

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Exploring the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's central business district

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated ride-hailing drivers' livelihoods in the City of Polokwane, Limpopo Province. This qualitative exploration provided an understanding of the industry's dynamics by directly incorporating the experiences and perspectives of drivers. Through in-depth interviews with 15 ride-hailing drivers, thematic analysis and NVivo software revealed multifaceted challenges impacting income levels. Surge pricing, access to resources, safety concerns, competition regulation, driver incentives, financial planning, app efficiency, and the potential benefits of loyalty programmes all emerged as pivotal factors influencing the livelihoods of ride-hailing professionals.

Beyond highlighting challenges, the study uncovers potential avenues for improvement, including exploring loyalty programmes. By assessing the feasibility and benefits of loyalty initiatives, the research opens a discourse on how such programmes could contribute to the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers. As the ride-hailing industry continues to evolve, understanding these factors becomes imperative for developing initiatives that foster a sustainable and supportive environment for those driving the industry forward. The study not only contributes valuable insights into the complex dynamics inherent in the ride-hailing sector but also provides specific recommendations aimed at enhancing the overall well-being and financial resilience of the drivers.

Keywords: Livelihoods, Polokwane, Ride-hailing, Sustainable

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Table 1: Table of acronyms

	TABLE OF ACRONYMS
CBD	Central Business District
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
ILO	International Labour Organisation
SA	South Africa
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction to the study

This study explored the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's central business district (CBD). According to International Labour Organisation (2013), a person's livelihood incorporates the capabilities, possessions, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life such as food, water, shelter and clothes. These activities are often repeated and carried out in a sustainable and dignified way (International Labour Organisation, 2013). For example, the livelihood of a ride-hailing driver is dependent on the money earned through the transportation of clients. However, although these drivers might be independent, their earnings and levies are still regulated by the ride-hailing companies they are affiliated with, meaning that they share their commissions with the regulating companies (Lefcoe et al., 2023).

When Uber, a United States-based corporation, entered the South African market in 2013, ushering in the era of ride-hailing services in the country, it improved the livelihoods of many South Africans (Berndt et al., 2021). Bolt (formerly Taxify), an Estonian start-up, also joined the South African market in 2015, and was later followed by the Chinese-based DiDi Chuxing in 2021, both of which contributed to the sustainable livelihoods of the drivers (Henama et al., 2017). From that point on, the road transport sector was transformed, presenting South African commuters with a much-needed subsector that was not only pleasant and convenient for client comfort and dignity, but also presented a business opportunity for those wanting to earn money through ride-hailing (Hussein et al., 2021).

While this industry has contributed to economic development in the country, particularly for young people, it was not without challenges (Salim et al., 2020). As a result, rather than just examining the employment-generation potential of ride-hailing services, it is critical to explore the drivers' livelihoods in this industry. This is especially important in South Africa, where ride-hailing drivers have faced challenges as a result of competition concerns within and outside the industry; experience of violence from counterparts such as metered taxi drivers and an increase in levies, all of which potentially negatively impacted their earning potential (Makhanya, 2023), as well as uncertainty in their job satisfaction. Some of the day-to-day incidents include ride-hailing drivers being assaulted by a meter-taxi driver while on duty (Nqunjana, 2023).

Similarly, Malinga (2022) claimed that local industry commentators believe that intense competition, which advantages the major multinational ride-hailing businesses, has harmed income generation in the local transport industry. According to the conclusions of a study by Wilmans and Rashied (2021), even though ride-hailing drivers have more self-employment prospects and potential profit-generation opportunities, their everyday experiences impact their livelihoods, with safety and income being their major worry.

On the contrary, Berger et al. (2019) conducted a study that focused on drivers' experiences, comparing data from two cities in the United Kingdom and discovering that, on average, drivers reported both greater satisfaction in their livelihoods as well as feelings of 'worthwhileness' from being employed as ride-hailing drivers. Given this conclusion, the experiences of ride-hailing drivers in these cities become critical, since self-employment corresponds with greater levels of job satisfaction which contributes to their sustainable livelihoods.

In Chile, Fielbaum and Tirachini (2020) investigated what drew drivers to this line of work, and found that flexibility, admiration for driving, better working conditions, and salary levels were the main motivators. Concerning drivers' satisfaction with their jobs, a series of comments about certain job characteristics were made, and drivers expressed their feelings on a seven-point scale (seven being highly satisfied). According to the findings of this survey, drivers are generally satisfied with the outcomes on their livelihoods (Fielbaum and Tirachini, 2020).

Against the above background, this study aimed to investigate the factors influencing the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD. The primary objectives encompass a comprehensive exploration of the determinants impacting these drivers' livelihoods, an assessment of the income levels within the ride-hailing industry among drivers in Polokwane's CBD, and the documentation of strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing the overall well-being and working conditions of ride-hailing drivers in this urban setting. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of ride-hailing drivers' livelihoods, offering a comprehensive framework for improvement in the city's ride-hailing industry.

1.2. Problem statement and rationale for the study

Since its debut, the ride-hailing industry has played a significant role in enhancing mobility in South Africa. The benefits of ride-hailing services have been highlighted in the present literature, particularly for drivers who found it much easier to generate income to sustain their livelihoods. However, as this sector grew in South Africa, it caused issues both inside and outside of the ride-hailing business, as it competed with other modes of transportation such as minibus taxis, metered taxis, and buses (Wilmans and Rashied, 2021). The result of this intense competition manifested in the form of violent acts against ride-hailing drivers by drivers from competing transportation businesses (Competition Commission South Africa, 2021). Furthermore, for their profession as drivers, such experiences resulted in concerns over their safety, and loss of income (Henama et al., 2017; Kimberley, 2019).

Having said that, the existing literature falls short of accurately portraying the day-to-day livelihoods of drivers (Wilmans and Rashied, 2021), which was observed through most of the studies that made use of only the quantitative research approach in studying the experiences of ride-hailing drivers. Furthermore, there is also a vacuum in determining the level of income within the ride-hailing industry in comparison with the minimum wage in South Africa since this industry is still unregulated in the country (Huysamen, 2018). Their voices, in terms of being given a stand to make recommendations and suggest strategies that can sustain their work and livelihoods is also not captured, particularly in modest cities such as Polokwane, thus creating a gap that needs further research. Also, a significant number of ride-hailing studies focus on different consumer and regulatory components of the sector, whereas ride-hailing drivers receive very little attention in the scholarly literature on topics related to their daily working experiences and livelihoods (Fielbaum et al., 2022). Given the growing importance of ride-hailing services in South Africa's transportation industry, this study sought to fill a gap in the literature by concentrating on the factors affecting the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD.

1.3. Aim of the study

The fundamental aim of this study is to explore the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD.

1.4. Research questions

1. What are the factors affecting the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD?
2. What is the level of income among the ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD?
3. What would be the recommendations to improve the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD?

1.5. Objectives

1. To explore the factors affecting the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD.
2. To determine the level of income in the ride-hailing industry among ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD.
3. To document the recommendations to improve the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD.

1.6. Research methodology

This study opted for a qualitative research approach to explore the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers operating in Polokwane's CBD. The qualitative approach, which is a research methodology that focuses on non-numerical data to gain in-depth insights into the complexity and context of a phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), facilitated a comprehensive exploration of factors, encompassing income levels and the formulation of recommendations for sustainable livelihoods.

Upon receiving ethical clearance (see Annexure D), data collection commenced. The data collection process involved audio-recorded face-to-face interviews, with the subsequent data analysis employing a combination of thematic analysis and NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Influenced by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis facilitated the identification and interpretation of patterns within the collected data, providing rich insights into the experiences and perspectives of ride-hailing drivers. The utilisation of NVivo software streamlined the systematic organisation and analysis of the qualitative data, offering a framework for coding, categorising, and extracting meaningful findings.

1.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this section has provided an overview of the study, delving into the landscape of the ride-hailing industry by exploring the livelihoods of drivers in Polokwane's CBD. The study aims to explore the factors influencing these livelihoods, assess income levels, and document strategic recommendations. This encompasses the transformative effects of ride-hailing services on South Africa's transportation sector, highlighting both the positive and challenging aspects of the industry. Moving forward, the next chapter will explore the existing literature, offering a thorough review of studies on ride-hailing drivers' experiences, income, and challenges, laying the foundation for the subsequent chapters of research methodology, as well as analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the literature relevant to this study. The literature review will begin by presenting an abstract definition of ride-hailing, which will then be followed by the motivating theory, the nature of ride-hailing as gig work, and the general factors affecting the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers. Furthermore, this section will present the challenges faced by ride-hailing drivers as well as the level of income amongst drivers.

2.2. An explanation of ride-hailing

Ride-hailing is an act in which a customer books a tailored ride online, typically through a smartphone application. It is, in essence, akin to a taxi service. The ride is ordered by the consumer through a ride-hailing platform, which acts as a middleman between the driver and the passenger (Ojekere, Ojo and Mkpandiok, 2022). The most well-known mediators include Uber, Bolt, DiDi, in Drive, and others.

