant 4:

When they accept the job, obviously the first thing we check, you know, how long is the distance and how much they're paying. Okay. This is the majority people, 90, I would say 95 to 98% people check how much you're paying, where you're going and how long is the distance. You know, that's it.

Researcher:

Right, right.

Participant 4:

But I would say 5% people check additional thing, what is the riders rating? Yeah, customers rating. So for example, myself, I do late night shifts. And also, you know, late night shifts, mostly you get a lot of drunk people from the

They're coming out from pubs and clubs and, you know, a lot of different sort of places. So, for myself, for my own safety, what I do, I first thing I check is what is the trade customers rating. So, so for me, rating...

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

is a big thing. For me, rating is a special thing and it's very useful as well. I set myself a certain limit where I don't take below a certain level of ratings, rated customers. So it's very important for me. And the same thing goes for riders as well. Riders can check **drivers** rating as well. For example, if someone is thinking, oh, this driver has got lower rating and they're not...

feeling safe or they're not feeling comfortable, they can then cancel the, you know, they can, they are allowed to cancel the trip, which is, which is a good, I think, good thing for both sides. And it's a safe thing to do as well. And another good thing about Uber about the ratings,

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

You know, it's not only that customers rate the driver, and when you do the trip, driver has to do rating for the customer as well. So this is a mandatory, we have to rate. Okay, so I think that's a very good thing. And sometimes this rating things can be manipulated by the riders. Because, for example, in Uber, you will see a lot of this is I experienced so many times. Customer customers come in.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

They ask or drive, can I vape inside my car? Or they ask or, you know, for example, someone has started to eat or drink. And if driver politely says, oh, you are not meant to, not allowed to eat inside or drink inside or vape inside, just sit.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

by saying these customers.

Most of the time, if you say no, or if you don't allow them, they give you bad ratings, which may affect your future working for the Uber. So you have to keep all this different balance, everything out. So rating, great thing, but can be manipulating, you know, in some sense, when customers can do whatever they want to do. So it's a win-win.

Researcher:

Right.

Yeah, okay, that's great. You know, it just covers a lot of questions. Okay, so, you know, you have already mentioned your migration status in a way that, you know, you came to Swansea like 17 years ago and you studied here, now settled here.

Participant 4:

Mhm.

Researcher:

Okay, so I had a few questions related to, you know, you entering the labor market. Did you face any challenge, any challenges when you entered the labor market here, like, you know, getting a proper job?

Participant 4:

Mhm.

Researcher:

Maybe just, you know, finding work here.

Participant 4:

As an Uber driver or as in general?

Researcher:

No, no, no, generally, like, you know, and the labor market here.

Participant 4:

As in, as a migrant.

Researcher:

Yeah, as a migrant, did you find any challenge like, you know, it was hard to get or maybe it was easy for you? What was your experience?

Participant 4:

Um, uh, yes, um...

So, so so it is it is a challenging because obviously there are a lot of barriers. The barriers can be racial barriers, it can be your language barriers. You might you might

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

Speak 100% fluent, you might have a good control over your ability over your English language, but still you do not speak like their mother tongue. English is their mother tongue, and also the way their pronunciations and, you know, it's...

It cannot be the same, you know, as a migrant. I won't have the same as them, you know. It can make a huge difference. It can make a, what they call, a little bit of discrimination it can make. I can give you an example. When I

Researcher:

Yeah

Participant 4:

Came after I finished my undergrad and everything. I worked in a retail for a few years and then I became a retail manager. So now after the hard work, working only two years in retail, becoming a branch manager, it's

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

It's amazing. It sounds amazing. But once I become, yeah, once I become, until I was a supervisor, until I was assistant manager, I was okay. I didn't feel that I discriminated. I was feeling great. Once I become manager, when I started to

Researcher:

It's amazing, yeah.

Participant 4:

speak to the head office or started contacting with my operation managers, where I found discrimination comes from top.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

It's, you don't get discrimination. Probably you get, you don't feel that discrimination as a migrant when you are in a lower position. The upper position when you go, you can see it, you can feel it. And when I was a branch manager,

Researcher:

Yeah.

Big.

Speaking.

Yeah, okay, so do you think your my background?

Participant 4:

for 3 and a half.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

Hello?

Hello!

Researcher:

Hi, can you hear me, brother? Yes?

