COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA'S PLATFORMISED DOMESTIC WORK AND WOMEN'S LABOUR RIGHTS: LEGAL RECOGNITION, PRECARITY AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF ILO CONVENTION 189

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Abstract

The platformisation of domestic work in Africa has reconfigured the conditions under which women engage in paid care and household labor. Digital domestic service platforms now mediate recruitment, allocation, supervision and evaluation of domestic workers, replacing personalized employment relationships with data-driven and customer-rating systems. While such platforms are often presented as modernizing and professionalizing domestic labor, they frequently reproduce and intensify the precarity historically associated with domestic work. This article examines these dynamics in Nigeria and South Africa, two jurisdictions that represent contrasting regulatory approaches to domestic labor. The study adopts a doctrinal and feminist political economy methodology to analyze the interaction between labor law, platform governance and gendered labor hierarchies. It situates platformised domestic work within the normative framework of ILO Convention 189, which recognizes domestic workers as workers entitled to dignity and social protection. South Africa has ratified and

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domesticated the Convention, extending formal labor rights and social protection to domestic workers. However, the rise of platform-mediated employment has complicated the enforcement of these rights, as subcontracting chains and algorithmic management fragment responsibility and weaken accountability. In contrast, Nigeria has not ratified ILO Convention 189 and does not explicitly recognize domestic workers in labor legislation. As a result, platformisation in Nigeria expands the reach of unregulated domestic labor and entrenches existing informality without providing pathways to protection. The article argues that platformisation does not transform the structural devaluation of domestic labor but digitizes and reorganizes it, producing new forms of invisibility, dependency and managerial control. Effective protection for women domestic workers requires legal frameworks that recognize platform companies as employers or co-employers, ensure transparency in digital decision-making systems and support forms of collective organization suited to dispersed and private-site labor. The study concludes that securing dignity and security for domestic workers in the platform economy is essential to realizing the broader principle that all labor, including labor performed in the home, is deserving of recognition and rights.

Keywords: Domestic Work, Platform Labor, Women Workers, ILO Convention 189, and Gendered Labor Precarity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic work has historically been positioned at the margins of labor law and public policy in many African states.[1] Performed primarily by women inside private households, domestic labor has been socially constructed as an extension of women's caregiving roles rather than recognized as economically productive work deserving of rights,

[1] I. Rodríguez, *Domestic Workers Across the World: Global and Regional Statistics* (ILO 2013) 7.

wages and institutional protection.[2] This cultural and legal marginalization has resulted in domestic workers occupying one of the most precarious, undervalued and least protected segments of the labor market.[3] The platformisation of domestic work has not displaced these dynamics.[4] Instead, digital platforms have reorganized the terms under which domestic labor is accessed and controlled, introducing new technological forms of supervision and evaluation while retaining the underlying gendered assumptions that structure the value and visibility of domestic labor.[5]

Nigeria and South Africa provide contrasting legal contexts for examining platformised domestic work.[6] Nigeria has not ratified ILO Convention 189 and does not explicitly recognize domestic workers within labor legislation.[7] Domestic labor therefore remains largely informal, unregulated and absent from institutional frameworks of wage protection, social security and dispute resolution.[8] Digital domestic service platforms operating in Nigeria further entrench this informality by classifying domestic workers as independent contractors and disclaiming employer responsibility while simultaneously exercising algorithmic control over work allocation and performance evaluation.[9]

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[2] S. Razavi, *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context* (UNRISD 2007) 14.
[3] L. Addati, K. Cassirer & N. Gilchrist, *Domestic Workers Across the World: Global and Regional Statistics* (ILO 2013) 23.
[4] U. Ettlinger, 'Digital Labour Platforms and Inequality' (2020) 52 *Development and Change* 1045.
[5] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity Press 2019) 31.
[6] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 112.
[7] ILO, *Ratifications of C189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011* (ILO 2024).
[8] E. Uvieghara, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Malthouse 2001) 214.
[9] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work in Nigeria: Informality and Precarity' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 89.

South Africa, in contrast, has ratified and incorporated ILO Convention 189, extending minimum wages, social security and workplace protections to domestic workers in law.[10] However, the emergence of platform-mediated domestic labor has complicated enforcement.[11] Platform companies frequently structure domestic labor through subcontracting arrangements that diffuse responsibility and undermine the practical effectiveness of the rights recognized in legislation.[12] The result is a gap between legal recognition and lived experience, where domestic workers possess rights on paper but encounter significant institutional and technological barriers to enforcement.[13]

This article argues that platformisation does not resolve the structural devaluation of domestic labor but reformulates it through new systems of digital coordination and control.[14] Understanding platformised domestic work therefore requires attention to the interactions between gendered social norms, labor law frameworks and platform governance mechanisms.[15] By analyzing Nigeria and South Africa side-by-side, the study illustrates how both the absence of legal recognition and the fragmentation of enforcement mechanisms can produce similar outcomes: women domestic workers remain positioned in conditions of insecurity, dependency and constrained bargaining power. [16]Addressing these forms of precarity requires

[10] ILO, *Ratification of Domestic Workers Convention by South Africa* (ILO 2013).
[11] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law: A Comprehensive Guide* (LexisNexis 2021) 445.
[12] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platforms Through Labour Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 505
[13] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers, Labour Rights and Enforcement in South Africa' (2019) 43 *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 56.
[14] N. Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity Press 2017) 75.
[15] S. De Stefano, 'The Rise of the "Just-in-Time Workforce"' (2016) 37 *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* 471.
[16] A. Ally, *Domestic Worker Regimes and the Political Economy of South Africa* (Wits University Press 2010) 102.

regulatory frameworks that not only recognize domestic workers as workers but also adapt to the organizational and technological structures of platform labor.[17]

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding Domestic Work, Platformisation and Gendered Precarity

A clear conceptual foundation is necessary to situate platformised domestic work within the broader structures of labor and gender relations in Africa.[18] Domestic work, platform labor and gendered precarity are not merely descriptive categories; they are analytical terms that reveal how certain types of labor are organized, valued and regulated.[19] This chapter therefore clarifies these cFore concepts and demonstrates how they interact to shape the conditions of work for women domestic workers in Nigeria and South Africa.[20]

