New Work, Data and Inclusion in the Digital Economy:
A Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Perspective

NEW
WORK
and Inclusion in the Middle East
and North Africa

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NEW FORMS OF WORK BASED ON ELECTRONIC PLATFORMS: FOCUS ON JORDAN

Case Study

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Jordanian economy suffers from high unemployment rates and slow economic growth, a pairing that is compounded by rising costs of living and an insufficient minimum wage. Current unemployment rates hover at about 30.7 percent for women and 19.6 percent for men, or 21.9 percent of the workforce overall.[1] Unemployed women, in particular, tend to be highly educated, and bachelor's degree holders. In fact, 79.5 percent of unemployed women have completed a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 26.7 percent of unemployed men. Young workers have things even worse, with unemployment estimates for those aged between 15 and 24 resting at 46.1 percent (42.1 percent for men and 64.1 percent for women). These alarming figures reflect on Jordan's low economic participation rate of 33.3 percent (53.3 percent for men and 13.7 percent for women). These statistics, however, only include those who are formally employed and registered with social security. Such a dire economic situation is further exacerbated by low-income levels, with an inadequate minimum wage set at 260 JOD ($366) per month.[2] This amount is often not enough to cover living costs, particularly in the capital of Amman. It is estimated that the amount needed to cover the average monthly expenses of a family is at least 480–502 JOD ($676–$733),[3] suggesting that the minimum wage might have to be doubled. Furthermore, economic growth rates are minimal, reaching 2.5 percent in early 2022, up from 2.1 percent in 2021 after enduring a 1.6 percent contraction due to the onset of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.[4] The average inflation rate increased by 2.93 percent for April 2023 compared to the same month in 2022, according to the Department of Statistics.[5] While being one of the lowest in the region,[6] the inflation of prices affects low-income groups significantly as they spend a larger share of their income on household essentials.[7] In April 2023, compared to the same month the year prior, consumer prices had risen for basic commodity categories as defined by the department of statistics: fuel and lighting by 23.33 percent, dairy products and eggs by 8.84 percent, and rent by 5.17 percent.[8] Debt pressures represent another threat to the economy, with public and publicly guaranteed debt servicing standing at 113.7 percent of GDP at the end of 2021.

Rapid increases to the population, spurred on by the influx of refugees fleeing surrounding conflicts and a relatively high birth rate, have further impacted Jordan, contributing to the country's already severe resource limitations and economic challenges. Over the last two decades, the population has grown from 5 million to over 11 million.[9] Jordan has absorbed the shock of the Iraqi, Yemeni, and Syrian crises, taking the lead as the host of the second largest number of refugees per capita in the world.[10] Syrians account for approximately 660,000 of this population, with 66 percent living below the

1   Jordanian Department of Statistics, "Unemployment Report Q1 2023," retrieved on August 31, 2023 from: https://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/ar/

2   "Raising the wage limit to 260 dinars, as of January 1, 2021," Jordanian Ministry of Labor, 2021. https://mol.gov.jo/ar/NewsDetails/%d8%b1%d9%81%d8%b9_%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%af_%d9%84%d9%84%d8%a3%d8%ac%d9%88%d8%b1_%d8%a5%d9%84%d9%89_260_%d8%af%d9%8a%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%b1_%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%aa%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%8b_%d9%85%d9%86_112021

3   See for example: Wage Indicator Foundation (2020), Living Wage Jordan, available at: https://wageindicator.org/salary/living-wage/archive-no-index/jordan-living-wage-series-september-2020 ; Krafft, C., & Hannafi, C. (2022). Minimum and Living Wages in Jordan and Tunisia. Economic Research Forum Working Paper No. 1557. Retrieved from https://erf.org.eg/app/uploads/2022/08/1661079797_609_2190824_1557.pdf.

Jordan Strategy Forum (2023). "*Jordan's Informal Economy: A Potential Opportunity for Higher Productivity and Economic Growth.*" Retrieved August 31, 2023 from https://jsf.org/uploads/2023/05/07/Jordan_s%20Informal%20Economy-1683446252.pdf

4   "The World Bank In Jordan: Overview," World Bank, January 9, 2023, retrieved September 14, 2023 from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview

5   Jordanian Department of Statistics, "Department of Statistics: 2.93% the Average increase of the Inflation Rate for April 2023 compared with the same month in 2022 (100 = 2018)," May 14, 2023, https://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/DataBank/News/Inflation/2023/CPI_May_en.pdf

6   The Economist Intelligence Unit (2022). "Middle East outlook 2023: Weathering political and economic headwinds," Economist Intelligence Unit, 2023, https://www.eiu.com/n/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Middle-East-in-2023-Final.pdf

7   Rayya Al Muheisen, "Low-income consumers feel pinch of inflation," *Jordan Times*, September 15, 2023, https://jordantimes.com/news/local/low-income-consumers-feel-pinch-inflation

8   Jordanian Department of Statistics, "Department of Statistics: 2.93% the Average increase of the Inflation Rate for April 2023 compared with the same month in 2022 (100 = 2018)," May 14, 2023, https://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/DataBank/News/Inflation/2023/CPI_May_en.pdf

9   "The World Bank In Jordan: Overview," World Bank, January 9, 2023, retrieved September 14, 2023 from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview

10   European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), "ECHO Factsheet–Jordan," June 2022, retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/echo-factsheet-jordan-19062022#:~:text=Jordan%20hosts%20the%20second%20largest,live%20below%20the%20poverty%20line

poverty line.[11] In conjunction with rising population levels, water scarcity and other resource limitations mean that Jordan's growing refugee population will continue to be at risk in coming years.[12]

As a result of these economic conditions and social factors, as well as restrictions dictating which sectors are open to non-Jordanians, many choose or are forced to turn to informal jobs to make a living. The informal economy makes up a significant part of Jordan's economy as a whole. Recent estimates have it representing from 46.1 percent (Social Security Corporation) to 51.6 percent (ILO data)[13] and even as high as 59 percent of the total economy (World Bank).[14]

Over the past few years, freelancing or temporary work has become a new reality in labor markets in countries around the world, especially with the emergence and proliferation of online platforms. Platforms are defined as "digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact."[15] Platform-mediated work consists of two subcategories: 1) ground work via applications that facilitate location-based services such as transportation, delivery, household services, or accommodation and 2) cloud work via applications, which facilitate online remote services such as freelancing or microtasking platforms.[16]

While thousands of men and women in Jordan have resorted to working through these platforms, many continue to face challenges that stem from the lack of social protections in addition to labor exploitation resulting from a weak regulatory framework, marked by nonexistence of necessary regulations

"Thousands of men and women in Jordan have resorted to working through these platforms, many continue to face challenges that stem from the lack of social protections in addition to labor exploitation resulting from a weak regulatory framework..."

in some cases or poor implementation or enforcement in others.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

This study seeks to take an in-depth look at platform-mediated work in Jordan, with an eye toward squaring the actual reality of work conditions against the International Labor Organisation-defined principles of decent work[17] as well as trying to understand the effect of platform-work on Jordan's economic development and various statistical indicators.

III. METHODOLOGY

The preparation of this study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach that is consistent with the objectives of the study, as follows:

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11   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Jordan

12   "The World Bank In Jordan: Overview," World Bank, January 9, 2023, retrieved September 14, 2023 from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview

13   "Jordan's Informal Economy: A Potential Opportunity for Higher Productivity and Economic Growth," Jordan Strategy Forum, 2023, retrieved on September 14, 2023 from: https://jsf.org/uploads/2023/05/07/Jordan_s%20Informal%20Economy-1683446252.pdf

14   "Jobs Undone: Reshaping the Role of Governments toward Markets and Workers in the Middle East and North Africa," World Bank, 2022, *retrieved on August 31, 2023 from:* https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6208c7c8-8f6a-59a3-b545-23612b2ce712/content.

15   Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Books, 2016)

16   Eric Tucker, "Towards a political economy of platform-mediated work," *Studies in Political Economy,* 101, no. 3, (2020), DOI: 10.1080/07078552.2020.1848499.

17   ILO, Decent Work principles: https://www.ilo.org/topics/decent-work

- **Desk review:** A review of Jordanian legislation, various studies, literature, indicators, and policies, as well as relevant international and national reports.
- **In-depth interviews:** a total of 31 interviews were conducted with workers on applications and cloud platforms, a brainstorming session with key stakeholders, and five in-depth interviews with experts and policymakers.

This study is mainly qualitative and, as such, provides insight into general trends and experiences of platform workers in Jordan. However, it is important to note that any quantitative data used in this study is secondary data and that the in-depth qualitative insights provided by this research offer a valuable foundation for future quantitative investigations in this area.

IV. THE STUDY SAMPLE

A total of 16 ground-mediated platform workers were interviewed. They work on three platforms (one food delivery platform, Talabat, and two unlicensed passenger transportation platforms, Queen Car and TaxiF).

Talabat, a company founded in the Gulf in 2004, officially launched in Jordan in 2017. Queen Car began operating in Jordan in 2019, according to its first Facebook post, and TaxiF began operating in 2020, according to a Facebook post.

