

A Study of Online and Offline Women Service Provider's Safety in Kochi's Platform and Gig Economy

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**Gender
Perspectives
on the Digital
Economy**

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1. Introduction

The opportunities for self-employment and flexible work as part of being employed in the platform economy has been bringing in more women workers to the arena. This is true for the rampant increase in women making use of online avenues for influencing, freelancing, or selling merchandise and, although to a lesser extent, for women providing delivery services, riding cabs, or working as care workers.

However, the female workforce who enter the platforms for work has been exposed to different forms of harassment, discrimination, and safety concerns. The online gig economy is also found to be posing enhanced threats in cases of sexual harassment and violence (The Economist, n.d). General cases of cyber attacks against women are also on the rise in India. In 2020, a 44% rise in cyber crimes against women was recorded in India (Muthyanolla & Kancharla, 2021). In this context, an in-depth understanding of the safety issues and work satisfaction of workers involved in various aspects of the growing platform economy becomes crucial. This study analyzes safety threats faced by women, their aspirations, nature of threats faced by women and satisfaction of redressal mechanisms across 6 sectors of online and offline platform economy work. Women involved in influencing, freelancing, e-commerce services, food and product delivery, cab driving and home-based care work took part in the study.

The study is based in Kochi, the commercial capital of Kerala, a high literacy state like Kerala where the majority of women entering this work scenario are considerably educated or have higher educational aspirations. The research is centered around inputs based on a small cohort (50 workers) and hence is more capable of generating further research questions on the quality of life and livelihoods of platform economy workers with limited scope of providing an overall sense of the community at a national or the regional scale.

2. Objectives of Study

1. Determine sector-specific perceptions of safety, threats faced, redressal mechanisms available and their satisfaction and aspirations of women in online and offline sectors of gig work identified.
2. Determine if offline workers using platforms are safe from cyber-attacks and if online workers are safe from physical threats.
3. Compare perceptions of safety between women employed in female centric sectors to gender neutral sectors and male dominant sectors.

4. Methodology

This is a qualitative study that was conducted in the city of Kochi in Kerala. Being the business capital of Kerala, Kochi attracts a considerable number of inter-state migrants as well and is most often than not known as the hub of new employment opportunities and urbanization. The state has a high percentage of literate population and so most of the workers in the platform economy are literate and educated even up to the graduate level.

Primary and secondary research was used to arrive at a comparative analysis of occupational threats and record gendered narratives from women workers involved in offline and online professions. The primary research was designed to build an overall analysis of safety and occupational threats faced by platform-based work performed by women. The sample-set in the case of online and offline groups were arrived at using convenience and snowball sampling methods. This is because in case of both categories, a comprehensive list of Kochi-based employees in particular roles or overall statistics of women workers is unavailable, although the eShram initiative has been launched by the central government.

All respondents were requested to fill out the survey form and participate in a follow-up interview about the general state of women workers in their profession. Some respondents preferred to participate in the survey and interview together over phone. Respondents' preferences were duly considered in the survey-interview process.

In the online category people who identify themselves as influencers, freelancers or undertaking e-commerce activities with a social media presence across Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn were approached. The study set the categories by taking into account stereotypically feminized, male-dominated and gender-neutral sectors of gig work. In the influencer category, there was a traveler influencer, fashion influencers, a writer running a feminist content page, two content creators producing cultural critiquing content, a music creator and a woman running a page to promote reading. In the freelancer category, there was a digital marketer, models, content creators, food photographer and stylist, graphic designers, zumba trainer etc. In the e-commerce category, there were owners of social media pages selling food, crochet and embroidery artists, personal gifting artists, thrift shop owners, home decor artists etc. They were also given the option to report other platforms that they made use of for their work. Women with lower than 1000 followers on Instagram, nano (1000 to 10,000 followers) and micro (10,000 to 50,000 followers) level of following participated in the study.

The online respondents were given the option to choose the category they most related to their profession particularly as the distinction between influencers and freelancers were not obvious at times. This option to choose the category has no contradicting influence as the classification of workers in online professions remains fluid compared to the clear classification of workers in the offline category. For instance, few respondents who were considered to be in the influencer category based on their social media content chose to be in the Freelancer category.

In the offline category, two predominantly male-dominant professions and a female-dominant sector were chosen to be studied to understand perceptions of safety, threats, available redressal mechanisms, aspirations of workers involved in different professions etc. Sectors were also chosen to understand the stereotypical societal perception of low societal acceptance for certain fields. In the male-dominated offline platform work category, food and product delivery workers and cab drivers in Kochi and Ernakulam region were reached out to take part in the study. In the caregiver category, full-time home-based caregivers and agencies offering need-based caregiving services were approached to find participants for the study.

The primary research utilized surveys and follow-up open-ended structured interviews for both categories. Surveys focused on collecting demographic details, evaluation of personal safety, availability and experience in utilizing redressal mechanisms of platforms, work satisfaction and future aspirations. Interviews were taken as an extension of the survey. It examined a wider sectoral analysis of the respondents' specific professions. Following cohorts were covered:

Online workers- 32 respondents

1. Influencers (Social media influencers on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook) - 8 participants
2. Freelancers (Women using social media for remunerative/unremunerative content creation) - 14 respondents
3. E-commerce vendors (Women-led businesses with a social media presence) - 10 respondents.

Offline workers- 18 respondents

1. Food and product delivery workers (Swiggy, Zomato, Erado) - 7 respondents (4 delivery workers from Zomato, 1 worker from Swiggy, 1 worker who worked for both platforms and 1 worker from Erado, a platform delivering fresh vegetables and merchandise (Erado) participated)
2. Caregivers service providers - 6 respondents working in Care Guardians (Name changed upon request)
3. Cab Drivers (SheTaxi) - 5 SheTaxi drivers

4. Literature review

Pasquale (2016) compares the enabling and obstructing views of the platform economy. The enabling viewpoint finds it as an employment opportunity facilitating low-cost entry into jobs,

reducing discrimination, booster for economic growth and so on. But, platforms are found to be discriminating for reducing the bargaining power of workers, racial discrimination facilitated by online profiles with photos of workers and their names, reducing wages for workers, and so on.

Asia Foundation (2020) brought out how changing the nature of work has a huge impact on the structure, organization, and practices at the workplace. Technology plays a pivotal role in this changing context of the meaning of labor relations. Digital platforms often do not create a new world of work nor interfere with existing patterns of employment relations. They are often observed to continue with the historic trends in employment while gradually shifting to precarious contract-based employment often not protected by law.

ILO (2021) found freelance content-based platforms charging commission fees for their workers while subsidizing their clients. This practice of charging commission-free is prevalent across freelancing platforms globally. Chinese platforms often require workers to make security deposits for getting software project gigs. Around 30-50% of project-based rewards went to the platform. Algorithms favor those users who have purchased connections or have paid an additional fee to be assigned more projects.

Bérastégui (2021) classifies gig economy risks under three categories. First are risks resulting from physical and social isolation from tasks performed individually with no sense of community. Next Are psychological threats resulting from algorithmic management and digital surveillance. Finally are risks resulting from work transience from the short-term nature of gig work leading to a job.

Samant (2019) points out that the risks faced by drivers in the traditional economy like long working-hours, night shifts, poor wages, and so on are very much identical to the threats faced by drivers in the platform economy. Additionally, they are also exposed to digital surveillance as platforms keep track of drivers using GPS (Global Positioning System) constantly to determine their location, accessibility to customers, cost of rides, traffic in the area, and so on.

Garben (2017) describes potential occupational and health risks (OSH) in the platform economy. Online platform workers share similarities with temporary and agency workers implying that they

are probably exposed to the same OSH hazards. It is needed to examine the physical and psychosocial risks of various online platform work.

Banks (2019) denotes how gig workers' basic needs can be met through work design changes and support systems like employer-funded workers' compensation, community policy planning facilitating gig work and legislation for basic protection. Support systems help workers to receive economic, physical and psychological support regardless of their backgrounds, economic status, gender, nationality or disability.

Jimenez (2019) denotes how studies at an international level point out that risks are particularly higher for women working in vulnerable positions of the platform economy. Physical and psychological threats risk employability, safety, and prospective general earnings that workers target to earn.

González (2021) compares platform economy to a capitalistic exploitative arrangement in which digital capitalists reorganize work and the labor force as dictated by algorithms and related regulations. Algorithms can be re-written by capitalists to enforce exploitative technologies to loot digital proletariats. Sociotechnical systems by corporations regulate behavior of the working class and larger consumerist population.

UNESCO's (2020) comprehensive reportage points out the online violence unleashed against female journalists. The report points to threats of physical violence, sexual abuse, and psychological attacks faced through cyberspace by women journalists at the global level. 73% of women journalists experienced online violence in the course of their work. 25% had received threats of physical violence, 18% were threatened with sexual violence and 20% reported being attacked offline in connection with online violence they had experienced.

