



Delivering Resistance: Exploring Mobilisation and Collective Actions of Food Delivery Couriers in Georgia

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the collective actions of gig workers in Georgia. Specifically, the study sheds light on how Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt food delivery couriers mobilise for better working conditions and labour rights in the country. For this purpose, the thesis draws on news reports covering riders' mobilisation and in-depth interviews with five former couriers who have participated in collection actions, providing quantitative and qualitative insights. The study also examines the factors that empower couriers in mobilisation and delves into the role that human rights play in this process. To this end, the thesis combines the Power Resources Theory with the concept of solidarity and offers a comprehensive discussion. This thesis demonstrates that although couriers are less likely to mobilise due to their exclusion from the scope of labour laws, highly atomised workplace, lack of access to formal collective representation channels, and other obstacles that the organisation of labour within the gig economy presents, they nevertheless manage to navigate through these barriers and ultimately mobilise. The study maps a myriad of collective actions, primarily driven by self-mobilised couriers' grassroots groups in forms of strikes and street protests but also expanding to more formal and institutional routes with CSOs and trade union involvement. Unveiling the ways in which couriers are collectivising fragmented working environment, the study shows that they are overcoming workplace dispersal and building ties of solidarity, leading to mobilisation. Importantly, the thesis also employs a human rights lens, observing that human rights empower couriers who find themselves outside the ambit of labour laws in their collective action endeavours. Overall, the study contributes to the growing scholarship on workers' mobilisation in the gig economy – the phenomenon that was thought would not emerge.

Keywords: gig economy, gig workers, food delivery couriers, workers, labour rights, strike, mobilisation, collective action, Georgia.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organisation(s)
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Directive
GTUC	Georgian Trade Union Confederation
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LIO	Labour Inspection Office
MP	Member of Parliament
OSH	Occupational safety and health
PDO	Public Defender's Office
PEA	Protest Event Analysis
PRT	Power Resources Theory
RQ(s)	Research Question(s)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Problem Statement

Gig economy, otherwise known as platform economy, presents challenges for gig workers in enjoying labour rights and accessing decent work.¹ The emergence of technology-driven business models, coupled with accelerated efforts of companies to maximise profit and bypass labour regulations, has created non-conventional forms of labour arrangements characterised by more precarity and diminished worker protection. Gig economy, connecting the demand and supply of labour via digital platforms, has become a hub of these non-standard forms of work (Cini, Maccarrone, and Tassinari, 2022, p.341). The rise of gig economy is attributed to the Great Recession of the late 2000s, thriving amid widespread unemployment, fiscal austerity, and growing inequality (Van Doorn, 2017, p.900).

Classified as “independent contractors” rather than employees, gig workers are left outside the scope of labour rights, social protection, and occupational safety and health regulations that usually apply to workers in traditional employment relationships (Gupta, 2021). Due to misclassification, gig workers are trapped in the legal “grey area” devoid of labour regulations and rights, leaving them in a precarious situation (Stylogiannis, 2023). Algorithmic management of labour adds another layer to the issue. Labour management within gig economy relies on algorithms by which platform companies assign tasks to gig workers and control, monitor, and evaluate their performance with minimal direct human oversight.² The algorithm-based organisation of work renders platform companies as “non-negotiable employers” (Vandaele, 2018, p.9), controlling and governing “the rules of the game” (Srnicek, 2017, p.47). Algorithmic management serves as an “immunitary strategy” for platform companies, allowing them to evade accountability concerning claims arising from the management of workers (Van Doorn, 2017, p.903). Considering these challenges, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2021, p.245) has called on governments to address the working conditions of gig workers to ensure their access to decent work.

Facing precarity, gig workers, especially those in food delivery and ride-hailing sectors, have undertaken diverse collective actions globally, demanding labour rights and fair working

¹ In this study, terms “gig economy” and “platform economy” will be used interchangeably. Similarly, “gig worker(s)” and “platform worker(s)” will also be use interchangeably.

² This is not to suggest that algorithms function without human involvement as humans are the architects behind these algorithms.

conditions. This trend is also observable in Georgia, an area that remains unstudied. The first-ever strike of Glovo couriers took place in the country in January 2021 (Social Justice Centre, 2021). Since then, food delivery rider protests have become more frequent. In 2021-2024, Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt delivery workers have been resorting to protests, including strikes (Kinch, 2021; Vize, 2021; Gabritchidze, 2023). Apart from street and protest actions, they have also taken institutional steps, seeking redress through the Public Defender's Office and courts.

Workers' collective action in Georgia's gig economy, specifically in the food delivery sector, is an important phenomenon, given that the platform-mediated work environment creates "inhospitable" conditions for workers' mobilisation (Stuart *et al.*, 2023, p.288). Collective organisation of gig workers is "uniquely difficult" (Lenaerts, Kilhoffer and Akgüç, 2018, p.72) owing to structural barriers to mobilisation, such as high turnover rates, the lack of employment protection, and minimal union representation (Maccarrone and Tassinari, 2022, p.193). Unlike traditional employees, platform workers have limited access to rights to collective bargaining and to form and join trade unions, which are crucial for worker organising. This creates legal fragmentation for gig workers, rendering them "legally individualised monads and not a social group with collective capacity to act" (Heiland, 2020, p.20). Spatial dispersal, the lack of shared office space, and being constantly on the move pose another challenge to mobilisation (Heiland, 2020). Additionally, algorithms allow platforms to disconnect or exclude "troublemaking" and outspoken couriers to suppress any attempt at collective action (Vandaele, 2018, p.16). Besides, platform algorithms promote competition among gig workers for 'gigs', hindering the formation of solidarity (Meacham and Tava, 2021).

Against this background, food delivery couriers in Georgia have come together collectively to demand better working conditions. Consequently, subjecting this unforeseen and emerging phenomenon to scientific inquiry is imperative.

1.2. Research Purpose and Research Questions

Considering the research problem, this study aims to investigate the collective actions that gig workers have undertaken in Georgia. Specifically, the objective is to unveil food delivery riders' mobilisation in response to precarious and exploitative working conditions in the Georgian context. I focused on Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt couriers for two reasons. First, Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food are the major players in Georgia's gig economy sector. Second, their riders have been at the forefront of mobilisation.

To achieve this goal, the study seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

1. How do food delivery couriers in Georgia mobilise for better working conditions and labour rights?
2. What factors empower food delivery couriers to take collective action in Georgia, and what role does human rights play in this regard?

While the first RQ strives to illuminate workers' mobilisation empirically, the second question attempts to explain their collective action theoretically.

1.3. Relevance to Human Rights

This study strongly resonates with human rights, given that the struggle of gig workers for their labour rights lies at the heart of it. Additionally, as the thesis will show, human (labour) rights are not only the end but also the means of couriers' mobilisation, further underscoring the relevance of the thesis to the field of human rights.

Pursuing labour rights through a human rights lens has attracted support from industrial relations scholars, trade unions, and labour movements, adopting the “labour rights are human rights” approach (Adams, 2006; Gross and Compa, 2009).

Enshrined in the “International Bill of Rights,” which includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN General Assembly, 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966), labour rights belong to the family of human rights. These rights encompass the right to just and favourable working conditions, fair pay, health and safety protections, the right to collective bargaining, and prohibition of workplace discrimination, among others - the lack of which often prompts gig workers to mobilise. The freedom of association, which is central to workers' mobilisation, even predated the establishment of a contemporary human rights framework. Freedom of association of workers was acknowledged as a universal right in the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the ILO (Philadelphia Declaration) (International Labour Conference, 1944), which “is considered to have provided inspiration and guidance for the later Universal Declaration” (Adams, 2006, p.2). Therefore, labour rights are not only intertwined with human rights but have also contributed to developing a broader human rights regime.

The convergence between labour and human rights is not limited to a normative framework and extends to respective discourse and framing. Workers gain power when they believe and show that they are asserting their rights rather than pursuing a wage increase or other benefits, as society tends to be more receptive to workers organising as an expression of human rights instead of mere economic interests (Gross and Compa, 2009, p.8).

Importantly, due to the exclusion of gig workers from traditional labour law protections, human rights serve as a vital recourse to address their precarity and labour rights abuses. Montgomery and Baglioni (2021) define gig economy as a subtype of precarious work. Albin (2012) and Mantouvalou (2012) emphasise the efficacy of invoking human rights when conventional labour regulations fall short in safeguarding workers facing precariousness. For gig workers who lack legal entitlement to labour rights due to their independent contractor status, human rights become crucial in compensating for this absence of protection. Recognising the growing mobilisation of gig workers, Stylogiannis (2023) advocates for a human rights-based approach, proposing the elimination of distinctions between traditional employees and self-employed independent contractors in the exercise of rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining.

The focus of human rights monitoring bodies on gig workers further underscores the connection of this study to human rights. For instance, the European Committee of Social Rights (2023, p.21) has addressed the working conditions of food delivery couriers in its reporting requirements for Georgia, urging the country to provide information on measures taken to guarantee that platform workers have the right to organise and are shielded from discrimination based on their attempts to unionise.

1.4. Background

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia transitioned to a market economy. In the 1990s, the country experienced a severe economic crisis. Unemployment, which stood at 2.7% in 1991, surged to 7.6% in 1995 and continued to rise, reaching double-digit levels (ILO, 2023). The Rose Revolution in 2003 marked a milestone in Georgia's recent history. Following the revolution, the country took a radical neoliberal shift and labour market deregulation started. In 2006, the government abolished the Labour Inspectorate, resulting in an increase in workplace accidents (Tchanturidze, 2018). The Labour Code erased previous employment protections, lifted restrictions on working hours, deregulated dismissal procedures, and lowered trade union rights (Chipashvili, 2007).

However, following the conclusion of the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) in 2014, Georgia undertook obligations to harmonise domestic laws, including labour legislation, with EU standards. As a result, labour reforms unfolded. The Labour Code strengthened worker protection. Additionally, the reforms advanced occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations. They reestablished the Labour Inspection Office with a mandate to oversee compliance with labour rights and OSH (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2023).

Notwithstanding a more robust labour normative framework, gig work remains unregulated. As Georgia's labour legislation applies to traditional employment relationships, food delivery couriers, having the status of independent contractors or "partners," cannot benefit from most of the labour rights, trade union rights, and protections granted under Georgia's labour laws.

Founded in 2014, Glovo is a Spain-based company operating in 25 countries (Glovo, n.d.). Headquartered in Estonia and launched in 2019, Bolt Food operates in 19 countries (Bolt, 2023). Wolt, founded in 2014 in Finland, offers services across 25 countries (Wolt Careers, n.d.). All three companies provide food and grocery delivery services by connecting their couriers and customers via apps.

There is no official statistic regarding the number of couriers working in the platform economy in Georgia. However, according to secondary sources, Wolt and Glovo, which entered the Georgian market in 2018, contract approximately 7,000 and 3,000 riders, respectively (Fairwork, 2023, pp.19-20). Bolt Food appeared on the Georgian market in 2020. Information about the number of Bolt Food riders in Georgia is unavailable.

1.5. Delimitations

The gig economy is a global phenomenon, with various forms of mobilisation among gig workers emerging worldwide. However, this study is empirically limited to the Georgian context. While food delivery couriers may display similarities in their collective actions globally, this study is not universal due to varied country-specific regulations influencing gig economy and its labour dynamics. The study is limited to the 2021-2024 period, as 2021 marks the start of couriers' mobilisation.

Types of work within the platform economy can be grouped into two categories: online web-based work and location-based work (ILO, 2021). The former encompasses online and remote work, such as translation, transcription, graphic design, and the like (ILO, 2021). As for the

latter, location-based work comprises conventional jobs, such as transportation and food delivery, that are executed in person in specific geographic areas (ILO, 2021). Facilitated by apps, location-based work can also be termed "work on demand via apps" (De Stefano, 2016, p.471-472). This study focuses on the mobilisation of food delivery couriers conducting location-based work on demand via apps, and it does not extend to online web-based workers.

As for theoretical delimitations, workers' collective action can be examined through various theoretical lenses, such as social movements (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) and mobilisation (Kelly, 1998) theories. However, these theories have faced criticism due to their focus on the leadership component, often absent in instances of self-mobilisation, as commonly observed in gig economy (Atzeni, 2010). Considering the aforesaid, this study employs Power Resources Theory (PRT) and Solidarity as a theoretical framework. The advantage of the PRT "is its emphasis on labour's agency, countering outmoded portrayals of workers...as passive victims" (Brookes, 2018, p.254). As for solidarity, it departs from the leadership component and regards workers as the driving force for mobilisation. Thus, allowing worker-centric analysis of couriers' mobilisation, the PRT and solidarity form a well-suited theoretical tool to attain the objective of this study. Therefore, the study is limited to these theories.

As to methodological delimitations, this study employs a mixed-method approach, utilising quantitative data from news reports and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews. While alternative methodologies like surveys or discourse analysis could have been considered, news reports were chosen as they are the most comprehensive published sources covering couriers' mobilisation, while interviews offer nuanced qualitative depth. Limitations related to these choices will be addressed in the Methodology chapter.

1.6. Study Outline

This thesis begins with an introduction, introducing the research problem, aim, and research questions. It outlines this study's relevance to the human rights field, provides background information, and delimits the study. Next, the study offers an overview of previous research pertaining to its subject. Following this, the study provides a theoretical framework and explains its application. Thereafter, the research introduces data collection and analysis methods and discusses ethical considerations. The study's findings are then presented, first quantitative and then qualitative, answering the first RQ. Next, in the discussion chapter, the study applies the theoretical framework, answering the second RQ. Finally, the thesis ends with a conclusion and recommendations for policy and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Scholars distinguish between narrative and systematic literature reviews (Bryman, 2016, pp.90-105). I will use the former to provide an overview of the existing knowledge in my research area as a prelude to conducting my research (Bryman, 2016, pp.90-91). The forthcoming literature review first gives an overview of convergence between the regulation of gig work and human rights, moving to outline the mobilisation of gig workers from a global perspective, followed by an overview of the Georgian context and finally identifying the gap this study aims to fill.

2.1. Regulation of Gig Work and Human Rights

Attempting to fill the regulatory gap in gig work, four camps of thought have emerged in the literature. The first approach supports extending existing labour regulations and standards to encompass gig workers (Tyc, 2022; Pinosof, 2016). This approach endorses a functional interpretation of current labour regulations to accommodate the nature of gig work, specifically focusing on the degree of gig workers' dependence on digital platforms, the imbalance of bargaining power between workers and platforms, and the level of control platforms exert over workers (Tan *et al.*, 2021). When faced with misclassification cases, courts in different jurisdictions have applied this perspective, using existing tests designed to determine employment relationships to assess whether gig workers were employees or genuine self-employed independent contractors (Zorob, 2019, pp.12-18). The second approach claims that platform work is too distinct to align with existing labour regulations and standards, suggesting the development of a new regulatory framework specifically for gig workers (Harris and Krueger, 2015). Proponents of this perspective, such as Todolí-Signes (2017), propose “a tailor-made regulation” adapting to the specific features of gig work while safeguarding certain labour rights. The third approach advocates for the international regulation of platform work, proposing a model ILO treaty encompassing a range of labour rights, health and safety guarantees, and social protection standards (Fredman *et al.*, 2021).

Unlike labour law-focused proposals, the fourth approach introduces a human rights perspective to address the regulatory gap. Lu and Chen (2020) propose a human rights-based approach for protecting gig workers in China, emphasising social rights. Atkinson (2023, p.1174) interprets employment law as “legislated human rights”, arguing that “much of employment law can...be understood as protecting workers’ human rights”. Invoking universality and equal application of human rights to everyone, Atkinson (2023) claims that

labour rights, by default, shall apply to every worker, with a presumption favouring the existence of employee status. Instead of placing a burden on gig workers to prove their employee status, the assumption should be that they are employees and, thus, entitled to labour rights (Atkinson, 2023, p.1177). Similarly, De Stefano and Aloisi (2018, p.13) maintain that excluding gig workers from labour rights would be incompatible with categorising labour rights as human rights and their inherent universal nature. Putting particular emphasis on the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and collective action, De Stefano and Aloisi (2018) claim that these rights are “enabling rights” and can act as gateways to broader labour rights for gig workers.

Applying a human rights perspective to the labour dimension of gig economy finds its grounds in ILO’s instruments and international human rights frameworks. As this study focuses on gig workers’ mobilisation, it is crucial to show how collective labour rights, such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, and right to strike, apply to non-standard workers, including gig workers. To this end, the remainder of this section summarises relevant standards from ILO, the Council of Europe (CoE), and the UN.³

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (ILO, 1998) recognises freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining as one of the five categories of fundamental rights at work.⁴ These rights are also enshrined in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention No. 87 (ILO, 1948) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention No. 98 (ILO, 1949), respectively.