According to Nor et al., (2021), when a customer requests a ride through an application, the application communicates their position and request to a nearby driver, who can then decide whether to accept the ride request or not. If they accept the ride, the customer will be able to monitor the car as it approaches them in their application, as well as the time it will take for the car to arrive. They also view details regarding the ride, such as the license plate number and the driver's name. Once that car has arrived, the customer can simply sit back and relax until the car arrives at their destination.

Furthermore, most ride-hailing platforms deduct the amount for the trip directly from the customer's registered bank account, so consumers do not even have to bother about payment; they can simply exit the automobile when they arrive at their location. In contrast to ride-sharing, the driver normally does not make any stops between the starting point and the destination. Riders cannot split the cost with the driver because the drivers offer their services for a profit. The money is charged automatically, and the income is split between the mediator and the driver (Nor et al., 2021).

According to Gan et al. (2021) and Wilmans and Rashied (2021), the income split between the ride-hailing company (the mediator) and the driver typically varies based on the specific company and region. However, a common ratio is around 70% to the driver and 30% to the company, although this can vary. Some companies may have different ratios or may use a dynamic pricing model that can change the income split based on factors such as demand and supply. It is important to note that the income split is a significant factor in drivers' earnings and job satisfaction, as it directly impacts their take-home pay.

2.3. Motivating theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory on motivation and job-satisfaction acts as a footprint for this study. This is a 20th century theory which has resulted in a paradigm shift from viewing job satisfaction as a single construct ranging from satisfaction to dissatisfaction, to a two-dimensional construct (DiMichael, 1959). According to Alrawahi et al. (2020), the first construct ranges from satisfaction to no satisfaction, while the second construct ranges from dissatisfaction to no dissatisfaction.

According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, satisfaction is a result of internal variables known as motivation factors, which in the context of this study, refers to favourable working conditions, safety, income level and personal growth. Job dissatisfaction, on the other hand, is impacted by external variables to the work itself, which are referred to as hygiene factors, which in the context of this study, include components such as unfavourable working environment, unsatisfactory income, job security, unsafe working environment, poor organisational standards and regulations (Erasmus, 2019).

Furthermore, Herzberg's two-factor theory states that employees who view work-related criteria such as job security, income level, profitability, and working conditions to be inadequate are more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs as it affects their livelihoods. Contentment with these factors, according to Alrawahi et al. (2020), does not always lead to satisfaction, but may rather lead to a sense of dissatisfaction. While hygienic factors are required to encourage employees, Erasmus (2019) emphasises that they will only result in pleasure and motivation if motivational factors are also present.

As a result, according to this idea, job security, income level, profitability, working conditions, development, and personal growth all contribute to job satisfaction. Furthermore, DiMichael (1959) suggests that work should be fascinating and that employees should be satisfied in terms of having a great work experience, which can boost motivation and ensure progress.

Although Herzberg's theory applies to this study, it has been criticised for failing to account for individual variations and for failing to characterise the link between satisfaction and motivation (Alrawahi et al., 2020).

In the context of the current study, for example, it makes no distinction between an employee working as a driver for a vehicle owner and a self-employed individual working in the same industry. Its main contribution to this study, however, is to provide an understanding of job satisfaction in terms of two constructs (intrinsic and extrinsic factors) that are thought to contribute to satisfaction and dissatisfaction, advancing our understanding of sustainable livelihoods among ride-hailing drivers as a multidimensional construct. The idea also states that an individual's higher-level of satisfaction might be met by their line of work by providing more positive experiences.

2.4. Nature of ride-hailing as gig work

Ride-hailing has emerged as a prominent example of gig work, characterised by its on-demand nature and the use of digital platforms to connect drivers with passengers. This form of work is often seen as part of the broader gig economy, where individuals perform short-term, flexible tasks or jobs, often facilitated by technological platforms (De Stefano, 2018). The characteristics of ride-hailing industry include the following:

2.4.1. Flexibility

According to De Stefano (2018), flexibility in the ride-hailing industry is a key characteristic of gig work, providing drivers with the autonomy to manage their work schedules according to their preferences and needs. This flexibility allows drivers to balance their work with other commitments, such as family responsibilities, education, or other employment. The ability to choose when and how much to work is often cited as a major attraction for individuals seeking gig work opportunities.

Research by Kuek et al. (2015) highlights how this flexibility can be particularly beneficial for drivers in developing countries, where formal employment opportunities may be limited. According to Kuek et al (2015), the ride-hailing industry offers a means for individuals to earn income without the constraints of traditional employment arrangements. Drivers can choose to work part-time or full-time, depending on their financial needs and personal circumstances (Berg et al., 2018).

The flexibility of gig work in ride-hailing also extends to the ability to work from different locations. Drivers can log on to the platform and start accepting ride requests from anywhere within the service area, providing them with the freedom to work in areas that are convenient for them (Chen et al., 2020). This flexibility can be especially valuable for drivers who may need to travel for personal reasons or who live in areas with limited job opportunities.

However, while flexibility is often seen as a positive aspect of gig work, it can also have some drawbacks. For example, the freedom to choose when to work can lead to fluctuations in earnings, as drivers may not always be able to predict demand accurately (Hall and Krueger, 2018). Additionally, the lack of a fixed work schedule can make it challenging for drivers to plan their finances and access benefits such as health insurance or retirement savings (Katz and Krueger, 2016).

Despite these challenges, the flexibility of gig work in the ride-hailing industry remains a significant draw for many individuals seeking flexible employment opportunities. As the gig economy continues to evolve, it will be important for drivers to consider how to balance the benefits of flexibility with the need for stability and security for gig workers.

2.4.2. Independent contractor status

According to Katz and Krueger (2016), gig workers are often classified as independent contractors, a designation that distinguishes them from traditional employees. This classification has significant implications for their employment status, including access to benefits and protection under labour laws. Independent contractors are considered self-employed individuals who enter into contracts to provide services to companies but are not considered employees of those companies (Katz and Krueger, 2016).

One of the primary differences between independent contractors and employees is the level of control exerted by the hiring company. Independent contractors have greater autonomy over when, where, and how they work, whereas employees are typically subjected to more direct control and supervision by their employer. This distinction is important because it can affect the rights and benefits to which workers are entitled (Chen et al., 2020).

For example, Katz and Krueger (2016) are of the view that independent contractors may not be eligible for benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, or paid time off that are typically provided to employees. They may also be exempt from certain labour laws, such as minimum wage and overtime requirements, that apply to employees.

Additionally, independent contractors are generally responsible for paying their own taxes and may not be covered by unemployment insurance or workers' compensation programs (Katz and Krueger, 2016).

Importantly, the classification of gig workers as independent contractors has also been the subject of much debate and legal scrutiny in recent years. Some argue that this classification allows companies to avoid providing benefits and protection to workers that they would be entitled to as employees. Others argue that the flexibility and autonomy afforded to independent contractors are valued by gig workers and should be preserved (Wilmans and Rashied, 2021).

2.4.3. Digital platforms

Digital platforms are instrumental in facilitating gig work within the ride-hailing sector, acting as intermediaries between drivers and passengers and streamlining the connection, payment processing, and dissemination of critical ride information. This technological integration has significantly altered the accessibility and functionality of ride-hailing services, enhancing convenience and effectiveness for both drivers and passengers (Sundararajan, 2016).

A primary function of these platforms is to match drivers with passengers, achieved through algorithms that consider driver proximity to the passenger's location. This real-time matching feature has notably decreased passenger waiting times and bolstered driver efficiency, allowing them to optimise their earnings (Chen et al., 2020).

Moreover, digital platforms facilitate payment processing for ride-hailing services, enabling passengers to conveniently pay for rides through integrated systems linked to their credit or debit cards. This cashless system not only benefits passengers but also ensures prompt payment for drivers, enhancing their financial stability (Codagnone and Martens, 2016).

Additionally, these platforms equip drivers with detailed ride information, including the destination and any special requests, enabling them to deliver personalised and efficient services. This transparency enhances the overall ride experience for passengers and helps drivers plan their routes more effectively (Slee, 2016).

However, the increasing reliance on digital platforms has raised several concerns. Critics have questioned the fairness and bias of the algorithms used for driver-passenger matching. Furthermore, issues regarding data privacy and security have emerged, given the substantial amount of personal information collected and stored by these platforms (Sundararajan, 2016).

Despite these challenges, Chen et al. (2020) argued that the integration of digital platforms has revolutionised the ride-hailing industry, making it more accessible, efficient, and user-friendly. As technology continues to advance, digital platforms are expected to play an increasingly pivotal role in shaping the future of gig work in the ride-hailing sector (Codagnone and Martens, 2016).

2.4.4. Variable earnings

Variable earnings are a prominent characteristic of gig work in the ride-hailing industry, where drivers' income levels can fluctuate significantly based on several factors such as demand, time of day and location (Hall and Krueger, 2016). This variability can lead to income unpredictability for drivers, making it challenging to estimate their earnings accurately.

