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# Precarity in Motion: Gendered Experiences in India's Ride-Hailing Platform Work

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## Abstract

The platform economy has opened new avenues for urban women to enter traditionally male-dominated sectors like taxi driving. However, despite the flexible nature of gig work, women's participation remains disproportionately low. Operating within a system lacking comprehensive regulatory frameworks, women drivers often face 'statistical invisibility' in data and policy. This paper, grounded in feminist geography and social reproduction theory, explores the daily lived experiences of women ride-hailing app drivers in Northern India to understand the factors inhibiting their participation and the strategies they adopt to navigate the platform economy.

Using a grounded theory approach, the research draws on extensive fieldwork involving in-depth interviews with 86 ride-hailing app drivers (80 men and 6 women), four focus group discussions, and digital ethnographic insights from WhatsApp group interactions. Findings reveal that women drivers experience elevated risks of 'invisibilized precarity' as existing social relations extend into the platform economy and are reworked in complex ways. While platform work promises autonomy and flexibility, the lack of legal clarity around working conditions, grievance redressal, and protections against harassment limits its potential for women. The informal, transient nature of gig work makes it difficult for workers especially women to access legal recourse or report misconduct. Even male drivers express unease over the absence of clear sexual harassment policies, fearing false accusations. Women often work in isolation, lacking networks to share experiences or support. This isolation intensifies their vulnerability and further marginalizes them within digital labour markets.

To address these challenges, the paper calls for an inclusive rethinking of platform work regulation. Creating official online forums exclusively for women drivers akin to Uberpeople.net, can foster solidarity, share advice, and facilitate a collective voice. Additionally, governments must ensure accessible public infrastructure such as hygienic washrooms, drinking water, waiting shelters, and designated parking spaces for women drivers. In digital domains, safeguards against cyber harassment and stronger data privacy protocols are crucial. Media campaigns featuring women drivers can also help counter gender stereotypes, promote visibility, and normalize women's presence in such roles. A holistic policy approach combining regulatory protections, social infrastructure, and cultural change is essential to ensure platform work is truly inclusive and empowering for women.

**Keywords:** (In)visibility, Precarity, Gender, Ride hailing apps, Platform Work, Regulation

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