While the freedom of association grants workers the right to organise and, form and join trade unions, the right to collective bargaining allows them to negotiate collective agreements with employers regarding employment. The right to collective bargaining is intertwined with freedom of association (ILO, 2008, p.5), and both “[focus] attention on the rights of working people universally to a collective voice in the establishment of the conditions under which they work” (Adams, 2006, p.2).

³ Georgia is a contracting party to the ILO, CoE, and UN labour and human rights instruments discussed in this section, hence their relevance to the study.

⁴ Adopted in 1988 and amended in 2022, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work represents a joint commitment from governments, and employers, and workers' organisations to uphold fundamental human rights at work. The Declaration is based on the 5 core principles: freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, abolition of child labour, elimination of discrimination, and a safe and healthy working environment (ILO, 1998).

The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) (2012, paras. 53, 209) has acknowledged that Conventions nos. 87 and 98 apply to all workers, including self-employed workers. The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association has reaffirmed this position and held that self-employed workers enjoy the right to organise, as exercising the freedom of association is not contingent upon an employment relationship (ILO, 2018, para. 387). Importantly, CEACR (2020, para. 327) explicitly recognised the application of fundamental principles and rights at work, including the freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, to gig workers.

As for the right to strike, ILO clearly states that “the right to strike is an intrinsic corollary to the right to organise protected by Convention No. 87” (ILO, 2018, para.754). Dorssemont (2021, p.220) and Aloisi (2019, p.8) infer that if freedom of association, encompassing the right to strike, applies to self-employed and non-standard workers, it follows that the gig workers are entitled to the right to strike. Furthermore, the right to strike has attained the status of a fundamental human right not only as an element of freedom of association but also as a standalone right (Leyton García, 2017).

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are also enshrined in the CoE human rights framework. Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (1950) grants freedom of assembly and association. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) established that the right to collective bargaining falls within the scope of the freedom of association (*Demir and Baykara v. Turkey*, 2008, paras.153-154) and further clarified that these rights apply to self-employed workers (*Vörður Ólafsson v. Iceland*, 2010). The European Committee of Social Rights, which monitors compliance with the European Social Charter, has adopted the same position (*ICTU v. Ireland*, 2018, para.95).

Additionally, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), a monitoring body for the ICESCR, recognised the importance of freedom of assembly and collective bargaining rights for exercising the right to just and favourable working conditions and reaffirmed that these rights apply to every worker, including self-employed workers (CESCR, 2016, para.5).

The openness of ILO and other international human rights bodies to include self-employed workers, such as gig workers, in the scope of labour rights, allows them to resort to human rights in mobilisation.

2.2. Mobilisation of Gig Workers: A Global Perspective

Bessa *et al.* (2022) studied 1,271 instances of platform workers' protests, including legal actions, between 2017 and 2020 in ride-hailing and delivery sectors globally.⁵ The study revealed that low pay is the leading cause for gig workers' collective action, followed by issues related to poor working conditions, concerns over employment status and health and safety (Bessa *et al.*, 2022, pp.19-20). Protests over health and safety increased in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Bessa *et al.*, 2022, p.20). Strikes, log-offs, and demonstrations were the most used forms of mobilisation. As for the type of organisation, the protests were driven from below, predominantly self-organised by workers, challenging the belief that formal trade unions are always central to workers' mobilisation (Bessa *et al.*, 2022, p.20). Nonetheless, trade unions were present in some cases, mainly when trade unions resorted to institutional methods to challenge platform practices, such as contesting workers' legal status through litigation and pursuing regulations (Bessa *et al.*, 2022, p.21).

Most instances of mobilisation occurred in Asia and the Pacific, followed by Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Africa, and Arab States (Bessa *et al.*, 2022, p.38). Regarding mobilisation strategies, there is a difference between Global North and Global South contexts. In the former, strikes and demonstrations prevail, while in the latter, gig workers' mobilisation encompasses institutional strategies, such as litigation and collective bargaining (ILO, 2022, para. 115).

In their comparative analysis of food delivery couriers' mobilisation in the UK and Italy, Tassinari and Maccarone (2020) found that strikes and demonstrations emerged because of workers' dissatisfaction, driven by low remuneration, job insecurity, the lack of health and safety guarantees, as well as the arbitrary managerial control. Interestingly, the research revealed that although classifying food delivery workers as independent contractors removes their avenues for unionisation and collective bargaining, it nevertheless allows them to circumvent stringent strike regulations applicable to traditional employees (Tassinari and Maccarone, 2020). Similarly, Lei's (2021) findings in the food delivery sector in China suggest that grievances stemming from decreasing pay rates, unfair legal arrangements, and non-favourable changes in dispatch and disciplinary rules, such as restricted freedom to decline delivery requests, contribute to collective action. While misclassification is a common concern among platform workers in general, it does not constitute a significant concern among couriers

⁵ It is important to note that Georgia is not included in this global study due to its temporal scope.

in China. Due to the weak implementation of labour regulations in China, platform workers believed that their classification as employees would not improve their situation (Lei, 2021). Tassinari and Maccarone (2020) and Lei (2021) underscore the importance of solidarity for couriers' mobilisation, noting that solidarity is not confined to delivery riders within one company but extends among couriers from different platform companies, forming "cross-cutting solidarity" (Lei, 2021, p.305).

On the contrary, following an examination of food delivery couriers' mobilisation in India amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Hussain (2023) found that attempts at collective action were ineffective. The heterogeneity of workers shaped by diverse aspirations, commitments, and interests made coordinated action challenging to organise. Additionally, inherent features of platform work, such as the lack of office space, made it unfeasible to cease work collectively (Hussain, 2023). Lastly, workers hesitated to risk their sole source of income during the pandemic (Hussain, 2023). Similar to Hussain, focusing on wildcat strikes of delivery riders in Indonesia, Novianto (2023) underscores the factors undermining the success of their mobilisation. The limitation lies in wildcat strikes - impromptu workers' demonstrations that lack long-term organisation, are not affiliated with trade unions and do not have a central leader (Novianto, 2023, p.255). However, Novianto (2023, p.268) acknowledges that "the action of the wildcat strike and action through the union are neither separate nor mutually exclusive. Both can still be used or combined simultaneously to win certain demands".

Therefore, although the collective actions of gig economy riders in different contexts exhibit some similarities, their mobilisation practices and outcomes vary. Two factors can explain this variation: the specific capabilities of grassroots unions active in respective localities and the political traditions of militant organising present in the mobilisation contexts (Cini, Maccarrone, and Tassinari, 2022).

Platform companies use different tactics to dissuade mobilisation efforts. Gig companies in India (Hussain, 2023), the UK (Tassinari and Maccarone, 2020), and Argentina (Negri, 2021) offered short-term financial incentives and bonuses to protesting riders to break mobilisation. Additionally, platforms commonly employ account deactivation to sanction those who mobilise (Heiland, 2020, p.27; Stylogiannis, 2023, p.131). For instance, after platform companies in China discovered that workers were coordinating protests through social media groups, they terminated the organisers' accounts and requested social media platforms to block those groups (Lei, 2021, p.303).

However, couriers have developed the “capacity of technological counter-use”, meaning that riders repurpose technology for mobilisation (Cini and Goldmann, 2021, p.958). Riders in Italy manipulated the app by accessing workers' contact information and creating group chats outside the app to plan strikes (Cini and Goldmann, 2021, p.958). Additionally, couriers commonly resort to collective logouts from apps during strikes. Collective logouts resemble stopping machines in a factory (Vandaele, 2018, p. 15), which can disrupt apps and cause malfunctions (Bessa *et al.*, 2022; Cant, 2020), although they may not always completely shut down platforms (Joyce, Stuart, and Foede, 2023, p. 31).

2.3. Georgian Context

The scholarship on gig work in Georgia is limited as gig economy is a new phenomenon in Georgia’s labour market. One strand of literature regards platform economy as a potential solution for unemployment in light of creating new and easy-to-access job opportunities in Georgia (Kvirkvaia and Shengelia, 2024; Kvirkvaia, 2023). Others have taken a rather critical approach, focusing on workers. Diakonidze (2023) examined the factors that compel gig workers to accept precarious labour conditions and observed that platform workers have internalised precariousness. They view precarity as a regular aspect of employment due to the ubiquity of poor-quality jobs in Georgia and the absence of social security not only in gig economy but also in standard employment (Diakonidze, 2023). Applying a legal lens, Uridia (2022) contends that platform companies in Georgia mask employment relationships with service contracts to go around employment regulations and underscores the court system's role in rectifying this issue through case law. The Social Justice Centre confirms this assertion, arguing that couriers’ contracts share a common feature: all of them are formulated with the knowledge of indicators of traditional employment relationships, and they include provisions to bypass these indicators, explicitly denying the existence of employment between the involved parties (Shubladze, n.d.). In their comparative study of legal responses to gig economy in Georgia and the US, Bales and Mikhelidze (2019) address misclassification of gig workers and claim that platform workers must receive a certain level of legal protection to safeguard labour rights. Although the misclassification of gig workers is a widely acknowledged labour rights-related concern in the literature, Diakonidze (2022) suggests that in lower- and middle-income countries, such as Georgia, where labour rights are not efficiently enforced and social protection programmes are lacking, misclassification becomes less relevant, given the insufficient safeguards for even traditional workers.

To shed light on the labour landscape of Georgia's gig economy, Fairwork⁶ (2023) assessed 6 digital labour platforms operating in the country, including Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food. The platforms were evaluated using five criteria: fair pay, fair conditions, fair contracts, fair management, and fair representation (Fairwork, 2023). Platform companies were assigned fairness ratings ranging from 1 to 10.⁷ While Glovo and Wolt scored 4 out of 10, Bolt Food scored 1 out of 10 (Fairwork, 2023). The study revealed that: couriers earn much less than the minimum living wage;⁸ most couriers began to work without receiving sufficient safety training and equipment; workers are not notified of changes in their contracts; contracts include clauses that exempt platforms from liability for working conditions, and calculations used to determine pay rates are neither transparent nor available for workers; and couriers, as self-employed independent contractors, cannot enjoy the rights to organise and collective representation (Fairwork, 2023, pp.4-5).

As stated above, in the realm of gig work, particularly among food delivery workers, a noteworthy phenomenon has emerged - workers mobilising to demand better working conditions. While labour conditions in Georgia's food delivery sector have garnered some attention from a few scholars, couriers' mobilisation for their rights remains unexplored. Even globally, "research on gig work remains in its infancy" (Duggan *et al.*, 2022, p.2). Therefore, as the first-ever study examining gig workers' collective action in Georgia, this study bridges that knowledge deficit.

⁶ Fairwork is a project based at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford and the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. Fairwork evaluates the work conditions of digital labour platforms in the platform economy internationally and scores them. Available at: <https://fair.work/en/fw/homepage/>

⁷ Fairwork (2023) carried out the assessment based on desk research and interviews with platform representatives and platform workers. On the fairness rating scale from 1 to 10, 1 indicates the least fair, and 10 indicates the fairest.

⁸ The minimum living wage in Georgia is calculated as \$650 per month or \$3.80 per hour (Fairwork, 2023). The minimum wage referenced here is not enshrined in law; instead, it's determined through expert calculations and civil society organisations' assessments.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In social research, the theory provides a framework to interrogate social phenomena and interpret findings (Bryman, 2016, p.18). Scholars distinguish between grand and middle-range theories (Merton, 1967). Distinct from empirical concerns and unbounded by subject matter, grand theories are characterised by abstractness, while “middle-range theories reflect more sociologically embedded theorizing, which strives to integrate theory and empirical variations” (Ponjaert, 2021, p.131).

Using a middle-range theory, this chapter introduces the theoretical framework, namely the Power Resources Theory and the concept of solidarity and concludes with the operationalisation of this theoretical framework.

3.1. Power Resources Theory

Power Resources Theory (PRT) explains how workers can mobilise themselves to mitigate the influence that employers wield over them. Acknowledging that there is a power asymmetry between employers and workers, with the former holding a structural advantage over the latter, PRT is founded on the idea that workers hold the power which they can utilise to advance their position (Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022, p.1960). The basic premise of the PRT is that "the workforce can successfully defend its interests by collective mobilisation of power resources in the structurally asymmetric and antagonistic relationship between capital and labour" (Schmalz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.115).

The initial development of the PRT is ascribed to Walter Korpi⁹ who defines power resources as "the attributes...of actors...which enable them to reward or punish other actors" (Korpi, 1985, p.33). Originally, Korpi's PRT centred around 'class' as an analytical category to examine the power of the working class in shaping a welfare state (Korpi, 2006).

During the early 2000s, with the rise of precarious work coupled with a decline in trade unions, a second wave of discussions on PRT emerged (Schmalz, Ludwig, and Webster, 2018, p.114). Scholars such as Wright (2000) and Silver (2003) conceptualised specific types of power resources, such as structural and associational powers. Subsequently, further scholarly contributions led the PRT to expand and encompass other kinds of powers, such as institutional and societal powers (Dörre, Holst and Nachtwey, 2009; Tattersall, 2010). These four sources

⁹ Walter Korpi is a Swedish sociologist.

of workers' power, presented in detail below, constitute the present state of the PRT, which workers can draw on and mobilise to promote their interests. For this study, I will introduce an additional concept – solidarity – which is associated with the associational power within PRT.

Much of the existing scholarship has used PRT to study trade unions. However, recognising that trade unions are not always primary drivers of workers' collective action and that power resources can be available to any category of workers irrespective of trade union membership, scholars have applied PRT to examine gig workers' mobilisation (Vandaele, 2018; Stuart *et al.*, 2023; Köhler, 2021; Joyce, Stuart, and Forde, 2023).

As this study centres on the mobilisation of food delivery couriers, PRT offers a powerful theoretical lens to explain how the power resources shape their collective actions. Below, each category of power within PRT is presented.

3.1.1. Structural Power

Structural power derives from the positionality of workers within the economic system (Wright, 2000, p.962). Silver (2003, p.13) distinguishes between two types of structural power: marketplace bargaining power and workplace bargaining power. Marketplace bargaining power is determined by having skills that are rare and sought-after by employers, minimal unemployment levels, and the capacity of workers to exit the labour market and sustain themselves through income sources that are not tied to wages (Silver, 2003, p.13). Workplace bargaining power arises when workers are engaged in highly interconnected distribution and production processes where a work stoppage can lead to broader disruption (Silver, 2003). Hence, workplace bargaining power “is mobilised by the refusal to continue working,” which can be exercised by strikes and other forms of work stoppage (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.116).

3.1.2. Associational Power

Associational power refers to “the various forms of power that result from the formation of collective organisations of workers”, trade unions and workers' political parties being one of the examples (Wright, 2000, p.962). Unlike structural power, associational power requires an organising process and the emergence of collective actors who can develop and execute strategies (Silver, 2003). Wright (2000) outlines three levels at which associational power can form: workplace level, sectoral level, and political system level. As for the indicators for determining associational power, Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster (2018, pp.118-120)

distinguish between member numbers, infrastructural resources, organisational efficiency, member participation, and internal cohesion. Associational power of workers counters capitalist interests as it makes it much harder for them to decrease wages and terminate workers (Wright, 2000, p.958). When it comes to workers' collective action in the platform economy, Vandaele (2018) has provided an initial categorisation of the associational power of gig workers wherein grassroots unions and self-organising workers primarily follow a *logic of membership*, aiming to mobilise workers to enhance associational power through direct action.

3.1.3. Institutional Power

Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster (2018, p.121) define institutional power as “the result of struggles and negotiation processes based on structural power and associational power”. Labour rights are central to institutional power as the latter lies in the “legally or contractually enshrined individual and collective rights that workers can use to improve conditions” (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, n.d.). Institutional power can derive from a variety of sources, including but not limited to laws guaranteeing rights for workers, regulations protecting occupational health and safety, collective bargaining frameworks, social security schemes, unemployment benefit systems, and formal institutions, such as courts, labour tribunals, executive government bodies, and national human rights institutions, that support workers' interests (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, pp.121-122; Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022, pp.1963-1964; Goods *et al.*, 2024). Institutional power is not limited to the national level and can extend to a supranational arena. For instance, ILO and other international organisations, including international human rights organisations or human rights monitoring bodies, can play a vital role in shaping institutional power for workers through their standard-setting (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018). The distinguishing characteristic of institutional power lies in its long-lasting stability, meaning that workers can continue relying on institutional power resources when other types of power within the PRT framework are decreasing (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.121).