Moore (2018) denotes the lack of social protection that is available for workers who enter private homes to deliver services. These include skilled work using computers or low-skilled work including care work and cleaning work mostly performed by women. Online gig work is often found to violate aspects of the ILO Convention on Home Work calling for social protection, fair

wages, occupational health, maternity benefits, right to organize and raise your voice against discrimination if needed.

Marzi (2016) illustrates how spatial mobility or immobility of people facilitates educational and occupational aspirations and is intertwined with one's ascribed individual responsibilities. Higher aspirations alone are insufficient to achieve upward mobility as people are situated in socio-cultural-economic contexts that may enable or constrain their mobility. Physical mobility in relation to people's neighborhoods are identified as important for acquiring capital, development of skills and habits required to facilitate upward mobility and aspirations.

Appadurai (2004) identifies aspirations as products of social interactions. They stem from the cultural and navigational capacity to explore probabilities and possibilities in one's environment. Views about a future development perspective and planning is also integral in this process. Low aspirations may generate "aspiration traps" due to inadequate investment and a vicious circle of economic disadvantage.

Urban unemployment has become a crucial issue in Kerala in the last two decades as indicated by state and national surveys. According to the latest reports, the unemployment rate in Kerala is 23.5%, more than triple the national average (Knoema, n.d.). The unemployment rate among youth between 15 and 29 years of age in the state was at 40.5% between January-March 2020, the highest in the country according to the Indian government's latest Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) for January-March 2020 (MOSPI, 2021).

The prevalence of high unemployment rates have been attributed to "educated unemployment" which refers to the case when educated candidates wait for permanent employment suitable for their qualifications rather than earn for a living. The unemployment rate among women is even higher due to their lower mobility in comparison to men (Kuttappan, 2021). Kochi has seen the rise of food delivery work in the past few years. The general population that becomes part of food delivery work in Ernakulam consists of reasonably educated people in rotating attrition (M. K, 2019). Although official data of women entering as drivers with platforms like Uber, Ola, Myntra, Zomato and so on is not available, it was known from platform workers that women have entered

in considerable numbers in these areas particularly owing to the financial challenges posed by the pandemic.

5. Platform economy workers in India - An overview

The National Statistical office (NSO) data states that urban unemployment rate in India stood at 10.3% in the third quarter of 2020-21 (Sharma, 2021). From 2010, when Flipkart was the only platform in the digital economy area, India saw a tremendous increase in the number of platforms and people employed in them over the past decade. Platform companies offering services like food and product delivery, beauty care, househelp services, care services etc have entered the arena. The feminized areas of work introduced by platforms with its flexibility appeared to be suitable for women workers catering to stereotyped household tasks. It is estimated that in 2020-21, 77 lakh workers were engaged in the gig economy (Niti Aayog, 2022).

However, diminishing earning capacity owing to inadequate fuel adjusted wages poses a challenge to flexible working for all workers. With remuneration per kilometer reduced to Rs. 20 (acquired from participant interviews), delivery workers work longer hours, including women workers taking orders until late to achieve their targets. In such situations, questions of women workers' safety, redressal mechanisms available, prevalence of their usage and platforms' role in ensuring support for workers to avail redressal need to be evaluated.

The largest market for freelancers in the world is the United States followed by India standing at nearly 15 million (Kasliwal, 2020). Indian Ministry of Labor and Employment in 2019 proposed the Code of Social Security as the first formal attempt by the government to recognize gig economy workers and offer social security benefits. However, the social security code along with codes on wages, industrial relations and occupational safety were passed in 2019 and 2020, and are yet to be implemented as the rules framed under the Act have not been (Nath, 2021).

Although many studies including this one reveal that the motivation to opt for platform work is the flexibility and associated decent earning opportunity, platform workers are far from being financially stable (Chatterjee et.al, 2021). They lack formal risk protection measures, are not

provided with the right credit mechanisms and lack adequate data to determine nature of financial security that comes with platform work

6. Findings of study

In this section, the most critical aspects of safety, aspirations of respondents, the nature of attacks reported by them acquired through a largely objective questionnaire shared with them or filled out by the interviewer after interactions with the respondents are elaborated.

a. Online category:

INPUTS FROM ONLINE WORKERS' SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

- ☒ 9/32 of the respondents in the online category responded that they have faced some form of attacks through the platforms they utilize for their work. “Adverse situation” was explained to respondents as any unpleasant conversations, chats, or inquiries that they may have faced from clients or the general platform crowd. Adverse situations were identified as instances of physical attacks or threats of a physical attack, cyber attack, verbal abuse, or a combination of two or more of these attacks.
- ☒ The majority reported having faced a combination of cyber attacks and verbal abuse. This is closely followed by respondents who have faced cyberattacks alone.
- ☒ 8/32 of the respondents indicated that they would like to further expand their business, content reach or land on better opportunities.
- ☒ 2/32 of the respondents saw their online profession as a launchpad towards another mainstream profession. This involved entering the film industry, professional singing etc.
- ☒ 4/32 of the respondents responded that they are satisfied with how their online profession is going on and would like it to continue as it is.

INPUTS FROM FOLLOW-UP OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEWS

The follow-up open-ended interviews for both online and offline category respondents were conducted based on their willingness to participate in the same which they indicated in the respective surveys they filled out or responded to. This section projects some of the prominent responses collected from participants that convey their perceptions about whether women actively choose their particular field of work and their satisfaction and suggestions with respect to improving redressal mechanisms in platforms based on their personal experience.

Influencers

Safety

The questions on safety perceptions brought in diverse viewpoints from respondents which were reflective of their individual experiences. For instance, the word “safety” for most online participants instantly relates to safety in cyberspace. The participants in professions such as modelling were mostly used to the question of their safety. On the other hand, there were respondents in other professions who found safety to be guaranteed in the virtual medium as there is no possibility of physical harm whatsoever. Here are a few excerpts from interviews that reflect diverse responses to the safety question.

Gracee (25) is a travel influencer active through an Instagram page where she posts travel content mostly from personal travels with friends. Gracee responded that a lot of women are joining travel influencing as she has observed a number of travel blogs, solo travellers, travelogues, and the prevalence of social media groups like Apoopanthadi based in Kerala exclusively for women travellers. She believes that the reason more women join the field is due to the higher acceptance they receive primarily through social media.

Gracee was concerned about the hate comments she had to confront whenever she put out her ideologies in addition to travel content. She had the following to say when asked if she feels safe using social media for influencing, “*While posting on my page, I ensure that my ideologies are not*

being compromised. I get targeted by random people through hate comments. People come and ask "If you are a traveller, why can't you stick to it? Why be political!?! There is a societal system that is built according to which we are expected to present content or express ourselves only in certain ways. This is true for cooking, travelling, or for anyone using platforms for their job or passion. We are supposed to do that main profession only, entertain and make people happy. There are no robust guidelines in social media platforms to prevent or curtail cyberbullying."

A majority of the respondents resonated with this lack of guidelines or the need for more safety features to curtail bullying in general. Esha (21) is a fashion influencer and model based out of Kochi with an Instagram following of nearly 5000 followers. She observed that many in general and women in particular opt to take into influencing presently. According to Esha, the ability to work from anywhere in the world with social media becoming more inclusive now are the prime reasons for this trend. As someone whose work details and personal photographs are present in the public domain, she has faced instances of continued stalking and cyber threats. When asked about what support against potential cyber attacks or safety threats she would want from social media as an influencer, she responded,

"I think there should be an additional step ahead of blocking or reporting on social media platforms. I have had a bad experience when a creepy person continuously made fake accounts and tried to find out my personal details. At that point, I was scared to approach the cyber cell....."

Ashita (27), an influencer, content creator and model also resonated with concerns relating to cyber harassment,

"There is a lot of online harassment thrown at us for putting ourselves out there. People think it's their right to have perverted and mean comments sent out just because we have a public account! Many times I've had to wait days in order to get the platform to take down an account that is clearly trying to impersonate me. "

The above narratives reflected a general state of the mental harassment that women, particularly those whose identity is explicitly out in the public face and requires technical solutions on the lines of those suggested by the respondents themselves.

On the other hand, there were a minority of the respondents who belonged to similar professions who interpreted safety in different terms and outweighed the same against other positive factors of using social media as their primary platform. A popular Instagram influencer talked about the element of “financial safety” which resonated with the comments of a freelancer. Arunima (24) is a popular Kochi-based Instagram influencer with nearly 28,000 followers. She creates sarcastic video content about aspects of “Malayalee” culture, critiquing anti-feminist tendencies on a lighter note. About safety and the opportunities she had the following to say,

“The worst that can happen is you won't get any views or you might get negative comments. Sometimes people may pour verbal abuse on you. Even in such situations, we don't lose anything as these are not direct attacks. But you are not guaranteed financial safety in this profession if you are of the stand that you want to earn a stipulated amount every month.

The best part of my profession is that I can do things that are typically not allowed by Indian families. On Instagram, we have the option to report abusive words in our own language. In English, Instagram itself identifies such words. So there are such safety measures too that are available. So I think women are safe taking up professions like mine, not the safest!”