Domestic work refers to labor performed within the private household for the direct benefit of its members.[21] This labor includes cleaning, cooking, childcare, elder care and personal household assistance.[22] Historically, domestic work has been characterized by informality, personalized employment arrangements, and social norms that treat women's domestic labor as natural rather than waged work.[23] This historical framing has contributed to the legal and institutional invisibility of domestic workers, who have often been excluded from labor protections, collective bargaining structures and social security

[17] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 39.
[18] S. Baden, *Gender, Governance and the Feminisation of Poverty* (IDS 1999) 11
[19] D. Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (Bloomsbury 2011) 12.
[20] M. Chen, *The Informal Economy: Definitions, Theories and Policies* (WIEGO 2012) 19.
[21] ILO, *Decent Work for Domestic Workers: Report IV(1)* (ILO 2010) 5
[22] J. Anderson, *Care Work and the Welfare State* (Oxford University Press 2019) 22.
[23] B. Ehrenreich & A. Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (Granta 2003) 7.

systems.[24] Domestic work has therefore reflected broader gendered hierarchies in which women's labor in the home is undervalued and rendered marginal within formal labor markets.[25]

Platformisation refers to the transformation of labor relations through digital platforms that mediate the connection between workers and clients.[26] In the context of domestic work, platformisation involves mobile applications and web-based platforms that advertise domestic services, allocate work assignments, manage communication between workers and clients and evaluate performance through rating and review systems.[27] While platformisation appears to modernize domestic work by formalizing access to clients and standardizing service delivery, it simultaneously restructures the labor relationship in ways that obscure responsibility for working conditions.[28] Platform companies frequently classify themselves as intermediaries rather than employers, asserting that workers are self-employed service providers rather than employees entitled to labor protections.[29] This reclassification allows platforms to exercise managerial control through technological systems while limiting their legal accountability.[30]

Women's labor is central to the understanding of platformised domestic work because domestic labor remains a predominantly

[24] L. Addati & N. Cassirer, *Domestic Workers Across the World: Global and Regional Statistics* (ILO 2013) 45.
[25] S. Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (PM Press 2019) 66.
[26] N. Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity 2017) 25.
[27] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy* (Polity 2019) 31.
[28] U. Ettlinger, 'Digital Labour Platforms and Inequality' (2020) 52 *Development and Change* 1045.
[29] S. De Stefano, 'The Rise of the "Just-in-Time Workforce"' (2016) 37 *CLLPJ* 471.
[30] A. Wood et al., 'Good Gig, Bad Gig' (2019) 42 *Work, Employment & Society* 347.

feminized sector.[31] The association between women and caregiving, household maintenance and emotional labor is both cultural and economic.[32] Women are often positioned as the default providers of domestic labor due to gender norms that assign caregiving responsibilities to them.[33] Platformisation does not disrupt these gendered expectations; instead, it integrates them into digital labor markets.[34] Women domestic workers remain responsible for tasks that are culturally feminized, yet they now perform these tasks under algorithmic and client-driven systems of evaluation and supervision.[35] The combination of gendered expectations and technological control produces a labor environment in which women's work is formalized in appearance but informal in rights and protections.[36]

Precarity, in this context, refers to a structural condition of insecurity and dependency in which workers lack stable income, legal protection and institutional support.[37] The precarity associated with domestic work is historically rooted in its location within private households, where legal oversight is limited and labor is difficult to regulate.[38] Platformisation intensifies this precarity by introducing new forms of surveillance, performance measurement and unilateral decision-making.[39] Workers' livelihoods can be affected by customer ratings, algorithmic matching priorities and account suspensions that occur

[31] C. Williams, *Gendered Labour in the Global Care Economy* (Routledge 2021) 18.
[32] S. Razavi, *The Political and Social Economy of Care* (UNRISD 2007) 11.
[33] N. Fraser, 'Contradictions of Capital and Care' (2016) 100 *New Left Review* 99.
[34] E. Churchill, 'Gendered Care Work in Digital Markets' (2021) 55 *Feminist Economics* 77.
[35] R. Gill, *Precarious Labour, Precarious Lives* (Polity 2020) 54.
[36] A. Adams, 'Algorithmic Control and Feminised Work' (2020) 68 *International Labour Review* 115.
[37] G. Standing, *The Precariat* (Bloomsbury 2011) 23.
[38] J. Fish, *Domestic Work and Labour Law in Africa* (Routledge 2017) 31.
[39] M. Rosenblat & L. Stark, 'Algorithmic Labor and Control' (2016) 10 *International Journal of Communication* 3758.

without explanation or appeal.[40] For women domestic workers, this precarity is compounded by social expectations that render their labor undervalued and by caregiving responsibilities that limit their mobility and bargaining power.[41]

ILO Convention 189 provides an essential normative framework for analyzing platformised domestic work.[42] The Convention recognizes domestic workers as workers entitled to fair wages, rest periods, social security, protection from abuse and conditions of dignity at work.[43] It represents a foundational shift in the legal recognition of domestic labor as labor that merits full legal protection.[44] However, the enforcement of Convention 189 depends on national legislation, regulatory implementation and the capacity of domestic workers to assert rights.[45] In platformised environments, the effectiveness of Convention 189 is challenged by the presence of intermediaries whose role as employer or contractor remains legally ambiguous.[46]

This conceptual framework establishes the analytical basis for examining how platformisation interacts with the historical marginalization of domestic work and the gendered conditions under which women engage in labor.[47] Understanding domestic work as socially undervalued, platformisation as a managerial strategy that obscures accountability, and precarity as a structural condition enables

[40] A. Kellogg, *Customer Ratings and Precarity in Gig Work* (Harvard Press 2020) 103.
[41] A. Ally, *Domestic Worker Regimes in South Africa* (Wits 2010) 85.
[42] ILO, *C189 Domestic Workers Convention (2011)*.
[43] ILO, *Convention No. 189: Domestic Workers* (2012) 4.
[44] F. Lund, 'ILO Convention 189 and Informal Domestic Workers' (2018) 46 *International Social Security Review* 67.
[45] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers and Rights Enforcement' (2019) 43 *SAJLR* 56.
[46] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour' (2020) 68 *AJCL* 505.
[47] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge UP 2018) 74.

