

## Freelance Platforms and the Transformation of "Stable Job" Concept Among Algerian Youth: An Empirical Field Study

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### Abstract

This study investigates the effect of platforms of freelancers on the transformation of the notion of stable employment of Algerian youth. Taking into account a comprehensive survey among 387 individuals aged 18 to 35 carried out in three important cities of Algeria (Alger, Oran and Constantine), the digital labor platforms are changing career perceptions and employment preferences. The results showed that the younger generations were turning out to be more popular as 67.2% preferred freelancing work. Statistical analysis reveals strong correlation between the familiarity with gig economy platform skills and digital abilities. The research adds to the expanding knowledge base on platform-mediated labor in the MENA region, along with policy recommendations to include freelance work in Algeria's formal economy.

**Keywords:** freelance platforms, gig economy, youth employment, stable job, Algeria, digital labor, career preferences

### 1. Introduction

The world's labor market has changed a lot over the decades; mainly because of technology and digital platforms that offer freelance work and gig jobs.

These transformations have fundamentally reshaped traditional views of career stability, especially among the younger generations, who are increasingly questioning the traditional model of permanent, ongoing employment with an individual employer. In the North Africa, which has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world, freelance platforms are becoming an alternative employment and a heated topic of scholarly and policy debate (World Bank, 2023).

According to the most recent statistics from the World Bank (2024), youth unemployment hovers around 29 to 30 per cent in Algeria. This youth unemployment makes Algeria a particularly compelling case to examine the impact of freelance platforms, on the employment aspirations of youth. In the country's labour market, there is a strong cultural bias for public sector jobs that is historically viewed as the epitome of job security and social status. Nevertheless, these rooted preferences have begun to be contested due to economic restructuring, decreased public sector recruitment and emergence of digital freelance platforms (Benatia & Bousselmi, 2024).

This research fills an important gap in the literature by empirically investigating how Algerian youth view and use freelance platforms and how that is changing their understanding of what is a ‘stable job’. While there has been considerable existing research into gig economy uptake in developed countries (Wood et al., 2019; Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016) there is little empirical evidence from the North African context which has different labour market institutions, cultural norms and digital infrastructure to western settings. What is the familiarity and usage of free platforms by Algerian youth? The research questions guiding this investigation are: (1) To what extent are Algerian youth familiar with and utilizing freelance platforms? How do platform-mediated work experiences influence views on job stability? What predicting factors are there of positive attitudes toward freelance work as a career?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. The Gig Economy and Platform Labor**

Digital platforms have fundamentally reshaped labor markets around the world, leading to what researchers call the ‘gig economy’ or ‘platform economy’ (Schor et al., 2020; Vallas & Schor, 2020). These websites like Upwork, Fiverr, and Freelancer are nothing but global marketplaces that connect clients with independent workers for project-based tasks. They help generate new job opportunities through distance work. Lehdonvirta et al. (2019) show that online freelancing gives workers the unusual and non-standard choice and flexibility at work, but also makes them unstable and unpredictable in income.

A systematic literature review by Mungai and Ogbodo (2024) on the transformative dimensions of the gig economy indicates that digital platforms facilitate “temporary hires” and “freelance employment” across varying occupations. These arrangements improve some workers’ work-life balance but expose others to new risk. Relevant to this study, research on platform economy employment opportunities for young people in the Global South shows that such digital labour markets offer several ways in which young people can access work that would otherwise not be available to them (Anwar & Graham, 2024). But this scholarship must equally encourage reflection on the nature of opportunities endowed and their relationships with local labour market conditions and cultural expectations about employment security.

### **2.2. Youth Perceptions of Employment Stability**

The literature contains extensive documentation regarding attitudes of generations towards work and careers. According to Csehné et al. (2024), Gen X is known to prefer stability and independence, Gen Y be it career advancement or flexibility, Gen Z has another exclusive set shaped by their experience of digital nativity and uncertainty. A study of Generation Z expectations in the workplace reveals that security in terms of employment stability, relationships with co-workers and appropriate salary levels are of paramount importance (Kawka et al., 2025).