Redressal Mechanisms and satisfaction

When asked what could improve with respect to platforms she utilizes for influencing to safeguard content creators like her, Gracee (25) responded,

“In general, these are times when there is a lot of hate being spread via social media platforms. The so-called “community guidelines” of Instagram and Facebook are very pathetic. If we post something based on our own choice, the platforms remove it based on community guidelines which I find to be very contradictory. So there should be more support from platforms for free expression and ideologies.”

A number of influencers made the suggestion in line with what Esha (21) suggested,

“A feature to know the identity of people who keep disturbing us through multiple fake accounts is needed. An additional or alternative step to blocking and reporting without necessarily having to go to the cyber cell should be provided by platforms.”

When asked about what she wished could be improved in platforms for the safety of women based on her own personal experience, Ashita (27) responded with specific recommendations,

“ There should be a means to filter out mean DMs that we receive. Faster response from the platform’s side to report and take down accounts that are sending hateful/ unsolicited derogatory pictures is important.”

Although very thankful to online platforms for giving the opportunities she receive, Arunima (24) also had suggestions with regards to personal safety and for keeping the content created by influencers like her “safe” from being just copied by someone else,

“Copyright infringement is a serious issue. It can be artwork, writing or anything. There are no guidelines on Instagram prohibiting the snatching of one’s content without any permission. Even if I report, it is just a waste of time. Instagram is giving an option to fill a form indicating copyright infringement, but it is not given much importance. I should save my content myself with a watermark. But even if I add a watermark, people just repost changing that! So that should also be prevented.”

Freelancers

Safety

The safety concerns of influencers and freelancers were observed to be quite similar owing to the fluid nature of their work which intersects with both areas. Navya (27) is a model, actor and educator native to Kochi in Kerala and is currently based in Chennai. She uses Instagram for posting her work and has nearly 13,000 followers. Navya has observed that a lot of women are using social media for modelling, acting, or the arts in general. She talks about how social media

has helped in making it easier to find talent. However, she is concerned about the downsides that come with using social media for her profession,

“Everything is out there for grabs for anybody who has access to a good working network. As snippets of your life are out there for people to scrutinize and use at their disposal, it is a little unnerving. People may even impersonate and ask you to collaborate on a project which may not even exist! There are experiences of people sending demeaning messages or nude photographs giving instructions asking me to do something to them.”

Although female models tend to be targeted considerably, there were also respondents who reportedly considered social media as only a part of their profession and not the whole, accepted its shortcomings and took personal preventive measures to be safe. Babita (24) is a Kochi native based out of Delhi currently. She is known for being a fashion influencer, model and illustrator who breaks stereotyped beauty standards through her work. She has taken part in several prestigious international and pan-Indian modelling shoots including a project for Vogue in Paris. She primarily uses Instagram for her modelling assignments and has nearly 15,000 followers.

When asked about her feeling of safety and satisfaction using Instagram for her work, Babita replied,

“On Instagram, I vet my followers thoroughly to prevent any unsafe interaction and this has yielded benefits. I do find my Instagram engagement to be very varied, which can be demotivating at times and the constant need to post had led to burnout earlier. Otherwise, I have had a pretty positive experience and try not to take any social media platform too seriously.”

Nakshatra (24) is a freelance digital marketer who has a public page on Instagram with around 350 followers. She periodically reposts her Instagram content to her Facebook page under the same name. When asked about safety, she resonated with the aspect of financial safety pointed out by one of the influencers in addition to “mental health safety”,

“I think a lot of women find this safer. But I have seen a lot of women who don't want to take up this path as it is unsafe in terms of pay. On the other hand, there are many youngsters building their own

brand or starting things as a side hustle. From a financial point, I would say safety is a little uncertain. But for me, I prefer being able to make my own decisions and I think that guarantees safety on a mental health level as well.”

Riya (36) is a Zumba trainer who is currently taking a mix of online and offline zumba classes for people of different age groups. Although she is very satisfied with her job and finds it safe, she narrated an incident of cyber attack that she had to face,

“Someone added a lot of vulgar comments on many of my posts in a single day. He commented in Malayalam on my clothes and called me too old for the job. I put up a story on Instagram and Facebook showing the person’s comments. First, I thought I will tag the Kerala police page also. But then my husband told me it may lead to trouble if we are called to travel in between covid.....”

Redressal Mechanisms and satisfaction

The major concerns of respondents stemmed from the fact that they aren’t aware of the actions taken by platforms, limited options of the kind of crimes that can be reported and the ease with which harassment can continue from perpetrators through multiple accounts. Navya (27) raised some concerns about the safety mechanisms from the platform before making her suggestion. She responded,

“The entire problem seems to stem from the fact that you are able to duplicate your accounts behind the disguise of being someone else. You can do whatever you want and there is no way that you can track the activity! I have felt that the options platforms give to report accounts aren’t always befitting. It would be great if we could type in the response as opposed to cookie-cutter answers.”

Nakshatra (24), in addition to echoing similar improvement pointers by other online workers, also suggested enhancing the reach of social media communities and pages that are devoted to creating safe online spaces,

“The only thing that platforms can do is improve their customer service and respond to all the queries faster. This is because any platform we use is free and only if you update to a premium version like in LinkedIn you get more features. So even for the free features, the response needs to be more defined and more streamlined.”

Sanjana (22) is a freelance model who uses Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn for reaching her modelling gigs. On Instagram, she has more than 5000 followers. Unlike, most women models interacted with during the study, Sanjana has been safe from social media hate comments or any form of cyber stalking. But, she had an interesting suggestion that could be considered by all online platforms as a preventive measure to curb attacks,

“There should be assurance from the platforms’ side that the complaints raised are being taken care of. I have also come across the mood indicating features in some apps that can be chosen. We can choose - happy, sad, distressed etc..so that people can approach you accordingly”

Such a feature could bring in a higher human interactive feel to the platform which would enable communication among netizens by understanding the emotional status of others online.

Even when not personally faced with any negative experiences, a small section of respondents have the experience of reporting crime to support the case of others. Nandana (25) is a freelance fine artist and video editor using Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp. She has an Instagram page each for her artworks and photography and both have a following below 150. She hasn’t faced attacks herself owing to her public pages, but she has reported crimes online on others’ behalf. Recalling her satisfaction level with the features, she said,

“Cyber safety applies to someone who has a lot of exposure and views. For those who do not have that face very minimal security problems from my understanding. As I belong to the latter category, I feel I am better off relying on other options as well rather than depend on social media....this is not because of safety concerns.

I have reported crimes on behalf of others. But that does not stop the crime. Hence, I'm disappointed and unsatisfied with my efforts. I think that the options available are less because even when we approach cyber security, they have limitations in finding criminals because of the advances in technology.”

Perry (26) who is a food stylist and photographer uses her Instagram page for food photoshoots and collaborations that fetch her income. Although she has no personal experience of any threats, her written response to the question of what could be improved on platforms for upgrading redressal mechanisms, her concise response resonates with many others,

“A way to stop content theft and obscene messages!”

E-commerce vendors

Safety

This category of respondents did not associate much with the questions on safety in terms of safety from physical, verbal or cyber threats and related more with financial safety than the previous categories. They found their social media presence as a display of their talent that could invite more earnings. Their nature of social media presence, mostly involving the display of their products, were perceived as ‘safe’.

Sany (21) is a postgraduate student and a baker with an Instagram page in which she posts pictures of cakes she makes for her family. She occasionally takes orders based on her ability to deliver if her study schedule permits. When asked about safety and what can be improved for platforms, she responded from the perspective of running a business and from her personal experience of interactions via her food page. She responded,

“Can’t say women are safe in this space as a business cannot always be successful. From a safety viewpoint, I don’t feel any difference compared to my private account and my food page as my

friends are its followers and I only have few people out of it who follow my page. The only difference is that people I tag can see the post and comment on it. This has led to conversations with other bakers. But that's it. So I really don't know about what can be improved in platforms....."

Vidya's (25) response also resonated with the above. She is a Macrame artist with an Instagram page followed by nearly 250 followers. When asked about safety, she responded,

"I have observed that there are many women entrepreneurs starting very similar businesses like mine. They believe that a small business would motivate themselves to be independent. For small business like mine, commonly used platforms are Facebook or Instagram which is quite safe and personally I haven't had any issues"

Biji (52) assumed her middle-age being one of the reasons for her safety and considered the safety questions to be more relevant for younger women. She runs a cake business with the help of online pages on Instagram and Facebook. She herself uses Facebook to post pictures of her cakes while her daughters help her to maintain her Instagram page. She sounded rather uncertain when asked about safety in relation to her online presence,

"I haven't faced any issues until now, maybe because I don't have many contacts. I mostly take orders from people I know only. I don't think there should be issues of safety as we are just putting up our work on these platforms and just presenting our product. If we do things honestly and sincerely we won't face attacks."