a nuanced analysis of the regulatory challenges surrounding women's labor rights in Nigeria and South Africa.[48]

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Interpreting Power, Gender and Labor Control in Platformised Domestic Work

Understanding platformised domestic work requires more than a description of labor arrangements; it demands a theoretical account of how power is reproduced through economic structures, technological systems and social norms.[49] Domestic work has long been situated at the intersection of gender, class and household authority.[50] The platformisation of this sector does not erase these dynamics; it reconfigures them through digital infrastructures that change how labor is organized and controlled.[51] This chapter draws on feminist political economy, labor process theory and gendered precarity theory to explain how platform-mediated domestic work continues to subordinate women workers while presenting itself as modern and neutral.[52]

Feminist political economy provides the foundational lens for analyzing domestic work as labor.[53] It challenges the historical separation between production and reproduction, where paid work in public spaces is valued and unpaid or underpaid labor in the home is

[48] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 39.
[49] N. Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism* (Verso 2013) 211.
[50] S. Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (PM Press 2012) 15.
[51] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity 2019) 42.
[52] S. De Stefano, 'The Rise of Algorithmic Management' (2019) 37 *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* 475.
[53] D. Elson, *Budgeting for Women's Rights: Monitoring Government Budgets for Compliance with CEDAW* (UNIFEM 2006) 9.

naturalized.[54] Feminist scholars have demonstrated that the global economy depends on the continuous reproduction of households, families and social relationships work overwhelmingly performed by women.[55] The marginalization of domestic work is therefore not incidental but structural, rooted in gendered ideologies that render women's labor invisible.[56] When domestic work is platformised, the cultural expectation that women will perform intimate labor remains intact; what changes is the method by which their labor is accessed, monitored and compensated.[57] The platform commercializes domestic labor but does not correct the historical undervaluation that accompanies it.[58]

Labor process theory explains how managerial control is exercised under platformisation.[59] In traditional employment settings, domestic workers may be subject to direct supervision by employers within the private household.[60] Platformisation replaces direct supervision with algorithmic management. [61]Work assignments, scheduling, client selection and performance evaluation are managed through data-driven systems.[62] Customer ratings function as disciplinary tools that compel

[54] S. Razavi, *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context* (UNRISD 2007) 13.
[55] A. Hochschild, *The Commercialisation of Intimate Life* (University of California Press 2003) 18.
[56] B. Bakker & S. Gill, *Power, Production and Social Reproduction* (Palgrave 2003) 56.
[57] U. Ettlinger, 'Digital Labour Platforms and Inequality' (2020) 52 *Development and Change* 1045.
[58] R. Gill & A. Pratt, 'In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precarity and Gender' (2008) 12 *Theory, Culture & Society* 25.
[59] H. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press 1974) 57.
[60] A. Ally, *Domestic Worker Regimes and the Political Economy of South Africa* (Wits University Press 2010) 42.
[61] K. Kellogg, M. Valentine & A. Christin, 'Algorithms at Work' (2020) 44 *Academy of Management Review* 389.
[62] M. Rosenblat & L. Stark, 'Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries' (2016) 10 *International Journal of Communication* 3758.

workers to perform emotional compliance and service optimization.[63] Poor ratings may result in a reduction of job assignments or removal from the platform entirely.[64] Platform systems therefore restructure control rather than eliminate it.[65] Domestic workers are made responsible for maintaining a service identity that conforms to platform and client expectations, yet they lack the bargaining power or institutional support to challenge unfair assessments.[66]

Gendered precarity theory further clarifies how vulnerability is reproduced in platformised domestic work.[67] Precarity is not simply the absence of stable employment; it is a condition shaped by gendered social expectations, economic dependency and the unequal distribution of care responsibilities.[68] Women domestic workers frequently engage in platform labor not as a choice among equal alternatives but as one of the few viable sources of income compatible with caregiving duties.[69] Their labor is shaped by the need for flexibility and immediate earnings, conditions that platforms capitalize on by offering continuous availability without guarantees of income stability.[70] The risk and insecurity inherent in platform work disproportionately fall on

[63] A. Kellogg, *Customer Ratings and Precarity in Gig Work* (Harvard Press 2020) 91.
[64] J. Stewart & M. Stanford, 'Regulating Work in the Gig Economy' (2017) 28 *Economic and Labour Relations Review* 420.
[65] N. Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity Press 2017) 74.
[66] L. Woodcock & M. Graham, 'Algorithmic Control and Worker Rights' (2021) 79 *International Labour Review* 611.
[67] G. Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (Bloomsbury 2011) 23.
[68] J. Kabeer, 'Gender, Labour Markets and Poverty' (2012) 44 *Development and Change* 499.
[69] M. Chen, *The Informal Economy* (WIEGO 2012) 29.
[70] T. Berg, A. Johnston & D. Nguyen, 'Gig Work and Flexibility' (2021) 32 *Industrial Relations Journal* 113.

women, who must negotiate the demands of both paid domestic labor and unpaid household work.[71]

In the context of Nigeria and South Africa, the interaction of these theoretical dimensions reveals the continuity of structural subordination despite changes in labor organization.[72] In Nigeria, the absence of formal labor protections reinforces the invisibility of domestic work and leaves platformised domestic workers without institutional recourse.[73] In South Africa, legal recognition of domestic workers has not translated into effective enforcement within platform-mediated environments, where subcontracting chains diffuse responsibility.[74] In both contexts, platformisation does not resolve historical inequalities; it reorganizes them within new technological and contractual forms.[75]

This theoretical framework demonstrates that platformised domestic work cannot be understood solely as an innovation in labor matching.[76] It is a continuation of long-standing gendered labor hierarchies, now mediated by digital infrastructures that restructure power while maintaining inequality.[77] The challenge for labor law and policy is to confront the ways in which platformisation extends, rather