3.1.4. Societal Power

Societal power refers to the ability of workers to collaborate with other social groups and organisations, as well as the endorsement and support of workers and their demands by society (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.122). Accordingly, societal power encompasses two types of power: coalitional power and discursive power. The former entails the network of social actors, such as social movements, CSOs, students or other actors that can support workers in their mobilisation efforts, while the latter relates to “discursive representation of societal

problems [by workers] that can mobilise external support [from society]” (Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022, p.1965). By utilising their discursive power, workers not only gain society’s support but also ensure the credibility and legitimacy of their demands and cause (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018; Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022). External and internal factors influence workers’ discursive power. External factors, such as the degree of democracy within the political system and the extent of freedom of expression, impact workers' ability to act (Slaiby, 2018, p.13). Additionally, internal factors, such as workers' capacity to effectively utilise mass media, play a crucial role (Slaiby, 2018, p.13).

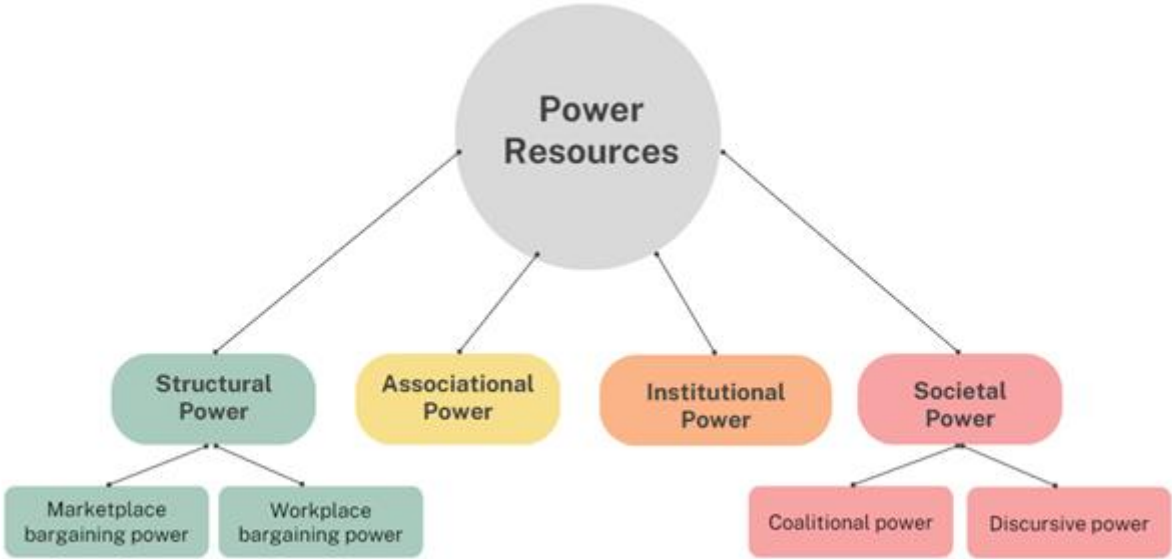


Figure 1: A diagram of the Power Resources Theory (PRT), outlining structural, associational, institutional, and societal powers, and their composition. Based on Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster (2018).

3.2. Solidarity

While solidarity does not stand as a distinct type of power within the PRT, it is closely linked with associational power given that associational power “is rooted in...worker solidarity” (Cappiali, 2019, p.134). Atzeni (2010) offers a Marxist-informed conception of solidarity that lies at the heart of collective mobilisation of workers. Building on the Marxist theory of capitalist labour process, that is, the capitalist labour process is inherently antagonistic and exploitative to the detriment of workers, Atzeni (2010) explains how workplace *embryonic* solidarity transforms into *active* solidarity. This inherent antagonistic nature of the capitalist labour process, coupled with intrinsic conflict of interest between workers and employers, creates ground for the formation of solidarity among workers. Solidarity is theoretically and

practically central to workers' mobilisation for two reasons. First, solidarity is a type of social interaction that reflects the collective aspect of labour. This implies the material conditions and experiences that workers have in common (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2020, pp.38-41; Hodson *et al.*, 1993). Second, solidarity could be a tool for workers to take collective action (Atzeni, 2010, p.15). The collective nature of labour, meaning that workers engage in work-related activities together, creates a shared sense of interdependence and gives rise to a need for mutual support – this is what Atzeni (2010, p.28) calls “embryonic solidarity” or “solidarity not yet activated”. “Embryonic solidarity” pre-exists in the workplace as collective labour bonds and connects workers (Atzeni, 2010, pp.28-29). Therefore, “it is taken for granted that the capitalist labour process generates conflict and that necessary conditions for workers' mobilization are already set within the system” (Atzeni, 2010, p.32). Since solidarity is a part of a dynamic process, rather than something static and fixed, it is impossible to formulate an exhaustive list of conditions that can transform the “embryonic solidarity” into “active solidarity”. The activators could include but are not limited to social networks, group or class identification, sense of injustice, and leaders' actions. What matters the most is that solidarity among workers is a core driver for their collective action (Atzeni, 2010).

3.3. Operationalisation of Theory

I will utilise the theoretical framework in the Discussion chapter to theorise the empirical findings and answer the second RQ: *What factors empower food delivery workers to take collective action in Georgia and what role does human rights play in this regard?* To this end, I will scrutinise the empirical findings through PRT, with solidarity complementing associational power. Theoretically explaining the mobilisation of couriers, the operationalisation of theory will aid in accomplishing the aim of this study, which is to understand the collective actions of food delivery couriers in Georgia.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Mixed Method Approach

This research project employs a mixed method approach, using quantitative and qualitative research methods, Protest Event Analysis (PEA) and in-depth interviews, respectively. Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods within a single research project (Bryman, 2016, p.635). Mixed methods design strengthens the credibility of findings, helps to understand the research problem comprehensively, and counteracts the limitations of each method while leveraging their strengths (Bryman, 2016, p.641).

There are different types of mixed methods design. This study uses an *explanatory sequential design* wherein the collection and analysis of quantitative data is followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to enrich, explain, and elaborate quantitative findings (Bryman, 2016, p.640).

4.2. Data Collection Methods

4.2.1. Quantitative Data Collection Method: News Reports

I collected quantitative data from news reports covering the collective actions of food delivery couriers in Georgia. I chose news reports since Protest Event Analysis, the methodology used for quantitative data analysis in this study, involves coding from media sources (Koopmans and Rucht, 2002). Additionally, news reports represent the most comprehensive published data to date on the mobilisation of couriers in Georgia.

I began data collection by exploring the web pages of multiple media organisations in Georgia and searching for relevant news reports. In the search process, I used keywords such as: ‘gig economy’, ‘Georgia’, ‘food delivery couriers’, ‘collective action’, ‘mobilisation’, ‘strikes’, ‘Glovo’, ‘Wolt’, and ‘Bolt Food’. I categorised news reports based on the target companies of mobilisation (Glovo, Bolt Food, or Wolt). I further sorted the articles within these categories based on their publication dates.

I collected the following data from media sources: type of collective action, date, location, number of workers involved, target companies, and demands/requests.¹⁰

¹⁰ These data were quantified during the data analysis process.

During data collection, I acknowledged the potential for implicit bias and commercial influences that can undermine the credibility of media sources. There is a possibility of a selection bias. News may highlight certain events while neglecting others or cover particular elements of collective action while overlooking others (Hutter, 2014). To ensure the completeness of data sources, I scrutinised the coverage of each collective action across various media sources and chose the most thorough coverage. Where this was not possible, I combined multiple news reports about the same event, each supplying missing data from the others. To ensure credibility, I predominantly relied on trusted and independent media sources, primarily online media outlets such as Netgazeti.ge, Batumelebi.ge, On.ge, Radio Liberty, Publika.ge and OC Media. International Research & Exchanges Board (2023) assessed these media platforms as independent news outlets producing fact-based and well-sourced content. Additionally, I relied on Commersant.ge, TV.25, and LabourStart, using one news report from each, as they covered events not covered by other media.

I relied solely on news reports for street mobilisation (protest) and non-demonstrative mobilisation (petitioning) data. However, for institutional mobilisation, I also incorporated decisions of the Public Defender's Office to complement the news reports covering these decisions.

The news reports from which I gathered data are listed in [Annex III](#).

4.2.2. Qualitative Data Collection Method: In-depth Interviews

To enhance the comprehensiveness of this study, I employed semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect qualitative data (Bryman, 2016, p.466). In multi-method research design, interviews are a well-suited method to use in combination with other methods (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.285). My objective was to understand the collective actions of food delivery couriers in Georgia, who were also research participants. Therefore, through interviews, I could grasp firsthand experiences of the main actors who lie at the heart of the phenomena being studied. One of the advantages of interviewing is that it provides room for the emergence of previously unthought, albeit essential, topics that a researcher may not have foreseen beforehand (Bryman, 2016, p.467). Considering the absence of research on the collective action of gig workers in Georgia, I acknowledged the possibility that participants might raise themes covered neither in existing sources nor in the interview guide (see [Annex IV](#)).

I conducted interviews in the Georgian language, with the shortest lasting 30 minutes and the longest 55 minutes. As I reside outside Georgia, the interviews were executed remotely using

Zoom. I audio-recorded the interviews, transcribed them, and translated transcripts into English.

4.2.2.a. Sampling

I used criterion sampling, which involves the selection of participants who fulfil certain criteria for research purposes (Bryman, 2016, p.409). I set out the following criteria that interviewees had to meet cumulatively to participate:

- The interviewee is or has been working as a courier at Glovo, Wolt or Bolt Food in Georgia.
- The interviewee has taken part in a collective action of food delivery couriers at least once since 2021.
- The interviewee is over the age of 18.

4.2.2.b. Participant Recruitment

I employed two strategies for participant recruitment. First, some food delivery couriers are known to the public due to their engagement with the media. Since their names are publicly available, I searched for them on social media, contacted them, and asked if they were interested in participating. Second, I joined courier groups on Facebook, where I published a post describing my study and invited those interested in taking part to contact me.

4.2.2.c. Participant Profiles

Among the 5 research participants, 1 had worked as a Bolt Food courier, 2 had experience with both Bolt Food and Wolt, 1 had been a Wolt courier, and 1 had worked as a Glovo courier.

Respondent No.	Affiliation
Respondent 1	Former Bolt Food and Wolt courier
Respondent 2	Former Bolt Food and Wolt courier
Respondent 3	Former Glovo courier
Respondent 4	Former Wolt courier
Respondent 5	Former Bolt Food courier

Figure 2: Table depicting respondents' anonymised names and affiliations with food delivery companies.

The duration of work among the interviewees with the food delivery companies ranged from 7 months to 4 years.

As for educational background, 2 respondents have completed higher education, 2 have received vocational education, and 1 reported having incomplete higher education. The age range of the research participants was between 26 and 38 years. All research participants identified as men.¹¹

4.3. Data Analysis Methods

4.3.1. Quantitative Data Analysis Method: Protest Event Analysis

Developed in social movement research, Protest Event Analysis (PEA) is a key methodology for studying the mobilisation of different social groups, allowing for analysis of several characteristics of protest events. Scholars have used PEA to create and analyse datasets on protest events and other types of mobilisation (Hutter, 2014, p.22), including workers' collective actions (Bizyukov and Dollbaum, 2021).

PEA, as a type of quantitative content analysis, involves coding from textual data, mostly media sources, transforming words into numbers (Koopmans and Rucht, 2002, p.235). It facilitates the quantification of various protest attributes, such as “frequency, timing and duration, location, claims, size, forms, carriers, and targets” (Caiani *et al.*, 2012, p.33).

For this study, the unit of analysis was a single collective action. Considering that collective action represents an action which a group of individuals takes to attain a common goal in their shared interest (Marshall, 1998), limiting couriers' mobilisation to actual protest events alone would be restrictive as their collective action extends beyond the streets to include institutional avenues. PEA is a well-suited method to study legal complaints as a form of collective action, provided that they are “connected with societal and/or political demands rather than seeking the attainment of individual advantages” (Fillieule and Jiménez, 2003, p.273). Scholars have also extended PEA to cover petitions (Oliver, Hanna and Lim, 2023). The choice of the unit of analysis within PEA depends on one's RQs and goal, and selecting a broader unit of analysis, such as "collective action", empowers researchers to address a more extensive array of questions (Koopmans and Rucht, 2002, p.235-237).

¹¹ Despite my efforts to ensure diverse gender representation in the sample, I was not able to do so as the food delivery sector in Georgia is heavily dominated by men. I managed to recruit one female respondent; however, because of health reasons, she could no longer participate in an interview.

Considering this, this study employs PEA with “collective action” as a unit of analysis, encompassing traditional forms of protest events, and petitions, as well as institutional forms of mobilisation, such as unionisation and quasi-legal¹² and legal mobilisation.

PEA involves the creation of a codebook in which a researcher codes variables. There is no pre-determined list of variables, and they depend entirely on the researcher, considering the characteristics of the collective action that the researcher is interested in exploring (Hutter, 2014, p.353-354).

For this study, I developed the codebook with codes and variables to analyse the data obtained from the news reports (see [Annex II](#)). I created the dataset using an Excel sheet.

As part of PEA, I employed descriptive analysis, otherwise known as descriptive statistics, which is a commonly used methodology for PEA-based datasets (Hutter, 2014, p.355-356). Descriptive analysis involves the detailed exploration, summary, and presentation of data to understand characteristics, patterns, and trends within a dataset. Some qualitative descriptions will accompany descriptive statistics as PEA allows “a combination of quantitative analyses with the presentation of more detailed qualitative material” (Hutter, 2014, p.355).

I manually collected, coded, and analysed quantitative data as the dataset size did not require the application of any automated system. To avoid human error, I carried out calculations twice.

4.3.2. Qualitative Data Analysis Method: Thematic Analysis

I employed thematic analysis to examine the data collected from semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To detect themes in interviews, researchers should examine repetitions, recurring topics, metaphors, and analogies used by participants, and observe how topics transition and change, paying attention to how similarly or differently participants discuss the same topics (Bryman, 2016, p.586). In analysing the interview data, I used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework, comprising the following six steps: becoming familiar with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up.

¹² Quasi-judicial (quasi-legal) procedures include complaints filed to ombudsman’s offices and other bodies outside the court system (Lehoucq and Taylor, 2020: 179)

To this end, I utilised Delvetool – a qualitative data analysis software where I coded interview transcripts, grouped codes under respective themes, and analysed the data.¹³

While conducting thematic analysis, I applied an inductive approach. Instead of using a pre-determined coding frame, the codes emerged based on the interview data. However, “researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.12). Therefore, despite the inductive approach, I took two considerations throughout the coding process: first, research purpose and RQs, and second, the theoretical framework.

The thematic analysis chart depicting themes and sub-themes can be found in [Annex V](#).

4.4. Method Interplay

The quantitative and qualitative methods in this study complement each other. While the former allows assessing the scale, frequency, and intensity of various collective actions, the latter offers the opportunity to delve into the breadth and depth of mobilisation. Semi-structured interviews do not directly connect to a specific collective action event examined through PEA. Rather, they provide a more nuanced account of workers’ mobilisation that quantitative methodology could not capture.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

The quantitative methodology does not present any ethical issues as it required neither personal data collection nor engagement with people. However, semi-structured interviews raise ethical considerations. Bryman (2016, pp.125-134) outlines four concerns that can undermine ethics in research: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception.

Harm to participants: Harm implies possible re-traumatisation when recalling past experiences. I carefully prepared interview questions to minimise the possibility of triggering the respondents. I reminded the participants that they could refuse to answer questions or withdraw from interviews if uncomfortable.

Informed consent: I prepared an informed consent form detailing the study and information on collecting and storing personal data (see [Annex I](#)). Research participants read the form and

¹³ I translated the transcripts from Georgian into English before using the software.

expressed their consent by signature. During interviews, I also sought verbal confirmation from each respondent, ensuring they understood and consented to the consent form.

Privacy: I collected and processed respondents' personal data per the General Data Protection Directive. Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research has evaluated that handling personal data in this project fulfils relevant requirements. To ensure privacy, I replaced every data that could identify a person with a code and stored the two separately. I audio-recorded interviews using a secure Nettskjema-diktafon app. I placed personal data, recordings, and transcripts on a secure server requiring multi-factor authentication for access.¹⁴

Deception: deception refers to the deliberate misrepresentation of a research project to research participants (Bryman, 2016, p.133). I am confident that I provided the respondents with accurate and honest information about this study.

4.6. Positionality and Trustworthiness

Positionality refers to how a researcher's background, including race, gender, class, work experience and other factors, influences their position within a study. Positionality shall be acknowledged in relation to the research subject and the participants (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).

My nationality, work experience, and left-oriented political ideology shape my positionality within the research subject. I was born and raised in Georgia, hence the context of this study. Holding anticapitalistic views, I believe that workers and their rights trump profit. Additionally, while writing this thesis, I worked as a food delivery courier in Sweden. Thus, this subject matter holds a personal significance for me.