Redressal Mechanisms and Satisfaction

E-commerce service providers echoed many of the concerns and safety issues shared by the other two categories although many didn't find it obvious to be faced with threats owing to the nature of their professions. Abigale (21) is an architecture student who runs a page to sell handmade customizable crochet products. She has below 200 followers on Instagram and her clientele are mostly her networks. She hasn't reported any threats online. But, she indicated in the survey that she was only "partially satisfied" with online redressal mechanisms that are available. When asked

about her general perception of what may be improved on platforms, she briefly stated the inability of the platform to stop multiple fake profiles amounted to her dissatisfaction.

Biji (52) had a unique point of improvement particularly for Instagram that indicates the need for the platform to be more accommodative of different age groups. Although her response came from the point of comfort using the platform, it can be considered as a preventive measure against elderly populations unknowingly choosing wrong online options leading to safety threats,

“I have some dullness in my eyes. I can’t see Instagram font pictures nor the pictures very well. They are smaller compared to Facebook. On Facebook, I can see things more freely. But Instagram is where more people who I personally do not know send message inquiries. I also get more orders via Instagram than through Facebook.”

B. Offline category

INPUTS FROM OFFLINE WORKERS’ SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

- ☒ 5/18 participants responded that they have faced some form of attacks through the platforms they utilize for their work.
- ☒ There was one worker who has experienced verbal and cyber abuse, 2 workers having faced verbal attacks and 2 workers reported having faced cyber attacks.
- ☒ The motivation for financial gains from their employment was higher for offline workers than online workers
- ☒ A strong likelihood was observed between workers who were either a graduate or pursuing their degree to move out of the sector and their aspirations were to work in the private sector, acquire student placements or start a food or tailoring business soon. One of the student workers who used to work in Zomato is currently working with Kudumbashree and aspires to set up a platform for women facing abuse owing to her relatable personal experiences.

- ☒ All cab drivers wished to continue with their jobs while 4 delivery workers wished to move out of their jobs to student placements, start a business, acquire another private/government job, and so on.

INPUTS FROM OFFLINE WORKERS' FOLLOW-UP OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEWS

Delivery workers

The majority of workers who took part in the study worked as delivery partners for Zomato and closely followed by Swiggy. Food delivery platforms have been open to hiring women delivery partners in Kochi since 2018. Many women worked part-time or quit their full-time jobs in industries with less pay hike to work as delivery partners for popular platforms (Tom, 2019).

Safety

Delivery workers were identified as the cohort who were in a tussle with the platforms when they were faced with issues. Even if they hadn't faced a personal issue, they were aware of the safety threats faced by others in their profession and considered themselves fortunate and not guaranteed against facing threats.

Rekha (25) is a food delivery worker with Swiggy working in the Kaloore zone in Kochi. She is a single parent who is currently pursuing a corporate accounting diploma along with working for more than 10 hours on a daily basis as a Swiggy delivery partner. Rekha narrated the following incident,

“A customer placed an order and later called me up to cancel it as I was on my way to deliver. It was raining and my daughter had accompanied me. He had opted for cash on delivery. But the customer care executive put him and me on a conference call to clarify and he changed what he told me and said he never asked to cancel the order. Swiggy straightaway deducted Rs.500 from my incentives amount although it wasn't my fault.”

Rekha had also faced another uncomfortable situation, *“At night, an alcoholic person with cash on delivery was told to come inside. What if I had been attacked?!”*

On the other hand, workers who have been working in the delivery field for a long time considered it as the best job they could be involved in owing to the aspect of people-to-people interaction they got to have everyday. However, even experienced delivery personnel have also faced their share of issues over the years. Lishi (35) is a delivery worker with a platform called Erado in Kochi. She has been working in the delivery field for the past 8 years. She is a recipient of the E-comm Express award for her excellent track record of working as a delivery agent. But, that hasn't shielded her from facing cyber threats and in-person harassment. She responded,

“A man was constantly messaging me on Whatsapp, forcing me to meet him. He got my number when I delivered an order to his friend’s apartment. He sent my photographs that he had taken while I was driving. I rang him up, told him my brother is a policeman, and strongly asked him to stop contacting me. We have to deal with such problems ourselves. We can tell it to our supervisor, but there is no means to register a complaint.”

There have also been cases when the platforms have served as the only hope for women left with no support system of their own. Lakshmi (23) worked with Zomato in 2019 until she got a job in Kudumbashree recently. She was Zomato’s first cycle partner in Kerala. She left her home at the age of 17 and had to support herself since then. She talks about her time working in Zomato as comfortable owing to the flexible work hours and the ability to attend college during the day and work at night. Lakshmi mentioned that there was a recent enquiry from Zomato about her well-being and offered to support her financially.

Redressal Mechanisms and satisfaction

Rekha (25) complained about her incident which caused humiliation, loss of pay and stress to Swiggy.

“After I explained the situation, I got the money refunded to me after a month. But during that time, I faced humiliation and distress and the money I lost was very valuable to me. I wished the platform had heard my part in the beginning itself so that I didn’t face the financial distress that I had to go through at least.”

When asked about general responses from customer care and redressal mechanisms available, she responded with few important rhetoric questions,

“Whenever I have had issues with incentives or customers behaving badly, I haven’t ever received a fully-satisfied response. When I have to travel more than 10 km at night to deliver orders with my child to customers who are drunk, I only have access to customer care until the order is live. If I face any issue, we don’t have anyone to respond to us in an emergency situation. What if I face an attack after the order is complete?!”

Lishi (35) feels that we should be in-charge of our safety,

“ We should say something back. If we get a WhatsApp message, we can block it or ask them properly to avoid contacting as well. We should be strong. But women don’t usually share such things with their husband or son. Then we have to deal with it ourselves.

It would be good if we can rate customers back. Supervisor supporting us is not enough. For ladies, there should be higher consideration from companies. Higher staff are just concerned about the company, but they should maintain the delivery staff also. Major problem they will say is, there is no facility to understand our problems. This is why many people working with platforms leave the jobs quickly”

Vidya (35) takes some personal precautions to prevent personal safety threats,

“Initially, I used to wear salwar for work. But then, I shifted to wearing men’s wear so that people don’t easily recognize that I am a woman. Recently, I got a delivery to Aluva late at night. I called the customer and asked if he could come to the main road and he agreed. I do this when I feel scared or find it difficult to reach locations.”

Cab drivers

Although lady cab drivers working with platforms like Uber, Ola, Tukxi etc were searched for, it was revealed that presently these platforms did not have women partners based in Kochi. There

are only 5-6 women cab drivers workers who used to work for SheTaxi in Kochi presently. SheTaxi is a flagship initiative launched by Gender Park, an initiative by the Kerala government. Women drivers were supported by the SheTaxi Federation which was maintained by a fleet operator. The initiative however has been running without the support of Gender Park or the reassigned fleet operator in 2020, Global Track technologies presently. Drivers now get rides booked through personal connections they made when the support from the platform was live.

Safety

Seema (42) started as an uber driver and worked for a year as she couldn't use her father's car to enrol under SheTaxi. As rules changed 3 years ago, she shifted to driving for SheTaxi. However, now as drivers don't get support from the company, she took a quotation to drive regularly for a government officer for 34,000/month. She is also thinking of running for uber during her free times to fetch more income. When asked if she felt safe doing her job, she was quick to say "yes". But on further probing, she narrated an incident from a customer,

"I had a male customer once. When the trip was complete, he took my number for future trips. He then called me after few days and when I asked the destination location, he said "We can go to any place you like". I told I am not the kind of person he thought I was, cut the call and blocked him. I also told my SheTaxi friends so that they could be cautious of not taking rides from him."

Although not faced with safety threats as such and valuing being able to work against all odds, women drivers have been working for excessive hours and leveraging their community generated contacts to find customers. Miny (53) has been riding her SheTaxi cab for 7 years now and is its Kochi coordinator. She works for more than 10 hours a day. She had received a session on how to deal with physical attacks and was also given a bottle of pepper spray. She is not worried about the safety of her job and works as one of the only two SheTaxi drivers in Kochi who goes for long trips.

Similarly, Sandhya (34) has been working with SheTaxi for the past 8 years. But as the support from the SheTaxi company disappeared which led to a low number of trips, Sandhya now works

full-time at a driving school as the “lady” instructor. But she continues to take possible trips after her work hours. When asked about her safety being a SheTaxi driver, she responded,

“I don’t go for any unnecessary communication. I was given pepper spray to keep in the car when I joined. There was GPS in the car and an SOS button for customer and driver. But now I have removed all of that as it is bringing down my car’s battery and proving to be costly.....”

Redressal Mechanisms and satisfaction

For the women workers of SheTaxi, the question of safety applies more in terms of financial safety and security. With the name of SheTaxi only existing on the vehicles they bought mostly through banks from private banks, the conversation of safety invariably shifted to overall support from the enterprise by all means.

Rini (39) used to work on an average of 8-10 hours a day before covid times. Now her working time has reduced to nearly 4 hours per day fetching her proportionally lower wages. She she echoes the financial constraints by all workers in her response,

“Now no new lady drivers are joining the enterprise and existing drivers are dropping off. I took a 7 lakhs loan from Syndicate bank and had to pay nearly 14 lakhs to pay it off for my car. I didn’t receive loan from the Women Development Corporation without collateral.”