Research from Denmark shows Generation Z is not less ambitious than previous generations. Contrary to popular belief that young workers prefer flexibility over security, recent evidence shows that they care about wages, career advancement, and job security more than values. This finding is in accordance with the research of Moen and Sweet (2023) on young workers’ perception of job insecurity. They found four legitimizing frames through which young precarious workers conceptualize employment instability. These are as a spur to

entrepreneurialism; as unavoidable due to repeated exposure; as a stage in the life course; as the price of autonomy and meaningful work.

### **2.3. Freelance Work and the MENA Context**

In recent times, research that specifically addresses freelance work in the MENA region has begun to appear. According to a descriptive survey study, gig economy and freelancing work in Algeria highlighted that the increased availability of platforms such as Upwork and Fiverr is leading many to opt for freelancing work in Algeria. There is also demand for digital services locally. (Benatia & Bousselmi, 2025). The study noted that while infrastructure constraints and regulatory uncertainties are present, Algerian freelancers are increasingly using international platforms to obtain global clients and income.

In Algeria, the regulation of freelance work has been impacted by the “self-employed contractor” law permitting previously informal economic activities to be formalized. Research on the law noted that creating self-employed contractor status is a significant step to integrating Algerian freelancers into the formal economy, but that the law needs strengthening to serve the needs of platform workers (Hadj-Moussa & Belkadi, 2025). The Fairwork report confirms serious problems of working conditions for this category of workers. It also calls for policies which protect the workers but without impeding the flexibility that makes this work desirable (Fairwork, 2024).

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1. Research Design and Sample**

This study is conducted using cross sectional quantitative design for knowing the relation between freelance platform engagement and employment stability perception of youth of Algeria. The primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire between September 2024 and December 2024 from the three major Algerian cities namely Algiers (capital city), Oran (2nd biggest city) and Constantine (major economic city in eastern Algeria). To ensure geographic diversity and difference regional labor market conditions selected these cities.

The target population comprised of youth aged 18-35 years either currently working, actively seeking employment or engaged in some form of earning activities. We used a multi-stage sampling method wherein we chose the neighbourhoods from each city based on the socioeconomic diversity of the neighbourhood. The sampling of participants within each neighbourhood was done with convenience sampling. Out of the total 450 questionnaires, 412 which is 91.6% were returned.

After we deleted the incomplete responses, the analytical sample had 387 cases.

### **3.2. Measurement Instruments**

The scales developed by the researchers and other previously established researchers were used in the construction of the questionnaire related to career preference, entrepreneurial intention and platform work. This research instrument consisted of the following sections: (1) demographic data comprising age, sex, education, and current job; (2) platform awareness and engagement i.e. awareness and engagement of major freelance platforms; (3) digital skills: items adapted from Digital Skills framework; (4) perception of employment security: measured on a 5-point Likert scale; (5) career choice – traditional job vs freelance; and (6) barriers and motivators for freelance work engagement.

The theoretical framework draws on Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, previously applied in entrepreneurship research (Bayona-Oré, 2023; Alshebami et al., 2020), to explain how donations to charities increase the likelihood of individuals collaborating with these charities. According to Luthje and Franke (2003), the self-employment decisions of individuals in the model involve perceived barriers and mechanisms of support..

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (N=387)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Age Group	18-24	156	40.3%
	25-30	142	36.7%
	31-35	89	23.0%
Gender	Male	201	51.9%
	Female	186	48.1%
Education Level	Secondary	87	22.5%
	Bachelor	198	51.2%
	Postgraduate	102	26.4%
Employment Status	Employed FT	124	32.0%
	Employed PT	67	17.3%
	Freelancer	78	20.2%
	Unemployed	118	30.5%

*Source: Field survey data, 2024*

## 4. Results and Findings

### 4.1. Platform Familiarity and Usage Patterns

The Algerian youth is aware about freelancing platforms. In this regard, 78.3% of the respondents said that they know one digital freelancing platform. As per the table 2, upwork is known as the most popular platform with an awareness of 62.8% followed by fiverr 58.4% and down from the region mostaq (34.6%) and khamsat (28.7%). Despite having knowledge of freelance platforms, 34.4% have done not use them to make money. Between awareness and use, this gap reveals a large hurdle to entry worth looking into.