As for situating myself with research participants, I acknowledge my privileges, such as my educational background and previous work experiences. Furthermore, I reside in Sweden, while most respondents live in Georgia, where living and travelling in the EU are considered luxurious, which most people cannot afford.

While social research is never value-free (Simpson, 2022), I took measures to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, which is determined by credibility and confirmability (Lincoln

¹⁴ All personal data will be removed as soon as this study is completed.

and Guba, 1985). Credibility refers to establishing confidence in the “truth” of research results, while confirmability denotes the “degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry” rather than the biases of the inquirer (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). Criteria for establishing credibility and confirmability involve prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and reflexivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.301-305).

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation: in addition to interviews, I spent sufficient time understanding the phenomenon of my interest by browsing couriers’ Facebook groups, watching TV programmes featuring couriers and their mobilisation, and reading relevant news articles. I transcribed and translated interviews manually to gain a deeper understanding of the interview data, ensuring persistent observation.

Triangulation: I applied method triangulation and theory triangulation. The former involves verifying the consistency of results obtained through different data collection methods, while the latter entails employing multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp.305-307). Method triangulation was utilised by collecting quantitative and qualitative data from news media reports and in-depth interviews. Theory triangulation involved utilising Power Resources Theory and complementing it with the concept of solidarity.

Reflexivity: I remained reflexive throughout the research process, recognising my potential biases but maintaining objectivity and neutrality.

I also ensured the interview questions were neutral, avoiding leading language. Following the interviews, I sent transcripts to the respondents, seeking their approval to prevent misrepresentation of their responses.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

The forthcoming analysis, comprising the findings obtained through PEA and thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, shed light on the collective actions of Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food couriers in Georgia, answering the first RQ: *How do food delivery couriers in Georgia mobilise for better working conditions and labour rights?*

5.1 Protest Event Analysis (PEA)

The quantitative data presented below is calculated, aggregated, and synthesised based on multiple news reports. As citing specific sources for each point is impractical due to the summation of sources, the news reports contributing to this data are listed in [Annex III](#). Nevertheless, sources are referenced in the text where possible and appropriate and when qualitative information is presented.

Analysis of Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt couriers' mobilisation revealed 26 collective action events during 2021-2024. Out of these events, 69% (18) constituted street mobilisation, such as protests, 8% (2) comprised non-demonstrative mobilisation, such as petitions and letter-writing campaigns, while 23% (6) represented institutional mobilisation, including quasi-legal mobilisation, legal mobilisation, and unionisation (Figure 2).

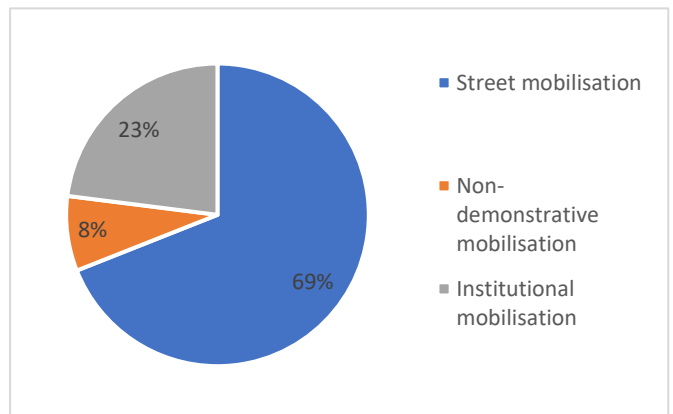


Figure 3: Collective Actions of Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt riders in Georgia, 2021-2024 (N=26)

5.1.1. Street Mobilisation

When going on a strike, couriers most commonly resort to street mobilisation as a form of collective action, encompassing protests and ride-outs. Ride-out refers to the coordinated movement of couriers using vehicles and honking to draw attention. Out of 18 instances of street mobilisation, most protest events, totalling 10, were directed at Wolt, with protests targeting Glovo and Bolt Food, each amounting to 4 (Figure 3).

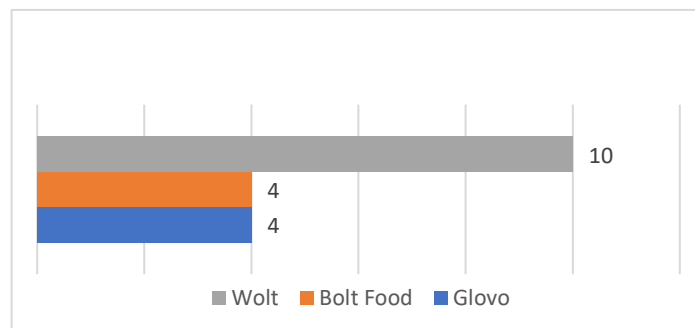


Figure 4: Breakdown of the distribution of street protest events based on their targets (N=18)

Most protest events, comprising 89% (16) of all protests, occurred in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. The remaining 11% (2) took place in Batumi, the second-largest city in the country, where Wolt couriers went on strike (Kiknadze, 2023; Dumbadze, 2023). All demonstrations were peaceful, without any instances of violence.

When it comes to participation, 24% of the documented protest events comprise fewer than 50 participants, 10% involve 50-100 participants, 52% encompass 100-200 participants, and 14% entail over 200 participants (Figure 4). Protests, including more than 200 participants, are organised by Glovo and Wolt couriers.

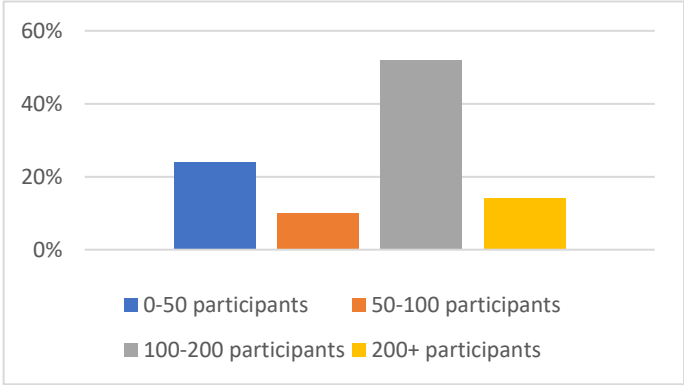


Figure 5: Number of participants in street protests

Regarding the protestors’ demands (Figure 5), fair remuneration is first on the list in 100% of protest events. Wage-related demands vary, some concerning the rise in fixed rates, some focusing on bonus systems, and some encompassing both. Health insurance and collective meetings/negotiations with management are the second most common demands, present in nearly 50% of protests. When strikes begin, target companies usually terminate and block couriers in response to protests (Radio Liberty, 2021). Therefore, after the first protest within a single strike, workers typically add the reinstatement of terminated couriers to their demands for subsequent protests. Such demand was present in nearly 40% of protest events. Demands concerning improved and fair functioning of apps and algorithms occurred in nearly 14% of protests, while relatively rarely, in 5% of protest events, couriers demanded the dismissal of platform companies’ executives for their inadequate attention to workers’ concerns. In protests taking place in Batumi, constituting 10% of street mobilisation, couriers demanded equal remuneration rates across every city and establishing a local Wolt office (Kiknadze, 2023; Dumbadze, 2023). Interestingly, while couriers on strike express concerns about their misclassification as independent contractors in media interviews, the issue has never been listed among their official demands.

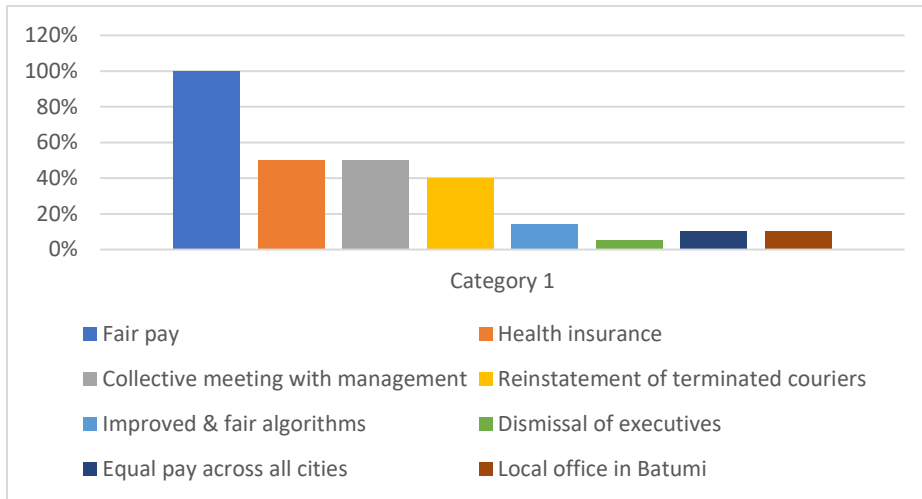


Figure 6: Frequency of demands in protest events (showing the percentage of protests events in which the particular demand was made)

5.1.2. Non-Demonstrative Mobilisation

In addition to street protests, couriers have been utilising non-demonstrative means to participate in collective action, constituting 8% of all collective action events. These methods include a petition and online campaign, amounting to 2 instances of non-demonstrative mobilisation.

Wolt couriers organised 100% of these events. With the petition, 300 couriers addressed Wolt, demanding that the management meet couriers collectively to negotiate the terms and conditions of their contracts. In the online campaign “Georgia: Justice for Wolt Couriers”, 5,131 supporters signed a letter, demanding fair pay, health insurance, and an end to the discriminatory termination of couriers by Wolt (LabourStart, 2023). The campaign also targeted the Labour Inspection Office to monitor the implementation of labour rights by the company.

5.1.3. Institutional Mobilisation

The analysis of riders’ collective action showed 6 instances of institutional mobilisation among Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food couriers, with 4 involving quasi-legal collective action, 1 involving a legal action – lawsuit, and 1 involving unionisation, all accounting for 23% of overall collective action events.

When it comes to quasi-legal mobilisation, couriers filed a total of 4 complaints against the platform companies with the Public Defender’s Office (PDO). They accused the companies of

discriminating against riders based on trade union membership and terminating them due to their involvement in strikes and vocal advocacy for labour rights. Specifically, 2 complaints were directed at Wolt (PDO, 2023a; PDO, 2024), 1 at Glovo (PDO, 2023b), and another at Bolt Food (PDO, 2021). One complaint concerning Wolt involved 140 applicants, while another had only 1 courier involved.¹⁵ The complaint against Bolt Food had 28 applicants, and the complaint against Glovo involved 1 applicant. Therefore, a total of 170 workers were involved in the quasi-legal mobilisation. In all decisions concerning the complaints, the PDO found that the couriers were discriminated against due to their participation in strikes and addressed respective platform companies to eradicate the discriminatory practices. Additionally, the PDO determined that the couriers are *de facto* employees and thus entitled to labour rights, based on the degree of control and subordination between them and the platforms. The PDO substantiated its conclusions by citing provisions safeguarding the right to work, the right to just and favourable conditions of work, and anti-discrimination.¹⁶

In one instance of legal mobilisation, a former Wolt courier took legal action against the company, seeking clarification from the court on the nature of their contract — whether it constitutes employment or merely a service agreement (Pertaia, 2021).¹⁷ Although this lawsuit is not a class action, it carries significant collective implications. Should the court rule in favour of employment status, it would impact all couriers under similar contracts with Wolt.

Hence, among quasi-legal and legal efforts totaling 5 instances, 3 were directed towards Wolt, 1 towards Glovo, and 1 towards Bolt Food (Figure 6).

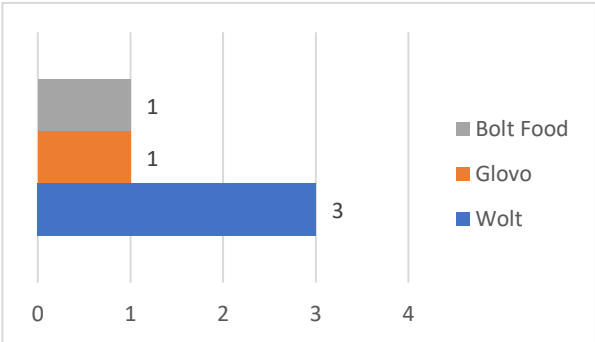


Figure 7: Distribution of quasi-legal and legal collective actions based on the target platform companies.

¹⁵ I categorised complaints involving only 1 claimant as part of collective mobilisation because, in its decision, the Public Defender urged the platform companies to eliminate discrimination against couriers in general. Consequently, the decisions, irrespective of the number of claimants, have a collective impact on workers.
¹⁶ As enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the European Social Charter, as well as in the Constitution of Georgia, the Labour Code of Georgia, and the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (PDO, 2021; PDO, 2023a; PDO, 2023b; PDO, 2024).
¹⁷ The lawsuit is currently pending before the court.

Furthermore, in August 2023, some 30 couriers from Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food joined an established trade union “LABOUR”, marking the first-ever successful attempt of food delivery riders to unionise (Commersant, 2023).¹⁸

5.2 Thematic Analysis

This section presents a thematic analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with five respondents, encompassing five core themes: *couriers as a collective*, *self-mobilisation*, *support from external actors*, *state apathy towards couriers’ mobilisation*, and *freedom of assembly and association at the heart of mobilisation*, and their sub-themes.¹⁹

Theme 1: Couriers as a Collective

The theme of *Couriers as Collective* encapsulates the overarching sentiment expressed by all 5 respondents about building bonds with each other and positioning themselves as a unity capable of disrupting the working process through their collective action. Accordingly, the theme comprises the following sub-themes: *overcoming workplace dispersion*, “*all of us are in the same boat*”, and *the power of collective disruption*.

Sub-theme: Overcoming Workplace Dispersion

Gig workers typically lack a designated physical workspace, such as an office. Consequently, they often experience less social interaction with co-workers, which is pivotal for mobilisation. Reflecting on this matter, Respondent 2 explained that food delivery is a highly individualised and “lonely” experience:

We all drive on the street all day long. I am not sure if you have had the experience of riding with a helmet for a long time. That is, a person is in a completely closed space, and sometimes, I talk to myself as I feel alone. You can sing, too, as the helmet creates a great acoustic (Respondent 2).

¹⁸ As mentioned earlier in the thesis, gig workers in Georgia are excluded from labour laws, including trade union laws, posing a barrier for them to unionise in any form formally. Therefore, this instance of unionisation requires further investigation to unveil the details of how it materialised procedurally. Although I attempted to interview a representative of the union to that end, he was not able to participate due to time constraints; however, in the Discussion chapter, this thesis attempts to explain the phenomenon and find the rationale behind it considering the scope of the study. LABOUR is a trade union representing workers in agriculture, trade, and industry in Georgia. Available at: <https://lbr.ge/about-us.html>

¹⁹ Please see the thematic analysis map in [Annex V](#).

While most respondents recognised the challenges posed by the absence of shared office space or a consistent, physically designated workplace, their experiences indicate that they are adapting to their dispersed environment, discovering alternative avenues for social interaction to build bonds, solidarity, and plan for collective action. Streets seem to be one of the most prominent sites to this end.

You can feel [our] unity in the streets. If you see a courier in trouble, his scooter broke down or slipped, or something like that, you go and help them so this unity and solidarity is felt everywhere even in the streets (Respondent 3).

When I ride my scooter to deliver food and I see my fellow couriers, who I do not know, honking and waving at me on the street, it gives me strength and motivation to carry on (Respondent 2).

Based on the riders' responses, I have identified two primary physical spaces where couriers gather, socialise, discuss concerns, and plan for strikes and protests. The first such place includes food establishments where riders wait to pick up orders. Secondly, they utilise so-called "active areas" with the highest delivery frequency in different parts of the city. These areas feature outdoor spaces where couriers meet, get to know each other, and discuss mobilisation.²⁰ Additionally, as Respondent 2 explained, once strikes and protests are planned, couriers use delivery pick-up areas to raise awareness about mobilisation and encourage other riders to join them:

We divided ourselves into groups and went to different pick-up points around food establishments where we met with fellow couriers, told why and where the strike was happening, and asked them to join us (Respondent 2).

Respondent 4, a former Wolt courier, further observed that Wolt riders frequently gathered at each other's houses and apartments to plan strikes and discuss mobilisation strategies.

Moreover, socialisation and collective action planning extend to virtual settings. According to Respondent 1, a former Bolt Food and Wolt courier, riders utilise Facebook private groups to express their concerns, offer advice, and deliberate on mobilisation strategies. However, as Respondent 5, a former Bolt Food courier highlighted, couriers exercise caution when

²⁰ I refrain from naming these spaces as per respondents' requests.

mobilising in Facebook groups due to the potential presence of infiltrators affiliated with platform companies, who may use fake profiles to gather information.