Participant 4:

Yeah, yeah, I can hear you now.

Yeah, it does, it does affect, it does affect, you know, your career, and then then from private sector to public sector, when I started working as a civil servant for last almost 10 years now, I'm working as a civil servant there.

Researcher:

Yeah, okay, so...

Yeah.

Participant 4:

In Wales, I would say civil service is great. In that sense, the, you know, ⁸¹you don't feel that, you don't feel that, you know, discriminations at all because what they call the diversity and there are a lot of different activities, a lot of different group of people working together, you know, closely. So you don't feel that, you know, discriminated in that sector. But obviously, in general, I would say, of course, there are

Researcher:

Mm.

Yeah.

Participant 4:

discriminations or, you know, problems everywhere. People face different way. From my experience, I faced, I faced a few times, not few times, a lot of time, but when I was as a store manager working with the higher level people and I feel like there is discrimination and problems are more than if you work, you know, you know, like entry level.

Researcher:

Yeah.

That's amazing. That's a lot of insight. Okay, so do you think your migrant background affects any experience that you have with the Uber, like working as a

driver, or do they, do you feel that platform, you know, treats you fairly in that regard? Or it doesn't matter to them. What do you think?

Participant 4:

Um...

With Uber, with Uber, it doesn't matter, because Uber, to be honest, it runs, you know, runs by the migrants, because if there is there are no migrants, there are no, you know, people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or wherever. migrants, majority of the drivers are migrants. So basically Uber runs by, you know, migrants. So from Uber itself is no problem at all. I don't think they see that way. From customer's perspective, it's, as I said, I heard a lot of stories, I heard a lot of different occasions, situations where people did face racial abuse as a driver. It happens and it is very common practice in some places, in some areas. But as I said, I haven't faced yet. But yes, I can hear sometimes one or two times.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

different comments, you know, as a, you know, as a migrant or, you know, different ethnic minority. I do, you know, overheard one or two comments, but I never faced direct any discrimination yet, touch wood, inshallah.

Um, never happened, but it it does it it does happen in some places with some lot of people, but I haven't faced yet.

55

Researcher:

That's amazing.

That's amazing. That's really good to know. Okay, so do you think for someone who is working like full-time for Uber, it is a stable job. They can make a lot of money out of it. What do you think?

Participant 4:

Yes, if you committed, if you think, oh, I can put a lot of hours, and if you have that mentality that, you know, doesn't matter whatever it is, I will work 10 hours, 12 hours, you can make good money.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

Depends on the area. Some areas you can make, for example, some area if you work 10 hours a day, you can make 300 pound, 400 pound. In some areas, in some areas you work 10 hours, you can make maximum 150 pound. So it depends on the area.

Researcher:

Yeah

Participant 4:

And, you know, it depends on the area, but I would say yes, 100%. If you work as an Uber driver, you can work as a full-time profession. You can make out of Uber a good amount of money.

But you have to work long hours and you have to work, you know, almost six days a week for a decent amount of money. But it is, it is, I mean, I would say...

Researcher:

Mm.

Participant 4:

A lot of people do take Uber as a full-time job.

Researcher:

That's amazing. Okay, one last question. Do you think a person like you, Mashallah, you're highly qualified and you know you have good skills and good qualifications? Do you think all of that somehow, you know, helps you with this work? Do you think your skills are recognized in this work?

Participant 4:

Yeah.

Researcher:

Or no.

Participant 4:

I would say I did transfer some of my skills or experience to Uber. This is communication and customer service because obviously I've been working as a civil servant for 10 years. This is a different platform. That didn't bring me anything to

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

Uber platform. But before that, I was working as a store manager, branch manager for four years. And then I worked in retail, retail as well. I worked, when I came first, I worked in a restaurant. I used to work two days a week in a restaurant as well. So those kind of places where

Researcher:

Thank you.

Participant 4:

You have to do a lot of customer service. You have to you have to know how you deal with the customers, if there is an any odd situation, how you handle the situation, and you know, and it teaches you the manners and you know, you know how you talk to the people.

Researcher

Okay.

Thanks.

It polishes you.

Participant 4:

Which is, yeah, which is, I think, a great experience I had from that previous experience, you know, by, you know, talking to customers and how you should behave. So, that experience helped me. I think that...

Researcher:

Okay.