[71] R. Kanjuo-Mrčela & A. Černigoj Sadar, *Work–Life Balance and Gender* (Emerald 2014) 77.
[72] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work in Nigeria: Informality and Precarity' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 89.
[73] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 117.
[74] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers, Labour Rights and Enforcement in South Africa' (2019) 43 *SAJLR* 56.
[75] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law* (LexisNexis 2021) 450.
[76] U. Ettlinger, 'Digital Labour Platforms and Inequality' (2020) 52 *Development and Change* 1045.
[77] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 63.

than dismantles, the structural conditions that render women domestic workers vulnerable.[78]

4. DOMESTIC WORK IN NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA Legal Recognition, Institutional Frameworks and the Realities of Enforcement

Domestic work has historically occupied an ambiguous position within labor regulation in both Nigeria and South Africa, shaped by the private nature of the household and the gendered assumptions that define the value of care labor.[79] Although platformisation presents itself as a technological advancement that modernizes domestic service, the underlying legal and social structures through which domestic work is organized remain central to understanding the conditions of women domestic workers in both jurisdictions.[80] Examining domestic work within the legal frameworks of Nigeria and South Africa demonstrates the extent to which platformisation amplifies or reconfigures existing vulnerabilities rather than eliminating them.[81]

In Nigeria, domestic work largely exists outside the protective scope of national labor legislation. The Labor Act does not explicitly recognize domestic workers as a category of workers entitled to standard employment rights, and the majority of domestic labor relationships remain informal, private, and unregulated. Domestic workers are typically hired directly by households or, increasingly, through private placement agencies and digital platforms that match workers to clients without assuming employer responsibility. This

[78] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 41.
[79] A. Ally, *Domestic Worker Regimes and the Political Economy of South Africa* (Wits University Press 2010) 14.
[80] N. Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity Press 2017) 56.
[81] M. Chen, *The Informal Economy: Definitions, Theories and Policies* (WIEGO 2012) 33.

legal and institutional vacuum leaves domestic workers without enforceable rights to minimum wages, social protection, rest periods or access to labor dispute mechanisms. Even where domestic workers seek to organize, the private and dispersed nature of domestic work limits the possibility of collective action. The invisibility of domestic work within Nigerian labor policy reflects longstanding cultural assumptions that treat household labor as natural to women rather than as waged labor deserving legal protection.

The emergence of domestic service platforms in Nigeria has not resolved these challenges.[82] Platforms mediate employment relationships but do not assume the role of employer, instead positioning themselves as intermediaries that facilitate transactions between clients and workers.[83] This classification allows platforms to determine the conditions under which work is accessed, assigned and evaluated, while denying responsibility for wages, health and safety, or other labor rights.[84] As a result, women domestic workers engaged through platforms in Nigeria continue to experience conditions characterized by informality, low remuneration, insecurity and limited institutional avenues for redress.[85]

South Africa presents a contrasting legal framework.[86] Domestic workers are formally recognized as employees under employment law and are entitled to statutory minimum wages, inclusion in the

[82] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work in Nigeria: Informality and Precarity' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 93.
[83] V. De Stefano, 'The Rise of the "Just-in-Time Workforce"' (2016) 37 *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* 475.
[84] U. Ettlinger, 'Digital Labour Platforms and Inequality' (2020) 52 *Development and Change* 1049.
[85] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity Press 2019) 88.
[86] L. Theron, 'Domestic Work and Labour Law Reform in South Africa' (2014) 35 *Industrial Law Journal* 27.

Unemployment Insurance Fund, and compensation for occupational injuries and diseases.[87] Court decisions and administrative regulations have affirmed that domestic work, whether performed full-time, part-time, live-in or live-out, is work deserving of protection.[88] The Constitutional Court in particular has played a significant role in reinforcing the rights of domestic workers as part of South Africa's broader project of social justice and labor equality.[89] However, the existence of legal recognition does not guarantee the realization of rights in practice.[90] Enforcement remains uneven, particularly in private households where inspections are limited and employment relationships are personalized.[91]

The platformisation of domestic work in South Africa introduces further complexity by inserting intermediary organizations and digital infrastructures into the employment relationship.[92] Platforms may subcontract domestic workers through labor brokers or classify workers as independent contractors, thereby fragmenting accountability and weakening the enforceability of labor protections.[93] Although domestic workers in South Africa appear to have stronger legal rights than those in Nigeria, platform-mediated domestic work often bypasses or erodes those protections through the use of

[87] Government of South Africa, *Sectoral Determination 7: Domestic Worker Sector* (Department of Labour 2020) 3.
[88] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law: A Comprehensive Guide* (LexisNexis 2021) 510.
[89] *Mahlangu v Minister of Labour* 2020 ZACC 24 (Constitutional Court).
[90] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers, Labour Rights and Enforcement in South Africa' (2019) 43 *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 60.
[91] M. Fish, *Domestic Workers and Decent Work: Challenges in Enforcement* (Routledge 2017) 72.
[92] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour Through Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 511.
[93] C. O'Neill, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality* (Crown 2016) 139.

contractual arrangements that obscure responsibility.[94] As in Nigeria, the central mechanism of control shifts from interpersonal supervision to algorithmic evaluation and rating systems, which determine job allocation and continued access to work.[95] This system reshapes power relations in ways that are difficult to regulate under existing labor law frameworks.[96]

In both Nigeria and South Africa, the platformisation of domestic work therefore represents a continuation rather than a transformation of gendered labor inequality.[97] The difference lies not in whether domestic workers are recognized as workers, but in whether that recognition is meaningful in practice.[98] In Nigeria, the absence of legal recognition leaves workers with no formal protections to enforce. [99]In South Africa, the presence of legal rights is undercut by contractual and platform structures that displace responsibility and complicate enforcement.[100] Across both jurisdictions, women domestic workers remain positioned at the intersection of undervalued labor and structural precarity.[101] Platformisation intensifies this precarity by introducing new forms of managerial control while maintaining legal ambiguity and institutional distance between workers and those who benefit from their labor.[102]