To conclude, although atomisation, isolation and individualism characterises platform work, bonds and mutual support among couriers are formed, particularly evident in their unity on the streets. Physical spaces such as food establishments, designated "active areas", and each other's apartments serve as hubs for socialisation and planning collective action. Additionally, social media play a role in facilitating communication, socialisation and planning, albeit with caution due to potential infiltration. Overall, couriers adapt to their dispersed environment and find alternative avenues to mobilise.

Sub-theme: "All of us are in the same boat"

I titled the present sub-theme with a quote from one of the respondents - "*All of us are in the same boat*" - as most informants highlighted that their collective experiences and shared grievances serve as catalysts for bonding and spark solidarity among them, ultimately leading to their collective action. There is an overwhelming consensus among the respondents that food delivery riders are one of the most solidaristic worker groups due to the material conditions they have in common.

All of us have shared and common problems and every courier understands each other's concerns because all of us are in the same boat. This is why it is quite simple to find like-minded workers in this sector for mobilisation. Irrespective of for which company or on which platform couriers work, all of us experience the same injustice (Respondent 1).

Couriers are...united by facing same problems and challenges. Everyone's shared pain is that working conditions are extremely precarious, we feel unsafe, devoid of any rights and protection, and have no control over how much we earn (Respondent 2).

The lack of occupational health and safety protections appears to be one of the leading issues constituting shared grievances. For every respondent, working as a food delivery rider puts one's health and life at serious risk. Three riders shared their personal experiences of being injured in traffic accidents, while others recounted similar experiences of their colleagues and instances of fatalities resulting from road accidents.

There is no single courier who has not been in an accident. I have had a few accidents, but nothing life-threatening or serious happened. But many accidents have been fatal and lots of couriers have died because of the injuries they suffered from workplace accidents (Respondent 1).

The interviews revealed three primary factors contributing to the heightened health and safety risks. First, platform companies do not offer proper safety gear and training to couriers. Second, they lack health insurance coverage. Third, the street infrastructure in Tbilisi is unsuitable for two-wheeled vehicles, which couriers predominantly use.

We are responsible for setting our own health and safety standards and we must pay our own money for that. For instance, we must buy helmets and other safety equipment. Companies do not contribute to this. They set no health and safety standards. They tell us that we are responsible for it (Respondent 1).

Another core issue that puts couriers “in the same boat” relates to the classification of riders as “partners” rather than employees. Every respondent ascribed the arbitrariness of platform companies, i.e. unilateral changes in pay without any consultation with couriers, to the absence of an employment contract that renders Georgian labour legislation inapplicable to riders.

The issue is that we, couriers, have no rights at all. The nature of our contract and relationship with the company leaves us without rights. We are not able to demand anything from the company due to the nature of our contract (Respondent 5).

While riders acknowledged that misclassification is a common concern among couriers, Respondent 3, a former Glovo courier, explained that some part-time riders prefer not to have an employment contract due to income tax obligations. Under the service contract, only 1% of income is taxed, whereas an employment contract imposes a 20% tax on income. Every respondent I interviewed worked as a full-time courier; therefore, I am not able to expand the analysis on the perspectives of those for whom food delivery is a side job. However, this could explain why PEA did not find a misclassification issue in the list of demands during protests.

The interviews revealed that the unwillingness of management to communicate with couriers poses another shared challenge, prompting riders to undertake collective action. Each respondent emphasised that before strikes and protests, couriers attempted to meet with management to address their concerns through dialogue. However, management consistently refused these requests. Therefore, mobilisation becomes a last resort, chosen after unsuccessful

attempts to engage in dialogue with management. Having an app as a “manager” contributes to the issue.

I have recently started a new courier job at the Georgian company. The main difference is that I interact with people instead of an app. Now I realise that there is a difference. Working conditions are negotiable when dealing with people, while when dealing with a platform, it is impossible to negotiate anything. You cannot talk to an app (Respondent 2).

Respondent 4 shared that couriers often feel insulted and disrespected by management, who perceive riders as lacking the intelligence for formal conversation and negotiations:

They think that because we are not working in suits and ties we don't have enough mental capacity, skills, and knowledge to sit around the table and discuss our concerns, demands, and working conditions (Respondent 4).

The preceding sub-theme has demonstrated that shared experiences and common challenges provide the foundation for couriers to unite and take collective action. These shared grievances arise from inadequate health and safety protections, inability to access labour rights due to the absence of employment contracts, and the challenges in negotiating working conditions with management.

Sub-theme: the power of collective disruption

Collective logouts from platform apps, present in all instances of couriers' strikes in Georgia, represent a work stoppage strategy riders utilise to cause disruption during strikes.

Collective logouts...create discomfort for companies. If couriers don't accept orders in the app, then the company will stop its operation and will be compelled to make concessions and satisfy our demands. Companies are not willing to engage in a dialogue with us. Therefore, logout is our strategy to force them to hear our voice (Respondent 1).

For instance, when 50 out of 100 couriers log out from the application, the remaining 50 find it difficult to work due to the disparity between the number of orders and the number of couriers available for delivery, so disruptions appear. Customers start to cancel their orders and sometimes stop using the app. Log-offs give a signal to the company that it needs to take our demands seriously (Respondent 2).

Although most respondents acknowledged the power of collective logoffs in pressuring the platform companies to address riders' grievances, it appears that companies have devised strategies to mitigate the impact of labour shortages resulting from logouts. Respondents 2 and 5 observed that following strikes and collective logoffs from apps, companies expedited their recruitment efforts to attract new riders, sidestepping the need to meet the demands.

When we started to protest and collectively logged out from the app, I came across ads on the company's Facebook page that it was hiring new couriers to somehow fill this gap and replace logged-off couriers, and then we decided to reach out to other couriers so that we could gather as many couriers as possible to log out from the app (Respondent 2).

Additionally, respondents' perspectives indicate that work stoppage is not the sole goal of strikes and logouts. Logouts carry a strong symbolic function aimed at demonstrating riders' centrality in the production process within the food delivery sector. They highlight that through collective logoffs, they portray themselves as more than just 'partners' or 'independent contractors', showing that the value of their labour amounts to that of an employee.

We demonstrated to the public and the company that we are the cornerstone of its operations and that without us, they cannot function and exist. We proved that with our unity, we can completely paralyse the company, which operates internationally across numerous countries, including in Europe. They may call us 'partners' on paper, but I am sure they realise that our work is invaluable for their survival; they just do not want to acknowledge it (Respondent 3).

To sum up, collective logout is a labour withdrawal strategy that Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food riders use in Georgia to induce a disruption in the operation of the delivery system, compel platform companies to fulfil their demands, and demonstrate the centrality of their labour to the food delivery sector.

Theme 2: Self-mobilisation

All 5 respondents I interviewed consistently emphasised that strikes on a street level commenced and concluded through self-mobilisation. Although riders select specific couriers to act as spokespersons for the media and the public, articulating demands and representing couriers' collective voice, workers remain the primary catalysts of strikes in the streets. Respondent 1 who was involved in strikes against Bolt Food explained:

I did not have any special status or privilege; I was a regular courier protesting unfair working conditions. I managed to gather like-minded people around the cause and served as a spokesperson for the couriers. However, we had no leaders or hierarchy in our mobilisation. All of us are equally important and equally contribute to protests (Respondent 1).

Respondent 3 who took part in strikes targeting Glovo further noted:

When we met with Glovo management at the office to discuss our concerns and left the meeting without achieving the results we fought for, a large group of couriers was waiting outside for us. Upset with the management, we simply made calls, posted in social media groups to gather as many couriers as possible, and logged out from the application, initiating the strike instantly (Respondent 3).

Research participants who took part in strikes against Bolt Food and Glovo reported that some political parties offered support, however, couriers declined the request as they did not want to be affiliated with any political organisation and wanted to remain independent, free from any external influence.

Our main principle was not to single out any group of leaders or become affiliated with any political party or organisation. We wanted to establish our identity as couriers only (Respondent 5).

Although the couriers succeeded in self-mobilising themselves during strikes and accompanying street protests, their efforts to form an independent trade union exclusively composed of couriers did not materialise. Some informants' accounts suggest that food delivery riders attempted to establish a trade union on their own but were unable to do so because of insufficient material and organisational resources.

We wanted to establish an independent trade union, but it required much work, time, and resources. Also, we were struggling financially due to strikes and did not see any immediate financial benefit in this process. I felt that forming a trade union required some heroism from us, and we ended up not being heroes (Respondent 3).

While food delivery riders did not succeed in forming a new trade union independently, as the PEA demonstrated, some Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food couriers joined the existing trade union,

LABOUR. Therefore, unionisation occurred as a distinct form of mobilisation, albeit not through self-mobilisation, as seen in grassroots street-level mobilisation.

Theme 3: Support from External Actors

Although all respondents emphasised that their collective actions were driven by self-mobilisation, 4 participants suggested that third parties, such as established trade unions, CSOs, and the public, have played an important role in facilitating their collective actions. The overarching theme of *Support From External Actors* captures the involvement of these parties in riders' mobilisation, which itself covers the sub-themes of *Support From Trade Unions and Civil Society Organisations* and *Support from the Public*.

Support From Trade Unions and Civil Society Organisations

All research participants recognised the supportive role of trade unions and CSOs when couriers turned to street protests during strikes. Their support encompasses various activities, including offering technical assistance, educating workers about their rights during strikes, advising on how to articulate demands, and gathering donations and conducting fundraising campaigns to financially aid striking couriers who are unable to earn income due to work stoppage. Additionally, according to respondents, trade union and CSO representatives were physically present during protests, standing together with couriers.

The involvement of trade unions was crucial. We received funding from them when it was most needed as we needed food to survive. Additionally, they provided technical support. For instance, the trade union Labor gave us megaphones. These may seem like minor details now, but they were important at that time (Respondent 4).

Khma²¹ stood by us. They were the first who came to us when we were trying to protest in front of the Bolt Food office. They went live on their social media, took interviews from us and broadcasted the protest to let people know what was happening. They also collected money through donations and gave it to those of us who were unlawfully terminated after the first day of the strike (Respondent 5).

²¹ Khma (meaning 'Voice' in English) is a CSO and social movement committed to social justice in Georgia. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ModzraobaKhma>

Although every participant recognised the value of support from trade unions, two respondents' expressed ambivalence about the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC).²² These participants, both former Bolt Food couriers, found GTUC's commitment insufficient as it did not yield any outcomes.

I expected more commitment from GTUC. When we met with the president of GTUC, he told us that we were strong people and that we initiated an important process with our strike. But his attitude was like a father to his children. He told us we were alone in this struggle and we had to keep fighting until the end. He then left the room. Although they facilitated our meeting with a labour dispute mediator, nothing resulted from it (Respondent 5).

I am not saying that GTUC ignored us. Quite the contrary, they supported us but I felt like they did it just because they had to. I could not see enough enthusiasm and desire on their part. The president of GTUC suggested that we should establish a couriers' trade union but that was it. They did not explain how we could do it or offer help to this end (Respondent 2).

On the contrary, Respondent 4, a former Wolt Courier, stressed the effectiveness of trade union LABOUR's involvement in Wolt couriers' strikes, as it set the groundwork for some couriers to later join this trade union.

Participants' responses suggest that trade unions and CSOs play a more active role when it comes to the institutional mobilisation of food delivery riders. Given that these organisations have legal teams with expertise in labour affairs, they assume a leading position in presenting couriers on the institutional level. For instance, according to respondent 1, a former Bolt Food and Wolt courier, the lawyers of GTUC are representing him in a lawsuit against Wolt that is currently pending. Similarly, respondent 5, a former Bolt Food courier, highlighted that following the termination of approximately 20 riders by Bolt Food due to strikes, the GTUC and the Young Lawyers Association of Georgia took the lead in filing discrimination claims with the PDO.

Therefore, while trade unions and CSOs play a secondary role in strikes and street protests, their involvement becomes more prominent in the institutional mobilisation of couriers.

²² Founded in 1992, the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC) is the biggest trade union in Georgia, uniting 21 sectoral trade unions and some 150 000 members. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yeOzhM>

Sub-theme: Support from the Public

The accounts provided by research participants suggest that the support and solidarity from the public serve as a source of motivation and inspiration during strikes. According to some respondents, before strike waves started in 2021, the public showed less support due to misinformation, believing that couriers earned a lot with minimal commitment to their jobs. However, as riders gained public visibility and spoke up about their working conditions, public awareness gradually increased, resulting in a more solidaristic attitude towards couriers.

I remember vividly that during our ride out, people applauded us from the streets and apartment balconies, shouting "Go boys!" and the whole thing gave us a big push and motivation (Respondent 3).

As we rode in the streets, cars honked for us. I also remember that people expressed their support on social media, posting that they would boycott Bolt Food and stop ordering food. Knowing that people supported our cause really helped us keep going (Respondent 5).

Research participants attribute the public support to various factors. According to respondent 3, a former Glovo courier, people saw the value of a courier job during the lockdown amid the COVID-19 pandemic when riders did not cease to work and delivered food, medicines, and household products to customers who could not leave their homes. Additionally, respondents' experiences indicate they have earned trust and solidarity from the public by demonstrating commitment to significant social or political causes.

When Russia started the war against Ukraine, fellow couriers and I met the ambassador of Ukraine to Georgia, and we joined the pro-Ukraine rally on Rustaveli Avenue. We delivered a speech there to show our solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Indeed, the public saw that we respected the correct values, and this support became reciprocal (Respondent 3).

We actively support other social groups who, like us, experience injustice. During the recent evictions, when the government attempted to remove economically vulnerable families from their homes, we stood with them. I am sure people recognise that we are not selfish workers solely focused on our interests and we stand by others who require our support (Respondent 4).

Theme 4: State Apathy Towards Couriers' Mobilisation

The respondents' accounts of their efforts to appeal to state agencies during collective actions, which all 5 participants highlighted, prompted me to formulate the overarching theme of *State Apathy Towards Couriers' Mobilisation*, encompassing two sub-themes: *Neglect from Labour Affairs Authorities*, and *Corporate Protectionism*. These sub-themes encapsulate informants' experiences with relevant government bodies.

Sub-theme: Neglect from Labour Authorities

All respondents reported that during strike periods, couriers sent letters to the Labour Inspection Office (LIO), a government agency within the Ministry of Labour, requesting the Office to inspect labour rights abuses and safety violations by the food delivery companies. However, LIO refused to fulfil these requests and declined to investigate the working conditions and the reasons behind the food delivery riders' decision to go on strike. Respondent 3 noted:

I do not feel that the LIO even exists. Unless the situation is extremely alarming, they do not show interest and motivation to investigate violations. If the strike on such a big scale and the media coverage that followed did not make them interested in our working conditions, why do they exist? They could have at least talked to us and explained why they could not help, but they have zero interest in our struggle (Respondent 3).

The LIO does nothing and just ignores the situation...Even if we do not officially ask them to investigate the issue, they must take the initiative and at least ask us why we strike (Respondent 4).

When I inquired about the reasons why LIO stays dormant during strikes, the respondents unanimously highlighted the classification issue, emphasising that their status as 'partners' or 'independent contractors' instead of 'employees' hinders their access to the LIO:

We attempted to meet with the LIO...but the companies claim that because we are not employees, the LIO is not mandated to intervene and monitor our working conditions...This is why our classification as partners rather than employees is wrong and unfair. We all know that we are employees in practice, and these companies are violating our rights. However, because the law says we are not employees, the LIO has no legal grounds to act (Respondent 1).

Although the research participants underscored the centrality of their classification as 'partners' rather than employees in LIO's inability to take actions within its mandate, their overall accounts suggest a profound lack of willingness on LIO's part to engage in discussions with striking couriers, despite the potential for addressing the issue through informal dialogue without the necessity for formal investigation or inspection procedures.

Aside from LIO, the Ministry of Labour itself demonstrated negligence. According to Respondent 5, a former Wolt courier, couriers sought mediation from the Ministry to address a collective dispute with Wolt. However, the Ministry declined to appoint a mediator, asserting that the couriers' relationship with Wolt did not constitute employment.

Therefore, riders' experiences suggest that although couriers appeal to labour authorities during strikes, the authorities overlook their collective actions, and this neglect stems from the absence of employee status.

Sub-theme: Corporate Protectionism

Some respondents attributed the state's inadequate response to their collective mobilisation to the government's general tendency to favour the interests of corporations over those of workers, which I frame as *corporate protectionism*.

I once attended a study presentation where government representatives, including the Deputy Minister of Labour, praised food-delivery companies for employing people during the COVID-19 pandemic. They did not even mention the sacrifices we, couriers, had to make while we worked during the pandemic. The government cares much more about these companies than for us (Respondent 5).