Unlicensed ride-hailing applications and platforms were chosen because there are many studies that dealt with licensed applications and platforms and also in order to dive deeper into the work of ride-hailing applications and platforms in Jordan.

Regarding the distribution of the sample by gender, most of the drivers interviewed were male, as Phenix Center was unable to find female drivers on Queen Car and TaxiF, although all interviewees and other contacts were asked if they knew of any female drivers working on these two applications. In contrast to Talabat, where the Phenix Center was able to find female drivers, four women were interviewed.
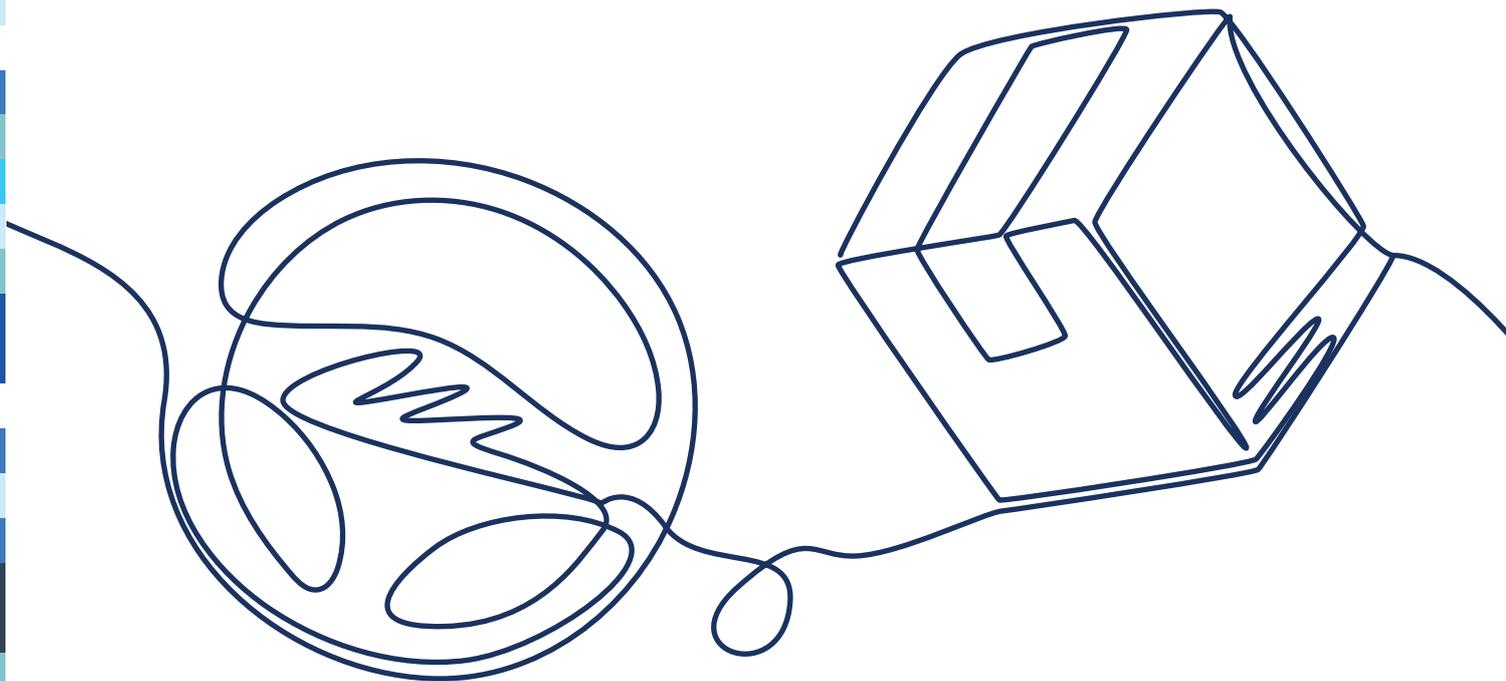
As for the age groups and educational levels of the interviewed drivers, interviewees ranged in age from 22 to 44 years old, with most having a bachelor's degree and a few holding a master's degree.

As for cloud platforms, a total of 15 workers were interviewed: 11 women and four men (three Syrian and one Jordanian). Most of them were in their 20s and 30s and worked across five platforms: Mostaql, Upwork, Fiverr, Baeed and Freelancer.com.

These platforms operate in the fields of business and consulting services, programming, website and application development, engineering and interior design, graphic design, video and audio production, e-marketing and sales, writing, editing, and translation, support and assistance, data entry, training, and distance education.

Most of the interviewees on the cloud platforms had a bachelor's degree, and a few had a master's degree, with majors ranging from computer science, English, Arabic, media, project management, health sciences, social sciences, agronomy, information systems, and human resources. Regarding their marital status, most of them were unmarried but were responsible for providing some needs for their families.

V. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. *Digital platform economy in Jordan and reasons why young people are turning to it*

The online platform economy in Jordan has grown rapidly over the last decade for a number of reasons. First, the country has witnessed high rates of population growth as a result of local demographic factors as well as refugee and migrant movements from neighboring countries. While the Jordanian economy has witnessed steady economic growth of 2 to 2.3 percent over the last ten years, this has not been enough to keep pace with the population growth, as evidenced by high unemployment rates, especially among the youth, as well as the high cost of living in Jordan versus wage levels.

All these challenges have had a significant impact on vulnerable groups in Jordan. As such, people of working age have resorted to non-tradition-

al ways to generate income for themselves and their families, many of them turning to working on online platforms.

Most of the drivers interviewed in the course of this study were either unemployed before starting to work on platforms, were facing challenges in their previous jobs and decided to try working on platforms, or resorted to working on platforms while remaining in their original jobs, with the aim of increasing their income.[18]

Many drivers said they preferred the platform's daily pay system (which varies according to the number of trips they complete per day) over a monthly payout, as well as the freedom to control their daily working hours. Others said that they did not have a job opportunity in their field of specialization and/or faced financial difficulties that led them to take up work on platforms.[19]

One of the drivers working on Talabat said: "I applied for more than one job in my field of specialization, but to no avail. So I eventually turned to working on platforms, especially since working on them does not require any scientific degree."[20]

Another driver who works for TaxiF, who was unemployed before working on the application, said he was unemployed before working on the applications: "I didn't want to stay at home without a job, so I resorted to working on the ride-hailing application even if the income is insufficient."[21]

Many of those interviewed emphasized that most of the drivers got the idea to work on ride-hailing applications through friends or family members who were or still are working on these applications or through advertisements for ride-hailing applications companies on social media.[22]

Working on licensed platforms requires a vehicle with a model year of 2016 and above, a vehicle and a driver's license, two non-conviction certificates, and a Land Transport Regulatory Commission (LTRC) permit that costs 400 dinars per year.

Working on unlicensed passenger ride-hailing applications such as TaxiF and Queen Car does not require a permit from the LTRC. A driver must have a vehicle, a vehicle and driving license, and certificates that can attest to their criminal record and bill of health.

As for food delivery platforms, such as Talabat, working on them does not require the purchase of a newer vehicle. Drivers can work for the platform using a small motorcycle or scooter. Though, they must have a vehicle or scooter and a driver's license and certificates that can attest to their criminal record and bill of health.

The interviewed women indicated that they chose to work on Talabat specifically because it is limited to food delivery, unlike Queen Car and TaxiF, and they did not feel safe driving passengers.[23]

Moreover, to work on Talabat does not require a driver to pay 400 dinars annually to the Land Transport Regulatory Commission in exchange for a permit. This also applies to Queen Car and TaxiF, as they are unlicensed. Thus, workers on these platforms save considerable money thus improving their financial return, unlike workers on licensed passenger transportation applications, who are required to pay this amount annually to the commission.

As for workers on cloud platforms, interviewees said they turned to them due to a lack of opportunities in their field in traditional work environments. When they found out that cloud services had opportunities in their respective fields, they decided to explore the platforms, saying they were intrigued by the "flexibility" of work. Some of those interviewed said they had no previous experience in the specific fields of work that cloud platforms cater to but turned to them to secure income.[24]

Others saw platform work as a way to circumvent racism or restrictions on entry into the labor market based on nationality. "There are no office job opportunities for Syrians, so the best option is to freelance on these platforms," said one of Mostaql's workers, who is Syrian.[25]

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18   In-depth interviews with application workers.

19   In-depth interviews with application workers.

20   In-depth interview with a Talabat employee.

21   In-depth interview with a worker on TaxiF.

22   In-depth interviews with application workers.

23   In-depth interviews with woman working on Talabat.

24   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

25   In-depth interview with a worker on Mostaql.

According to the workers interviewed, they were either introduced to the possibility of working on cloud platforms by their friends, through social media sites like LinkedIn, or through training courses offered by Education for Employment (EFE), an organization active in the MENA region that offers job training and workshops on self-employment and entrepreneurship.[26]

2. Statistical indicators for ground and cloud platforms in Jordan

Although there are no accurate statistics on the number of men and women working on online platforms and applications in Jordan, some organizations have published figures that can give us an approximate impression of the size of the labor force. According to estimates by the Ministry of Digital Economy last year, approximately 25,000 men and women work on food delivery platforms.[27] The number of drivers working on the seven licensed ride-hailing applications is about 11,600, according to the latest figures released by the Land Transport Regulatory Commission in March.[28] There are no clear figures for those working on unlicensed ride-hailing applications.