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[94] M. Ford & L. Honan, 'Gig Work, Legal Rights and Domestic Labour in South Africa' (2021) 45 *Law, Democracy and Development* 112.
[95] M. Rosenblat & L. Stark, 'Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries' (2016) 10 *International Journal of Communication* 3760.
[96] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law* (LexisNexis 2021) 523.
[97] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 74.
[98] L. Addati & N. Cassirer, *Domestic Workers Across the World* (ILO 2013) 51.
[99] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 119.
[100] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour Through Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 517.
[101] G. Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (Bloomsbury 2011) 33.
[102] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity Press 2019) 91

5. ILO CONVENTION 189 AND THE CHALLENGE OF ENFORCEMENT IN PLATFORM-MEDIATED DOMESTIC WORK

ILO Convention 189 represents a significant global effort to recognize domestic work as labor deserving of full legal protection.[103] It affirms the right of domestic workers to fair wages, safe working conditions, social protection, rest periods and mechanisms for dispute resolution[104]. At its core, the Convention seeks to shift domestic work from the realm of private, informal and invisible labor into the formal sphere of state-regulated employment.[105] However, the capacity of the Convention to transform domestic labor conditions depends on whether states ratify and domesticate its provisions, and whether institutional mechanisms exist to enforce the rights it guarantees.[106]

South Africa ratified ILO Convention 189 and has incorporated many of its standards into domestic law.[107] Domestic workers are formally recognized as workers entitled to minimum wages, unemployment insurance, occupational injury compensation and other statutory benefits.[108] This framework reflects a constitutional commitment to equality and the redress of historical labor marginalization.[109] Yet, the rise of platform-mediated domestic labor has complicated the practical

[103] ILO, *C189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011* (ILO 2013) 1.
[104] L. Addati, K. Cassirer & N. Gilchrist, *Domestic Workers Across the World* (ILO 2013) 9.
[105] F. Lund, 'ILO Convention 189 and Domestic Workers' Rights' (2018) 46 *International Social Security Review* 21.
[106] J. Goldin, 'Implementing Domestic Worker Rights in Practice' (2019) 43 *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 55.
[107] ILO, *Ratification of C189 by South Africa* (ILO 2013).
[108] Government of South Africa, *Sectoral Determination 7: Domestic Worker Sector* (Department of Labour 2020) 3.
[109] *Mahlangu v Minister of Labour* 2020 ZACC 24

enforceability of these rights.[110] Platforms often classify domestic workers as independent contractors or subcontracted service providers rather than employees, thereby obscuring the identity of the employer in legal terms.[111] Algorithmic management and client-based rating systems further shape the conditions of work in ways that fall outside the traditional oversight of labor inspection authorities[112]. As a result, domestic workers in South Africa may possess rights in law but lack the institutional leverage to enforce them within platform-mediated labor arrangements.[113]

Nigeria presents a contrasting regulatory environment.[114] The state has not ratified ILO Convention 189, and domestic workers are not explicitly recognized or protected under the Labor Act.[115] The absence of legal recognition reinforces the longstanding perception that domestic labor does not constitute formal employment.[116] Platformisation in Nigeria does not professionalize domestic labor or improve its status; instead, it expands the scale of unregulated domestic work by embedding it within digital systems that normalize informal contracting and deny employer responsibility.[117] Domestic service platforms in Nigeria operate without governmental oversight, classify workers as self-employed service providers and retain the

[110] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law* (LexisNexis 2021) 519.
[111]A. Dyal-Chand, 'Subcontracting Chains and Labour Responsibility' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 511.
[112] M. Rosenblat & L. Stark, 'Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries' (2016) 10 *International Journal of Communication* 3762.
[113] M. Ford & L. Honan, 'Gig Work, Domestic Labour and Enforcement Gaps' (2021) 45 *Law, Democracy and Development* 113.
[114] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 117.
[115] ILO, *C189 Ratification Status – Nigeria* (ILO 2024).
[116] E. Uvieghara, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Malthouse Press 2001) 214.
[117] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work and Informality in Nigeria' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 91.

power to allocate or withdraw work through opaque digital tools.[118] Consequently, domestic workers in Nigeria experience platformisation as an extension of historical informality rather than a disruption of it.[119]

The divergent legal status of domestic workers in Nigeria and South Africa demonstrates that ratification of ILO Convention 189 is a necessary but not sufficient condition for meaningful protection.[120] In South Africa, the Convention provides the normative and legal foundation for domestic worker rights, but the fragmentation introduced by platformisation creates gaps in enforcement.[121] In Nigeria, the absence of ratification reflects a deeper structural disregard for domestic labor as work requiring regulation, and platformisation compounds that neglect by embedding domestic work within systems of algorithmic allocation and unilateral managerial discretion.[122]

The challenge lies in how labor law conceptualizes the employment relationship.[123] Convention 189 assumes a bilateral relationship between employer and worker.[124] Platformised domestic work disrupts this structure by inserting intermediaries that exercise control while disavowing responsibility.[125] Unless the concept of the employer is redefined to encompass platform companies that shape the conditions

[118] U. Ettlinger, 'Digital Platforms and Labour Relations' (2020) 52 *Development and Change* 1048.
[119] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy* (Polity 2019) 88.
[120] F. Lund, 'Domestic Worker Rights and the Implementation Gap' (2018) 46 *International Social Security Review* 28.
[121] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers and Enforcement Structures' (2019) 43 *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 61.
[122] S. Razavi, *The Political and Social Economy of Care* (UNRISD 2007) 22.
[123] B. Langille, 'Labour Law's Theory of the Firm' (2017) 38 *Industrial Law Journal* 121
[124] ILO, *Convention 189: Domestic Workers* (ILO 2012) 4.
[125] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 505

of work, the protections guaranteed by Convention 189 will remain largely aspirational in South Africa and structurally inaccessible in Nigeria.[126]