Moreover, the government seems to disregard the misclassification issue, viewing the relationship between riders and companies as a mere private arrangement. Respondent 5 further elaborated:

No one knows what our partnership agreement with the companies means, as it is unregulated. When I asked the government representatives about it, they responded that the state cannot intervene in the private relationship between two parties. In fact, this is not an agreement between two people. This is a relationship between one company and thousands of couriers (Respondent 5).

Respondent 4 explained that the state's negligence to couriers' mobilisation is due to some personal connections and financial interests held by high-ranking public officials in those companies.

These corporations benefit from people who work in the government as some state representatives are connected to these businesses by shares or personal interests. Let's take our case as an example. [One of the prominent managerial figures at] Wolt is the daughter of one of the MPs from the ruling party in parliament.²³ Well, it is already clear that no matter what demands we make, nothing will happen. The only thing the government cares about is not to upset the company. It is not difficult to understand why all this happens when your father is an MP (Respondent 4)

Theme 5: Freedom of Assembly and Association at the Heart of Mobilisation

When explaining how couriers navigate strike-related legislation, 4 participants repeatedly invoked freedom of assembly and association to bypass the limitations imposed by labour legislation that restricts their ability to formally strike due to their non-employee status. This recurring narrative led me to formulate the *Freedom of Assembly and Association at the Heart of Mobilisation* theme.

If we followed the law, we would not have managed to do anything because the law assumes that only employees can strike and does not say anything about other workers. But we called our actions a strike as we believed we were employees and recognised ourselves as such. The company always tries to justify our partner status by saying that we have flexibility and can work whenever we want. So, one day, we collectively decided we would not work. No matter what they call us, we all can get together and protest unfair working conditions. This is our constitutional right; they cannot take it away (Respondent 5).

Respondents' accounts indicate that couriers are aware of the legal obstacles related to strikes. They frame their protests using strike language and place confidence in the aforementioned human rights when justifying their mobilisation.

We could have just logged out from the app without protesting in the streets and calling our protest a strike. However, we chose to do the opposite to show everyone

²³ Although respondent 4 mentioned the name and occupation of the person referred to in the quote, I intentionally altered the quote (see the portion in “[]”) for ethical reasons.

that we are indeed employees. The company attempted to delegitimise our strikes, saying that the labour law does not grant us the right to strike because of our status. Still, they seem to forget that, like everyone else, we have the freedom of assembly and can decide how we express our protest (Respondent 3).

Chapter 6: Discussion

Applying the Power Resources Theory along with Atzeni's conceptualisation of solidarity, the forthcoming discussion theorises the findings from the previous chapter, ultimately answering the second RQ: *what are the factors empowering food delivery workers to take collective action in Georgia, and what role do human rights play in this regard?* The chapter structure follows the PRT framework sequentially, starting with structural power, then institutional power, associational power, and finally, societal power.

6.1 Structural Power

6.1.1. Marketplace Bargaining Power

Marketplace bargaining power arises when workers can freely quit or switch jobs without fearing unemployment (Schmal, Ludwig, & Webster, 2018, p. 117), especially when they possess rare, highly valued qualifications and skills, and unemployment rates are low (Silver, 2003). Conversely, working as a food delivery courier does not require specific educational qualifications, rare skills, or prior work experience, which renders their marketplace bargaining power low (Vandaele, 2018). Considering this, couriers' marketplace bargaining power is weak, and thus, their positionality in the economic system does not create favourable conditions for them to mobilise. High poverty and unemployment levels in Georgia add to the issue.²⁴ Couriers may feel scared to lose their only source of income and become unemployed, as they did in India (Hussain, 2023), if they engage in collective action.

However, under certain circumstances, particularly when the value of courier work increases, riders' marketplace bargaining power may emerge to some extent. The findings of this research demonstrate that during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, couriers continued to work, delivering essential items to people unable to leave their homes. In this context, one might argue that although courier jobs generally do not demand extensive education or rare skills, their significance and urgency heightened during the pandemic, potentially amplifying their marketplace bargaining power in those circumstances. This potential shift in marketplace bargaining power could explain why couriers' mobilisation started right after the pandemic in 2021. However, overall, the marketplace bargaining power of gig workers is weak. Despite this, couriers have managed to mobilise. Thus, while greater marketplace bargaining power could have empowered them more, it appears not to be a decisive factor in workers' mobilisation.

²⁴ Unemployment rate in Georgia amount to 16% (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023).

6.1.2. Workplace Bargaining Power

Workplace bargaining power relies on the ability of workers to disrupt production through work stoppages (Trappmann *et al.*, 2020, p.2). As the review of the previous research demonstrated, collective logout (disconnecting from the app) is a common labour withdrawal strategy among platform workers, which has become analogous to halting machines in the twentieth century (Vandaele, 2018, p.15). The findings of this study indicate that Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food couriers are also drawing on their workplace bargaining power through collective logouts to create labour shortages, disrupt the delivery system, and compel the companies to attend to workers' demands. This highlights gig workers' ability to develop innovative collective action strategies tailored to the algorithm and app-based architecture of the gig economy. Collective logout illustrates one of the novel ways the right to strike can be exercised in the gig economy, as strikes encompass a myriad of activities, so long as they intend to defend workers' rights by pressuring employers peacefully (Leyton García, 2017).

However, while couriers utilise their workplace bargaining power in the short term, it is difficult to assume that they can sustain it in the long term. This study found that couriers become economically vulnerable when they go on strike, relying on external material support. Therefore, their capacity to maintain a work stoppage independently for long periods is limited. Besides, the findings suggest that platform companies can counter riders' workplace bargaining power by recruiting new workforce during strikes. This aligns with the previous research, which has demonstrated that although platform workers can disrupt platform operations by exercising their workplace bargaining power, they cannot entirely shut down platforms (Joyce, Stuart, and Foede, 2023, p.31).

6.2. Institutional Power

Scholars studying the collective mobilisation of app-based food delivery couriers claim that their institutional power is non-existent (Vandaele, 2018; Goods *et al.*, 2023). This assertion stems from the classification of platform workers as self-employed independent contractors rather than traditional employees, thus depriving them of the institutional safeguards afforded by labour laws to conventional employees. Accordingly, as shown in the findings and analysis chapter, when couriers try to mobilise on the institutional level, they face complete rejection from labour authorities, such as the LIO and the Ministry of Labour, owing to the lack of employee status.

However, the sources of institutional power can extend beyond labour and employment laws, encompassing broader domains such as human rights. As Mantouvalou (2012) argues, human rights can be pivotal in empowering workers excluded from traditional labour laws and their associated institutions. This study found that the PDO, a national human rights institution that monitors human rights in Georgia, is the only state institution supporting Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food couriers. The PDO accepted their claims, recognising that the companies had discriminated against them by terminating their accounts and contracts during strikes. Most importantly, it acknowledged that couriers are misclassified as independent contractors and should instead be considered employees entitled to all labour rights and protections under Georgia's labour legislation. Although PDO's decisions are not legally binding, they are nevertheless authoritative. As mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, the European Committee of Social Rights took notice of the PDO's decisions regarding couriers and emphasised the discrimination faced by platform workers due to strikes in its 2022 report on Georgia, requesting the state to report to the Committee on the measures it takes to address the issue.

Therefore, when considering institutional power from a human rights perspective rather than strictly through a labour law lens, it becomes apparent that human rights can be a building block of couriers' institutional power. This is evident as the PDO decisions and the Committee's report are based on human rights norms and principles. Furthermore, the successful use of these human rights monitoring bodies exemplifies what Mantouvalou (2012) calls an "instrumental approach" to the intersection between labour rights and human rights. This approach suggests that "the character of labor rights as human rights is endorsed when...state and international institutions...are successful in promoting them as such" (Mantouvalou, 2012, p.160).

Additionally, this study found that although Georgian labour legislation reserves the right to strike for employees, couriers are nonetheless going on strikes by relying on the freedoms of assembly and association, labelling their actions as strikes. Two reasons can explain this phenomenon. Firstly, freedom of assembly and association are universal human rights granted under Georgia's constitution, applicable to anyone, including workers, irrespective of their employment status. Secondly, by framing the exercise of these rights as strikes, couriers assert their *de facto* employee status, despite being classified as "partners" or "independent contractors" *de jure*. This echoes Albin (2012), who claims that invoking human rights is frequent when labour regulations prove inadequate in addressing workers' experiences in the workplace. Furthermore, as outlined in the literature review, according to international standards, the freedom of association and the right to strike apply to all workers regardless of

their classification. Freedom of association is a far-reaching and stable source of workers' institutional power due to its constitutional and supranational standing (Schmalz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.122).

6.3. Associational Power

Research findings indicate that couriers possess associational power as they have demonstrated the capacity to mobilise and act collectively (Brookes, 2018, p.256). However, the findings also suggest that their associational power is shaped by different dynamics at various levels of mobilisation. Regarding strikes and street mobilisation, couriers' associational power predominantly relies on self-mobilisation, wherein the riders take charge of their collective actions. This finding aligns with those of Stuart *et al.* (2023), Tassinari and Maccarrone (2020), and Vandaele (2018), who observed that platform workers initiate and participate in strikes and protests from the ground up. However, when shifting the focus from streets to institutional collective action, the dynamics of associational power change, wherein self-mobilisation recedes to the background while the prominence of trade unions and CSOs comes to the forefront. This is evidenced by trade unions and CSOs actively representing couriers on the institutional level before the labour authorities, PDO, and court. Additionally, this study revealed that trade unions have played an important part in unionising couriers, as exemplified by the trade union "LABOUR" opening its doors for them.

The unionisation of couriers in Georgia represents a significant and somewhat paradoxical milestone. Despite Georgian labour legislation conferring trade union rights exclusively to employees, couriers operating as self-employed independent contractors have sidestepped this constraint to join the trade union ranks. Bringing a human rights lens to this discussion can provide valuable insights into understanding this development. Article 2 of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention No. 87 (ILO, 1948) unequivocally states that "Workers... without distinction whatsoever...shall have the right to establish and join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization." Here, the phrase "without distinction whatsoever" advocates for the broadest possible interpretation of the term "worker" (Dorssemont, 2021, p.2013). This illustrates that while labour laws may prioritise a worker's status to determine protection, freedom of association focuses on one's engagement in work rather than their specific status, thus allowing couriers to join trade unions. However, I do not intend to downplay the barriers that Georgian labour legislation poses to couriers by excluding them from its scope. The mere fact that couriers have joined a trade union

does not mean they will not face legal obstacles in exercising collective bargaining rights moving forward. What is important for this study is that the precedent of unionisation has been established, which may lead to significant shifts in the collective representation of couriers in the future.

Translating these findings into the levels of associational power, food delivery riders in Georgia display the highest associational power at the workplace level through self-mobilised grassroots groups. Street and non-demonstrative mobilisation, comprising 77% of couriers' collective actions as per PEA, occurred at this level. This is because, in gig economy, the workplace is distinct from traditional settings such as factories or offices as it is not physically bound. Here, the workplace is more abstract, defined by the couriers' network, emphasising its relational nature.

Couriers' associational power at the sectoral/industry level, which implies unionisation (Wright, 2000), appears to be no less complex than at the workplace level. This study has demonstrated that couriers failed to establish their own trade union due to a lack of resources and legal barriers. Thus, their associational power was not strong enough for independent unionisation. However, when it comes to joining existing trade unions, the findings reveal inconsistencies in their approaches to integrating couriers into their ranks. While the GTUC provided some legal and solidaristic support to riders, it did not assist them in unionisation efforts. In contrast, the trade union LABOUR included them in the union. Although the assessment of trade unions' approaches to gig workers goes beyond the scope of this thesis, it suggests that couriers' associational power in relation to joining existing trade unions does not entirely depend on them; there must be acceptance and reciprocity from established trade unions for the associational power of couriers at the industry/sectoral level to realise. Hence, while couriers may possess the associational power to join unions, this may not be sufficient if the trade union is unwilling to accept them.

When discussing associational power, solidarity becomes essential, given that associational power is built on solidarity among workers (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.120). As noted in the theory chapter, Atzeni (2010) conceptualises solidarity as the foundation upon which collective action can emerge. Although the formation of solidarity among gig workers is challenging due to workplace atomisation (Heiner, 2020), this study has found that couriers are overcoming this fragmentation by building bonds and establishing social interactions in alternative spaces, such as streets, food pick-up points, so-called "active spaces", each other's

apartments and social media. Hence, by overcoming workplace dispersity, couriers are collectivising their labour, which, in return, generates solidarity among them, as solidarity is “the social relation that expresses the collective nature of the labour process” (Atzeni, 2010, p.15).

Furthermore, solidarity arises from mutual material conditions and experiences shared among workers (Hodson *et al.*, 1993). Similarly, as this study found, “being in the same boat”, shared everyday experiences and common challenges act as a unifying factor for couriers in Georgia, prompting them to develop a shared identity.

These shared grievances, expressed through the demands couriers have made as per PEA, also serve as examples of what Atzeni (2010) characterises as the inherently exploitative nature of the workplace, creating antagonism between workers and employers. The reactions of platform companies to couriers’ mobilisation, such as termination of their accounts and rigid refusals to hear riders’ concerns in a discussion format, further illustrates the pervasiveness of antagonistic patterns between workers and the capital within the food delivery sector. Therefore, in line with Atzeni’s theoretical lens, due to these antagonistic dynamics, unavoidable conflict of interests, and couriers’ efforts to collectivise their fragmented labour, there is an “embryonic solidarity” among riders, the activation of which has led them to undertake collective actions.

However, the presence of mutual solidarity and collective identity among couriers does not assume that couriers are an entirely homogenous group. Riders may approach the same issues differently depending on their interests and motivations. For example, this study revealed that while full-time workers prefer employee status for more protection, some part-time couriers, also seeking better working conditions and labour rights, favour contractor status for lower taxes. Although workforce heterogeneity may thwart the formation of solidarity among couriers and decrease their willingness to mobilise (Hussain, 2023), the results of this study did not show any plausible indication of this divergency affecting their mobilisation. While couriers may have somewhat divergent perspectives on the solutions to their challenges - whether they should be classified as employees to benefit from existing labour laws or receive protections without necessarily being classified as employees - the working conditions they face are essentially the same. This is because precarity is an inherent feature of the gig economy (Montgomery and Bagrioni, 2021), affecting any worker involved. Additionally, workforce heterogeneity does not negate the inherently antagonistic and exploitative nature of the capitalist labour process - ‘the site where both the opposition of labour to capital and yet its dependence on it are

constantly reproduced and solidarity linkages established' (Atzeni, 2010, p.19). Therefore, couriers in Georgia appear to be successfully navigating their somewhat contrasting approaches, ensuring that these differences do not diminish their collective identity, solidarity, and, ultimately, mobilisation.

6.4. Societal Power

6.4.1. Coalitional Power

Coalitional power is connected to associational power as it is “based on boosting one’s own associational power by harnessing the resources of other players” (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.122). Classic PRT suggested that by forming alliances with political parties, workers could enhance their influence within the political system (Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022, p.1965). This study found that while some political parties offered cooperation to striking couriers, the riders chose not to affiliate with any party. Several reasons contribute to this. Firstly, couriers wished to be seen as an independent grassroots movement, which could be compromised by political involvement. Secondly, there is widespread distrust in political parties in Georgia. Thirdly, staying unaligned allows couriers to maintain flexibility in their mobilisation efforts. This suggests that it is not always in the best interest of workers to cooperate with political parties during mobilisation.

Coalitional power also extends to forming networks with other actors, such as CSOs and social movements (Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022, pp.1965-1966). The findings of this study demonstrated that couriers forged alliances with CSOs and trade unions, encompassing consultations, legal assistance, and representation before state institutions. While these instances of cooperation indicate that couriers possess coalitional power *vis-a-vis* CSOs, these alliances have been short-lived, emerging during strike periods and remaining dormant outside of collective action contexts. However, this temporariness shall not be interpreted as the ineffectiveness of couriers’ coalitional power given that “coalitional power means having networks with other social actors at one’s disposal and being able to activate these for mobilisations” (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018, p.122). Therefore, as long as couriers can reactivate previously established networks in their future collective actions, their coalitional power will likely endure.

There is a slight difference between couriers’ coalitional power with CSOs and their coalitional power *vis-à-vis* trade unions. While couriers' relationship with the former is purely coalitional, their relationship with the latter can manifest at two levels: coalitional and associational. As

previously mentioned, trade union LABOUR not only supported the couriers in mobilisation but also allowed them to join the union, whereas GTUC's role was solely limited to support. This discrepancy may stem from the unique nature of the gig economy to which trade unions have not yet fully adapted. Therefore, in relation to trade unions, couriers may possess both coalitional and associational powers, with the former limited to forming alliances and the latter expanding to joining the union.