Research by Hall and Krueger (2016) highlights the dynamic nature of earnings in the ride-hailing sector, with drivers often experiencing fluctuations in income due to changes in demand and other external factors. The study found that drivers' earnings tend to be higher during peak hours when demand is high, but may decrease during off-peak times when demand is lower. This variability in earnings can impact drivers' financial stability and their ability to plan for the future.

According to Berg et al. (2018), the variable nature of earnings in the ride-hailing industry is influenced by several factors, including the level of competition among drivers, pricing algorithms used by ride-hailing platforms, and external factors such as weather conditions or special events. These factors can all contribute to fluctuations in demand, and consequently, drivers' earnings.

Despite the challenges posed by variable earnings, this gig work in the ride-hailing industry offers drivers a level of flexibility and autonomy that traditional employment may not provide. Drivers have the freedom to choose when and how much they work, allowing them to balance work with other responsibilities (Chen et al., 2020). However, this flexibility comes with trade-offs, including the risk of income instability due to fluctuating demand.

Overall, the variable nature of earnings is a key aspect of gig work in the ride-hailing industry, impacting drivers' financial stability and their overall experience in the gig economy. As the gig economy continues to evolve, understanding and addressing the challenges associated with variable earnings will be essential for ensuring the well-being and financial security of gig workers.

2.4.5. Customer ratings

Customer ratings play a pivotal role in the ride-hailing industry, serving as a crucial measure of driver performance and service quality. Maintaining high ratings is imperative for drivers to remain active on the platform and receive ride requests (Cramer et al., 2016).

Research by Cramer et al. (2016) underscores the significance of customer ratings in the ride-hailing sector, highlighting how they can significantly impact a driver's success and earnings. Drivers with higher ratings are more likely to attract passengers, receive more frequent ride requests, and potentially earn more money compared to drivers with lower ratings.

Customer ratings are typically based on various factors, including the driver's punctuality, driving skills, vehicle cleanliness, and overall customer service. Drivers are often incentivised to maintain high ratings through bonuses or rewards for achieving and maintaining a certain rating threshold (Martin et al., 2019).

However, the use of customer ratings has faced criticism for its potential biases and lack of transparency. Critics argue that ratings may be influenced by factors outside the driver's control, such as passenger biases or mood, raising concerns about the fairness and reliability of the rating system (Martin et al., 2019).

Despite these challenges, customer ratings remain a fundamental aspect of the ride-hailing industry, shaping drivers' experiences and opportunities on the platform. As the gig economy continues to evolve, there is a growing need for further research and discussion on how to effectively use customer ratings to ensure fairness and transparency for gig workers.

2.4.6. Limited worker protection

Gig workers in the ride-hailing industry often face a lack of traditional worker protection, raising concerns about their financial security and well-being. This situation is attributed to their classification as independent contractors rather than employees, which exempts them from certain labour laws and protection (Katz and Krueger, 2016).

According to Katz and Krueger (2016), this classification has significant implications for gig workers, as it means they are not entitled to benefits such as minimum wage, overtime pay, or health insurance. This lack of protection can leave gig workers vulnerable to financial instability, especially during periods of low demand or economic downturns.

Research by Berg et al. (2018) further highlights the challenges faced by gig workers due to their classification as independent contractors. Berg et al. (2018) argue that this classification undermines gig workers' ability to negotiate fair wages and access essential benefits, contributing to a precarious work environment.

The limited worker protections in the ride-hailing industry have sparked debate and calls for regulatory intervention to ensure fair treatment and provide basic protections for gig workers. Some proposals include reclassifying gig workers as employees or implementing alternative forms of social protection tailored to the gig economy (De Stefano, 2016).

Despite these challenges, gig work in the ride-hailing industry continues to attract individuals seeking flexibility and supplementary income. However, the lack of worker protections remains a critical issue that requires attention from policymakers, platform operators, and other stakeholders to ensure the well-being and security of gig workers.

2.5. Economic challenges and opportunities of ride-hailing as gig work

Income fluctuations and financial instability are significant challenges for gig workers in the ride-hailing industry. The nature of gig work often means that drivers' earnings can vary widely from week to week, depending on factors such as demand, competition and external economic conditions (Hall and Krueger, 2016). This variability can make it challenging for drivers to predict their income and budget effectively, leading to financial stress and insecurity.

To address these challenges, drivers often employ various strategies to maximise their earnings. One common strategy is to work during peak hours when demand for rides is high and surge pricing is in effect. By strategically choosing when to work, drivers can take advantage of higher fares and increase their overall earnings (Chen et al., 2020). Additionally, drivers may also explore diversifying their income sources by working for multiple ride-hailing platforms or engaging in other gig work when ride demand is low (Burtch et al., 2018).

Despite these strategies, achieving financial stability in the ride-hailing industry can be challenging, particularly for drivers who rely solely on gig work for their income. Research by Hall and Krueger (2016) suggests that while some drivers are able to earn a decent income from ride-hailing, many struggle to make ends meet due to factors beyond their control, such as changes in demand and competition.

The economic challenges faced by gig workers in the ride-hailing industry highlight the need for policies and support mechanisms that can help drivers achieve greater financial security. This could include initiatives such as income smoothing tools, financial planning resources and access to benefits traditionally provided to employees, such as health insurance and retirement savings plans (Chen et al., 2020).

2.6. Driver experience and well-being

Gig work in the ride-hailing industry can have a significant impact on drivers' mental health and overall well-being. The nature of gig work, with its irregular hours, lack of job security, and isolation, can contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety and depression among drivers (De Stefano, 2016). Studies have shown that gig workers, including ride-hailing drivers, are more likely to experience mental health issues compared to traditional employees (Benach et al., 2014).

To address these challenges, Adebayo et al (2020) emphasise that it is essential to implement support systems that can enhance the driver experience and promote well-being. One approach is to provide access to mental health resources, such as counselling services and support groups, to help drivers cope with the stresses of gig work (Adebayo et al., 2020). These resources can provide drivers with the tools and strategies they need to manage their mental health effectively.

Additionally, support systems can also include initiatives aimed at improving the overall working conditions for drivers. This could involve providing access to rest areas and amenities, such as restrooms and refreshments, during their shifts (Bakker et al., 2019). Creating a more comfortable and conducive working environment can help reduce stress and improve drivers' overall experience. Furthermore, platforms can also offer incentives and rewards for drivers who maintain high ratings and provide excellent service. These incentives can help boost morale and motivation, leading to a more positive and fulfilling experience for drivers (Malhotra et al., 2019). By recognising and rewarding drivers for their hard work and dedication, platforms can create a more supportive and rewarding gig work environment.

In essence, addressing the mental health and well-being of ride-hailing drivers is crucial for ensuring a sustainable and positive gig work experience. By implementing support systems and initiatives aimed at enhancing the driver experience, platforms can help improve the overall well-being of their drivers and create a more resilient and satisfied workforce.

2.7. The impact of ride-hailing on the livelihoods of drivers

The nature of employment under which work is performed can range from absolutely delightful to exceedingly challenging and destructive to the livelihoods of employees (Dhamija et al., 2019). The nature of work, according to Pooja and Pradeep (2017), relates to the type of work performed by employees and how it sustains their lives. Ride-hailing services have grown in popularity in South Africa since 2015, owing to their capacity to provide a dependable alternative to traditional modes of transportation while simultaneously providing an option for self-employment (Henama et al., 2017). Due to South Africa's high unemployment rate, many people, particularly young people, have sought self-employment through ride-hailing to supplement their income (Wilmans and Rashied, 2021). According to Mahadea and Kaseeram (2018), ride-hailing has produced an important motivating factor from unemployment to entrepreneurship. This gave rise to the country's expanding informal and township economies, where disadvantaged people including women and youth can enter the job market through ride-hailing and participate in the country's economy.

As a result, Mahadea and Kaseeram (2018) contend that the introduction of ride-hailing has favourably impacted the livelihoods of many South Africans who now rely on ride-hailing as a source of income. According to Hong et al. (2020), the advantage of ride-hailing among drivers is that they can offer rides in areas and at times that are convenient for them. Because of this arm's length relationship with drivers, ride-hailing companies have mostly produced employment for many previously unemployed people.

2.8. Safety concerns and unfavourable conditions

According to Ramos et al., (2021), safety is the most important element in determining positive outcomes and may help to build an atmosphere that reduces employee risks and injuries. The working environment and workers' perceptions of safety are critical to individual work production and the success of the firm. This is an important issue with practical implications in the ride-hailing industry since the level of perceived risks greatly influences job satisfaction.

According to Gilili (2022), safety concerns among ride-hailing drivers have a detrimental impact on their job and life fulfilment. This is because the drivers' safety is the major motivator in the industry for value creation, creativity, and performance, and it has a considerable influence on their working circumstances and behaviour during their work (Diphoko, 2023).

