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# Title: From Silicon Scars to Solidarity: African Tech workers/Content Moderators' mental health and Collective Resistance to Algorithmic Trauma in the Global South

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## Abstract

Research Objective(Clinical Psychologist & Union/Cooperative Perspective):

This study investigates the mental health crisis among data workers, particularly content moderators in Africa, exposed to chronic vicarious trauma while cleaning toxic digital content for global platforms. It highlights systemic failures in corporate duty of care and proposes trauma-informed interventions to address PTSD, burnout, and gendered disparities in digital labor. It centers mental health as a frontier of labor struggle in digital capitalism. It also bridges labor activism and mental health to analyze how African content moderators organized through the Communications Workers Union (UNI Global Union affiliate) and Nigeria's first tech worker cooperative contest algorithmic trauma. It exposes mental health collapse as a galvanizing force for transnational worker resistance against platform capitalism's outsourcing of harm. This dual approach, fighting within the system while building democratic alternatives, charts a new path for global digital labor justice.

Methodology:

- Semi-structured interviews with 9 content moderators from TikTok and Meta.
- Clinical evaluations using validated psychometric tools to assess PTSD, anxiety, and depression.
- Analysis of worker-led advocacy collaborative analysis of Data Workers' Inquiry findings on structural harm (e.g., Fasica, 2024; Ranta, 2024), revealing structural barriers to care.
- Worker-Led Counter-Archives: Legal petitions (e.g., Meta Moderators' Case in Kenya).

Key Findings:

- 100% of moderators showed PTSD/anxiety symptoms, with persistent post-employment

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effects.

- Productivity over safety: Firms enforce brutal quotas (50-second tasks) while blocking mental health support.
- Gendered harm: Women battle harassment + childcare gaps; men self-medicate under masculinity pressures
- Worker solutions:
  - PTSD diagnoses became bargaining chips for hazard pay
  - Nigeria's first tech workers cooperative bypasses platforms to pool mental healthcare

Theoretical Contribution:

- Advances digital labor studies by showing how clinical trauma frameworks strengthen worker power
- Proposes mental health collectives as a new form of transnational worker infrastructure, challenging platforms' geographic fragmentation.
- Expands digital labor resistance scholarship by framing mental health collapse as a workplace injury demanding collective repair.
- Proposes algorithmic trauma as a critical lens for labor organizing in AI's supply chains. Bridging labor studies and mental health, this research redefines algorithmic trauma as a workplace hazard, challenging platforms' externalization of harm onto marginalized workforces. It advances a collective care framework for digital labor, emphasizing therapies and peer support as counterweights to corporate abandonment.

Intervention:

A pilot Collective Care Program models alternatives:

- Clinical Care to process trauma.
- Structural Advocacy: Policy demands for platform accountability and gender-sensitive workplace reforms.

<https://theconversation.com/africas-data-workers-are-being-exploited-by-foreign-tech-firms-4-ways-to-protect-them-252957>

**Keywords:** African tech workers/Content moderators Mental health, cooperatives and union