SheTaxi drivers do not have much experience using their app. So online redressal mechanisms to report safety threats aren’t an option that they have experience with. Sandhya (34) said,

“In the beginning, there was a tab called Fairmeter in my car. SheTaxi personnel used to call and check if I am available for a trip. I just have to start the trip on the tab and end it when it is over. It gives the kilometers covered and amount that the customer has to pay. Their mobile app has not become successful. The tab is still in the car but not in use.”

Caregivers

Platforms providing care services like nursing facilities for the elderly and bedridden are not common in Kerala. It was found that services were limited to few offered by private hospitals and home nursing agencies. The listed platforms and agencies online were reached out to and Care Guardians (CG) agreed to provide respondents for the study. This category covers 6 participants from this platform alone. All respondents provide full-time services for patients' families approaching CG for services. CG provides training sessions for home-care workers before they are sent to households.

Safety

Molly (52) started working with CG in 2019 before which she used to work in a clinic. She used to teach Midwifery courses in Paramedical institutions as she completed Auxiliary nurse midwife course after graduation. She had a different perspective of safety to offer,

“Home nursing care is a very good profession. But, it may pose some challenges for an unmarried girl for whom marriage proposals are sought. People may say that it is a girl who is staying in another home. But in my experience, it is a very safe job with great respect from customers.”

Rameela (50) has been working with CG for the past 5.6 years. She used to like the nursing profession as a youngster but couldn't formally pursue it given the financial status of her family. It is through a newspaper advertisement that she got to know about the opportunity and applied. When asked about safety, Rameela with full confidence replied,

“It is a very safe job and our company protects us a lot. In terms of safety, I think the way we behave with others reflects how we are faced with things. We should restrict such movements in the first place itself. Don't attend unnecessary phone calls. We should talk and behave in a proper way. Then we should also react to things, and shouldn't keep silent....”

Sindu (46) worked in a private hospital for a year before joining CG in April 2021. Apart from a single incident, she feels her job is very safe,

“I have just had one incident. After I completed my duty with a family, a man from the family started calling me unnecessarily. The 3rd time he called, I blocked his number. So I didn’t face any issue after that.”

Redressal Mechanisms and satisfaction

The caregivers at CG are sent to households post a thorough background check of the family requesting care and matching the requirements stated by the client to the appropriate homecare staff. The employees have access to two of the platform’s apps - to mark their attendance and to update patients’ vitals. They are not mandated to use the app and can alternatively maintain sheets to maintain all the information. Sindu (46) said,

“I don’t use the app much as I am not very comfortable with it. We just inform the coordinator or our supervisor directly via call about leaves. Every Friday there is a meeting and we can say leave. When we message via the app it may take time to receive a reply. So I am more comfortable directly calling.”

Daisy (37) also echoed Sindu when she said she doesn’t use the app much and prefers to call and inform or report anything. She prefers to use her physical sheets rather than update patient details on the app as she feels it is easier for the platform’s staff to verify details. About the apps, although, she has a very positive feeling,

“The apps are very useful. It is very satisfying that we have an app and it shows discipline. It is not seen in other places. We also have our own login ID.”

Adding on to the options available to them to address concerns, Rameela (50) said, *“We have our WhatsApp group. They have told us to call the supervisor directly in case of any issues. They have also*

directed us to report upfront if we cannot deal with a home. They have told us that we needn't bear any trouble."

The platform stood out as the one that garnered good satisfaction levels from the workers in the offline category. This was also observed to largely result from the nature of the health-related, the higher

7. Analysis of findings

Perceptions about safety

Although most workers in both categories replied to the question of "safety" with "yes" or "maybe", with further probing, a considerable section of the participants chose to report the type of threats they faced and explained their specific experience. Online workers are better placed socially in terms of educational attainment compared to the offline workers. This leads to online workers choosing their digital presence or business additionally to their mainstream profession or education and not exposing themselves to risks taken by offline workers to be physically on the run for their job.

Prominence of threats -commonalities and departures

For online workers, there were no reports of physical attacks. Their thoughts on safety majorly revolved on cyber security and bullying. Although the possibilities of threats to physical attacks were explained to few participants who appeared to have probably experienced the same for being vocal and strong on social media, none of the respondents in the study reported to have experienced it.

The type of influencing and freelancing affected the safety perceptions and exposure to threats. For instance, respondents who were involved with modelling mostly experienced or anticipated

experiencing threats. This largely stemmed from their display of personal content which is a means for cyberbullies to spread hate and lash attacks or verbal threats against them.

On the other hand, a woman involved with book influencing or food and product delivery found the question of threats itself rather unnecessary. They believed that their personal safety on platforms are guaranteed given the nature of the content they post on their pages. However, this perception of guaranteed safety could be rechecked once they go on to expand their pages or with others running bigger pages in terms of followership.

In the offline category, experiences of threats were also limited to cyber threats and verbal abuse. The difference in exposure to verbal abuse in case of offline workers lay in that they faced in-person verbal abuse and faced lower societal regard for their job, as reflected in case of delivery workers. The low social status ascribed to home care workers was expressed by few workers. In contrast, other homecare workers also expressed the respect and safety they received from families in which they provided care.

Redressal Mechanisms

The overall availability of options to report threats that one personally faces or is faced by someone we know was appreciated by a minority of online workers. This didn't depend much on whether they were online respondents with a significant or smaller followership. For instance, a considerably well-known influencer was satisfied largely with at least the availability of options to report crime online, while an artist with a small Instagram page was dissatisfied with the options owing to her experience of reporting threats faced by other fellow women creators online.

The major redressal gap reported was the lack of a follow-up mechanism to find out the exact process followed by platforms to punish or or warn the account or content reported. This made the redressal mechanism feel like name-sake features without actual action taken. The redressal mechanisms also felt not completely useful as digital abusers are able to come up with as many numbers of accounts as they like and continue with their abuse.

In case of the homecare workers, their profession of care confirmed the societal stereotype of women as good caregivers. Even though they stayed full-time with their clients, the constant availability of redressal mechanisms and general reaching out from their platform helped them feel safe in general. Although being the category that is most exposed to their clients and working environment and hence likely to be most prone to physical threats, the women workers in this category were reportedly most safe due to the effective support that they received from their platform and redressal mechanisms available.

Aspirations of Online and Offline Workers

The majority of workers in the online category considered their online profession as one or more of the side gigs they invested time and effort in addition to managing their studies or full-time professions. The online category workers can be further prompted if they would have chosen their social media or online apps based profession if they weren't offered the option of flexible working. Although the majority (26/32) of the respondents in the online category responded to the reason for them to join their online profession as being their "personal interest", it was observed that the ability to flexibly work according to one's convenience was very much integral to facilitating respondent's professional interest.

Although the study did not specifically look at the income earning potential or current average earnings of workers, it can be said that better social status does not mean better earnings from online professions. Online workers approached their profession more from a "fulfilling passion" perspective with short term earnings and did not receive a steady income. Offline workers were comparatively less educated and their aspirations were mostly to attain a "stable job". While a self-regulated working schedule came as a boon for both categories, the offline category faced more strain to ensure income from their work and were more desperate to improve their situations at hand, than dream of rampant change.

8. Recommendations

Online workers

- ☒ Safety from cyber threats perspective are mostly reported by women having personal details like photographs shared on their public pages. There should be a mechanism across platforms to filter out perpetrators and report obscene comments and messages sent out by them even in their regional languages.
- ☒ Platforms should notify the action that they have taken against a reported account. With the lack of such a mechanism, respondents assume inaction from the side of the platform. There should be intimation from the platform detailing actions taken by them when an account gets reported.
- ☒ There should be restrictions on the number of accounts perpetrators of crime online are able to create to curb his or her capacity to continue inflicting harm on others.
- ☒ Platforms including Instagram are widely used by people of different age groups for influencing and e-commerce activities and must consider their user experience. This can be in terms of a customizable version of social media applications for each user.
- ☒ Mood indicating elements on platforms can act as preventive strategies of cues for users while reaching out to other users. This will also help bring the missing personal element of observing feelings of fellow social media users and to contact them appropriately with this information.
- ☒ The intellectual theft of content was pointed out by some influencers particularly. While existing features of using watermarks, platforms blocking unpermitted use of owned content and so on exists, the respondents who raised the concern saw this as an intellectual and professional rights and safety question. Platforms must also invest further in addressing this form of threats and introduce more subjective features to report such scenarios and ensure speedy redressal.

Offline workers

- ☒ The redressal mechanism available to workers must be improved with provisions for customer rating and complaints filing. Workers must be duly informed of the status of their complaints.
- ☒ Platforms involving in-person services must ensure end-to-end support in terms of tracking workers and ensuring their safety not only until they have finished their service,

but until they have reached a safe location. Cross-mapping with red-spots in cities will help to this need.