Mtembu (2022) emphasises that most often, jobs may become stagnant, and one may feel unsatisfied in their path if they must cope with elements beyond their control, such as an unsafe working atmosphere. For example, one of the ride-hailing drivers in Durban was seized at gunpoint by an unknown gang of perpetrators while on his way to a client's address (Pillay, 2023). Similarly, it was also revealed that one of the ride-hailing drivers was murdered in Cloetesville, Stellenbosch, which resulted in most drivers avoiding trips to townships (Diphoko, 2023).

In Pretoria, Import (2023) claimed that ride-hailing drivers are still being hijacked and killed on a weekly basis, and that nothing has changed on the applications' end in terms of safety features. According to Gilili (2022), such incidents have led ride-hailing drivers to strike for three days over in 2022. As such, Diphoko (2023) is of the view that while ride-hailing companies have explored a variety of methods to improve passenger safety, nothing has been done to safeguard the driver.

Furthermore, Chiumbu et al. (2020) discovered that drivers are exploited by both the industry and, in some cases, the actual owners of the vehicles if they do not own them. Drivers say it is impossible to unionise so they can speak with one voice. They point out that they may simply be blacklisted and deregistered from the platform for raising concerns about their working conditions (Ruggunan, 2022). In the South African setting, issues such as precarity, prejudice against immigrants, 'foreignisation' of ride-hailing work, and turf battles between ride-hailing drivers and metered taxi operators reign supreme. Therefore, safety and security issues became rampant in South Africa, with drivers expressing concerns about operating in certain pick-up spots as well as carrying cash-paying customers on weekends (Ruggunan, 2022).

According to Sabbagha (2016) and Valaei and Rezaei (2016), favourable working conditions necessitate standards, norms, policies, processes, and any other instructions that will assist ride-hailing drivers in carrying out their jobs. This is due to the fact that drivers who believe operational processes are ineffective are more inclined to record a lower degree of job satisfaction in the industry, whereas drivers who work in an atmosphere that encourages development are more likely to report greater degrees of satisfaction (Valaei and Rezaei, 2016).

2.9. Ride-hailing as a competitor to other modes of transport

The value added by ride-hailing services suggests that a considerable percentage of commuters may be shifting to alternate modes of transportation. Ride-hailing services have been considered as disruptors to the metre taxi business, adding value to commuters while displacing current options (Smith, 2020). These services provide both monetary and non-monetary value, with past research yielding inconclusive results on the potential impact of ride-hailing services on public transit. The link between ride-hailing and public transportation use is not commonly understood, and greater study on the subject might help transportation businesses and policymakers (Smith, 2020). It is not surprising that the introduction of ride-hailing services has had a direct influence on other means of transportation.

According to Smith (2020), multiple research efforts have attempted to investigate the impact of ride-hailing platforms on mobility, and while evaluating the effects of ride-hailing services on transportation usage is difficult, some studies have gained insight into the potential consequences. Ride-hailing services provide commuters with accessibility and mobility benefits, making car access easier, increasing both accessibility and mobility, and perhaps contributing more trips to the transportation network. However, it may be argued that ride-hailing services encourage ride-sharing and reduce wasteful driving (Megantara et al., 2022). Mobility is often measured in terms of either distance travelled, or the total number of trips undertaken (Smith, 2020).

Ride-hailing services are believed to represent the initial and final mode of transportation for clients using modalities with fixed routes, such as rail and bus, and are therefore viewed to be complimentary to public transportation, yet they may be utilised to replace private as well as public transportation (Smith, 2020). According to Hong et al. (2020), ride-hailing services supplement public transport networks by aiding with the 'last mile' problems, which refers to the journey between the nearest transit station and a commuter's destination.

According to a poll by Clewlow and Mishra (2017), ride-hailing services led to a 6% decrease in public transport utilisation among American commuters. However, ride-hailing customers increased their commuter train use by 3%, suggesting that ride-hailing services may have both a replacement and a complimentary impact depending on the user and the available transportation options. As suggested by the poll, if ride-hailing services had not been accessible, passengers would have avoided up to 61% of trips and opted for non-motorised transport or public transit. Despite the fact that ride-hailing services may supplement or replace

specific means of transportation, the study found that the overall impact of miles travelled is uncertain (Clewlow and Mishra, 2017).

Furthermore, using a regression discontinuity technique, Sadowsky and Nelson (2017) discovered that the advent of ride-hailing services affected bus riders differently compared to rail users. Model estimates suggested that ride-hailing services were never a replacement for bus use, but rather a supplement. According to the study, pricing competition among ride-hailing services increases the likelihood that a typical rail user is much more likely to choose a ride-hailing service when compared to a typical bus customer. Taxis, according to existing research, act as both alternatives and complements to other modes of public transport (Austin and Zegras, 2012; King et al., 2012). Depending on the route conditions, a commuter may use ride-hailing as a primary mode of transportation or as a complement to another mode of transportation.

Ride-hailing services, according to Hall and Krueger (2015), augment public transportation, with a substantial number of journeys beginning and ending at bus terminals, train stations, and airports. Areas with a high volume of trip requests near public transport infrastructure are likely to indicate whether these amenities are a complement or a replacement. Ride-hailing services have the potential to shift non-motorised and public transportation modes without lowering passenger numbers (Vanderschuren and Baufeldt, 2018; Liu et al., 2019).

Based on survey data, Cheng (2016) discovered that 27% of respondents stated they made more trips using ride-hailing services. This might be because of better access or availability. Rayle et al. (2018) conducted an intercepted survey in San Francisco to discover why consumers choose ride-hailing services rather than taxis or public transportation. This is a type of research method used to collect data from individuals who are approached in person, often in a public place or at an event. Researchers intercept or approach people and ask them to participate in the survey on the spot (Henley and McCoy, 2018). According to the data, the majority of those who responded would have made the trip even if ride-hailing services were not available, and just 8% would not have made the trip at all.

Taking cognisance of the efficiencies related to time, approximately one-third of those who responded indicated they utilised ride-hailing services regularly rather than making use of public transit. Furthermore, the statistics indicated that, while ride-hailing services can replace certain individual journeys, they are better utilised to augment public transport for the great

majority of trips. While the generality of the study is uncertain, the survey's focus on one location gives significant information about commuting preferences (Rayle et al., 2018).

2.10. Level of income

In view that ride-hailing companies and drivers have an arms-length relationship centred on providing services such as trips in exchange for money, this relationship is considered a vital component in drivers' lives (Khan et al., 2016). Importantly, research on the earnings of ride-hailing drivers has produced wildly disparate outcomes, depending on context and specific on-the-job expenses like fuel and vehicle maintenance (Button, 2020). According to Ivancevich (2017) and Mitonga-Monga (2019), drivers frequently assess the fairness of ride commissions in relation to their minimum income and livelihood. Furthermore, drivers who consider the commission they receive in exchange for their services fair and acceptable are more likely to be satisfied with their current position. (Sabbagha, 2016; Dhamija et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, according to Attwood and Attwood (2022), with high petrol prices and sometimes low trip fares, many South African ride-hailing drivers believe that as opposed to being independent and flexible self-employed people, ride-hailing companies treat them like cheap labourers with no benefits and little room for negotiation. Following that, it was found that prominent ride-hailing businesses like Uber and Bolt have a total of 60,000 drivers in South Africa, each doing dozens of trips per day (Attwood and Attwood, 2022).

Different sources present varying estimations of earnings in the ride-hailing industry. Mutandiro (2023) contends that despite engaging in 12-hour shifts for six or seven days a week, drivers struggle to make ends meet. Ramalepe (2022) exemplifies this challenge, highlighting that drivers face substantial commission deductions from e-hailing companies, with Uber deducting 25% of the total cost for each trip and Bolt charging a slightly lower 23%. The practice of keeping fares low to maintain user satisfaction further exacerbates the financial strain on drivers, prompting a desire to augment their incomes and enhance their living conditions (Ramalepe, 2022). Interestingly, corporations, as emphasised by Attwood and Attwood (2022), exhibit hesitancy in prioritising the interests of the drivers.

According to the South African Bureau of Labour Statistics, the average monthly income of an Uber driver stands at R 5,429, a figure reflecting a 38% deficit compared to the national average. Similarly, Bolt drivers earn R 6,550, representing a 25% shortfall when compared to the national average (Man, 2022).

It is important to note that these figures can significantly vary based on factors such as the number of hours worked, the type of car utilised, and the specific city where the Uber driver operates, as indicated by Man (2022). Bolt South Africa (2021) adds that top-performing full-time Bolt drivers in major cities, such as Johannesburg, have the potential to earn up to R7,000 per month. Even part-time drivers in major cities can earn up to R120 per hour, surpassing the minimum wage of R25,42 per hour. Bolt applies a commission rate ranging from 15% to 20% on the final order price, contingent on the city, for both cash and card rides. However, it is noteworthy that this commission does not extend to tips, bonuses, and additional fees for airport or tolls (Bolt South Africa, 2021).