The number of cloud workers in the sector was estimated to be at 11,000 between 2017 and 2022.[29]

3. Regulatory Framework for Terrestrial and Cloud Platforms in Jordan

When ride-hailing applications first started operating in Jordan in 2015, drivers working on applications did not need an official license from the government to operate. This created unfair competition between them and yellow taxi drivers who had to go through annual licensing procedures and pay annual licensing expenses. However, in 2018, the government published the System for Regulating Passenger Transport through the Use of Smart Applications in the Official Gazette.[30] The regulations prohibited unlicensed drivers from working in the sector. Enforcement and issuance of licenses was tasked to the Land Transport Regulatory Commission under the umbrella of the Ministry of Transport.

While the Land Transport Regulatory Commission set a quota on the number of drivers allowed to work on ride-hailing applications in the country, there were about 30 unlicensed applications operating at the time, and many of them were employing thousands of drivers. In the immediate aftermath of the decision, implementation was lacking. Faced with this discrepancy, the Ministry of Digital Economy announced in March 2024 that it had moved to block 24 unlicensed applications from Apple, Google, Huawei and app stores in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, the Land Transport Regulatory Commission, the Telecommunications Sector Regulatory Commission and the Public Security Directorate.[31]

In explaining the decision, the ministry said that the use of unlicensed ride-hailing applications exposes users to multiple risks, highlighting the absence of vehicle tracking and inability to ensure proper insurance coverage in the event of an accident or safety issues. Moreover, the ministry added, the lack of oversight means that the ministry cannot enforce industry quality standards, nor can they ensure fair competition laws.

Unlicensed ride-hailing applications in Jordan are violating article 24 of the traffic law, which imposes penalties on users of private vehicles for hire, up to and including vehicle seizure and imprisonment. Even after the ministry's decision, the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) has struggled to block all unlicensed companies, as their operators constantly change their digital identification footprint to evade blocking.

According to the government-approved regulations, the LTRC collects an annual fee of 100,000 dinars from each company that is allowed to transport passengers through ride-hailing applications. The 100,000 dinars cover the company's license. If

26   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

27   Estimates of the Ministry of Digital Economy: https://akhbarhayat.com/874023/

28   Land Transport Regulatory Commission, March 2024: https://www.ltrc.gov.jo/sites/default/files/ltqryr_lrby_llshhr_knwn_lthny_-_shbt-_dhr_2024_1.pdf

29   International Labour Organization.

30   Passenger transportation organization system through the use of smart applications: https://www.ltrc.gov.jo/sites/default/files/d0001075_0.pdf

31   Ministry of Digital Economy, March 2024: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/SqkgH5cF38dbBHyG/

the company exceeds the allowed 3,000 allowed drivers, it must pay 70 additional dinars for each additional vehicle to LTRC. The drivers must pay 400 dinars annually as a permit for each vehicle operating on those applications. If a driver wants to work on another application at the same time, he or she must pay an additional 20 dinars for each additional application.

Article 6 of the regulations mandates that the service provider (the driver) must not be more than 60 years old, and that he or any of his relatives (as far out as the second degree) must own the vehicle. Article 7 mandates that the vehicle be licensed and compulsorily insured in accordance with the provisions of the compulsory insurance system for vehicles. The driver must also have liability insurance that covers damages caused by the vehicle and exceeds the insurance coverage provided by the compulsory insurance system for vehicles. The vehicle in operation must have been manufactured at most seven years ago. The Land Transport Regulatory Commission also set the tariff for drivers on ride-hailing applications at 15 percent more than the yellow taxi meter of 35 piasters.[32]

As for food delivery drivers, they fall under the supervision of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, and there are no specific laws, regulations, or instructions governing their work, even as there are thousands of workers in the sector. The regulation of their work is left to the companies that operate the food delivery platforms through which they work or the restaurants that employ them. As for cloud workers, there is also no legislative framework to regulate their work or to protect their rights, and the government has only prepared policies aimed at developing its own cloud services, such as the one issued by the Ministry of Digital Economy in 2020.[33]

There is also an issue that Jordanian labor laws currently on the books are not implemented, specifically the labor and social security laws, which heightens the suffering of online platform workers as the government classifies them under current laws as employers and not workers like other independent workers. Thus, they are not entitled to any of the rights stipulated in the labor law, and they are denied social security coverage unless they participate voluntarily, which most of them refuse due to the fact that they must pay in 17.5 percent of their monthly wages.

However, although these workers enjoy a certain amount of autonomy during their work, such as controlling their working hours, they are also obligated to perform certain tasks set by the platform operators, which means that they are considered workers under the labor law and should therefore enjoy all the rights stipulated by Jordanian labor legislation. They are also obligated to pay government taxes, such as income tax, like other workers.

VI. LABOR REALITIES AND CONDITIONS

In this section, we will compare the conditions observed in ground and cloud-mediated platform work in Jordan to the decent work standards set by the ILO.

1. Applications on Digital distribution platforms

i) Fair pay

Although most drivers emphasized that they do not have difficulty receiving their payments, they believe that they are insufficient. One driver working on the TaxiF ride-hailing application said that the income he earns is barely enough to cover his family's basic needs.[34] Another worker at Queen Car pointed out that his income level depends on the number of hours he works and the trips he completes daily: "If I work long hours and complete a large number of trips, I will be able to provide my family's basic needs, but if I work a few hours or there is a stagnation in the number of trip requests, I will not be able to provide any needs."[35]

Other drivers on these two ride-hailing applications said that the number of working hours is not related to the number of trips. Sometimes they work long hours but only make a small number of trips.

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32   Regulations for the system for organizing passenger transportation through the use of smart applications: https://www.ltrc.gov.jo/sites/default/files/docuware_generated_pdf_1.pdf

33   Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship 2020, Cloud platforms services policy: https://www.modee.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/AR/CloudPolicy2020.pdf

34   In-depth interview with a worker on TaxiF.

35   In-depth interview with a worker on Queen Car.

According to those interviewed, this is due to the recessions that sometimes occur in the number of trips for drivers in general. Interviewees explained that the recession always occurs either in the winter season or in the summer vacation for university students.[36]

As for Talabat drivers, they said that the nature of their work differs from passenger ride-hailing applications in terms of working hours, as they work for hours determined by the operating company and on a shift system and in a hierarchical manner.[37] This means that drivers with the highest ratings choose their shifts first, followed by drivers with lower ratings. Most drivers on all three applications rely on the applications as their primary source of income. Only a few of the drivers interviewed have other jobs in other sectors.

Drivers on the three applications also stated that most drivers in Jordan, whether in ride-hailing applications or food delivery platforms, work on more than one platform at the same time, in order to boost their income.[38]

Regarding taxes, drivers on TaxiF and Queen Car said that they do not pay any taxes to the government, as these applications are not licensed, unlike the licensed ride-hailing companies, which require their drivers to pay a "sales tax"

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36   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