6.4.2. Discursive Power

Workers' discursive power relies on the public's perceptions of their demands as just (Schalmz, Ludwig and Webster, 2018). Discursive power is present when society shows its support for workers' cause. The findings of this study indicate that couriers have been gradually harnessing discursive power. Initially, the public did not show solidarity and support in the early stages of mobilisation due to the lack of awareness. However, as challenges faced by couriers entered the public discourse through different forms of collective action and as the public became more knowledgeable of their everyday reality, support emerged. Slaiby (2018) underscored the media's role in generating workers' discursive power. Couriers' mobilisation attracted considerable media attention to the extent that it allowed me to develop a dataset. Thus, one can argue that media has acted as a bridge, connecting couriers with broader society during mobilisation, ultimately strengthening their discursive power. Additionally, workers can build discursive power by engaging with broader societal problems, thereby increasing their legitimacy in the public's eye (Reflund and Arnholtz, 2022, p.1965). This could explain why the research participants expressed confidence that their support and solidarity with other social groups positively contribute to their public trust and credibility.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter concludes the study by summarising research findings in relation to the research goal and research questions (RQs). It also proposes recommendations for policy and future research.

7.1. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to investigate the mobilisation and collective actions of Glovo, Wolt, and Bolt Food delivery couriers in Georgia from 2021 to 2024. To attain this goal, the first research question looked into how food delivery workers in Georgia mobilise for their labour rights and better working conditions, while the second research question inquired about the factors that empower couriers in their collective action and explored the role of human rights in this process.

This study has revealed the multifaceted nature of collective actions among food delivery riders in Georgia, with three main modes of mobilisation: street mobilisation (protests), non-demonstrative mobilisation (petitioning), and institutional mobilisation (quasi-legal mobilisation, legal mobilisation, and unionisation). Street mobilisation, prevalent during strike periods, emerged as the primary strategy employed by couriers, largely self-driven, reflecting a broader trend seen in gig workers' mobilisation worldwide. Interestingly, couriers have adopted a new form of labour withdrawal - collective logouts. By disconnecting from the app, riders adjust their work stoppage tactics to the app-based nature of the gig economy, demonstrating the value and importance of their labour by taking it away through logouts.

While couriers' collective actions primarily rely on their grassroots efforts, their mobilisation does not occur in a vacuum. Riders harness the resources of other actors, such as trade unions and CSOs. When it comes to strikes and street mobilisation, the assistance of these external actors is mainly auxiliary, while on the institutional level, their role intensifies as they offer crucial resources and expertise necessary for navigating institutional channels. However, the issue of misclassification presents an obstacle to institutional mobilisation, as labour authorities often overlook couriers lacking official employee status.

Despite the inherently atomised nature of workplace in gig economy, couriers demonstrate resilience by forging bonds and networks with each other through interactions in alternate spaces such as streets, specific outdoor sites, and social media. These are also the spaces where mobilisation planning takes place. Additionally, the connections established in these spaces aid in developing a collective identity among riders. Another factor contributing to their unity is

that most couriers face the same challenges and injustices, fostering a sense of mutual solidarity. This collectiveness can be best understood as a spectrum – spanning from everyday acts of solidarity in the labour process to organised collective actions.

Notably, the study has found that human rights empower gig workers in mobilisation, particularly on the institutional level. While state institutions responsible for enforcing labour legislation have disregarded couriers' requests, the national human rights institution, the Public Defender's Office, was the sole entity at the national level to address riders' concerns, recognising that they had experienced discrimination. Additionally, the study indicates that human rights assist couriers in strikes and street mobilisation. Despite their lack of employee status, which legally precludes them from striking, couriers leverage the freedom of assembly and association to navigate this constraint, framing the exercise of these rights as strikes.

All in all, although labour architecture in the gig economy operates outside traditional collective bargaining and unionisation frames, the findings suggest that this does not present an impassable barrier to developing solidarity and collective action among gig workers. Mobilisation can occur even without established institutionalised channels for collective representation. While couriers could not establish their trade union, they managed to join an existing one, indicating their ability to transition grassroots mobilisation into a more institutionalised form. Yet, the effectiveness of unionisation for couriers in Georgia remains uncertain, pending the willingness and capacity of unions to adapt to the intricate gig economy landscape.

Overall, the gig economy has created a new reality for workers, one for which laws, policies, and practices have not been adequately tailored. Therefore, workers' mobilisation in gig economy is not static and fixed; instead, it is a dynamic process involving the interplay of various collective action strategies, the adaptation of traditional mobilisation tactics, the invention of novel mobilisation repertoires, and both successes and failures - all aimed at achieving better working conditions, decent work, and labour rights.

7.2. Recommendations

Recommendations for Research:

1. This study has unveiled the mobilisation of food delivery couriers in Georgia. It is equally crucial to examine the outcomes of this mobilisation. Therefore, future research shall focus on

evaluating the impact of couriers' collective actions, assessing the extent to which riders have achieved their objectives and the target platform companies have met their demands.

2. As previously mentioned, while couriers face shared challenges, they may have different perspectives on the solutions for these challenges, depending on their backgrounds and motivations. Future research shall explore how inclusive couriers' mobilisation is towards different groups of riders, such as part-time workers, and how identities, such as race and gender, play out in the mobilisation process.

3. This study has laid the groundwork for exploring the potential of human rights in empowering couriers for mobilisation purposes; however, further research is needed to fully grasp the extent to which international human rights law addresses common human rights concerns within gig work and which human rights mechanisms misclassified gig workers can invoke to seek redress.

4. Additionally, further research shall study and assess the strengths and weaknesses of traditional trade unions' approaches to integrating non-standard workers, such as gig workers, into their ranks.

Recommendations for Policy:

Parliament of Georgia shall:

- Regulate the gig economy, focusing on labour rights and occupational health and safety of gig workers. To this end, the parliament shall consult with experts, gig workers, CSOs, and trade unions and consider best practices.

Labour Inspection Office shall:

- Inspect the working conditions of food delivery couriers and assess Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt's labour law compliance.

Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt shall:

- Implement the recommendations received from the PDO and eliminate discrimination against couriers who engage in collective actions.
- undertake a human rights due diligence assessment from a labour rights perspective, identify risks, and address them.

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Annex I: Informed Consent Form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

“Coping with precarity: exploring the struggles and collective action of food delivery couriers in Georgia”?

Purpose of the project

You are invited to participate in a research project that aims to investigate the collective actions that gig workers, specifically food delivery riders, have undertaken in Georgia in response to precarious and exploitative working conditions.

The study aims to answer two main research questions:

1. How do food delivery workers in Georgia mobilise to address their labour rights violations?
3. What are the factors empowering food delivery workers to take collective action in Georgia and what role does human rights play in this regard?

This study is carried out for a master’s thesis within the Erasmus Mundus Master’s Programme in Human Rights Policy and Practice.

The data obtained for this study will be used exclusively for the master’s thesis only and will not serve any other purpose.

Which institution is responsible for the research project?

UiT The Arctic University of Norway (Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education) is responsible for the project (data controller).

Why are you being asked to participate?

To understand the mobilisation of food delivery couriers in Georgia, I have selected a sample of 5 couriers who have participated in collective actions. The sample consists of Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt food delivery workers. You are a part of one of these categories and were chosen because of your knowledge and experience in this area.

You have either contacted me at my email address, expressing your interest in participating in the study based on the post I published on social media, OR I reached out to you as your name was publicly known from public interviews and/or media coverage pertaining to food delivery workers’ mobilisation, and you expressed your interest to participate in the study.

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to participate in this study, I will interview you on matters relating to the mobilisation and collective action of food delivery couriers in Georgia. The interview will include questions about working conditions in Georgia’s gig economy, specifically, in the food delivery sector and the collective actions (i.e. protests, strikes, etc) you have participated in.

The interview will be held in Georgian and last for no longer than 45 minutes. The interview will be held remotely, voice-recorded, and transcribed. I will translate the Georgian transcription into English as the master's thesis has to be written in English.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified here and we will process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation (the GDPR). Only I, the researcher (student), will have access to your personal data.

Your personal data, such as your name and contact information will be replaced with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. All data, including audio recording of the interview, will be stored on an encrypted and secured server which requires login to access.

The master's thesis will not include any information or any personal data that could identify you. When presenting the results in the thesis, you will remain anonymous and only your occupation will be published (i.e. 'Glovo courier 1', 'Bolt Food courier 2', 'Wolt courier 3')

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The planned end date of the project is 31 May 2024. All your personal data that I will collect, process and store during this study will be deleted after the completion of the master's thesis.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with UiT Arctic University of Norway, Data Protection Services of Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project meets requirements in data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- UiT Arctic University of Norway via Anri Abuladze (email: anabu8984@uit.no)
- UiT Arctic University of Norway via Jennifer Hays (email: jennifer.hays@uit.no)
- Our Data Protection Officer: Annikken Steinbakk (email: personvernombud@uit.no)

If you have questions about how data protection has been assessed in this project by Sikt, contact:

- email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 73 98 40 40.

Yours sincerely,

Anri Abuladze

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “Coping with precarity: exploring the struggles and collective action of food delivery couriers in Georgia “and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview.
- for the interview to be audio recorded and transcribed.
- my personal data to be processed until the end of the project.

(Signed by participant, date)

დაინტერესებული ხართ მონაწილეობა მიიღოთ

“პრეკარულ შრომასთან გამკლავება: მიტანის სერვისში დასაქმებული კურიერების კოლექტიური მობილიზაცია საქართველოში“

კვლევით პროექტში?

პროექტის მიზანი

თქვენ შერჩეული ხართ მოცემულ კვლევით პროექტში მონაწილეობისათვის, რომელიც მიზნად ისახავს გამოიკვლიოს საქართველოში მიტანის სერვისში დასაქმებული მშრომელების კოლექტიური მობილიზაცია შრომითი უფლებებისათვის.

კვლევითი პროექტის მიზანია პასუხი გასცეს შემდეგ საკვლევ შეკითხვებს:

- 1) როგორ მობილიზდებიან საქართველოში მიტანის სერვისში დასაქმებული კურიერები შრომითი უფლებების დარღვევის საპასუხოდ და უკეთესი შრომითი პირობების მოთხოვნის მიზნით?
- 2) რა ფაქტორები აძლევს ძალას კურიერების კოლექტიულ მობილიზაციას და რა როლს თამაშობს ადამიანის უფლებები ამ მხრივ?

მოცემული კვლევითი პროექტი ტარდება სამაგისტრო თეზისის მიზნებისათვის, ერასმუს მუნდუსის ადამიანის უფლებათა პოლიტიკისა და პრაქტიკის სამაგისტრო პროგრამის ფარგლებში.

ამ კვლევითი პროექტის ფარგლებში მოპოვებული მონაცემები გამოყენებული იქნება მხოლოდ და მხოლოდ სამაგისტრო ნაშრომისათვის და არა სხვა რომელიმე მიზნისათვის.

რომელი ინსტიტუტია პასუხისმგებელი კვლევით პროექტზე?

UiT ნორვეგიის არქტიკული უნივერსიტეტი (ჰუმანიტარულ მეცნიერებათა, სოციალურ მეცნიერებათა და განათლების ფაკულტეტი) პასუხისმგებელია მოცემულ პროექტზე (მონაცემთა კონტროლიორი).

რატომ გთხოვთ თქვენ პროექტში მონაწილეობის მიღებას?

იმისათვის, რათა ვიკვლიო საქართველოში მიტანის სფეროში დასაქმებული კურიერების კოლექტიური მობილიზაცია შრომითი უფლებებისთვის, ინტერვიუ ჩატარდება 5 კურიერს, ვისაც მონაწილეობა აქვს მიღებული კურიერთა კოლექტიურ მობილიზაციაში. რესპოდენტები იქნებიან გლოვოს, ბოლტ ფუდისა და ვოლტის კურიერები. თქვენ ამ კატეგორიაში ექვევით და შერჩეული ხართ ინტერვიუში მონაწილეობის მიღებისთვის ამ სფეროში თქვენი ცოდნისა და გამოცდილებიდან გამომდინარე.

ან თქვენ დამეკონტაქტეთ ჩემს ელ-ფოსტის მისამართზე, სოციალურ მედიაში ჩემს მიერ გამოქვეყნებული პოსტის საფუძველზე და დააფიქსირეთ ინტერესი პროექტში მონაწილეობის მიღების თაობაზე, ან მე დაგეკონტაქტეთ, რადგან თქვენი სახელი და ვინაობა საჯაროდ იყო ცნობილი იმ მედია წყაროებიდან, მასალებიდან და სტატიებიდან, რომლებიც საქართველოში კურიერების მობილიზაციას შეეხებოდა და თქვენ გამოხატეთ ინტერესი ამ კვლევით პროექტში მონაწილეობასთან დაკავშირებით.

რას მოიცავს თქვენი პროექტში მონაწილეობა?

თუ ამ კვლევით პროექტში მონაწილეობას მიიღებთ, თქვენთან ჩავატარებ ინტერვიუს იმ საკითხების შესახებ, რაც უკავშირდება საქართველოში მიტანის სერვისში დასაქმებული პირების კოლექტიურ მობილიზაციას შრომითი უფლებებისათვის. ინტერვიუს ფარგლებში დასმული შეკითხვები შეეხება საქარველოს გიგ ეკონომიკაში, კერძოდ, მიტანის სერვისში, არსებულ შრომით პირობებსა და კურიერების მობილიზაციას (მაგ. პროტესტები, გაფიცვები და ა.შ.)

ინტერვიუ ჩატარდება ქართულ ენაზე და არ გაგრძელდება 45 წუთზე დიდი ხნის განმავლობაში. ასევე, ინტერვიუ ჩატარდება დისტანციურად, ჩაიწერება აუდიო და

შემდეგ მოხდება აუდიო ჩანაწერის ტრანსკრიფცია (ტექსტად ქცევა). ინტერვიუ ტრანსკრიპტი გადაითარგმნება ინგლისურ ენაზე, რადგან სამაგისტრო ნაშრომი სრულდება ინგლისურად.

მონაწილეობა არის ნებაყოფლობითი/მოხალისეობრივი

ამ კვლევით პროექტში მონაწილეობა ნებაყოფლობითია. თუ თქვენ გადაწყვეტთ მიიღოთ მონაწილეობა, შეგიძლიათ ნებისმიერ დროს გააუქმოთ თქვენი თანხმობა ყოველგვარი მიზეზის დასახელების გარეშე. შედეგად, ყველა ინფორმაცია თქვენს შესახებ გახდება ანონიმური. თუ პროექტში მონაწილეობის შესახებ უარს განაცხადებთ ან მოგვიანებით მიიღებთ გადაწყვეტილებას პროექტში მონაწილეობის შეწყვეტის შესახებ, ეს არ გამოიწვევს თქვენთვის არანაირ უარყოფით შედეგს.

თქვენი კონფიდენციალურობა – როგორ შევინახავთ და გამოვიყენებთ თქვენს პერსონალურ მონაცემებს?

ჩვენ გამოვიყენებთ თქვენს პერსონალურ მონაცემებს მხოლოდ აქ მითითებული მიზნ(ებ)ისთვის და დავამუშავებთ მათ მონაცემთა დაცვის კანონმდებლობის (GDPR) შესაბამისად. მხოლოდ მე, მკვლევარს (სტუდენტს) მექნება წვდომა თქვენს პერსონალურ მონაცემებზე.

თქვენი პერსონალური მონაცემები, როგორცაა თქვენი სახელი და საკონტაქტო ინფორმაცია შეიცვლება კოდით. სახელების სია, საკონტაქტო ინფორმაცია და შესაბამისი კოდები შეინახება დანარჩენი შეგროვებული მონაცემებისგან განცალკევებით. ყველა მონაცემი, ინტერვიუს აუდიო ჩანაწერის ჩათვლით, შეინახება დამიფრულ და დაცულ სერვერზე, რომელზე წვდომისათვისაც აუცილებელია ავტორიზაციის გავლა.

სამაგისტრო ნაშრომში არ მიეთითება ინფორმაცია ან რაიმე პირადი მონაცემი, რომლითაც შესაძლებელი იქნება თქვენი იდენტიფიცირება. დისერტაციაში შედეგების წარდგენისას დარჩებით ანონიმური და გამოქვეყნდება მხოლოდ თქვენი პროფესია/პოზიცია (მაგ. „გლოვოს კურიერი 1“, „ბოლტ ფუდ-ის კურიერი 2“, „ვოლტის კურიერი 3“ და ა.შ.)

რა მოუვა თქვენს პირად მონაცემებს კვლევითი პროექტის დასრულებისას?