2.11. Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review has provided a comprehensive overview of various facets influencing the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers. The exploration began by defining ride-hailing as an online service connecting customers with drivers through platforms like Uber, Bolt, and DiDi. Herzberg's two-factor theory was introduced as a theoretical framework, highlighting the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among ride-hailing drivers. The literature then explored the nature of ride-hailing as a form of gig work, tackling the pros and cons associated with this form of work.

The impact of ride-hailing on drivers' livelihoods was examined, emphasising the shift from unemployment to entrepreneurship for many in South Africa. The study showcased the potential benefits ride-hailing brings to disadvantaged individuals, contributing to the informal and township economies. Safety concerns emerged as a critical factor affecting job satisfaction, with instances of violence and crime impacting on drivers' overall well-being. The importance of favourable working conditions and organisational support in enhancing job satisfaction was highlighted.

Furthermore, the review explored ride-hailing as a competitor to other modes of transport, with a particular focus on its complimentary and potentially disruptive impact on public transportation. The literature suggested that ride-hailing services could either supplement or replace specific modes of transportation, depending on factors such as convenience and accessibility.

The section on the level of income provided insights into the financial aspect of ride-hailing, revealing disparities in earnings among drivers. The discussion included critique from drivers about commission structures, perceptions of being treated as cheap labour, and challenges in negotiating better terms. The varying estimations of earnings underscore the complexity of the financial landscape for ride-hailing drivers in South Africa. Overall, the literature review has identified several key findings aligned with the objectives of understanding the factors influencing the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers.

In the following chapter, the research methodology is presented with a detailed outline of the research approach and philosophy, the design, data collection process, and data analysis processes. The chapter outlines the rationale behind selecting certain methods over others, as well as its alignment with the study's objective.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Research methodology refers to the methods or tactics used to gather, choose, assess, and analyse information on a topic. The methodology portion of a research paper helps the reader to objectively examine the overall validity and reliability of the study. The methodology section addresses two major issues: how data will be gathered, and how it will be processed (Wilkinson, 2000).

As a result, this chapter outlines the methodology used for studying ride-hailing drivers' livelihoods in Polokwane's CBD. The chapter begins by stressing the importance of research methodology, addressing data collection methods and processing. This study is rooted in an interpretive paradigm, aligning with a qualitative research approach.

Adopting an exploratory design, the study utilises an inductive research type to explore the livelihoods of 15 ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD who are purposively selected to participate in the study. Furthermore, the data collection method is also presented, and it involves semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis, aided by NVivo software, are also explained in terms of how they were utilised to guide the analysis. Also, quality criteria of the study are also outlined, with emphasis on the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Lastly, ethical considerations are also presented as ethics were integral to the research process. Overall, this chapter provides a methodological overview of this qualitative study.

3.2. Philosophical paradigm

Philosophical or research paradigm is associated with the assumptions, knowledge and nature of the study. It is a system of the researcher's thoughts, following which new, reliable knowledge about the research object is obtained (Zukauskas et al., 2018). It is the philosophy about the way in which the researcher perceives the world, thus providing guidance as to how data will be collected, analysed and applied at a later stage in order to answer the research question (Schwandt, 2001). Therefore, in thinking of the research questions, the researcher was aware that the goal of this study is to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. As such, the paradigm that underlies an exploratory study of this nature was an interpretive paradigm.

This choice is in line with Crotty's (1998) argument which posits that since the interpretivists' view is that there is no single truth, then the paradigm should be of a qualitative nature in order to study participants' subjective experiences of reality in their specific social setting (Crotty, 1998). According to Willis (2007), interpretivists maintain that the reality and truth about a phenomenon can only be understood through the lived experiences of people and hold a strong belief that there is no single truth; hence the dependence on individuals' subjective experiences to generate knowledge. Furthermore, Crotty (1998) emphasises that a research paradigm is usually characterised by its ontological, epistemological and methodological positions. In research, *Ontology* is concerned with the nature of the world and what there is to know, *Epistemology* deals with the various ways of knowing, while *Methodology* refers to the researcher's plan to conduct the study.

Therefore, in this study, *Ontology* involved exploring the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers. *Epistemologically*, ride-hailing drivers were relevant in exploring this phenomenon; while in terms of the *Methodology*, interviews were considered as a method of collecting data. By adopting this interpretive paradigm, the study embraces the idea that the ride-hailing drivers' experiences can be best understood through qualitative inquiry, which allows for an exploration of the interconnected factors influencing their livelihoods.

3.3. Research approach of the study

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach is defined as a study of people's daily experiences, behaviours, emotions, and sentiments, as well as organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and relationships (Henama et al., 2017). Given that the goal of this study was to explore the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for gathering the detailed information needed to achieve this goal. Qualitative researchers, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), seek an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the factors that influence it.

Unlike quantitative research, Babbie (2013) defines qualitative research as the collection of non-numerical data from individuals in question. It is the type of research that aims to explain why and how certain events occur (Berg, 2008). According to Silverman (2011), qualitative research typically opposes the assumption of natural sciences methods of establishing truth, such as the hypothesis testing model, opting for an inductive approach that allows processes to unfold before developing hypotheses.

The advantage of using this technique in this study was that the researcher was able to collect specific information directly from participants who are directly affected by the issue under inquiry (Given, 2008). For this study, the qualitative approach allowed for the generation of relevant evidence and reasoning, which allowed the researcher to generate findings that address the research questions.

3.4. Research design: Exploratory research design

According to Blanche et al., (2006), the research design of a study should be one deemed to be the most suited to answer the proposed research questions and achieve the study's objectives. A research design, according to Creswell (2013), is a framework for answering research questions and gives direction throughout the investigation. It also outlines the data gathering and analysis procedures and guarantees that the evidence provided by the obtained results best answers the study topic. As a result, the researcher used an exploratory research design to carry out the study.

This strategy had the advantage of assisting the researcher in becoming acquainted with the phenomenon under examination and acquiring new insight into the subject under study. According to Creswell (2013), its objective is not to give definite answers, but rather to expand knowledge through investigating the problem, especially if the problem is not yet properly described. Accordingly, an exploratory research method is regarded to be essential in order to gather experience that will be valuable in developing an accurate hypothesis for a definitive investigation (Babbie and Mouton, 2008).

3.5. Research type

The study employed an inductive method, synonymous with inductive reasoning, which focuses on observation and testing, leading to the formulation of ideas emerging from the research process (Neuman, 2003). In alignment with this method, the research commenced by developing a topic rather than a hypothesis.

Throughout the inductive research process, it was acknowledged that certainty regarding the findings would only emerge upon completion of the investigation (Lodico et al., 2010). This qualitative research method involved delving into the experiences of ride-hailing drivers, extracting meanings from their everyday encounters. The researcher, having identified a pertinent issue through observation, employed specific research methodologies to formulate hypotheses based on the findings of the study.

The inductive approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted aspects influencing the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers, aligning with the interpretive paradigm and providing valuable insights into the drivers' subjective experiences within their social context.

3.6. Research population

According to Thacker (2019), the population in research refers to the entire group that possesses the characteristics of interest to the study, from which a sample is selected for research purposes. Guided by the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998), the study's initial step involved the identification of the intended population and the selection of a sample for the study. The study focused on ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD as the intended setting of the population. Recognising the impracticality of studying the entire population within the ride-hailing industry, and with cognisance of both self-employed drivers and those working as employees to vehicle owners, a sample of 15 self-employed ride-hailing drivers was chosen.

It is noteworthy that, in the course of the study, data saturation during data collection was considered. As emphasised by Saunders et al. (2017), data saturation signifies the point in the study where sufficient data has been collected to draw necessary conclusions, and further data gathering would not provide additional insights. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) further note that saturation is a crucial indicator that the sample adequately represents the phenomenon under study, demonstrating content validity by capturing the diversity, depth, and complexities of the concerns under consideration. Therefore, in the final analysis, the study was conducted with the selected sample, acknowledging the potential for data saturation within this specific context.

3.7. Setting

The setting of the study in research refers to the specific physical, organisational, or social context where the investigation takes place, providing the background and environment for data collection (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Therefore, this study was conducted within the urban context of the City of Polokwane, situated in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The research focuses on 15 ride-hailing drivers, offering a comprehensive view of their livelihoods in this specific geographic setting. Polokwane, as an economic hub and the largest city in Limpopo Province (Mokoele, 2023), provides a distinctive backdrop with its unique blend of urban dynamics, economic conditions, and regulatory frameworks.

The city's characteristics, coupled with its role as a ride-hailing hotspot, form the contextual lens through which the livelihoods of these drivers are explored.