37   In-depth interviews with a worker on Talabat.

38   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.
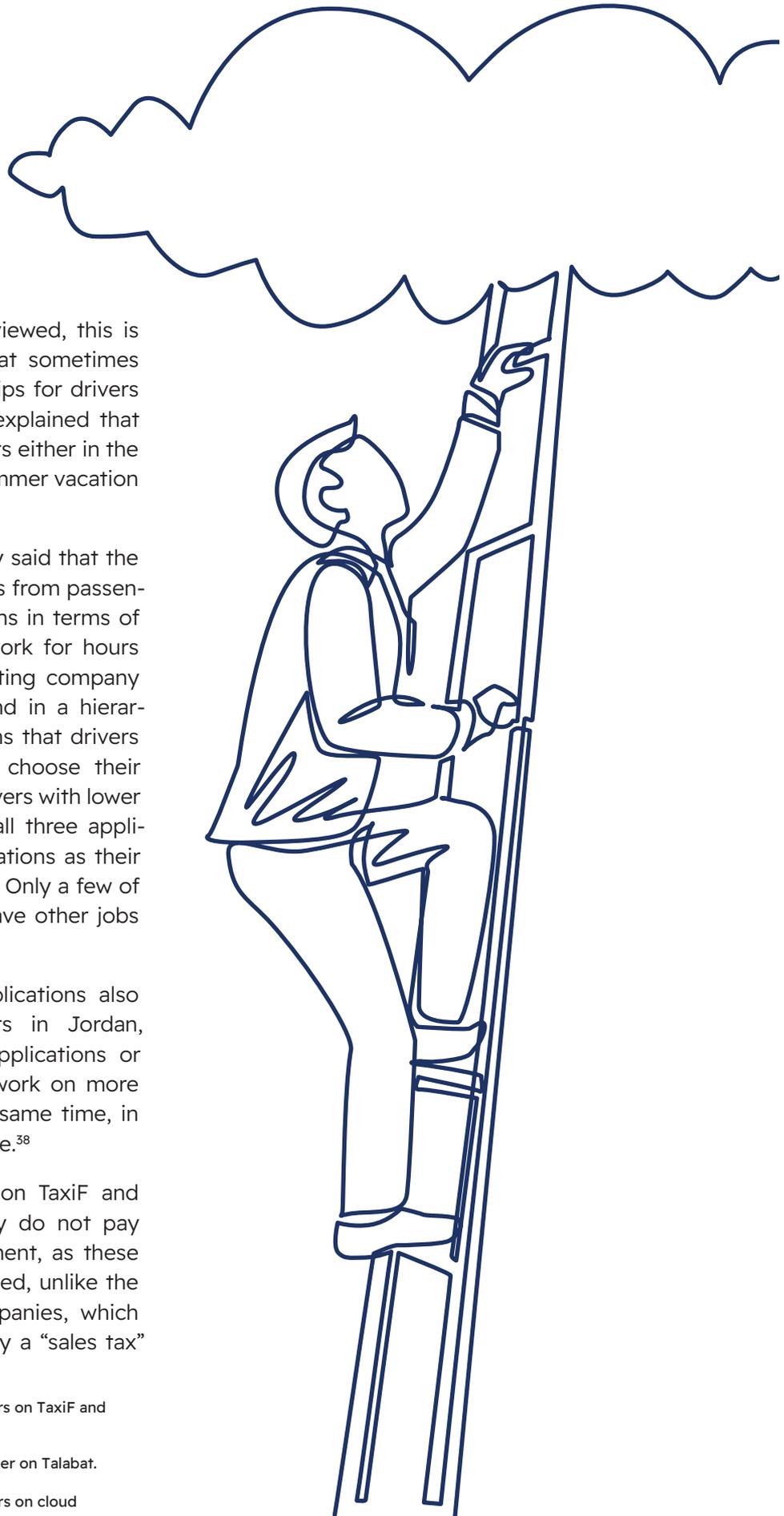
of 4 percent of their wages for each trip they complete.[39] Many drivers working on licensed ride-hailing applications believe that this tax should be levied on goods and services, and therefore the operators should pay it because they are the ones providing the ride-hailing service, but in reality, they are circumventing the drivers as service providers and employers rather than workers.

Referring to the definitions stipulated in the System for Regulating Passenger Transport Through the Use of Smart Applications, we noted that the driver is defined as the service provider, while the operating company is defined as the licensee, not the service provider, and this loophole is exploited by the operating companies to impose financial burdens on the drivers that they are not required to pay, as well as not giving them any of their rights. As for Talabat, most of those interviewed said that they are not aware of any taxes they have paid to the government and explained that the operating company does not explain these details to them.[40]

Drivers on TaxiF and QueenCar pointed out that the minimum fare is only one dinar, while at Talabat it is one dinar and ten piastres.[41] However, drivers on Talabat always complain about the company's GPS, which calculates the number of kilometers traveled by the driver from the restaurant to the customer. They expressed that this system is unfair to them, as it does not calculate the number of actual kilometers traveled by the driver. "The system calculates the distance from one point to another as five kilometers, while in reality we travel more than that," the drivers said.[42]

As for the commission that operators deduct from trips, drivers on TaxiF and Queen Car indicated that it ranges from 10 to 20 percent, which is lower than the 30 percent or more on licensed ride-hailing applications. This is one of the reasons that most drivers turn to working on unlicensed ride-hailing applications. Other reasons include the fact that by working on unlicensed applications, they circumvent the 400 dinars annual fees paid to the Land Transport Regulatory Commission for a permit, and

"The system calculates the distance from one point to another as five kilometers, while in reality we travel more than that."

they do not pay the "sales" tax that their counterparts on licensed ride-hailing applications pay.

In addition, unlicensed transportation platforms such as Taxi F and Queen Car do not offer a prepaid payment system via Visa credit cards, which is considered an issue for drivers on licensed ride-hailing platforms. This is because the amount due through credit cards does not transfer directly to the driver's bank account but rather takes several days, sometimes exceeding a week. The same applies to Talabat, where credit card payments are also delayed.[43]

Although paying in cash is better than paying by credit card for most drivers, interviewees working across all three platforms said that they sometimes have trouble getting paid for their trips.[44]

For example, if a customer refuses to pay for an order, the company does not compensate the driver for the order and does not provide any assistance, leaving the driver with no choice but to fight with the customer or file a complaint with security authorities.

Drivers on ride-hailing applications sometimes receive ride requests based on their proximity to customer locations rather than ratings. The drivers pointed out that a high rating holds little value, as some requests are assigned to drivers who are

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39   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

40   In-depth interviews with workers on Talabat.

41   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

42   In-depth interviews with workers on Talabat.

43   In depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

44   In-depth interviews with workers on applications.

closer to the customer's location, even if their ratings are low. They said they view this as unfair to drivers with high ratings. They also stated that the most lucrative requests, usually to the airport, are received by drivers with newer vehicles, which they perceived as discriminating against drivers with older model vehicles.[45]

The costs of regular repairs to drivers' vehicles, traffic violations, and insurance renewal costs all come at the drivers' expense, which increases the pressure on drivers, in addition to the fact that they are not entitled to any paid vacations.

The drivers did not mention any incentives offered by the companies to them except for competitions that are held from time to time, in which drivers are asked to complete a certain number of trips within a specified number of hours. The reward is either a cash payout, a reduction in the company's commission, or an increase in the driver's rating. In some instances, the companies reward drivers by granting them full accident insurance for a certain period.[46]

ii) Secure employment

Job security is a right outlined by the ILO decent work principles, but it is nonexistent for drivers on both licensed and unlicensed ride-hailing applications. Even upon a simple complaint from a customer, drivers can be banned from using the platform "at the push of a button." Most of the drivers interviewed at Queen Car and TaxiF said that bans are either temporary or permanent, depending on the customer's complaint.

They also acknowledged that most companies do not care about drivers' interests, as the customer is "number one" for them, even if the customer is at fault. One driver on TaxiF explained that many customers "spit" on drivers, but nonetheless, the driver is banned without even being consulted about the complaint, which they consider unfair.

iii) Employment contracts

Interviewed drivers at TaxiF and Queen Car said that the type of employment contracts between them and the operators are electronic contracts like those at licensed ride-hailing applications. They

are very similar to the permissions to access apps on any phone. The drivers point out that these contracts consist of many pages, and they cannot move to the next page unless they click on the permission option, and the contract text adheres to the laws of foreign countries, not Jordan or Arab countries.

These contracts, according to drivers, are drafted to benefit the companies more than the drivers, as there is no other option within the ride-hailing sector for workers, so they must accept to the contracts. Drivers said they considered their approval of the contracts a "forced signature" that takes advantage of the drivers' need to work without adhering to any of the labor rights stipulated in the labor and social security laws.

The drivers believe that these contracts are "acquiescence" contracts, which are not recognized by Jordanian law.

As for the contracts on Talabat, all of the drivers interviewed said that they received copies of their work contracts, which varied between physical and electronic copies.

Half of them confirmed that the terms of the contract were clear to them but did not include any of the rights stipulated in the labor and social security laws. One of them said: "Yes, I read the texts of the contract and they were clear, but I did not find any of my rights. All the texts talk about conditions and prohibitions."[47]

iv) Safe working conditions

Although drivers on the three platforms are free to end their work with companies that own these platforms and freely control their daily working hours for Queen Car and TaxiF, there are many challenges they face that make their work environment unsafe, especially since their employment contracts do not include any of their rights stipulated in Jordanian labor law. These challenges are not only limited to social protections, labor contracts, or job security but also extend to violence, as they are sometimes beaten or robbed by customers.

One of the drivers on Talabat said that he was subjected to an attempted robbery and verbal

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45   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

46   In-depth interviews with workers on applications.

47   In-depth interviews with workers on Talabat.

abuse, during a delivery from a restaurant in Amman at around one in the morning that exceeded 128 dinars.[48]

When he was about to arrive, the customer contacted him and informed him of the change in the delivery location, so he informed the operator, and they agreed to stay in touch in case anything happened to him. As soon as he arrived at the delivery location, three young men were waiting for him. They canceled the order through the app and tried to take the order from him forcibly without paying for it. When he refused, a fight broke out. Then two drivers who happened to be passing by intervened to help the driver. He then called the police to inform them of what happened to him.

Another driver who works on Talabat said that he was subjected to worse. The driver said his hand was injured when a customer attacked him with a sharp object, after he refused to deliver the order for free. After the assault, the customer contacted the company to complain about the driver's mistreatment of him. The company banned him from using the application for a week, disregarding what the driver said he was subjected to.[49]

Most of the drivers on Queen Car and TaxiF said that some of the areas where they go to drop off or pick up customers are frequented by panhandlers and bandits, and if they have a negative interaction with these people, the company does not show an interest.