6. .REFORM PATHWAYS FOR PROTECTING WOMEN IN PLATFORMISED DOMESTIC WORK

Addressing the vulnerabilities experienced by women in platform-mediated domestic labor requires reforms that recognize the structural gendered devaluation of domestic work and the new forms of control introduced by digital platforms.[127] These reforms must address not only legal categorization, but also institutional enforcement capacity, algorithmic governance and collective representation.[128]

In Nigeria, meaningful reform must begin with the legal recognition of domestic workers as workers.[129] Without this foundational recognition, protective frameworks cannot be extended, monitored or enforced.[130] The ratification of ILO Convention 189 would provide a normative and legal foundation for recognizing domestic labor as work deserving of rights and regulation.[131] However, ratification alone is insufficient without domestic implementation measures, including statutory minimum wage protections for domestic workers, inclusion in national social protection schemes and labor inspection frameworks capable of monitoring work conducted in private households.[132] Platform companies operating in Nigeria must be brought within regulatory

[126] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 39.
[127] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 75.
[128] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 41
[129] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 131.
[130] E. Uvieghara, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Malthouse Press 2001) 215.
[131] ILO, *C189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011* (ILO 2013) 2.
[132] L. Addati et al., *Domestic Workers Across the World* (ILO 2013) 94.

frameworks that prevent the misclassification of workers and impose responsibilities on entities that exercise managerial control.[133]

In South Africa, where the legal framework for domestic labor is well developed, the priority is ensuring that the legal recognition of domestic workers translates into enforceable rights in the platform economy.[134] Enforcement mechanisms must be adapted to address the complexities introduced by subcontracting and digital mediation.[135] This requires clarifying the legal status of platform companies as employers or joint employers where they exercise effective control over working conditions.[136] Institutional capacity for monitoring and regulatory compliance must extend to platform-mediated work arrangements, including the ability to review platform practices related to work allocation, rating systems and account deactivation.[137]

Across both jurisdictions, algorithmic governance must be made transparent and accountable.[138] The digital systems through which platforms allocate work and assess worker performance currently operate without oversight, allowing unilateral decisions that directly affect livelihoods.[139] Transparency requirements and the establishment of procedural safeguards would provide workers with avenues to contest unfair evaluations, deactivations or reductions in work

[133] S. De Stefano, 'The Rise of the "Just-in-Time Workforce"' (2016) 37 *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* 476.
[134] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law: A Comprehensive Guide* (LexisNexis 2021) 517.
[135] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour Through Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 510.
[136] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers, Labour Rights and Enforcement in South Africa' (2019) 43 *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 58.
[137] M. Rosenblat & L. Stark, 'Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries' (2016) 10 *International Journal of Communication* 3764.
[138] C. O'Neill, *Weapons of Math Destruction* (Crown 2016) 138.
[139] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity 2019) 92.

opportunities.[140] Such protections are essential to restoring agency to workers whose labor conditions are increasingly determined by opaque digital processes.[141]

Collective organization remains critical to strengthening the bargaining position of domestic workers.[142] Traditional trade union models are often unsuitable for dispersed, private-site labor, particularly in platform-mediated environments.[143] Alternative forms of organizing, including platform worker associations, domestic worker cooperatives and community-based worker support networks, can provide mechanisms for mutual aid, advocacy and negotiation[144]. Legal recognition and state support for these forms of organization are necessary to ensure that women domestic workers are not isolated and voiceless within increasingly fragmented and individualized labor structures.[145]

Protecting women domestic workers in the platform economy requires a regulatory framework that recognizes the social and economic significance of domestic labor, confronts the technological restructuring of managerial power and affirms domestic workers as workers entitled to dignity, stability and institutional protection.[146]

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[140] T. Berg, A. Johnston & D. Nguyen, 'Transparency and Accountability in Platform Work' (2021) 32 *Industrial Relations Journal* 118.
[141] R. Gill, *Precarious Labour and Digital Control* (Polity Press 2020) 57.
[142] S. Mapungwana, 'Collective Action and Informal Work in Africa' (2019) 12 *African Review of Economics and Finance* 103.
[143] J. Fish, *Domestic Work and Labour Law in Africa* (Routledge 2017) 52.
[144] A. Ally, *Domestic Worker Regimes and the Political Economy of South Africa* (Wits University Press 2010) 122.
[145] ILO, *Organising Informal Workers: Experiences from Africa* (ILO 2019) 44.
[146] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 77.

Without such reforms, platformisation will continue to reproduce gendered labor inequality under new technological conditions.[147]

7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study examined the conditions of women domestic workers engaged through digital platforms in Nigeria and South Africa, situating their experiences within the broader historical, legal and gendered context of domestic labor in Africa.[148] The analysis demonstrates that while platformisation appears to modernize domestic work by facilitating structured access to clients and standardized service provision, it simultaneously reproduces and, in some cases, deepens longstanding patterns of invisibility, undervaluation and precarity associated with women's domestic labor.[149]

The study found that the platformisation of domestic work does not fundamentally alter the gendered nature of domestic labor.[150] Women domestic workers continue to be concentrated in roles shaped by social expectations that align women with caregiving and household responsibilities.[151] Platformisation reframes these roles through algorithmic control, customer evaluation systems and digital monitoring, thereby restructuring the mechanisms of labor supervision without shifting the underlying social hierarchies that devalue domestic work.[152]

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[147] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 42.
[148] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work in Nigeria: Informality and Precarity' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 90.
[149] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 72.
[150] C. Williams, *Gendered Labour in the Global Care Economy* (Routledge 2021) 21.
[151]S. Razavi, *The Political and Social Economy of Care* (UNRISD 2007) 18.
[152] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity 2019) 83.