Figure 1: City of Polokwane Map (Malema et al., 2021:3)

3.8. Sampling

3.8.1. Sampling method

In this study, participants were selected using a non-probability sampling approach. Unlike probability sampling, where everyone has an equal chance of being selected, non-probability sampling does not involve random selection, indicating that not every ride-hailing driver had an equal chance of being chosen to participate in the research (Levy, 2008). The inclusion of participants in the research was based on their accessibility, forming the foundation of non-probability sampling.

This approach, effective when probability sampling is not feasible, was chosen for its time-saving benefits, particularly in the context of exploratory and qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). By drawing participants known to the researcher in the CBD of Polokwane, this sampling method was applied to capture the experiences and perspectives of ride-hailing drivers in a specific urban context.

3.8.2. Sampling procedure

Given the nature of the study, purposive sampling was employed. Purposive sampling, as a non-probability sampling procedure, involves the selection of participants based on the researcher's discretion (Johnson et al., 2020). This sampling approach offered the advantage of choosing participants based on their geographical proximity and relevance to the problem under investigation. The decision to incorporate a specific sample was driven by the nature of the study, enabling the researcher to swiftly obtain an appropriate sample (Johnson et al., 2020).

As suggested by Johnson et al., (2020) in acknowledging the potential for bias inherent in purposive sampling, efforts were made to minimise bias by allowing individuals to participate voluntarily. Furthermore, participants were well-suited to this sampling procedure due to their affiliation as ride-hailing drivers, possessing direct experiences and interests in the ride-hailing industry. This affiliation allowed for a comprehensive exploration of their livelihoods, encompassing factors such as the nature of work, income levels, and other pertinent aspects of their experiences within the industry.

3.8.3. Inclusion criteria for the study

Polit and Beck's (2012) conceptualisation of inclusion is described as a set of requirements or criteria that participants must meet to be included in the study. This approach proved crucial for the identification of study participants, as the sample was drawn from registered ride-hailing drivers who shared their experiences, making these criteria significant. Notably, there were no age, gender, or ethnic limitations, provided that the participant was affiliated with the ride-hailing industry and is recognised as a driver. This inclusive approach allowed for a diverse representation of participants, contributing to a comprehensive exploration of the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers within the ride-hailing industry.

3.9. Data collection process and the design of the interview questions

In this study, data collection was approached as the systematic gathering of information to address specific research questions, as outlined by Babbie and Mouton (2008). Given the qualitative nature of the study, 15 ride-hailing drivers were interviewed to obtain in-depth information for the purpose of generating findings to address the research problem.

Utilising Gray's (2009) perspective, a semi-structured interview strategy was employed as the cornerstone of the data collection method. Semi-structured interviews facilitated in-depth exploration of the issues under investigation, fostering open interaction and allowing the researcher to seek clarity and elaboration on participants' responses. Guided by Foster, Chasomeris and Blaauw (2021), the questions posed during the interviews were designed to be simple, ensuring participants' understanding and accurate responses. Face-to-face interviews were preferred to capture both verbal and nonverbal cues and to gauge participants' comfort levels throughout the data gathering process, aligning with Gray's (2009) recommendations. The interviews were conducted in the English language, audio-recorded, and later transcribed to facilitate rapid data analysis.

To guide the interviews, an interview guide was employed, offering a list of questions to be addressed throughout the interview process (see Appendix C). Influenced by the works of Foster and Chasomeris (2017) as well as Foster, Chasomeris and Blaauw (2021), the interview questions were crafted with the aim of eliciting detailed responses from ride-hailing drivers, focusing on their daily experiences, challenges, and perceptions. The questions were designed to explore various aspects of their livelihoods, including job satisfaction, economic factors, safety concerns, and overall well-being.

The methodological process in this study considered the exploratory nature of the study, aligning with the qualitative research approach (Babbie, 2013), and aimed to uncover rich insights into the subjective experiences of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD. Additionally, the questions were developed in accordance with the study's overarching goals, ensuring relevance in addressing the research objectives. For example, questions 1-4 gather the background information of participants, questions 5-7 address objective one, questions 8-14 address objective two, and questions 15-17 address objective three.

This semi-structured approach of the questions, as highlighted by Corbetta (2003), provided a framework for obtaining meaningful information, ensuring that pertinent questions were asked in a logical sequence.

Each interview, lasting 25 minutes on average, was conducted individually at the participants' preferred locations and times, contributing to a thorough and contextually rich exploration of ride-hailing drivers' experiences.

3.10. Data analysis

In this study, the application of thematic analysis and NVivo qualitative data analysis software served as a methodology for unravelling the complexities inherent in analysing textual material. Adhering to the structured framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis unfolded in a systematic progression of six key steps, each contributing to an understanding of the ride-hailing drivers' experiences.

3.10.1. Researcher's familiarisation with the collected data

The initial step involved frequent reading of the data acquired from the 15 participants. This continuous engagement with the data allowed the researcher to become intimately familiar with the responses, facilitating the identification of commonalities and distinctions before the data was synthesised.

3.10.2. Constructing initial codes from the original data using NVivo qualitative data analysis software

NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, played a crucial role in organising and analysing the data collected from ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD. Upon the initial step of the researcher's familiarisation with data from the 15 participants, the data was imported into NVivo data analysis software. Subsequently, an initial coding process took place, where key concepts and patterns within the data were identified and labelled. These initial codes were then organised into broader themes and subthemes, forming a thematic framework that captured the main topics and their interconnections. This framework served as a guide for the subsequent coding and categorisation process, where the entire dataset was systematically coded using NVivo. The software facilitated the application of the thematic framework to categorise text excerpts under relevant themes and subthemes.

3.10.3. Searching for meaningful themes

Throughout the coding process, the researcher engaged in constant comparison, revisiting codes and themes to ensure consistency and accuracy in representing participants' perspectives. NVivo's features, such as word frequency queries, were utilised to explore the data, enabling the identification of patterns and trends within the dataset. The thematic framework, once finalised, became the foundation for traditional thematic analysis. The researcher then delved deeper into the meanings embedded within the subthemes, ultimately synthesising primary themes that resonated with the study's intended goals. Iterative examinations of the original data were paramount to ensure the clarity of meanings within the emergent themes.

3.10.4. Refining selected themes

A critical review and adjustment of all identified themes occurred at this juncture. The aim was to refine the themes to their essence, eliminating irrelevant themes while retaining those that held significance in relation to the research topic. This refinement process ensured that the retained themes were directly aligned with the study's objectives, preventing confusion in the interpretation of the study's outcomes.

3.10.5. Defining and naming of themes

Further refinement was undertaken to precisely define and label the themes. The researcher paid attention to ensuring that each theme was substantiated by extracts from the participants. The chosen labels for the themes were carefully crafted to accurately convey the meanings captured within the extracted data.

3.10.6. Presenting the findings

In this phase, the researcher arranged the presentation and integration of findings from a diverse array of participants. This final step was instrumental in ensuring that the study's outcomes were communicated effectively, aligning with the overarching purpose, research aims, and objectives. The combination of thematic analysis and NVivo qualitative data analysis software not only facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the participants' experiences but also empowered the researcher to present the findings in a manner that resonated with the study's broader goals. This methodological synergy thus enriched the depth and clarity of the study's insights.

3.11. Quality criteria

Quality criteria is the validity and reliability of a qualitative investigation. As a result, the researcher used four criteria to assess data quality: credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability (Guba and Lincoln, 1985).

3.11.1. Credibility

To establish credibility, the researcher ensured that the findings were rooted in the participants' experiences. Participants were accurately identified and described, following Guba and Lincoln's (1985) suggestions for establishing trustworthiness. Measures such as sustained interaction with participants and data were employed to minimise distortions or misinformation. The conclusions drawn in the study were exclusively based on the information provided by the participants, contributing to the overall credibility of the research.

3.11.2. Transferability

The study aimed for transferability by offering a clear explanation of the research setting and providing adequate descriptive data. This will allow readers to assess the relevance or transferability of the findings to different contexts. The researcher utilised tried-and-tested data gathering procedures, ensuring that the conclusions would likely be comparable if the study were conducted under similar conditions in another location.

3.11.3. Dependability

Dependability, defined as consistency over time, was addressed by the researcher through several strategies. Thorough explanations of the study's assumptions and theory were provided, and multiple techniques such as NVivo data analysis software and thematic analysis method were employed to analyse data. The inclusion of a detailed description of how data would be acquired further contributed to dependability. Additionally, techniques such as the acknowledgement of bias, assumption, and theoretical focus were considered to enhance the validity of the qualitative research.

3.11.4. Confirmability

Confirmability was ensured by taking measures to illustrate that the conclusions derived from the collected data were not influenced by the researcher's personal bias. The researcher maintained consistency by providing plausible explanations and reasons for selecting certain techniques and procedures over others, thus reinforcing the neutrality of the results.

The focus remained on presenting conclusions that stemmed from the data rather than being driven by the researcher's predispositions. Collectively, these efforts contributed to confirming the research findings and bolstering the overall quality and trustworthiness of the study.

3.12. Ethical consideration

The bottom line of any research is the application of ethics to protect the researcher and participants (Bell and Bryman, 2007).