The drivers added that none of the concerned official authorities in the Land Transport Regulatory Commission or the Ministry of Transportation ensures the protection of their rights, which allows the operating companies to violate their rights. The only way, they say, that the can ensure their rights is via sit-ins. Although sit-ins do not bear fruit either.[50]

Women interviewed who work for Talabat explained that they are stranded in remote places with no services or means of assistance, which puts them at risk. Despite this, they prefer to work on food de-livery platforms, as they believe they are safer than ride-hailing applications.[51]

The effects of unsafe working conditions manifest in many ways, the most acute of which is physical exhaustion. Working long hours driving customers or delivering food in order to boost income can lead to back pain and physical exhaustion. Working on unlicensed ride-hailing apps is also against the law and subject to the scrutiny of the traffic police, with penalties ranging from impounding the vehicle to imprisoning the driver.

Therefore, drivers on Queen Car and TaxiF stated that they work away from areas where traffic police are present, and if they receive a request for a ride to the airport (the most lucrative request), they ask the customer to ride next to the driver to avoid detection, as sitting next to the driver suggests that he is a friend, sibling, or a relative of the driver.[52]

v) Equal opportunities and fair treatment

Interviewed platform drivers agreed that there are equal opportunities for women and men in working on platforms, but they also agreed that working in platforms, whether delivering food or transporting passengers, is more difficult for women. The challenges workers face, such as physical fatigue, job insecurity, and exposure to violence, can be better endured by men, the drivers added, while many of these factors push women to exit the sector. In addition, there is a social stigma about women working in the sector.

One of the women working as a driver said: "There are people in my life whom I don't tell about my work, because it is psychologically and physically harder for them, and society does not accept this type of work for women."[53]

For people with disabilities, most drivers said that they do not face any issues when applying for work, but they are asked to inform the company about the type of disability they have. There were aspects that drivers considered "discriminatory," between them and the client. For example, companies usual-

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48   In-depth interview with a Talabat employee.

49   In-depth interview with a worker on Talabat.

50   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

51   In-depth interviews with a woman working on Talabat.

52   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

53   In-depth interview with a worker on one of the applications.

ly only respond to clients' complaints, disregarding those made by drivers when they face a problem.

Also, Talabat drivers cannot rate customers, so they cannot give their opinion if a customer treats them badly, while customers can rate drivers and give feedback that suits their interests.[54]

Applications require that a driver be a Jordanian national, and therefore migrant workers cannot work on applications.

vi) Social protection

Most drivers working on food delivery platforms or ride-hailing applications do not enjoy any form of social protection. Drivers said that companies that own the platforms or applications do not cover them under the social security umbrella and do not provide them with health insurance.[55]

The only option available to them is voluntary participation in social services, which most drivers reject due to its high cost, saying that they cannot afford to bear more financial burdens. Many of them believe that social security participation is not at the top of their priorities.

The social security law still does not include appropriate insurance mechanisms and tools to include self-employed workers in the social security system, despite the fact that it has been amended several times. The only options it provides are limited to "voluntary participation," where a worker pays 17.5 percent of his or her salary to pay into the system. This high threshold for participation has led to tens of thousands of workers, including those working in smart transportation applications, continuing to be outside the social security system.

Regarding childcare for working women, one driver with children said that she has difficulty taking care of her children while she works. To deal with the issue, she relied on her relatives, but this did not last long, and she eventually had to place them in a nursery.[56]

During the coronavirus pandemic, drivers who were working at the time said that the companies did not provide them with general safety equipment, including face masks, gloves, sanitizer, or a plastic curtain between the driver and the customer, even though companies mandated that drivers stock follow measures that included the provision of safety supplies or face being banned from working on the platforms. This meant that drivers had to pay for safety equipment out of their own pocket.

vii) Career prospects

Some drivers working on platforms received training from the companies on how to use the platforms or apps, how to resolve technical issues, and how to communicate with customers. All drivers indicated that these trainings are free of charge and are either provided via a video tutorial sent to them by the company or at the company's headquarters.

Queen Car and TaxiF drivers said there are no promotions for them, no matter how many trips they complete,[57] while there are promotions for drivers on Talabat's platform, who said they can be promoted to a supervisor.[58]

Regarding the general skills gained from working on these applications, drivers on all three applications agreed that there are several skills that have improved, such as speaking English, self-reliance, ability to solve issues, time management, driving ability, as well as improved interpersonal skills.[59]

viii) Freedom of expression and trade union formation

Drivers interact and communicate with each other through their own groups on social media. Queen Car and TaxiF drivers usually use Facebook and WhatsApp, while Talabat drivers use Telegram. There are different social media groups for food delivery platforms and for groups for ride-hailing applications, given that the groups of workers have different issues.

Drivers at Queen Car and TaxiF explained[60] that their groups include most of the drivers working on licensed and unlicensed ride-hailing applications, and the goal of these groups is to discuss their

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54   In-depth interviews with workers on applications.
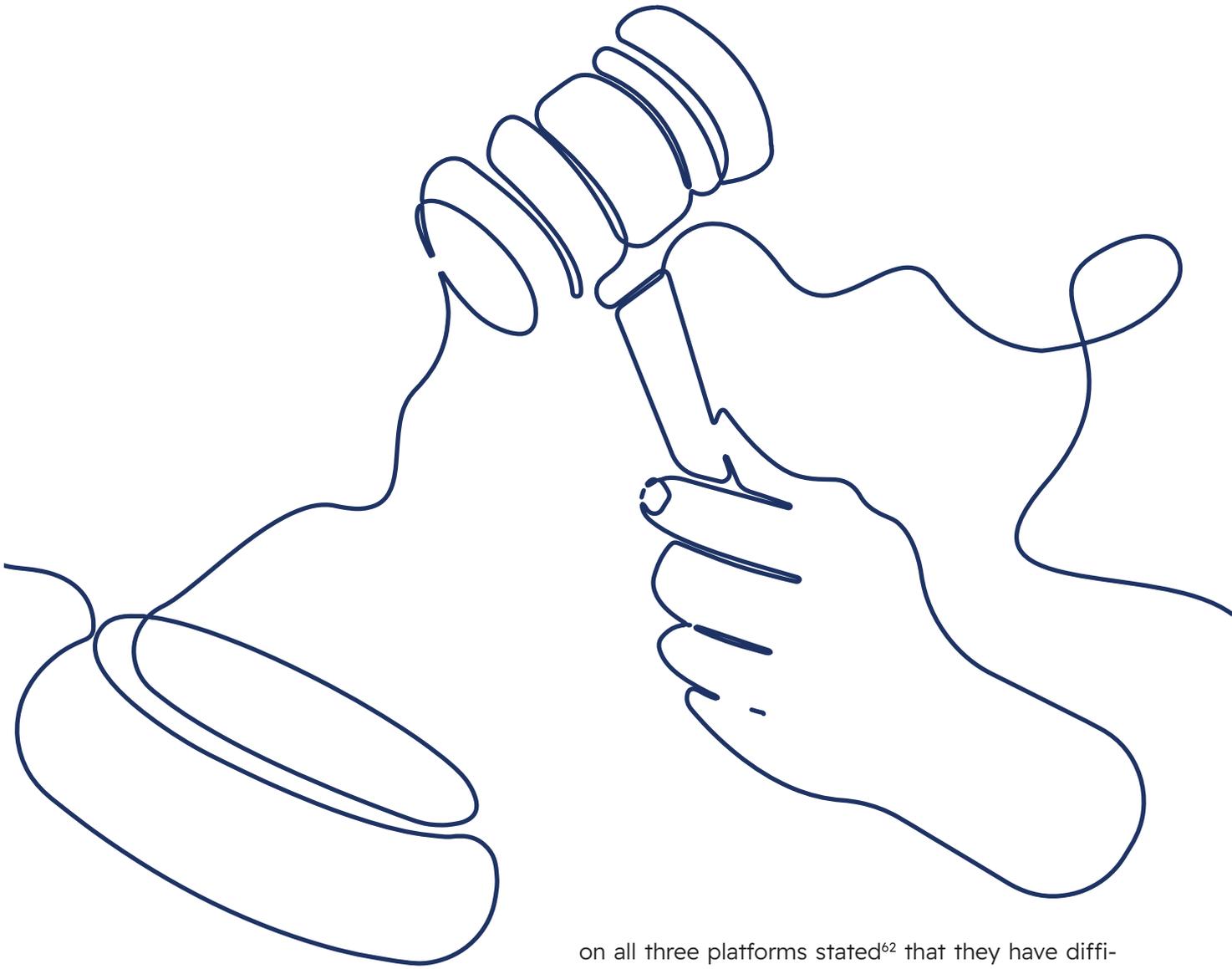
55   Idib.