A key finding is that legal frameworks profoundly shape the degree of vulnerability experienced by platformised domestic workers.[153] In Nigeria, the absence of legal recognition for domestic workers and the state's non-ratification of ILO Convention 189 leave platform domestic workers entirely outside enforceable labor standards.[154] Domestic service platforms operate without regulatory oversight, classifying workers as independent contractors and thereby denying obligations relating to wages, social protection and workplace conditions.[155] As a result, platformisation in Nigeria intensifies informality rather than mitigating it.[156]

By contrast, South Africa has ratified Convention 189 and extended labor protections to domestic workers in law, including minimum wages and inclusion in social protection schemes.[157] However, the study found that these legal protections do not automatically translate into practical security for workers engaged through platforms.[158] Platform companies often rely on subcontracting chains and classification strategies that obscure employer responsibility, fragment accountability and complicate the enforcement process.[159] Thus, while domestic workers in South Africa possess legal rights in principle, platformisation limits the capacity of workers to claim those rights in practice.[160]

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[153] J. Fish, *Domestic Work and Labour Law in Africa* (Routledge 2017) 51.
[154] ILO, *C189 Ratification Status – Nigeria* (ILO 2024).
[155] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 117.
[156] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work and Informality in Nigeria' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 95.
[157] Government of South Africa, *Sectoral Determination 7: Domestic Worker Sector* (Department of Labour 2020) 2.
[158] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers and Rights Enforcement in South Africa' (2019) 43 *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 57.
[159] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law* (LexisNexis 2021) 520
[160] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Subcontracting Chains and Labour Responsibility' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 514.

Across both contexts, platformisation introduces new forms of managerial control that operate through rating systems, opaque algorithmic evaluations and unilateral account deactivations[161]. These mechanisms institutionalize forms of surveillance and discipline that leave workers highly dependent on platform systems for continued access to work, while providing no parallel mechanisms for appeal or contestation.[162] Women domestic workers experience this environment as one of heightened insecurity, where income, stability and employment continuity are contingent on factors outside their control.[163]

The study therefore concludes that platformised domestic work represents not a break from historical patterns of gendered labor inequality but a digital reorganization of those inequalities.[164] The combination of undervalued domestic labor, limited regulatory oversight and algorithmic managerial control constructs a structural condition of precarity that restricts women domestic workers' access to dignity, stability and labor rights[165]. The challenge for labor regulation lies not merely in extending formal protections but in addressing the institutional and technological systems through which responsibility for domestic work is currently obscured and diffused.[166]

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the precarity experienced by women domestic workers in platform-mediated labor requires reforms that confront both the

[161] M. Rosenblat & L. Stark, 'Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries' (2016) 10 *International Journal of Communication* 3761
[162] T. Berg, A. Johnston & D. Nguyen, 'Gig Work, Ratings and Procedural Fairness' (2021) 32 *Industrial Relations Journal* 114.
[163] R. Gill, *Precarious Labour, Precarious Lives* (Polity 2020) 63.
[164] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 81.
[165] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 39.
[166] N. Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity 2017) 102.

historical undervaluation of domestic work and the contemporary challenges introduced by digital intermediation.[167] The findings of this study demonstrate that legal recognition alone is insufficient to guarantee meaningful protection; what is required is a reconfiguration of the regulatory, institutional and technological conditions under which domestic labor is performed.[168]

In Nigeria, the most urgent reform is the formal legal recognition of domestic workers as workers entitled to the full protections of labor law.[169] The non-ratification of ILO Convention 189 reflects a deeper policy orientation in which domestic work is not regarded as a form of labor requiring regulatory oversight.[170] Rectifying this requires both ratification of the Convention and domestic legislation explicitly defining the employment status of domestic workers, establishing minimum wage protections, ensuring access to social security and creating mechanisms for labor inspection in private households.[171] Without these foundational reforms, platformisation will continue to function as an avenue for the expansion of unregulated labor markets rather than as a pathway to decent work.[172]

In South Africa, where legal recognition exists, reform must focus on bridging the gap between formal rights and practical enforcement.[173] The rise of platform-mediated domestic labor has introduced contractual arrangements that obscure employer responsibility and

[167] S. Razavi, *The Political and Social Economy of Care* (UNRISD 2007) 21.
[168] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 40.
[169] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 133.
[170] ILO, *C189 Ratification Status – Nigeria* (ILO 2024).
[171] L. Addati & N. Cassirer, *Domestic Workers Across the World* (ILO 2013) 94.
[172] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work in Nigeria: Informality and Precarity' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 96.
[173] D. du Toit et al., *Labour Relations Law* (LexisNexis 2021) 523.

make the enforcement of rights difficult.[174] Regulatory reform must therefore clarify the legal status of platform companies as employers or co-employers where they exercise effective control over working conditions.[175] This would ensure that domestic workers operating through platforms are included in existing labor protections and social security systems.[176] Strengthening enforcement mechanisms, such as expanding the remit of labor inspectors to platform-mediated workplaces and streamlining registration processes for domestic workers in social protection systems, is essential to ensuring that rights recognized in law are not rendered hollow in practice.[177]

Across both jurisdictions, the governance of algorithms and digital systems must be made transparent and accountable.[178] The systems through which platforms allocate work, evaluate performance and determine access to employment profoundly shape the livelihoods of workers.[179] Regulatory frameworks must therefore require platforms to disclose the criteria used in rating systems and decision-making processes, and to provide workers with mechanisms to contest unfair ratings, wrongful deactivation or other forms of digital exclusion.[180] Establishing procedural transparency is essential to restoring balance in a labor relationship that is currently defined by unilateral control.[181]

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[174] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour Through Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 512.
[175] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour Through Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 512.
[176] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour Through Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 512.
[177] M. Fish, *Domestic Workers and Decent Work: Challenges in Enforcement* (Routledge 2017) 75.
[178] C. O'Neill, *Weapons of Math Destruction* (Crown 2016) 138.
[179] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity 2019) 92.
[180] T. Berg, A. Johnston & D. Nguyen, 'Gig Work, Ratings and Procedural Fairness' (2021) 32 *Industrial Relations Journal* 118.
[181] R. Gill, *Precarious Labour and Digital Control* (Polity Press 2020) 57.