- ☒ Workers' should be provided continuous support from the beginning to end of their gig and be able to use options provided by the platforms/ their apps to alert in case of any issues.
- ☒ Earnings of workers involving travel to locations must be adjusted proportionally to the changes in fuel prices and the minimum pay per kilometres must be determined in proportion to minimum wages of respective states.
- ☒ Platforms can introduce options to report crimes on others' behalf as available in online platforms. This will ensure that offline workers unfamiliar with reporting options or are technologically illiterate can seek redressal.
- ☒ Mandatory awareness sessions should be conducted so that workers, irrespective of their age/ digital literacy level, are able to enter their field of work with confidence.
- ☒ Peer-groups of offline workers can be initiated by platforms by placing workers with varying levels of digital literacy to act as a support mechanism in case of attacks or threats faced.

§ **9. Appendix**

Online Workers category

ONLINE WORKERS SURVEY FORM (Available in English and Malayalam)

Title: A study of safety mechanism for female online service providers

Basic Profile

1. Name
2. Which of the following categories of online services does your profession most identify with?
 - a. Influencer
 - b. Freelance services - Digital marketing, Photography, Content writing, modelling, Skill-based training etc
 - c. E-commerce - food, products etc
3. Specify your profession
4. Are you based in Kochi?
5. The platform(s) you utilize for work - choose more than 1 if it applies to you. Please write down other platforms you work with as well.
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Instagram
 - c. LinkedIn
 - d. Other.....
6. Your Age group
 - a. Below 18
 - b. 18 - 24 years
 - c. 25 -35 years

- d. 35 years and above

7. Education level

- a. 10th pass
- b. 12th pass
- c. Pursuing graduation
- d. Graduate
- e. Pursuing post-graduation
- f. Post graduate
- g. Other.....

8. Your latest degree title (BA English, B.tech, MBBS etc)

9. Years/months of service in your job

10. Duration of daily work

- a. Below 2 hours
- b. 2-4 hours
- c. 5 - 10 hours
- d. Above 10 hours
- e. Other.....

Job Safety

11. Do you generally feel safe doing your job?

Yes

No

Maybe

12. Please briefly state the reason for your previous answer.

13. Have you ever faced an adverse situation from the platform(s) you work with or from customers or people you interact with for your work?

Yes

No

14. If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, what was the nature of the threat? Please mark N/A if you answered "No" to the previous question.

- a. Physical threat
- b. Cyber attack
- c. Verbal abuse
- d. Combination of Physical threat and Cyber Attack
- e. Combination of Cyber attack and Verbal abuse
- f. Combination of Physical threat and verbal abuse
- g. N/A

Redressal Mechanism from Platform

15. Have you ever utilized any features of the platforms you work with to report an attack that you have faced?

Yes

No

16. Please select the platform(s) in which you have reported crime. You may select more than 1 option if it applies. Please note the other platforms in which you have reported attacks in the "other" option.

- a. Facebook
- b. Instagram
- c. LinkedIn
- d. I haven't reported attack
- e. Other.....

17. If you have reported an attack, how did you know about reporting options?

- a. I learned it myself
- b. I learned it from others

- c. I learned it myself when I had to report an attack
- d. I haven't reported crime
- e. Other.....

18. Are you satisfied with the options to report attacks offered by the platform?

- a. Yes, I am fully satisfied
- b. Yes, I am partially satisfied
- c. No, I am disappointed

19. Please state the reason for your answer to the previous question.

Work Satisfaction and Aspirations

20. Motivation to be involved in your field of work

- a. It is my personal interest/passion
- b. Flexible work hours
- c. Short-term requirement
- d. Inspiration from peers
- e. Other.....

21. Are/were you satisfied with your job?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

22. Please state the reason for your previous answer.

23. How long do you plan to work in your field of work with the help of social media?

- a. Long enough till I can land on a full-time job
- b. As long as I feel like
- c. I will stop as soon as possible

- d. Currently doing another job
- e. Other.....

24. Your future aspirations

25. Can you take part in a short follow-up question session as an extension of this survey? This interaction can happen at your convenience and via a phone call/ a voice note or text message interaction via any social media platform of your choice or via email.

Yes

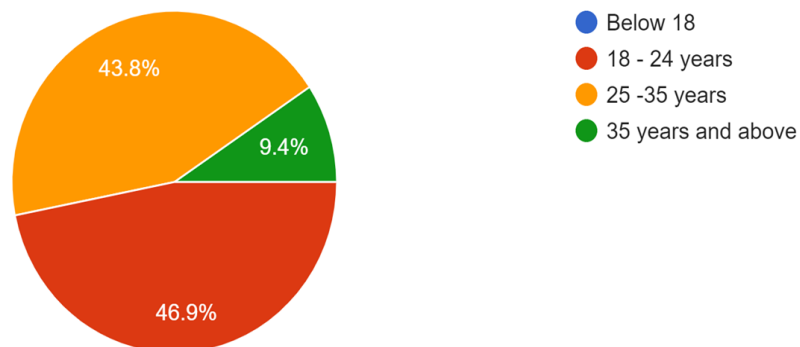
No

26. Please share either your phone number/ social media handle/email so that I can reach out to you for the extended session.