პროექტის დასრულების თარიღია 2024 წლის 31 მაისი. ყველა თქვენი პერსონალური მონაცემი, რომელსაც მე შევარგოვებ, დავამუშავებ და შევინახავ ამ კვლევის დროს, წაიშლება სამაგისტრო ნაშრომის დასრულებისას.

თქვენი უფლებები

იმ შემთხვევაში, როცა შეგროვებული მონაცემებით თქვენი იდენტიფიცირება შესაძლებელია, თქვენ უფლება გაქვთ:

- წვდომა გქონდეთ იმ პერსონალურ მონაცემებთან, რა პერსონალური მონაცემებით მუშავდება თქვენს შესახებ.

- მოითხოვთ, რომ წაიშალოს თქვენი პერსონალური მონაცემები.
- მოითხოვთ, რომ თქვენს შესახებ არასწორი პერსონალური მონაცემი ჩასწორდეს.
- მიიღოთ თქვენი პერსონალური მონაცემების ასლი (მონაცემთა პორტაბელურობა), და
- გაუგზავნოთ საჩივარი ნორვეგიის მონაცემთა დაცვის ორგანოს თქვენი პერსონალური მონაცემების დამუშავებასთან დაკავშირებით.

რა გვადლევს ჩვენ იმის უფლებას, რომ დავამუშავოთ თქვენი პერსონალური მონაცემები?

ჩვენ თქვენ პერსონალურ მონაცემებს დავამუშავებთ თქვენი თანხმობის საფუძველზე.

ნორვეგიის განათლებისა და კვლევის საერთო სერვისების სააგენტოს მონაცემთა დაცვის სამსახურმა (Sikt), UiT ნორვეგიის არქტიკულ უნივერსიტეტთან დადებული შეთანხმების საფუძველზე, დაასკვნა, რომ მოცემული პროექტის ფარგლებში პერსონალურ მონაცემთა დამუშავება აკმაყოფილებს პერსონალურ მონაცემთა დაცვის კანონმდებლობის მოთხოვნებს.

როგორ შემიძლია მივიღო დამატებითი ინფორმაცია?

თუ გაქვთ შეკითხვები ამ პროექტის შესახებ, ან გსურთ თქვენი უფლებების რეალიზება, დაუკავშირდით:

- UiT ნორვეგიის არქტიკულ უნივერსიტეტს ანრი აბულაძის მეშვეობით (ელ. ფოსტა: anabu8984@uit.no)
- UiT ნორვეგიის არქტიკულ უნივერსიტეტს ჯენიფერ ჰაისის მეშვეობით (ელ. ფოსტა: Jennifer.hays@uit.no)
- ჩვენს პერსონალურ მონაცემთა დაცვის ოფიცერს, ანიკენ სტეინბაკს (ელ. ფოსტა: personvernombud@uit.no)

თუ გაქვთ შეკითხვები იმის შესახებ, თუ როგორ შეაფასა ამ პროექტის ფარგლებში პერსონალურ მონაცემთა დაცვა ნორვეგიის განათლებისა და კვლევის საერთო სერვისების სააგენტომ (Sikt), დაუკავშირდით მას ელ.ფოსტის (personverntjenester@sikt.no) ან ტელეფონის საშუალებით: +47 73 98 40 40.

პატივისცემით,

ანრი აბულაძე

თანხმობის ფორმა

მივიღე და გავეცანი ინფორმაციას “პრეკარულ შრომასთან გამკლავება: მიტანის სერვისში დასაქმებული კურიერების კოლექტიური მობილიზაცია

საქართველოში“ კვლევითი პროექტის შესახებ და მქონდა შესაძლებლობა დამესვა შეკითხვები. თანხმობას ვაცხადებ, რომ:

- მონაწილეობა მივიღო ინტერვიუში.
- მოხდეს ინტერვიუს აუდიო ჩაწერა და ტრანსკრიფცია.
- დამუშავდეს ჩემი პერსონალური მონაცემები პროექტის დასრულებამდე.

(მონაწილის სახელი, გვარი; ხელმოწერა; ხელმოწერის თარიღი)

Annex II: Protest Event Analysis (PEA) Codebook and Variables

Type of collective action	Date	Location	Number of workers involved	Peaceful or violent (for protest events only)	Targets	Demands/requests (where applicable)
-Protest (street mobilisation) -Non-demonstrative mobilisation (petitions and signature collection) -Institutional mobilisation (unionisation, legal mobilisation, quasi-legal mobilisation)	2021-2024	-Tbilisi -Batumi -Online	-<50 -50-100 -100-200 ->200	-peaceful -violent	-Glovo -Bolt Food -Wolt	List of demands

Annex III: Sources for Protest Event Analysis (PEA) - News Reports

Glovo Couriers				
#	Title of News Article	Publication Date	Media Organisation	URL
1	რა პირობებით მუშაობენ და რას ითხოვენ გლოვოს კურიერები [Under What Conditions Glovo Couriers Work and What They Demand]	29.01.2021	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/515401/
2	“გვამუშავენ ისე, როგორც მონებს” “გლოვოს” კურიერების აქცია [“They Make Us Work as Slaves” “Glovo” Couriers’ Protest]	29.01.2021	Publika	https://publika.ge/gvamus-haveben-ise-rogorc-monebs-glovos-kurierebis-aqcia/
4	EMC მოუწოდებს შრომის ინსპექციას დაიწყოს “გლოვოს” კურიერების შრომის პირობების შესწავლა [EMC Calls on the Labour Inspection Office to Start Investigation into the Working Conditions of “Glovo” Couriers]	30.01.2021	Publika	https://publika.ge/emc-mouwodebs-shromis-inspeqcias-daiwyos-glovos-kurierebis-shromis-pirobebis-sheswavla/
3	“გლოვომ” დაუყონებლივ უზრუნველყოს დასაქმებულების სამუშაო პირობების გაუმჯობესება [“Glovo” should immediately ensure the improvement of the working conditions of the employees - Labour Platform]	05.02.2021	Publika	https://publika.ge/glovom-dauyonebliv-uzrunvelyos-dasaqmebulebis-samushao-pirobebis-gaumjobeseba-shromis-platforma/
5	თბილისში “გლოვოს” კურიერების აქცია გაიმართა [“Glovo” Couriers Held a Protest in Tbilisi]	16.05.2021	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/542204/

6	<p>“გლოვო” ადასტურებს სამსახურიდან 50-მდე კურიერის გათავისუფლებას</p> <p>[“Glovo” Confirms the Dismissal of About 50 Couriers]</p>	16.05.2021	Radio Liberty	https://www.radiotavisuplaba.ge/a/31257923.html
7	<p>“გლოვოს” კურიერების მორიგი გაფიცვა დასრულდა - რას მიაღწიეს გაფიცულებმა</p> <p>[Another Strike of “Glovo” Couriers Ended – What Did the Striking Couriers Achieve]</p>	18.05.2021	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/542665/
8	<p>სახალხო დამცველმა „გლოვოს“ კურიერის საქმეზე პროფესიული კავშირის წევრობის ნიშნით დისკრიმინაცია დაადგინა</p> <p>[The Public Defender found discrimination based on the membership of the trade union in the case of the "Glovo" courier]</p>	10.04.2023	Ombudsman	https://bit.ly/3Ui6l1f

Bolt Food

#	Title of News Article	Publication Date	Media Organisation	URL
1	<p>“აპლიკაცია გათიშული გვაქვს და არ ვმუშაობთ პროტესტის ნიშნად” Bolt Food-ის კურიერების პროტესტი</p> <p>[“We Turned off Our Applications and We Are not Working as Part of Our Protest” Protest of Bolt Food Couriers]</p>	17.03.2021	Publika	https://publika.ge/bolt-food-is-kurierebis-protesti/
2	<p>“პროტესტი გრძელდება” Bolt Food-ის კურიერებმა მორიგი აქცია გამართეს</p> <p>[“Protest Continues” Bolt Food Couriers Held Another Protest]</p>	23.03.2021	Publika	https://publika.ge/protesti-grdzeldeba-bolt-food-is-kurierebma-morigi-aqcia-gamartes/

3	ბოლტ ფუდის კურიერები მეორედ გაიფიცნენ [Bolt Food Couriers Went on Strike for the Second Time]	23.03.2021	On.ge	https://bit.ly/3WesJ7U
4	Bolt Food couriers on strike in Tbilisi	24.03.2021	OC Media	https://oc-media.org/bolt-food-couriers-on-strike-in-tbilisi/
5	Bolt Food-ის კურიერები პროტესტს აგრძელებენ [Bolt Food Couriers Continue Their Protest]	24.03.2021	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/529427/
6	Bolt Food-ის კურიერებმა შრომითი პირობების გაუმჯობესების მოთხოვნით აქცია გამართეს [Bolt Food Couriers Held a Protest, Demanding Improved Working Conditions]	25.03.2021	On.ge	https://bit.ly/44hUJtf
7	ომბუდსმენმა BOLT FOOD-ის მხრიდან კურიერების მიმართ განსხვავებული მოსაზრების ნიშნით დისკრიმინაცია დაადგინა [Ombudsperson Found that Bolt Food Discriminated Against Couriers Based on a Different Opinion]	15.06.2021	On.ge	https://bit.ly/3QhnGQg

Wolt

#	Title of News Article	Publication Date	Media Organisation	URL
1	რა არის „გიგ-ეკონომიკა“ და რა შეიძლება შეცვალოს კურიერის სასამართლო დავამ [What is Gig-economy and What Could a Courier’s Lawsuit Change]	30.03.2021	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/529875/

2	Wolt-ის კურიერები ტარიფების ზრდის მოთხოვნით აქციას მართავენ [Wolt Couriers are Holding a Protest, Demanding Pay Rise]	05.02.2023	Publika	https://publika.ge/wolt-is-kurierebi/
3	თბილისში "ვოლტის" კურიერები საპროტესტო აქციას მართავენ [Wolt Couriers are Holding a Protest in Tbilisi]	05.02.2023	Radio Liberty	https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32256195.html
4	„ვოლტის“ კურიერებმა ანაზღაურების მომატების მოთხოვნით აქცია გამართეს [“Wolt” Couriers Held a Protest, Demanding Pay Rise]	05.02.2023	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/653359/
5	ვოლტის კურიერები რესპუბლიკის მოედანზე აქციას მართავენ [Wolt Couriers are Holding a Protest at the Republic Square]	05.02.2023	On.ge	https://bit.ly/49UXBOf
6	რას პასუხობს Wolt კურიერების პროტესტს [What Does Wolt Respond to Couriers’ Protest]	06.02.2023	On.ge	https://bit.ly/3JAwCN3
7	“ვოლტის” კურიერებმა თბილისში მორიგი აქცია გამართეს [“Wolt Couriers Held Another Protest in Tbilisi]	15.02.2023	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/655232/
8	ბოდიში, მიტანის სერვისი დროებით დახურულია - "ვოლტის" კურიერების პროტესტი [Sorry, Delivery Service is Temporarily Closed - “Wolt” Couriers’ Protest]	15.02.2023	Radio Liberty	https://bit.ly/3Udr6EV
9	"ვოლტის" კურიერების აქცია ბათუმში - რას მოთხოვნები აქვთ და რას აპროტესტებენ?	16.02.2023	TV 25	https://www.tv25.ge/news/Society/voltis-kurierebis-aqtisia-batumshi-ras-

	["Wolt" Couriers' Protest is Batumi – What Demands Do They Have and What are They Protesting?"]			motkhovnebi-aqvt-da-ras-aprotesteben
10	ბათუმში Wolt-ის კურიერები გაიფიცნენ [Wolt Couriers Went on Strike in Batumi]	17.02.2023	Batumelebi	https://batumelebi.netgazeti.ge/news/465874/
11	Wolt-ის კურიერები კომპანიის ოფისთან მორიგ საპროტესტო აქციას მართავენ [Wolt Couriers Are Holding Another Protest at the Company's Office]	19.02.2023	Publika	https://publika.ge/wolt-is-kurierebi-kompaniis-ofistan-morig-saprotesto-aqcias/
12	Wolt-ის კურიერებმა მორიგი საპროტესტო აქცია გამართეს [Wolt Couriers Held Another Protest]	19.02.2023	On.ge	https://bit.ly/3UeJZHM
13	Wolt-ის კურიერების ნაწილი აპლიკაციას თიშავს და პროტესტს აგრძელებს [A Part of Wolt Couriers Turns off the Application and Continues Protest]	30.03.2023	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/662654/
14	Wolt-ის კურიერების ნაწილი აპლიკაციას თიშავს და უწყვეტ პროტესტს აგრძელებს [A Part of Wolt Couriers Turns off the Application and Continues Non-stop Protest]	30.03.2023	On.ge	https://bit.ly/3Uz0KP8
15	Wolt-ის კურიერების ნაწილი უწყვეტ პროტესტს აანონსებს - კომპანია მათი მხრიდან სხვა კურიერების შევიწროების ფაქტებზე საუბრობს [A Part of Wolt Couriers Announce Non-stop Protest – the Company Talks About the Harassment of Other Couriers by Them]	30.03.2023	Radio Liberty	https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32341879.html

16	ახალი კურიერები აჰყავთ, ჩვენ რომ ჩაგვანაცვლონ - "ვოლტი": გასაუბრებებს აქამდეც ვატარებდით [They are Hiring New Couriers to Replace Us - "Wolt": We Have Been Conducting Interviews Before]	31.03.2023	Radio Liberty	https://www.radiotavisupl eba.ge/a/32343896.html
17	"ვოლტის" კურიერებს კანცელარიასთან აქცია- კონცერტისთვის სცენა არ გააშლევინეს [“Wolt” Couriers Were not Allowed to Set up a Stage by the Government Administration Building]	06.04.2023	Netgazeti	https://netgazeti.ge/news/663994/
18	Georgia: Justice For Couriers	10.04.2023	LabourStart	https://bit.ly/3Wgybat
19	სახალხო დამცველმა ვოლტის კურიერების მიმართ დისკრიმინაცია დაადგინა [Public Defender Found That Wolt Couriers Had Been Discriminated Against]	06.07.2023	On.ge	https://bit.ly/4baGCIA
20	სახალხო დამცველმა Wolt-ს განსხვავებული მოსაზრების გამო დისკრიმინაციის აღმოფხვრის რეკომენდაციით მიმართა [Public Defender Addressed Wolt with a Recommendation to Eradicate Discrimination Based on a Different Opinion]	31.01.2024	Publika	https://bit.ly/3xT06mF

Glovo, Bolt Food, and Wolt

#	Title of News Article	Publication Date	Media Organisation	URL
1	“გლოვოს”, “ვოლტის” და “ბოლტის” რამდენიმე ათეული კურიერი პროფკავშირში გაწევრიანდა	17.08.2023	Commersant	https://commersant.ge/news/business/glovo-voltis-da-boltis-ramdenime-ateuli-kurieri-

	[Several dozen “Glovo”, “Wolt” and “Bolt Food” Couriers Joined a Trade Union]			profkavshirshi-gatsevrianda
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Annex IV: Interview Guide

Interview Topic	Questions
Introduction (warm-up)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your work background? What is your educational background? 2. How long have you been working as a food delivery courier? Why did you decide to become one? 3. Is food delivery the only source of income for you? How long do you intend to continue working as a rider?
Working Conditions and Labour Rights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How satisfied are you with being a food delivery rider? Do you think it is a secure job? Please explain. 5. Are there any challenges that you face as a courier? If so, what are these challenges? 6. How aware are you of your employment status? What kind of employment status do you have? Does your employment status have any implications for you as a worker?
Relationship with management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. How would you describe your relationship with your management?
Mobilisation and collective action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. How strong do you think the network of food delivery couriers is in Georgia? Would you consider yourself a part of a collective? 9. How often and in what types of situations do you interact with/socialise with/bond with/communicate with other food delivery couriers? 10. In what way have you been involved in the mobilisation/collective action of food delivery couriers in Georgia? 11. How do you plan/organise mobilisation? What do you think brings couriers together? 12. In your opinion, is there solidarity between food delivery couriers? If so, how does that solidarity materialise? 13. When mobilising, to what extent do you feel supported by trade unions, other civil society organisations, or social movements? What role do they usually play? 14. To what extent do you feel supported by the public? Please explain. 15. What are some enabling and limiting factors affecting the collective action of food delivery couriers? 16. In your opinion, how supportive is the legal and institutional environment in Georgia for your mobilisation efforts? 17. What do you usually pay attention to when formulating and framing your core messages as part of your collective action? 18. How do targets, platform companies, usually respond to your attempts to mobilise?
Cool-off	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. How successful do you think protests or other types of collective action are in your case? 20. Do you have anything else to add?

Annex V: Thematic Analysis Map