3.12.1. Permission to conduct the study

Ethical approval was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) before commencing the research (See the EC certificate in Appendix D with protocol number HSSREC/00006111/2023). This formal approval, obtained in writing, underscored the researcher's commitment to conducting the study with trustworthiness and integrity.

3.12.2. Informed consent

The process of obtaining informed consent was followed. Participants were presented with an information letter detailing the specifics of the study, outlining its nature, and emphasising the voluntary nature of their participation. Before commencing interviews, participants were ensured a comprehensive understanding of the study, its objectives, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. The informed consents were signed (see Appendix B for Official Consent Form), aided by two attachments for authenticity: the ethical clearance document and the information letter (see Appendix D for EC certificate and Appendix A for Information Letter).

3.12.3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality considerations were paramount in preserving the privacy of participants. The researcher committed to keeping participants' information confidential to the extent feasible, ensuring that it would not be shared with third parties without explicit approval. The disclosed information will be strictly used for academic purposes until being disposed.

3.12.4. Minimising harm to participants

The study was designed with careful consideration to minimise any potential risks to participants. The selected procedures and processes were deemed non-harmful, and participants were informed of the study's nature and any possible risks.

This transparent communication allowed participants the freedom to withdraw at any point if they felt the need to do so, ensuring their safety and well-being throughout the research process.

3.13. Conclusion

The methodology section outlined the methods and procedures employed throughout the inquiry, serving as a guide for the researcher until the data presentation and conclusion-drawing stages. The study, in essence, took the form of a qualitative exploratory investigation, focusing on the livelihoods of 15 ride-hailing drivers in the City of Polokwane. The fifteen ride-hailing drivers were purposively selected using non-probability sampling methods to participate in the study. This approach was chosen to ensure a nuanced exploration of the experiences and challenges faced by ride-hailing drivers, providing depth and context to the findings.

The next chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter on the presentation of findings aims to communicate the findings of the study based on the detailed perspectives and experiences of 15 purposively selected ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD. Through thematic analysis and NVivo data analysis software, the chapter offers a comprehensive understanding of the drivers' subjective realities. This presentation sets the stage for meaningful conclusions and contributes to the overall depth and context of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an extensive exploration of the lived experiences and multifaceted dimensions of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD. The preceding chapters detailed the research design, methodology, and ethical considerations that underpinned the qualitative exploratory study. Now, the spotlight shifts to the findings themselves, as they unravel the rich insights shared by the 15 purposively sampled ride-hailing drivers.

This presentation serves as a bridge between the research objectives that informed this study and the broader implications and applications of the study's outcomes. As the researcher presents the findings, the reader will gain an understanding of the diverse aspects that shape the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in this unique urban context.

The findings unfold through thematic analysis and NVivo data analysis software, offering a structured and thorough interpretation of the data. Each theme captures the essence of the participants' lived experiences, providing depth and context to their stories. Beyond mere description, the findings will be situated within the broader theoretical and practical landscape, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics inherent in the ride-hailing industry.

The presentation of findings is not merely a conclusion but a guide for discussion, reflection, and the envisaging of potential interventions. The aim is to offer not only insights into the specific context of the City of Polokwane but also to contribute to the broader discourse surrounding the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers within this gig economy. Therefore, this section will first present a tabulated background information of participants, followed by simultaneous presentation and discussion of themes, as well as the discussion of the relationship between the study's theoretical framework and the findings.

Table 2: Background information of participants

Participant	Nationality	Residential Area	Experience (Years/Months)	Motivation to Join	Perceived Diversity in Industry
1	South African	Suburb	3 years	Flexibility and extra income	Yes, diverse in terms of race and age
2	Zimbabwean	Township	6 months	Job loss pushed me into it	Not much diversity, mostly male and young
3	Nigerian	Informal settlement	1 year	Recommended by friends and better income	Limited diversity, mostly male and African
4	Namibian	Township	4 months	Recommended by a friend and flexible hours	Limited diversity, mostly male and African
5	South African	Suburb	2 years	Unemployment and potential to earn more	Diverse in terms of age and gender
6	Congolese	Informal settlement	1 year	Economic conditions and job flexibility	Limited diversity, mostly male and African
7	South African	Township	3 years	Job flexibility and income potential	Diverse, including various age groups and genders
8	South African	Suburb	1 year	Job flexibility and easy entry	Diverse, including various age groups and genders

Participant	Nationality	Residential Area	Experience (Years/Months)	Motivation to Join	Perceived Diversity in Industry
9	Zimbabwean	Suburb	2 years	Job flexibility and potential earnings	Diverse, including various age groups
10	South African	Township	6 months	Job flexibility and recommended by friends	Diverse, including various age groups and genders
11	South African	Suburb	1 year	Job flexibility and potential earnings	Diverse, including various age groups and genders
12	Zimbabwean	Township	2 years	Job flexibility and income potential	Diverse, including various age groups and genders
13	South African	Suburb	2 years	Job flexibility and potential earnings	Diverse, including various age groups
14	Zimbabwean	Township	1 year	Job flexibility and easy entry	Limited diversity, predominantly male
15	South African	Suburb	6 months	Recommended by friends and potential earnings	Diverse, including various age groups

4.2. Summary of the table

4.2.1. Nationality

Participants come from diverse national backgrounds, including South Africa (8), Zimbabwe (4), Nigeria (1), Namibia (1), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (1).

4.2.2. Residential area

Participants reside in different types of areas, such as suburbs, townships, and informal settlements.

4.2.3. Experience in the ride-hailing industry

The participants in the study bring varied levels of experience to the ride-hailing industry, with differing durations as drivers. For example, South African drivers have experience ranging from 6 months to 3 years. Zimbabwean drivers, predominantly from townships, have experience ranging from 6 months to 2 years, primarily driven by job flexibility and income potential. Nigerian and Namibian participants, residing in informal settlements or townships, have experience ranging from 1 to 4 months.

4.2.4. The mean and median years of experience

To calculate the mean and median years of experience for ride-hailing drivers, we first need to sum up all the years of experience and then divide by the total number of drivers to find the mean. For the median, we need to arrange the years of experience in ascending order and find the middle value.

Given years of experience: 3, 0.5, 1, 0.33, 2, 1, 1, 2, 0.5, 0.5, 2, 1, 2, 0.5, 0.5

Sum of years of experience: $3 + 0.5 + 1 + 0.33 + 2 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 0.5 + 0.5 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 0.5 + 0.5 = 18.83$ years

Number of drivers: 15

Mean experience: $18.83 \text{ years} / 15 \text{ drivers} \approx 1.255 \text{ years}$

Arranged years of experience: 0.33, 0.5, 0.5, 0.5, 0.5, 0.5, 0.5, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 3

Median experience: The middle value is the 8th value in the sorted list, which is 1 year.

Therefore, the mean experience is approximately 1.26 years, and the median experience is 1 year.

4.2.5. Motivation to join

The primary motivations for joining the ride-hailing industry include job flexibility, income potential, recommendations from friends, and economic conditions.

4.2.6. Perceived diversity in the industry

The perceived gender diversity in the ride-hailing industry among the study participants varies. Some participants, particularly those from South Africa, note a diverse mix of age and gender, emphasising inclusivity with various age groups and genders represented. However, others, particularly Zimbabwean and Congolese participants, observe a more limited gender diversity, noting a predominantly male presence in the industry. Overall, while some participants perceive the ride-hailing industry as inclusive, featuring drivers of various ages and genders, others highlight a noticeable gender imbalance, primarily with a male majority. This diversity in perceptions adds a nuanced layer to understanding the composition of the industry as reported by those actively engaged in it.

4.3. Presentation, interpretation and discussion of themes

This section is structured around three central themes, each developed to provide an understanding of the ride-hailing industry in this unique urban landscape. The first theme delves into the factors affecting ride-hailing drivers' livelihoods. From economic conditions to safety concerns, this theme captures the complex influences shaping their professional lives.

The second theme scrutinises the level of income. Here, the researcher delves into the complexities of earnings, exploring the dynamic interplay of surge pricing, peak hours, and the overall economic architecture that defines the financial dimensions of being a ride-hailing driver in Polokwane's CBD. The third and final theme covers the recommendations for improving livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers. Participants, through their experiences, offer valuable insights into the mechanisms that could enhance the well-being and satisfaction of ride-hailing drivers.

4.3.1. Factors affecting drivers' livelihoods

4.3.1.1. Theme: Competition and safety concerns

Participant 1: *"I've had mixed experiences. High competition and safety concerns are always on my mind."*

Participant 2: *"I've mostly had positive experiences. Demand and competition are the major factors in Polokwane."*

Competition within the ride-hailing industry is a recurring concern among participants, and safety-related apprehensions further compound their experiences. The heightened competition likely stems from the relatively low entry barriers for new drivers in the ride-hailing business. This saturation can lead to challenges in securing enough rides, affecting the overall earnings of drivers. Safety concerns, as voiced by Participant 1, include worries about encountering unruly passengers or navigating through areas perceived as less secure.