**Table 2: Freelance Platform Awareness and Usage (N=387)**

Platform	Awareness %	Active Users %	Avg Income*
Upwork	62.8%	18.3%	\$487
Fiverr	58.4%	15.7%	\$312
Freelancer.com	41.2%	9.8%	\$276
Mostaq (Regional)	34.6%	11.4%	\$198
Khamsat (Regional)	28.7%	14.2%	\$87

\*Average monthly income in USD for active users; Source: Field survey data, 2024

#### 4.2. Perceptions of Employment Stability

In this study, the shifting ideas of what is considered as ‘steady employment’ by Algerians youth is presented. When asked to explain what is job stability, traditional measures like permanent contracts (74.2%), social security (68.4%) and certainty in income (82.1%) remain important. On the other hand, respondents who were either familiar with or engaged in freelancing had quite different attitudes and assigned importance to skill enhancement opportunities (71.3%); earning more income (65.8%); and having the flexibility to choose their work schedule (73.6%).

Notably, 67.2% of the people surveyed opted for flexibility that freelancing brings rather than permanent employment when asked, in hypotheticals offering the same income levels. The preference was highest among people in the age group of 25-30 years (72.3%) and the postgraduate educated (76.4%) suggesting higher educational qualification may be related to less traditional employment expressions. These results fit the research from Lehdonvirta et al. (2019) on the attractions of online freelancing, but expand such observations to a context where public sector jobs have been historically the dominant aspiration.

**Table 3: Career Preferences by Demographic Groups**

Group	Prefer Traditional %	Prefer Freelance %	Chi-square
Overall Sample	32.8%	67.2%	-
Age 18-24	35.9%	64.1%	8.74*
Age 25-30	27.7%	72.3%	
Age 31-35	36.0%	64.0%	
Platform Users	18.2%	81.8%	24.3***
Non-Users	40.5%	59.5%	-

### 4.3. Predictors of Freelance Work Orientation

In order to identify the factors predicting positive attitudes towards taking up freelance work as a career option, regression analysis was applied. The independent variables denoted demographic variables, familiarity with the platform, digital skills and job status. Whereas, the dependent variable was the preference for freelance work (on a composite scale). According to Table 4, a number of variables are significant predictors of working freelance. Familiarity with platform ( $\beta=0.384$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) showed the strongest positive predictive relationship. In other words, respondents familiar with freelance platforms were more likely to agree that acquiring a freelance career is desirable. Digital skill proficiency also significantly impacted positively ( $\beta=0.267$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that technical capabilities support using a work platform. Interestingly, the current unemployment status was positively associated with freelancing orientation ( $\beta=0.189$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which means if one is unemployed, he/she may shift to other potential employment options. According to Wood et al. (2019), platform familiarity plays a role in deciding whether a worker participates in the gig economy. Our research finds it works differently for developing countries.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis - Predictors of Freelance Work Orientation**

Predictor Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Significance
Platform Familiarity	0.384	7.89	$p < 0.001$ ***
Digital Skill Proficiency	0.267	5.42	$p < 0.001$ ***
Unemployment Status	0.189	3.67	$p < 0.01$ **
Education Level	0.142	2.84	$p < 0.05$ *
Age (Continuous)	-0.078	-1.52	n.s.
Gender (Female)	-0.043	-0.87	n.s.

$$R^2 = 0.412, \text{ Adjusted } R^2 = 0.398, F(6, 380) = 47.23, p < 0.001$$

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , n.s. = not significant; Source: Field survey data, 2024

### 4.4. Barriers and Motivations for Platform Work

The survey asked about perceived barriers to engagement with a freelance platform and motivational factors for individuals considering or engaging with a platform. According to Figure 1, the most common barriers were a lack of English language skills (52.4%), payment security and cross-border concerns (48.7%), lack of awareness of platforms (41.2%), and lack of digital skills (37.8%). The difficulties encountered by Algerian youths, such as language problems and undeveloped payment systems, serve as consequences of the international freelance market.

The most common motivation factors of income flexibility (73.6%), skill development (68.9%), control over scheduling (64.2%), and international client access (58.7%) drive people

to do freelance platform work. In particular, 45.3% of respondents said that the desire to bypass the local labor market has motivated them to leave, clearly reflecting their dissatisfaction with limited local job opportunities. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, these motivations can be explained with the presence of positive attitude towards freelancing brought about by the labour market exclusion (push factor) and platform affordances (pull factor).

**Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing Freelance Work Orientation**

Independent Variables	Mediating Factors	Dependent Variable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platform Familiarity</li> <li>• Digital Skills</li> <li>• Employment Status</li> <li>• Education Level</li> <li>• Age / Gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Attitude toward Freelancing</li> <li>→ Subjective Norms</li> <li>→ Perceived Behavioral Control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freelance Work Preference</li> <li>• Platform Engagement Intent</li> <li>• Career Stability Redefinition</li> </ul>

*Note: Based on Theory of Planned Behavior framework (Ajzen, 1991)*

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Theoretical Implications

The results of this paper add to the literature on platform-mediated labor by providing some evidence from a context that has been previously neglected in the literature. The statistically significant link between familiarity with platform work and positive attitudes towards freelance work lends credence to the idea that proximity to the environment in which people do platform work influences the desirability of an employment option (Wood et al 2019; Lehdonvirta et al 2019). According to the Theory of Planned Behavior framework, the relationship may likely work through various mechanisms such as the development of positive attitudes toward autonomy and flexibility, the creation of new subjective norms in peer networks, and the enhancement of perceived behavioral control through skill acquisition.

The way young Algerians engaged in platforms perceive employment stability has changed significantly from traditional youth employment ideals. The result that 67.2% of respondents prefer flexible freelance work to conventional employment contradicts the common assumption that job security is universally appealing, particularly in settings where public sector employment has historically dominated aspirations (Benatia & Bousselmi, 2025). The modified approach shows that, according to Schor et al. (2020) global trends, platform workers tend to develop new criteria to assess the quality of jobs, in which autonomy and skills prevail over traditional stability attributes.

### 5.2. Policy Implications

The results may inform Algerian policy makers geared towards the creation of youth employment through digital economy initiatives. There is a considerable difference between awareness and use (78.3%-34.4%), indicating a substantial potential that can be tapped into through interventions. Programs targeted at English language training, digital skills training, and financial infrastructure improvements (notably in international payments processing) could lower barriers to participation in platform economy.

The new law that classifies self-employed contractors represents a significant move towards recognizing freelancers in Algeria (Hadj-Moussa & Belkadi, 2025). Notwithstanding, the research indicates regulatory frameworks should be coupled with practical support mechanisms that channel youth interest towards productive economic participation in platform work. Colleges and vocational training institutions can help fill this gap through courses that develop freelancing skills. They can also become associated with larger platforms and provide training programs for students in association with these platforms.

### 5.3. Limitations and Future Research

Must mention several limitations of the study. Thanks to the cross-sectional design, we cannot state a causal relationship between platform engagement and changes in employment preferences. Platforms work can exert powerful effects. Longitudinal studies which track attitudes over time would provide stronger evidence. Moreover, through the use of convenience sampling, the findings may not be generalizable to the whole Algerian youth. With a view to enhancing representativeness, random sampling techniques should be used in future research.

Third, attitudes and intent, rather than actual behavior outcomes, were the focus of this study. An inquiry into the transition of intentions to permanent engagement with the platform from being a freelancer will offer insights into the factors that enable or hinder it. On top of that, comparative studies examining the adoption of platform work across different MENA countries can shed light on how differences in institutional context affect the relationship between freelance platforms and employment preferences.

## 6. Conclusion

In the era of digital freelance platforms, Algerian youth envisions differently employment stability, as evidenced by this empirical study. Results show that young Algerians exhibit a high level of awareness of the platforms, a strong preference for flexible freelance work over fixed jobs and clear predictors of positive attitude towards platform-mediated careers. Familiarity with the platform, proficiency in digital skills, and current employment status are the most important factors determining orientation.

This research will add to the literature on platform labor in the Global South and help in understanding how digital platforms are changing career aspirations in a context with a rich history of public sector jobs. As youth in India show a desire to participate in the platform economy but face barriers to involvement, there is scope for policy interventions aimed at lowering these barriers. For instance, language training and digital skills development, along with the improvement of payment infrastructure can play an important role in translating their interest in freelancing work into productive economic activity. As Algeria still struggles with high youth unemployment rates, the platform economy represents a possible pathway to economic inclusion worthy of further academic investigation and policy support.

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