56   In-depth interview with a worker on one of the applications.

57   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

58   In-depth interviews with workers on Talabat.

59   In-depth interviews with workers on applications.

60   In-depth interviews with workers on TaxiF and Queen Car.

working conditions and the issues that occur. The groups discuss workers' issues with the policies of companies and authorities such as the Ministry of Transport and the Land Transport Regulatory Commission and ways to try to improve these issues through protests and sit-ins.

The groups for drivers working on Talabat function in much the same way.[61]

Most of the drivers interviewed said that they have never participated in a protest or sit-in before, and that their attempts to defend their rights has been limited to asking companies to compensate them for orders that customers have refused to pay for.

When drivers want to get in touch with platform management, they can send a message via the app or call a company call center. However, all drivers on all three platforms stated[62] that they have difficulty communicating with company management, as their call centers are not located in Jordan, but in other countries, and if they do respond, they do not provide adequate support. Sometimes platform companies provide a questionnaire to drivers to get their feedback on their policies, but their feedback is not taken seriously and is not acted upon, interviewed drivers said.

However, drivers stated that they can express their opinions and share them with company management or in their own groups, and they felt that they can even express them through protests or sit-ins. To date, there is no private union representing drivers on passenger transportation platforms (licensed and unlicensed) or food delivery platforms. Although they have repeatedly tried to register their own union, the Ministry of Labor has refused to grant a license.

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61 In-depth interviews with workers on Talabat.

62 In-depth interviews with workers on applications.

Therefore, a number of drivers working on licensed ride-hailing applications resorted to forming a committee to represent drivers and advocate for their rights. They obtained power of attorney from about 3,000 drivers in 2018. The group is called the Voluntary Committee for Smart App Captains.[63] It is only for ride-hailing applications (both licensed and unlicensed). However, the committee has not succeeded in meeting most of the drivers' demands, even as it has coordinated dozens of sit-ins in front of the Ministry of Transport and the Land Transport Regulatory Commission. However, the ministry and the regulatory commission have not responded to the sit-ins as they do not recognize the committee.

In 2022, licensed ride-hailing applications became part of the General Union of Land Transport Workers and Mechanics per a decision by the Ministry of Labor.[64] However, the drivers at the time saw that the union had no effective role in the rights of the workers under its umbrella, and indicated that they wanted to establish their own union under the name Independent Union of Workers in Smart Transportation Applications.[65]

ix) Future prospects

Most of the drivers interviewed stated that they plan to continue working on these platforms until they find better job opportunities.

Drivers made several recommendations that they said would improve their working conditions, the most prominent of which were to improve the re-

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63   Voluntary Committee for Smart Application Captains: https://www.facebook.com/groups/2389243131190321

64   A report issued by the Jordanian Labor Observatory: http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/153234

65   A report issued by the Jordanian Labor Observatory: http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/153231

sponse of company management to their observations, facilitate communication with management, increase fares, reduce commission ductions, increase incentives and bonuses for drivers, provide social protection in the form of social security and health insurance, provide job security, and pay attention to drivers and work to solve their issues.[66]

2. Cloud platforms

i) Fair pay

Interviews conducted with workers on cloud platforms indicated that some of them rely on some combination of work across platforms as their main source of income, while others said that they use cloud work as an additional source of income, as they also work in similar fields. But in general, most of the interviewees resorted to working on cloud platforms due to the lack of job opportunities in their fields.[67]

In terms of income levels, only two workers said that working on cloud platforms provides them with enough income to meet their basic needs, while the rest said that the income is insufficient. One worker on Fiverr said: "Honestly, the income is not enough, especially for mothers with children like me […] Working on freelancing platforms is very broad, especially with a lot of competitors inside and outside Jordan. However, these are the job opportunities currently available for people like me with extensive experience. I tried applying for jobs, but due to my experience in the private sector, they no longer consider hiring me, which is why I resorted to freelancing as a way to meet the needs of me and my children."[68]

Unlike work on applications, wages on cloud platforms do not vary according to the number of hours each worker works but rather according to the number of projects they receive, and the number of working hours varies according to the amount of time required to deliver each project. There are also no registration fees on cloud platforms, unlike ride-hailing applications, which require a payment of 400 dinars per year.

Most interviewees said that the number of hours they work per week ranges between 25 and 30 hours, while noting that the common minimum number of weekly working hours for cloud platform workers is at least 9 hours and the maximum is 60 hours.

The number of hours worked by the interviewed workers indicates that they do not receive enough projects on the platforms they work on. One worker on Mostaql said that she does not receive enough projects, and the projects she receives come infrequently (i.e. one every one or two weeks), which negatively affects her income. The need to be available for potential work on the platforms prevents workers from committing to other job opportunities.

In addition, the high degree of competitiveness on these platforms can negatively affect the income of many workers, especially those living in countries with weak economies, as they are willing to work for low wages to gain a competitive advantage.

A worker on freelancer.com said that competition among workers reduces the opportunities and projects that clients offer them, and this pushes many to lower their prices to gain as many opportunities and projects as possible. Or workers buy a premium account on the platform with a monthly subscription, as one of the workers explained that premium accounts increase the chances of obtaining projects, and therefore is another and perhaps better way than lowering prices to gain more projects.[69]

Cloud workers can negotiate with clients about extending project delivery times or prices, but clients have the right to accept or reject proposals. Another factor that affects cloud workers' incomes, according to those interviewed, is the fluctuating commission rates that platforms deduct from workers' earnings, which range from 10 to 20 percent, depending on the total cost of projects. More expensive projects charge higher commission rates.

Most interviewees found it difficult to accurately estimate their income, but estimates provided ranged from 60 to 500 dinars per month before commissions and 50 to 400 dinars after commissions. Those interviewed said that the highest price for a single project was 350 JOD, with the platform taking 70 JOD (20 percent) as a commission. However,

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66   In-depth interviews with workers on applications.

67   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

68   In-depth interviews with a worker on Fiverr.

69   In-depth interview with a worker on Freelancer.com.

most of the time, the rate for projects offered on the platforms was as low as 70 JOD. Most workers said that this fell below what they felt to be sufficient income.

Despite the low-income levels of cloud workers, most interviewees agreed that a piece-rate, per-project payment system made the most sense, as opposed to an hourly payment system, which they felt was not feasible for them due to the low hourly rate.[70] A worker using Fiverr said she was paid by the hour on one project, which was very time-consuming, and she was only paid two dinars for each hour of work, which she found insufficient.[71]

Some workers disagreed with the piece-rate system and considered it useless, due to the competition between workers in these platforms. "I think the piece-rate system needs to be changed. For example, I may work on a project for 15 to 20 days as an expert and offer a certain value in the project commensurate with my effort, but sometimes, another less experienced person may offer a lower price and be selected," said one of the workers. "This situation forces me to reduce prices and accept low offers such as 35-55 JOD, which is not feasible when converted to Jordanian dinars."[72]

During the interviews with workers, it became clear that there are other challenges associated with the process required to receive wages. When an agreement is reached between the client and the worker on a specific project, the client must deposit the worker's full wage on the platform's system as a protection measure for the worker. But when the worker finishes the project and hands it over to the client, there is a waiting period of 14 to 21 days before the wage is transferred to the worker. The stated purpose for the delay in transferring the money is to give the client time to request additional changes or modifications to the project.

Most of the interviewees see this waiting period as a challenge for them, especially since they always suffer from financial precarity due to the low wages provided by work on these platforms. They said that they need to receive their wages as soon as they deliver the project.

When it comes to Syrians working on cloud platforms, they face additional challenges, especially when it comes to opening a bank account.[73]

One interviewed expert said that Syrians cannot open a bank account in Jordan, which poses a significant challenge in working for cloud platforms as most of the platforms, whether international or in the region, require workers to open a bank account in order to receive their wages from the projects they work on.[74]

ii) Employment contracts

During interviews, most workers said they were aware of the existence of a written contract between them and each platform they work on. Still, a few said they were unaware of any contract and the terms, conditions and labor policies that platforms are obliged to follow. These policies include restrictions on the sharing of personal information data between the two parties (the worker and the client).

The contracts that workers sign, however, do not contain any of the labor rights stipulated in Jordan's labor and social security laws. These rights pertain to the provision of wages, working hours, overtime, sick or annual leave, or even social security coverage. According to a worker on Upwork, the contracts include only the policies and provisions according to which the platforms operate and some guiding matters for new workers, but they do not include any language about labor rights.[75]

Experts in Jordan's labor market and social protections said that the issue lies in the fact that Jordanian labor legislation does not apply to workers in self-employed businesses, such as online platforms.