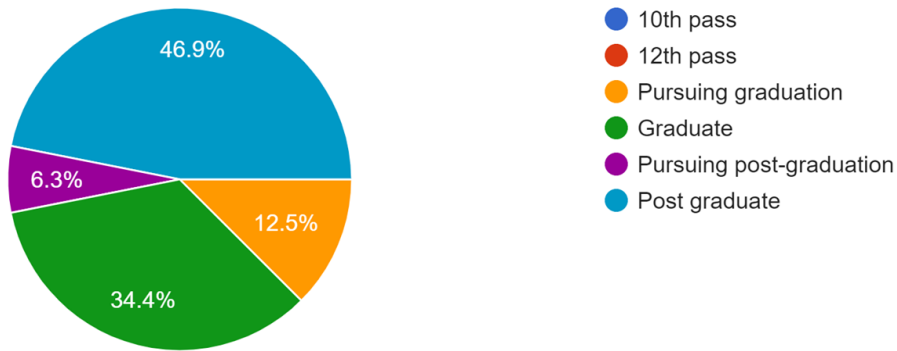
ONLINE CATEGORY SURVEY RESULTS

Demographics details

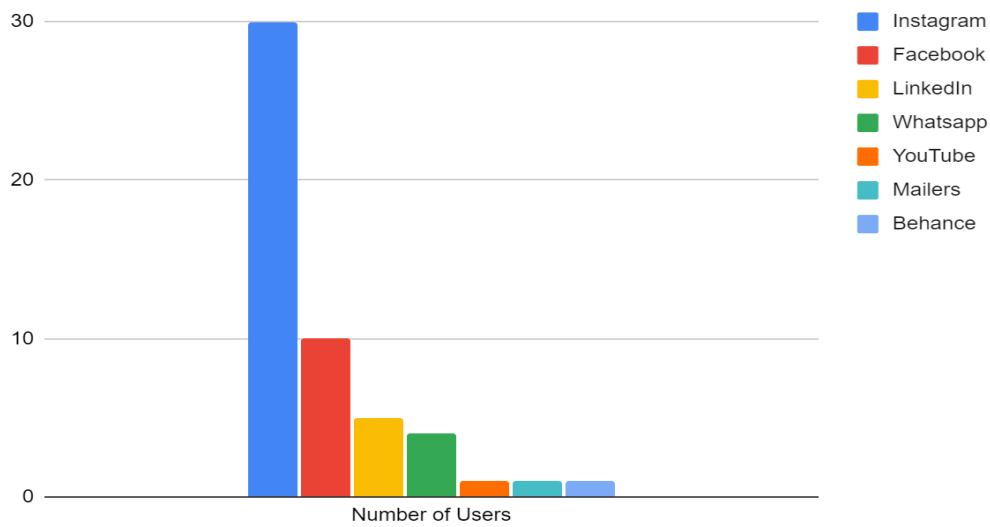
i. Age group



ii. Education level



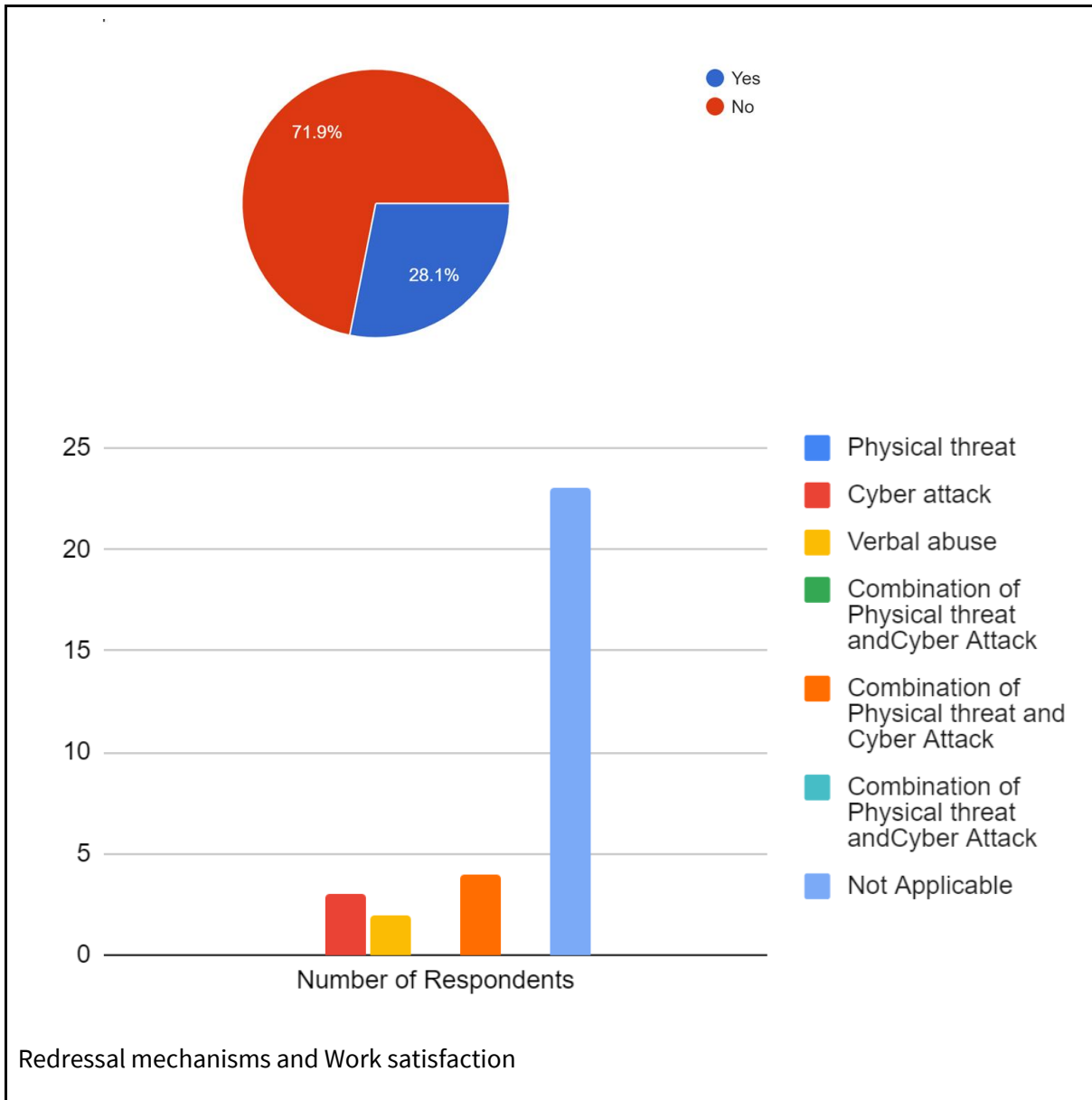
iv. Platforms used



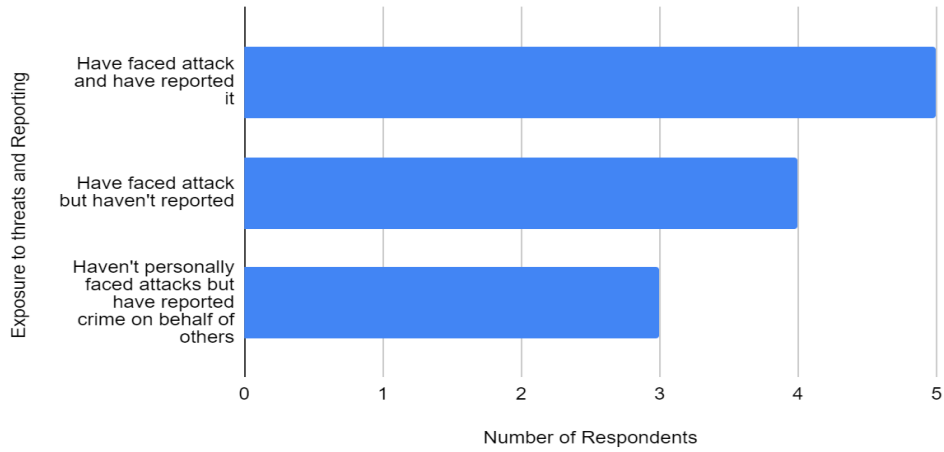
Nature of threats faced (Specific to each category and in general)

Survey question: Have you faced an adverse situation from customers or people you interact with for your job using a platform(s)?

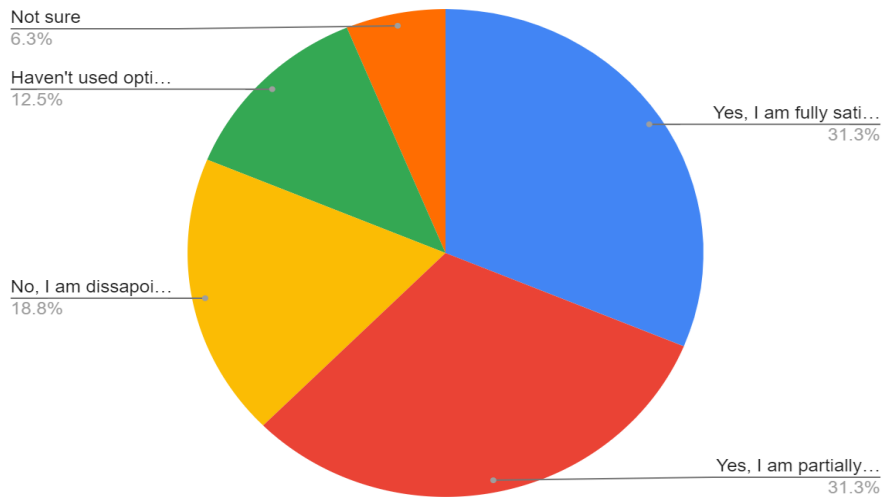
Gender Perspectives on the Digital Economy



Number of Respondents vs. Exposure to threats and Reporting






Q. Are you satisfied with the options to report attacks by the platforms?



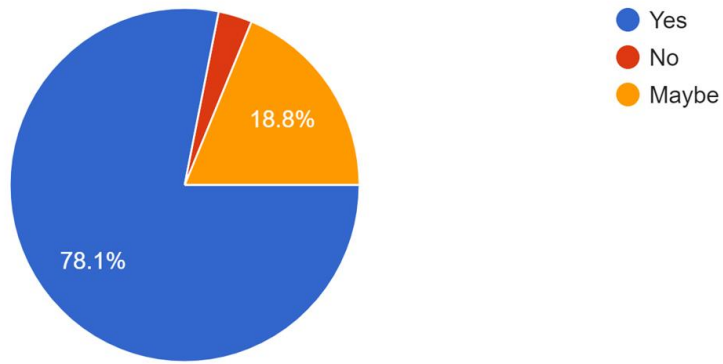
KEY

- Yes, I am fully satisfied
- Yes, I am partially satisfied

	No, I am disappointed
	Haven't used options
	Not sure

21. Are/were you satisfied with your job?

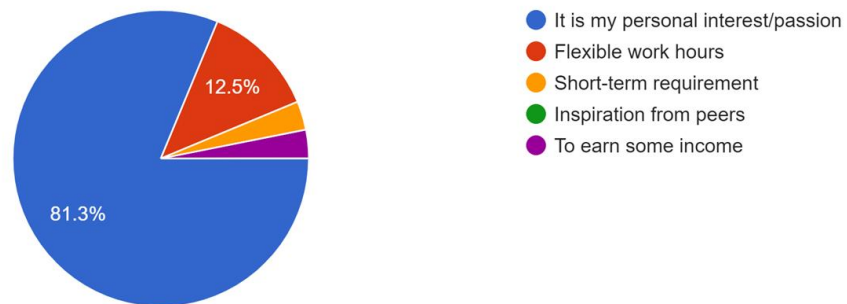
32 responses



Future aspirations of workers

20. Motivation to be involved in your field of work

32 responses



ONLINE WORKERS OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are more women joining similar professions as yours? Please denote yes or no to the question and please elaborate your thoughts on what the reason(s) could be.
2. Do you think women are generally safe taking up your profession? Please elaborate.
3. What do you think can improve generally with respect to platforms you utilize for your job to support you, your safety and your professional requirements?
4. What do you think can be improved with respect to supporting women workers in terms of the platforms you have experience using?
5. Are you satisfied with how you are able to navigate the apps of platforms you use for your job? Please state the reason.
6. Do you think women workers are better off working elsewhere than taking up your profession or similar professions?
7. To people who have faced attacks and reported- Do you wish there was more support from the platform's side when you were faced with issues? What could they have done better to address the problem?

Offline workers category

OFFLINE WORKERS SURVEY FORM (Available in English and Malayalam)

Title: A study of safety mechanism for female offline service providers

Basic Profile

1. Name
2. Category of Work
 - Food/ Product Delivery
 - Caregivers and House help service provider
 - Cab/Auto driver
3. Platform you work with
4. Age

- a. Below 18
- b. 18 - 24 years
- c. 25 -35 years
- d. 35 years and above
- e. Other.....