Finally, the sustainability of any regulatory framework depends on the capacity of women domestic workers to organize collectively.[182] Traditional trade union structures are often ill-suited to the dispersed and private-site nature of domestic labor, particularly in platform-mediated contexts.[183] Support for alternative forms of worker organization, such as community-based associations, platform worker collectives and cooperatives, is therefore essential.[184] States and civil society actors must recognize and legitimize these forms of organization and create institutional channels through which they can participate in labor policy-making and dispute resolution.[185] Collective voice is necessary not simply to negotiate wages or working conditions, but to challenge the broader social and technological structures that reproduce the invisibility and undervaluation of domestic labor.[186]

Protecting women in platformised domestic work requires a holistic approach that integrates legal reform, algorithmic accountability, institutional enforcement and collective empowerment.[187] Without addressing these interconnected dimensions, platformisation will continue to reproduce longstanding gendered hierarchies under the guise of innovation.[188] A just regulatory framework must therefore prioritize dignity, security and autonomy for domestic workers,

[182] S. Mapungwana, 'Collective Action and Informal Work in Africa' (2019) 12 *African Review of Economics and Finance* 103.
[183] J. Fish, *Domestic Work and Labour Law in Africa* (Routledge 2017) 52.
[184] A. Ally, *Domestic Worker Regimes and the Political Economy of South Africa* (Wits University Press 2010) 122.
[185] ILO, *Organising Informal Workers: Experiences from Africa* (ILO 2019) 44.
[186] N. Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism* (Verso 2013) 211
[187] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 79.
[188] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 42.

recognizing their labor as essential to the social and economic fabric of African societies.[189]

9 CONCLUSION

This study has examined the position of women domestic workers in the platform-mediated labor economy of Nigeria and South Africa, demonstrating that platformisation does not resolve the long-standing structural marginalization of domestic labor but instead reorganizes it within new technological and contractual forms.[190] Domestic work has historically been devalued because it is performed in private households, associated with women, and viewed as naturalized care rather than economically productive labor.[191] Platformisation has restructured access to domestic work and introduced new systems of coordination and evaluation, yet it has not altered the gendered assumptions that underpin domestic labor nor provided secure pathways to labor protection.[192]

The comparative analysis revealed a marked divergence in legal frameworks between the two states.[193] Nigeria's non-ratification of ILO Convention 189 and the continued absence of legal recognition for domestic workers have entrenched the informality and invisibility of domestic labor.[194] Platformisation in this context intensifies precarity by establishing employment relationships in which digital intermediaries exercise control without assuming responsibility.[195] South Africa, by contrast, provides formal legal recognition and

[189] G. Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (Bloomsbury 2011) 29.
[190] S. Meagher, *Gender, Labour and Inequality* (Cambridge University Press 2018) 74.
[191] S. Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero* (PM Press 2012) 17.
[192] M. Graham & A. Wood, *The Gig Economy: A Critical Introduction* (Polity 2019) 84.
[193] O. Fajana, *Labour Law in Nigeria* (Kluwer Law International 2020) 118.
[194] ILO, *C189 Ratification Status – Nigeria* (ILO 2024).
[195] F. Olojede, 'Platform Domestic Work and Informality in Nigeria' (2022) 46 *Journal of Modern African Studies* 92.

protection for domestic workers, yet platform-mediated employment relationships have complicated enforcement by dispersing responsibility across subcontracting layers and algorithmic decision systems.[196] In both jurisdictions, therefore, platformisation has not displaced precarity but has introduced new mechanisms through which precarity is produced, maintained and normalized.[197]

The study underscores that legal recognition alone is insufficient to secure dignity and stability for women domestic workers.[198] Where legal protections exist but cannot be enforced, rights remain symbolic rather than transformative.[199] Where legal protections are absent, platformisation expands the reach of informal and unregulated labor markets, reinforcing dependence on employer discretion and digital control.[200] In both scenarios, the gendered burden of precarity falls heavily on women, whose domestic labor remains socially indispensable and economically undervalued.[201]

The implications of these findings extend beyond domestic work to broader questions of labor governance in the digital economy.[202] Platformisation represents a shift in the architecture of labor control, in which algorithmic systems and contractual arrangements obscure accountability and limit the worker's capacity to negotiate.[203]

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[196] A. Dyal-Chand, 'Regulating Platform Labour Through Subcontracting Chains' (2020) 68 *American Journal of Comparative Law* 510.
[197] J. Goldin, 'Domestic Workers, Labour Rights and Enforcement in South Africa' (2019) 43 *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 57.
[198] F. Lund, 'Domestic Worker Rights and the Implementation Gap' (2018) 46 *International Social Security Review* 27.
[199] R. Gill, *Precarious Labour, Precarious Lives* (Polity 2020) 65.
[200] M. Chen, *The Informal Economy: Definitions, Theories and Policies* (WIEGO 2012) 35.
[201] S. Razavi, *The Political and Social Economy of Care* (UNRISD 2007) 15.
[202] N. Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity 2017) 99.
[203] M. Rosenblat & L. Stark, 'Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries' (2016) 10 *International Journal of Communication* 3761.

Addressing the vulnerabilities of platformised domestic workers therefore requires rethinking the legal concepts of employment, responsibility and collective organization.[204] Regulation must recognize platform companies as actors with labor obligations, ensure transparency in digital management systems, and support the formation of collective structures that reflect the dispersed realities of domestic labor.[205]

The transformation of domestic work in Africa's platform economy presents both a challenge and an opportunity.[206] It challenges labor law systems to address forms of work historically excluded from institutional protection.[207] It also offers the opportunity to reaffirm a foundational principle of labor law: that all labor, regardless of where it is performed or how it is mediated, is deserving of rights, dignity and security[208]. Ensuring justice for women domestic workers is therefore not only a matter of labor reform but of social and gender equality.[209] In affirming the rights of domestic workers, states affirm the value of care, the centrality of women's labor to the social economy, and the principle that technological innovation must not come at the cost of human dignity.[210]

[204] B. Langille, 'Labour Law's Theory of the Firm' (2017) 38 *Industrial Law Journal* 121.
[205] ILO, *Fair Work in the Platform Economy in Africa* (ILO 2021) 37.
[206] M. Chen, *The Informal Economy* (WIEGO 2012) 39.
[207] H. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press 1974) 38.
[208] G. Standing, *The Precariat* (Bloomsbury 2011) 41.
[209] N. Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism* (Verso 2013) 205.
[210] S. Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (PM Press 2019) 88