The experts pointed out that most workers in the sector are treated as employers rather than workers, even as they work according to specific tasks arranged by the companies operating these platforms, which means they are entitled to the status of worker and the rights stipulated in the labor law.[76]

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70   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

71   In-depth interview with a worker on Fiverr.

72   In-depth interview with a worker on Bayed.

73   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

74   In-depth interview with an expert.

75   In-depth interview with a worker on Upwork.

76   Discussion session with experts: http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/154045
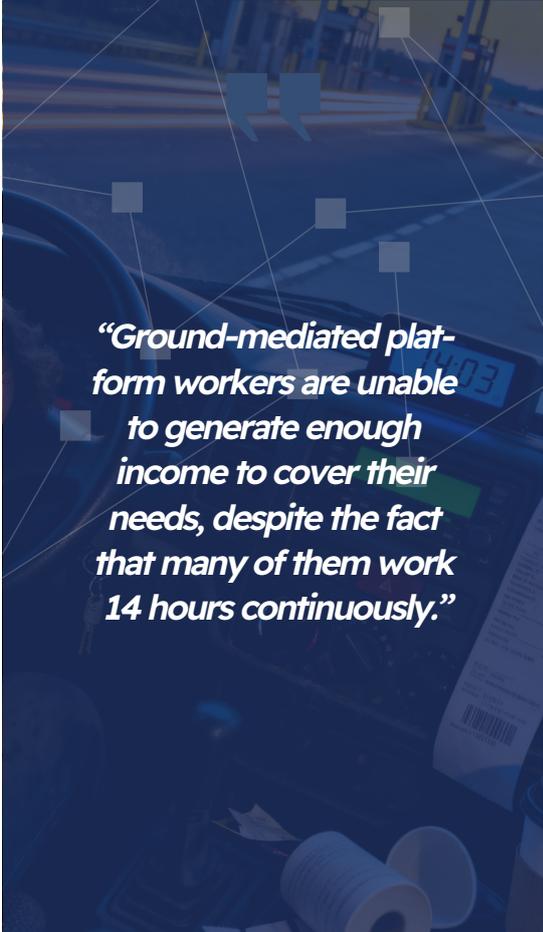
"Ground-mediated plat-form workers are unable to generate enough income to cover their needs, despite the fact that many of them work 14 hours continuously."

iii) Safe working conditions

Workers on cloud platforms do not suffer from major health issues due to their work, unlike applications where the worker or driver may be robbed, beaten, or assaulted by the customer. Nonetheless, safe working conditions are not only limited to physical health but can extend to the security of workers' personal information.

Interviewed workers said that communication between them and customers via cloud platforms is only done through the platforms' chat function or through Zoom calls. They are prohibited from communicating through other means. Most workers said that it is a fairly safe process, as the administrations of these platforms monitor the content of the chat between the worker and the customer for safety and compliance purposes. The platforms prevent the two parties from sharing personal information, such as email addresses or phone numbers, in order to maintain the security of their information. Any party who violates this policy is banned from the platform.

However, many interviewed workers said that they were not aware of this policy because they did not read the terms and conditions of the platforms in full when they registered. One worker said that the platform on which he worked banned him from accessing it for three and a half months because he shared his personal information with a customer after the customer asked him to do so.

Although the communication process between workers and customers in cloud platforms is secure in terms of personal information, workers said that they still face some challenges due to the restrictions imposed by the platform, such as: not being able to communicate with customers for a long time, either due to a technical malfunction on the customer's side or his or her refusal to communicate with the worker. This affects the worker's ability to continue working on the project and thus means they will not receive their wages if they deliver the project.[77]

The platforms use a five-star system on all cloud platforms, where both parties (worker and client) can evaluate each other upon completion of the project, in addition to being able to evaluate the platform as well. The higher the worker's rating, the higher their chance of receiving the largest number of projects.

The advantage of the dual rating system, workers said, is that it allows them to see a clients' previous projects, which gives them more insight into the credibility of a client before agreeing to work with them.[78]

iv) Equal opportunities and fair treatment

Most of the workers interviewed agreed that they did not face any kind of discrimination during their work and that there are equal opportunities for women and men working on cloud platforms. However, a few said that discrimination could occur against workers who do not put their profile picture on the platforms.

One worker on Freelancer.com explained a situation that happened to her. "I wear a niqab, and I was facing some kind of discrimination from clients, as some of them don't want to deal with women

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77   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

78   Idib.

who wear niqabs, so I changed my profile picture to a special logo with my name, to avoid such practices. But I later discovered that those who don't put their personal photos on their profiles on the platforms also don't get many projects, and I am now stuck between risking discrimination if I post my personal photo, or losing opportunities if I don't post it."[79]

Cloud workers said that online platforms encourage workers to put their personal photos on their profiles as a way to encourage customers to do business with them.

All those interviewees said they were unsure whether cloud platforms allow people with disabilities to work on them.

v) Social protection

Cloud workers are not provided any form of social protection and thus work in an unregulated manner, according to interviewed workers, who say they are neither offered social security or health insurance because they are considered employers rather than workers.[80]

The only option available to them is to voluntarily pay into the social insurance program, which most workers reject due to its high cost. Those interviewed said that they cannot afford more financial burden in light of their low wages. A worker on Baeed said: "I was a social security subscriber at my previous job, but I stopped my subscription when I started working on cloud platforms, and I currently have no choice but to subscribe to the voluntary subscription, which is very high and I cannot afford it because of my low income."[81]

As a result, experts advocated for the creation of appropriate and effective insurance products to extend social security and insurance schemes provided by the Social Security Corporation (SSC) to workers. They believe that there is a need to create a special system to include unorganized workers, including those working through online platforms, under the social security umbrella, and that this system should take into account the nature of their

work and the nature of their relations with the companies operating the platforms.[82]

vi) Career prospects

Many of the workers interviewed said that working on cloud platforms does not require academic qualifications, which they considered an advantage. Their chances of obtaining and implementing projects to the desired quality and within desired timeframe does not depend on their qualifications as much as on their experience and talent.

One of the interviewed workers, who works on Upwork, explained that each worker has a personal profile on the platform they work on, and they can add their academic qualifications, work experience and work samples. This information can increase their chances of getting projects.[83]

Most of the workers interviewed said that their work on the cloud platforms contributed to developing their skills, as the platforms offer free training programs and courses for workers on how to develop many of the skills needed for their work, such as marketing, designing a professional and attractive profile, identifying opportunities, assessing the market, and developing their relationships with customers.

One of the five platforms in the study sample also implements a performance badge system, which are specific badges or labels that the platform places on workers' profiles based on their performance, such as "commitment" and "speed of work completion," to encourage clients to choose workers with more badges.

Working on cloud platforms also allows workers to learn new terminology and new information in their fields to develop further expertise. One worker said: "Working on the platform has helped me expand my knowledge in my field, which is human resources management, and I am now aware of the laws of this field in many countries, not just Jordan."

The interviewed workers were also able to access opportunities on a global scale and develop expertise in their fields that they would not have been

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79   In-depth interview with a worker on Freelancer.com.

80   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

81   In-depth interview with a worker on Bayed.

82   Discussion session with experts: http://labor-watch.net/ar/read-news/154045

83   In-depth interviews with a worker on Upwork.

able to achieve in another job. They also said they improved their computer knowledge, learned how to complete work quickly, or on how to use AI to produce their projects. Some of them also improved their soft skills, such as organization, time management, persuasion, negotiation, communication, customer satisfaction, problem solving, self-confidence, and flexibility.[84]

vii) Freedom of expression and trade union formation

Workers on cloud platforms communicate with each other through their own groups on social media platforms, especially Facebook.

During the interviews, workers said that the purpose of these "groups" is to discuss their work and the projects they are working on and exchange experiences and skills. They have never discussed any issues related to their rights or work challenges. One worker said, "I only discuss issues that happen to me at work with my close friends."

Cloud platforms do allow workers to submit complaints via chat or email. One worker acknowledged that cloud platforms are responsive to complaints: "A worker or customer can complain to the platform's support team. They work 24 hours a day and are helpful."

Overall, most workers agreed that they feel free to express their concerns and issues without any fear[85].

There is no private union for cloud platform workers, except for the General Syndicate for Workers in Public Services and Free Professions, which was formed under the professional classification decision issued in 2022.

In a previous statement, the syndicate said that it faces difficulties in dealing with the cloud platform sector and defending the interests of its workers, their rights, and their union organization. The union previously stated that it faces great difficulties in dealing with the sector and defending the interests and rights of its workers and organizing them in a union. It indicated that it is not possible to initiate a labor dispute for each worker individually, as the matter requires the existence of an umbrella or an

organized framework for workers, such as workers in ground transportation platforms.[86]

viii) Future prospects

Most of the workers interviewed stated that they plan to continue working on these platforms until they find better job opportunities.

Workers made several recommendations that would improve their working conditions, most notably addressing competition among workers, especially in countries suffering from economic crises and low wage rates, reducing the commission rates that platform companies deduct from workers for each project they complete, eliminating the waiting period when delivering projects to clients, providing social security and health insurance, and providing job security.[87]

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGES

Platform work is an important component of the Jordanian labor market. In light of high unemployment rates and low wages. It has contributed to providing job opportunities for large segments of unemployed young men and women and those looking for additional work. However, most workers in the sector face significant challenges, from lack of job security and inadequate wages to the absence of social protections.