Participant 4:

you know, helped me a lot how to, you know, serve, give the good service to the customers. So it does help. It depends what, from what sector you are in, depends what kind of jobs you have done and depends what kind of qualifications as well. For example,

Researcher:

Yes.

Participant 4:

If someone is a good qualified, you know, from a management or from some kind of skilled diplomas and stuff, you learn how to handle the customers and how you should approach the customers. It does help. I mean,

Researcher:

yeah.

Participant 4:

It's not a major thing, but still that kind of skills and experience when you have it, you know, it's easier to handle the pressure because this can be sometimes very stressful as an Uber driver. So it does ease your stress. It does

Researcher:

Again.

K.

Thank you.

Participant 4:

give you confident to speak to people. So I would say it depends on what kind of experience you have. Working with Uber does make it not huge, but a little difference.

Researcher:

Mmh.

Mm.

Mhm.

Okay, that's amazing. Okay, it was just was one last question. If you could change anything about uber...

Participant 4:

Mhm.

Researcher:

or the work that you are doing, what it would it be?

Participant 4:

Sorry, sister, your voice is, your voice is cut down.

Researcher:

Anything.

Oh, sorry, I said if you could change one thing about, you know, this work, like working for Uber, what would it be?

Participant 4:

Hmm.

Oh, I think everyone will say the same thing.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

Money, I mean, I would say one thing.

Researcher:

Yeah, what is it?

Participant 4:

Uber does give you a lot of flexibility.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

And the rating system, it's very effective for both sides. I would say if you ask me only one thing, I would say Uber should take care, you know, more

Researcher:

Mm.

Mhm.

Participant 4:

you know, take care of their own drivers, which is sometimes they don't. The one thing you will heard a lot, if a customer give a wrong complaint, Uber sometimes without any investigation, they will just

Researcher:

Yeah.

Participant 4:

block you from working with Uber. I think that should be more clearer. That should, you know, Uber should take a step after, you know, listening to both parties and both parties and also they should, you know, prioritize their own drivers as well.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Yes.

Mhm.

Participant 4:

which is they don't. Because they're big, they're big company, multi-billion dollar company. They have millions of millions of drivers all over the world. So they don't

care. This is the thing. They should care more about the drivers. End of the day, drivers making money at the same time. When drivers making money,

Researcher:

Thing.

Mm.

Participant 4:

Uber making money too. So it's a, you know, money making for both. So they have to make good care of the drivers. Obviously, there was a lot of issues where driver never used to get holiday pay. Drivers do get holiday pay now.

Researcher:

Yeah.

Mm.

Mmh.

Okay, that's amazing.

Participant 4:

Yeah, do get the holiday. They don't give like holiday pay yearly. They pay, they add some extra money on the every trip. You get extra little few pens, few pounds with the with the every trip as a holiday, you know, holiday money, which is

Researcher:

Mmh.

Mm.

Participant 4:

which is amazing, which is good. But from my side, if I wanted to change one thing, I would say Uber should be more clearer, more supportive to the drivers. If any issues happens, Uber should listen to both parties, not only one.

Researcher:

Is it?

Yeah.

Participant 4:

And the major one, obviously, money. Uber, what they do, first six or one year, for example, when they came to Swansea first one year, they gave a lot of money. They gave just, I mean, unbelievable money. People used to make it tons from Uber.

Researcher:

Yes.

Participant 4:

Those are the ones, money, money, and second thing, they should support drivers more.

Researcher:

Okay, then.

Oh, that's amazing. Thank you, brother. That was amazing. I got a lot of insights.

Okay, I just want to say something that everything that you have mentioned in the interview, I will not be writing your name or your ethnicity or your status or anything anywhere in my report. I will transcribe your interview data and then I will delete

Participant 4:

Mm-hmm.

Researcher:

the audio within two weeks, okay? I have some ethical integrity and, you know, protocols to follow. And I will be updating you with whatever I have written down. If you have any, like, you know, problem or if you want to change any of the answers, you can let me know. Okay?

Participant 4:

No, no problem.

Mhm.

Mhm.

Yeah, sure, of course, of course. And no problem. And also, if you need any further questions, you can message or ask anytime. I mean, also, you know. So if you need anything, you can just ask. It's not a problem at all.

Researcher:

Thank you.

Yeah.

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you so much.

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