5. Education level

- a. 10th pass
- b. 12th pass
- c. Pursuing graduation
- d. Graduate
- e. Pursuing post-graduation
- f. Post graduate
- g. Other.....

6. Your latest degree title (BA English, B.tech, MBBS etc)

7. Years/months of service

8. Average duration of daily work

- a. Below 2 hours
- b. 2-4 hours
- c. 5 - 10 hours
- d. Above 10 hours
- e. Other.....

Job Safety

9. Do you generally feel safe doing your job?

Yes

No

Maybe

10. Please state the reason for your previous answer in 1-2 sentences (Q. 9)

11. Has a customer/ platform employee behaved badly to you during your service?

Yes

No

12. If you answered “Yes” to the previous question, what was the nature of the threat? You can choose all options applicable for you.

- a. Physical threat
- b. Cyber attack
- c. Verbal abuse
- d. Haven't faced any attack
- e. Other.....

Redressal Mechanism from Platform

13. Does your platform offer options to report attacks/ abuse?

Yes

No

Don't know

14. If you answered “Yes” to the previous question, how did you know about reporting options?

- a. Platform mentioned this in their contract
- b. Platform conducted an awareness session about it
- c. I learned it myself when I had to report an attack
- d. I learned it from my colleagues
- e. My platform offers no reporting options/ I don't know about reporting options
- f. Other.....

15. If you answered “Yes” to Q.8 (have faced attack) did you report the attack to your platform?

- a. Yes
- b. No

- c. In Process
- d. Haven't faced attack

16. Did the platform take any action to address the attack?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. In Process
- d. Not that I know of
- e. Haven't faced any attacks
- f. Other

17. If you answered "yes" or "In process" to the previous question, where/are you satisfied with the platform's redressal mechanism?

- a. Yes, I am fully satisfied
- b. Yes, I am partially satisfied
- c. No, I am not satisfied
- d. Haven't faced attack

Work Satisfaction and Aspirations

18. Motivation to work in platform economy

- a. It is my passion
- b. Flexible work hours
- c. Short-term requirement
- d. Inspiration from peers
- e. Other.....

19. Are/were you satisfied with your job?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

20. Please state the reason for your previous answer

21. How long do you plan to work in the platform economy?

- a. Long enough till I can land on a full-time job
- b. As long as I feel like
- c. Will stop as soon as possible
- d. Other.....

22. Future professional aspirations

23. Can you take part in a short interview as an extension of this survey? This interaction can happen at your convenience via phone or in-person.

Yes

No

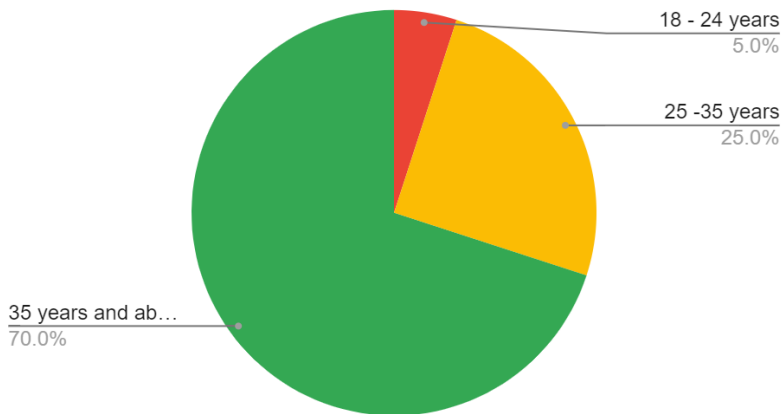
24. If you are comfortable sharing your phone number for the interview, kindly share the same here.

SURVEY RESULTS

Demographics details

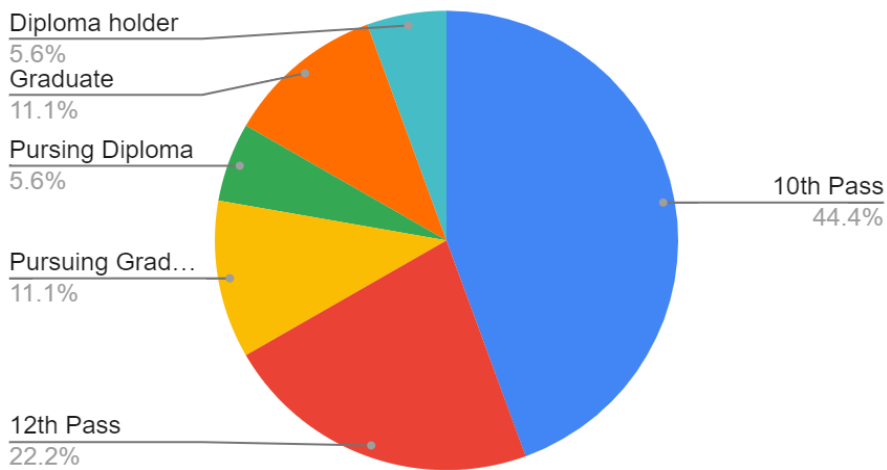
i.Age

Number of Respondents vs. Age category



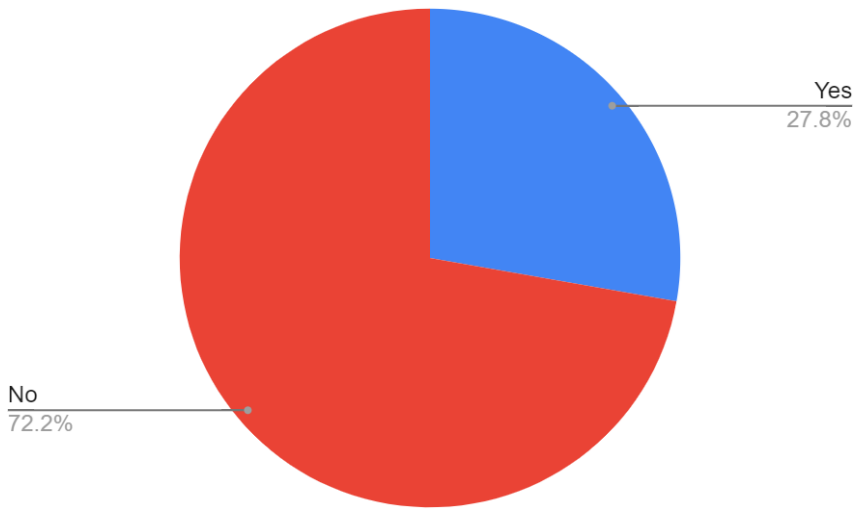
ii. Education level

Number of Respondants



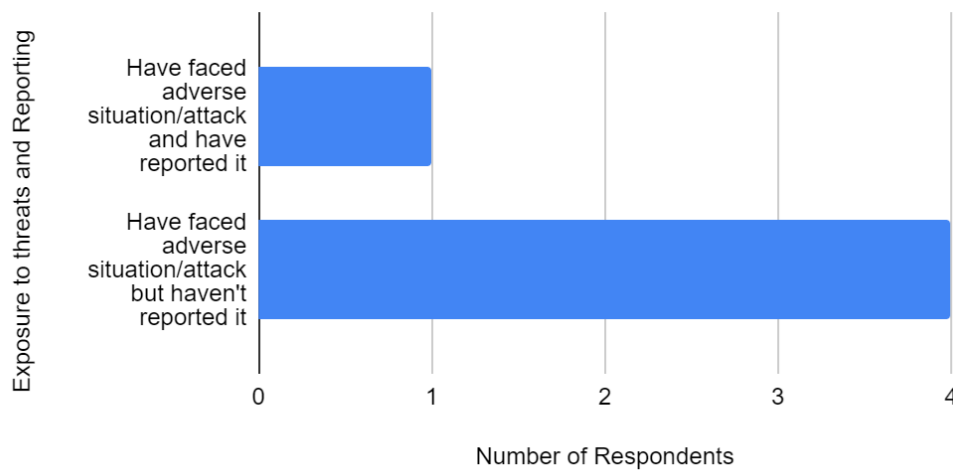
Nature of threats faced (Specific to each category and in general)

Q. Have you faced an adverse/unsafe situation during/as part of your job?



Redressal mechanisms and satisfaction

Number of Respondents vs. Exposure to threats and Reporting



OFFLINE WORKERS OPEN ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Why do you think more women are reluctant to join/are joining this area of platform economy? (To be asked as per inference from survey)
2. Do you think women are generally safe working in the platform you work/ have worked with?
3. What do you think can improve generally in the platform you are working with?
4. What do you think can be improved with respect to supporting women workers in your platform?
5. If you have access to the platform's app, are you satisfied with how you are able to navigate it?
6. Do you think women workers are better off working elsewhere than being part of the platform economy?
7. To Respondents who have faced attacks - Do you wish there was more support from the platform's side when you faced the issue? What could they have done better to address your case?

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