The interviews conducted in the course of this study show that ground-mediated platform workers are unable to generate enough income to cover their needs, despite the fact that many of them work 14 hours continuously. Whatever income they generate is also cut into by the many costs associated with their work, such as the annual permit fee of 400 dinars, the regular maintenance costs for their vehicles, fuel costs, annual licenses for their vehicles, and sometimes traffic violations. On the other hand, cloud platform workers face difficulties in securing enough work due to competition, due to the fact that the labor market is transna-

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84   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

85   Idib.

86   https://petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=279477&lang=ar&name=news

87   In-depth interviews with workers on cloud platforms.

Comparison between food delivery and ride-hailing applications and cloud platforms

SIMILARITIES	
Degree of Reliance on Platforms	They rely on platforms as a primary source of income
Balanced income	Income is variable and unstable
Commission Rates	The commission rates deducted are high
Job Security	Lack of job security
Labor Rights	Lack of any labor rights in employment contracts
Government's Treatment of Workers	They are treated as employers rather than workers, which leads to their deprivation of labor rights such as sick leave, annual leave, social security, and other rights stipulated in labor and social security laws
DIFFERENCES	
Customer	Ground platform workers receive customer requests more frequently than cloud platform workers, due to high competition in the market
Operating Costs	The costs incurred by ground platform workers related to their work are higher than those incurred by cloud platform workers
Platforms' Response	Ground platform workers sometimes suffer from poor customer behavior with weak response from platform management, while cloud platforms monitor the communication and chat process between workers and clients to protect the rights of both parties
The Relationship Between Workers	The relationships among ground platform workers are stronger than those among cloud platform workers, because their work is done outside the home, unlike cloud platform workers who work solely from home
Opportunities and Skills	The skills acquired by ground platform workers are limited and do not contribute to increasing income, whereas the skills acquired by cloud platform workers are diverse and may contribute to higher income and experience
Work's suitability for women	Women's work on ground platforms is considered unsuitable for them due to the social rejection of this type of work for women and the challenges they may face while working. In contrast, work on cloud platforms is more suitable for them and aligns with their domestic responsibilities

tional. Their wages are often not enough when they do secure work because of the high or fluctuating commission that cloud platform companies deduct from the fees of the projects they work on.

Workers on food delivery and ride-hailing applications do not enjoy job security. A driver can be banned from using the platform, either temporarily or permanently, due to a single complaint by a customer. The same applies to cloud platform workers when they share their personal information with a customer if asked to do so while working on the project.

Regarding safe working conditions, the interviews demonstrate that ground-mediated platform workers are vulnerable to physical and verbal abuse. Many workers said they had been robbed, assaulted, and mistreated by clients. Cloud platform workers do not face the same physical threats to their safety, but they nonetheless face the risk of financial exploitation. They can lose contact with the client after delivering a project, which could mean they won't be paid.

The labor contracts for both ground and cloud-mediated workers do include language around the rights enshrined in Jordan's labor and social security laws pertaining to annual or sick leave, overtime, or social protections. This gap is due in large part to the government and companies' classification of workers as employers or investors.

Both ground and cloud-mediated workers also do not have any specific trade union to represent them. Ground-mediated platform workers have gained entry into the General Syndicate of Land Transport and Mechanical Workers, and cloud workers into the General Syndicate of Workers in Public Services and Free Professions. But both unions do not have much power to improve the working conditions in the two sectors.

As a result, ground and cloud workers have turned to social media to discuss their work and how to secure their rights. This has specifically been the case for workers in food delivery and ride-hailing platforms.

OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the many challenges faced by workers on ground and cloud-mediated platforms, workers expressed advantages to their work environment.

For example, during the course of the interviews, workers said that one of the advantages of working for ground or cloud-mediated platforms is that the work is not governed by a certain number of hours, which means that they freely control how many hours they work per day.

Working on these platforms, especially on food delivery and ride-hailing applications, does not require academic degrees or past experience, which lowers the threshold of entry for those who are unemployed.

During interviews those working on cloud and ground platforms said that there are several skills that have improved in the course of their work, such as speaking English, self-reliance, the ability to solve issues, time management, leadership, and communication.

Cloud platforms specifically said their work contributed to developing their relationships and skills, as the platforms offer free training programs and courses for workers. Workers said that they have been able to build up skills in marketing, profile design, opportunity identification, market assessment, customer relationship development, organization, time management, and persuasion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above, the report recommends the following:

1. License unlicensed food delivery and ride-hailing applications to bring them into compliance with the Land Transport Regulatory Commission regulations and ensure the safety of their workers from the risk of imprisonment and seizure of their vehicles.

2. Reduce the work permit fee of 400 dinars so that workers are not pushed toward unlicensed applications.

3. Require companies operating food delivery and ride-hailing applications and cloud platforms to reduce the commissions they charge to ensure that workers receive fair wages for their work.

4. The relevant authorities (Ministry of Transport, Land Transport Regulatory Commission, and Ministry of Labor) should address the violations against food delivery and ride-hailing application workers by tightening oversight over the operating companies.

5. The Ministry of Labor should coordinate with the concerned authorities to ensure the labor law is implemented on platform and cloud platforms.

6. Amend the definitions set forth in the System for Regulating Passenger Transport through the Use of Smart Applications so that an operating company is defined as a service provider and the worker or driver is defined as a worker and facilitator of the service provided.

7. Review the contracts and terms and conditions between workers and the companies operating the food delivery and ride-hailing applications and cloud platforms so that they are in line with Jordanian labor legislation and protect their stipulated rights.

8. Compel companies operating ground and cloud platforms to include their workers under the social security umbrella or to develop appropriate mechanisms and tools with the General Organization for Social Security to facilitate the inclusion of these workers into social security schemes at a low cost.

9. Require companies operating ground and cloud platforms to establish a 24-hour hotline for workers to call when they are exposed to any kind of unsafe working conditions and to submit call reports to the Ministry of Labor and other concerned authorities.

10. Require food delivery and ride-hailing application companies to comply with the instructions and decisions of the Land Transportation Regulatory Commission regarding job security by preventing operating companies from banning any driver from working without obtaining the approval of the Land Transport Regulatory Authority. Companies sometimes ban drivers from working (either temporarily or permanently) without obtaining approval from the authority.

11. Cloud companies should eliminate the 14 to 21-day waiting period for workers' payment disbursal that begins when projects are delivered to clients.

12. Cloud platform companies should regulate competition among workers, especially in countries with economic crises and low wage rates, such as Jordan.

13. Strengthen the role of labor unions that represent ground and cloud workers in order to better defend their interests and rights.
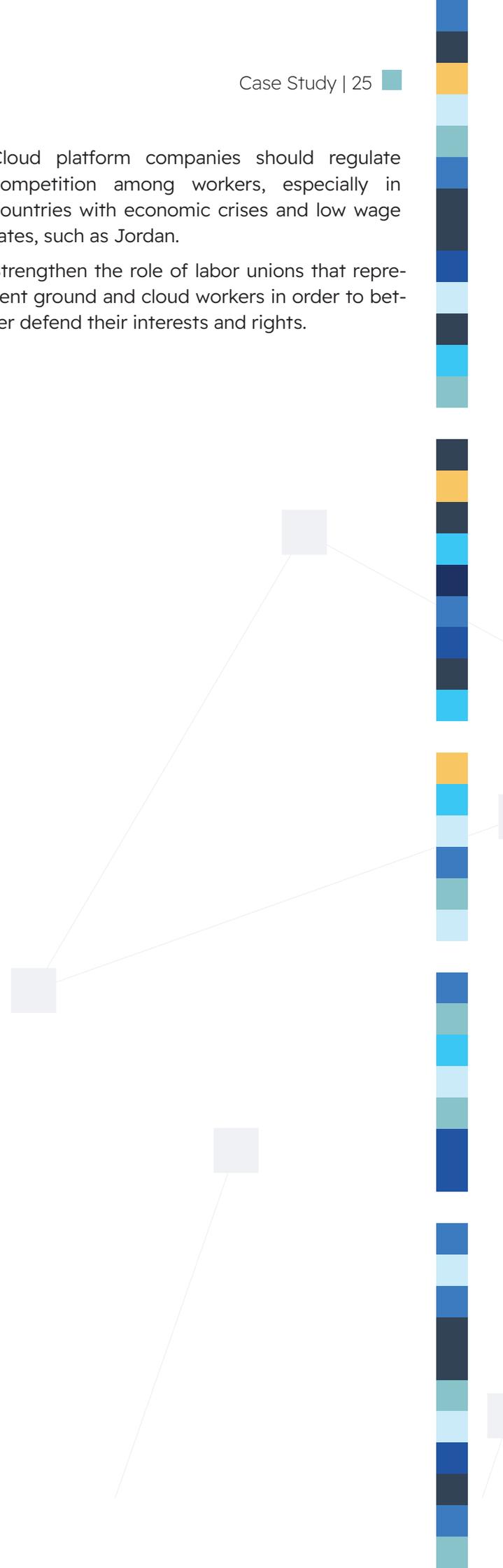
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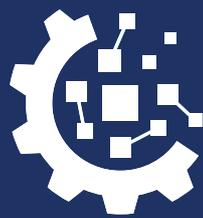
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