Literature on the ride-hailing industry often discusses the challenges arising from intense competition among drivers. Increased competition can lead to reduced fares and, consequently, lower earnings for drivers (De Vos, 2019). Safety concerns align with previous research, which has highlighted issues related to the personal safety of drivers, emphasising the need for platforms to address these concerns to ensure a more secure working environment (Smith et al., 2020).

4.3.1.2. Theme: Economic conditions

Participant 1: *"Economic conditions play a big role; they affect the number of passengers and, in turn, my earnings."*

Participant 2: *"Economic conditions directly impact demand, and competition influences how much I earn."*

Participant 3: *"Economic conditions can affect demand, and competition has a direct impact on my earnings."*

Participant 4: *"Economic conditions do play a role in demand, but competition is manageable."*

Participant 5: *"Economic conditions affecting demand and competition influencing earnings are things I keep an eye on."*

Participant 6: *"Economic conditions and competition definitely influence how much I earn."*

Participant 7: *"Economic conditions and competition have a direct impact on my earnings."*

Participant 8: *"Economic conditions play a role in demand, and competition is always a factor."*

Participant 9: *"Economic conditions and competition directly impact how much I earn."*

The participants' consensus on the significant impact of economic conditions reveals the intricate relationship between macroeconomic factors and the microcosm of ride-hailing livelihoods. By acknowledging the role of economic conditions in shaping the demand for their services, drivers recognise the inherent vulnerability of their income streams to broader economic fluctuations. The dependency on passenger demand, which is intricately linked to economic prosperity, creates a scenario where drivers experience the ripples of economic shifts directly.

The participants' remarks suggest that economic downturns not only influence the number of passengers but also contribute to heightened competition among drivers. In times of economic strain, more individuals may turn to gig work, saturating the market with drivers and consequently reducing the earning potential for each (Booth, 2019). The manageable competition mentioned by some participants implies that economic conditions are a key determinant of the competitive landscape, with economic upswings potentially alleviating competitive pressures.

The findings align with broader discussions on gig economy workers' susceptibility to economic conditions. Research has shown that gig workers, including ride-hailing drivers, often bear the brunt of economic downturns due to decreased consumer spending and increased labour supply (Berg et al., 2018). Recognising this sensitivity is crucial for both ride-hailing platforms and policymakers in developing support mechanisms during economic downturns.

The participants' acknowledgement of the intertwining of economic conditions and competition points to the dynamic nature of the ride-hailing industry. According to Agarwal et al., (2022), economic fluctuations not only affect the demand for rides but also influence the supply side by altering the number of drivers in the market. As competition intensifies during economic

downturns, platforms might need to consider implementing measures to ensure fair and sustainable earnings for drivers, such as dynamic pricing adjustments or targeted incentives.

Policymakers play a crucial role in mitigating the impact of economic volatility on gig workers. Policies that provide financial cushions or support mechanisms during economic downturns can help stabilise the income of ride-hailing drivers. Additionally, creating an environment that encourages fair competition while safeguarding the well-being of drivers is essential for the long-term sustainability of the ride-hailing industry (Agarwal et al., 2022).

4.3.1.3. Theme: Maintaining a good rating

Participant 1: *"Keeping my rating up is crucial, and managing fuel costs can be a challenge."*

Participant 4: *"It's about keeping that good rating and dealing with the challenges of traffic."*

Participant 5: *"Managing long working hours and ensuring my vehicle stays clean can be a task."*

Participant 8: *"It's a balance between work and personal life that I strive to maintain."*

Maintaining a good rating emerges as a key concern for several participants, underlining the significance placed on driver ratings within the ride-hailing industry. The emphasis on this aspect suggests that drivers perceive their ratings as influential not only in terms of their individual performance evaluation but also in securing future ride requests. Participants express the challenges associated with this, ranging from managing work-life balance (Participant 8) to addressing specific operational issues like keeping the vehicle clean (Participant 5).

Driver ratings hold substantial importance in the ride-hailing sector, as they directly impact a driver's visibility and desirability to potential passengers. Academic literature often associates driver ratings with customer satisfaction and service quality (Liu et al., 2017). According to Cram et al., (2022), platforms may use these ratings to allocate rides and, in some cases, to deactivate drivers falling below a certain threshold. In addition, the struggle to balance maintaining a high rating with other operational challenges, as highlighted by the participants, reflects the delicate equilibrium drivers must navigate in their pursuit of success within the ride-hailing industry.

Research by Lee et al., (2019) discusses the role of driver ratings in ride-hailing platforms and their implications on service quality. The study emphasises the significance of ratings in shaping customer perceptions and influencing their decisions to choose one driver over another. This aligns with the concerns expressed by participants regarding the importance of managing their ratings. Understanding the multifaceted aspects of maintaining a good rating is crucial for both drivers and platforms to enhance the overall ride-hailing experience.

4.3.1.4. Theme: Dealing with traffic

Participant 4: *"It's about keeping that good rating and dealing with the challenges of traffic."*

Participant 6: *"Dealing with traffic and the occasional rude passenger are part of the job."*

Traffic-related challenges are raised by participants 4 and 6, shedding light on the impact of urban congestion on the experiences of ride-hailing drivers. For Participant 4, traffic is presented as a factor intertwined with the broader challenge of maintaining a good rating, indicating the potential influence of traffic conditions on service delivery. Participant 6 identifies traffic as a persistent challenge, coupled with occasional encounters with discourteous passengers.

The acknowledgement of traffic-related challenges aligns with broader discussions in the ride-hailing industry. Urban traffic congestion can significantly affect driver productivity, increasing the time spent on each trip and potentially reducing the number of trips completed in a given time frame. This not only impacts the driver's earnings but can also contribute to increased stress and dissatisfaction among drivers (Rayle et al., 2018).

Additionally, according to Aghayari et al. (2021), dealing with traffic requires adaptive strategies, and drivers may need to develop navigational skills or leverage technology to optimise routes. Some ride-hailing platforms offer in-app navigation tools to assist drivers in real-time, reflecting efforts to mitigate the impact of traffic on service quality.

The challenges associated with traffic have been a subject of academic exploration in the context of the ride-sharing economy and transportation networks. Studies emphasise the need for effective navigation tools and adaptive strategies to enhance the efficiency of ride-hailing services in congested urban environments (Martin et al., 2016).

Understanding and addressing traffic-related challenges are crucial for both drivers and ride-hailing platforms to optimise operations and improve the overall experience for drivers and passengers.

4.3.1.5. Theme: Handling difficult passengers

Participant 6: *"Dealing with traffic and the occasional rude passenger are part of the job."*

Participant 7: *"Dealing with difficult passengers and managing vehicle maintenance are ongoing concerns."*

Participant 8: *"Positive experiences overall, but there are occasional challenges with passengers."*

Participant 11: *"Positive experiences, occasional challenges with passengers is something I come across."*

Participant 12: *"For me, I think positive experiences, but sometimes occasional challenges with passengers occur."*

Participants 6, 7, 8, 11 and 12 draw attention to the challenges associated with difficult or unruly passengers. Participant 7 specifically highlights the ongoing concerns related to managing both difficult passengers and vehicle maintenance, suggesting that these challenges are integral to their experiences in the ride-hailing industry. In contrast, Participant 8 mentions the broader challenge of dealing with difficult passengers, which may encompass various stressors, including interactions with difficult passengers. In addition, participants 8, 11, and 12 all acknowledge that, despite generally positive experiences, they encounter occasional challenges with passengers during their ride-hailing activities.

According to Smith et al., (2020), handling difficult or unruly passengers is a common challenge faced by ride-hailing drivers. Such encounters can range from verbal abuse to more serious safety concerns. Ride-hailing platforms must provide support mechanisms and guidelines for drivers to navigate such situations effectively. The safety and well-being of drivers are paramount, and addressing issues related to difficult passengers is vital for the overall sustainability of the ride-hailing industry.

The literature on ride-hailing often discusses the various safety and security concerns faced by drivers, including the challenges associated with difficult passengers. Research emphasises the importance of platform policies and support mechanisms to address safety issues and enhance the overall well-being of drivers (Smith et al., 2020). Strategies for managing difficult passenger interactions and promoting a healthy work-life balance contribute to the long-term sustainability of the ride-hailing workforce. Furthermore, handling challenging passengers requires emotional intelligence and effective communication skills (Kuek et al., 2015). Study by De Stefano (2016) pointed out the need for platforms to provide adequate support and mechanisms for dispute resolution to ensure a positive experience for both drivers and passengers.

4.3.1.6. Theme: Work-life balance

Participant 8: *"It's a balance between work and personal life that I strive to maintain."*

Participant 10: *"Balancing work with personal life."*

Participant 11: *"Challenges in maintaining work-life balance."*

Participant 12: *"Challenges in consistent earnings, adapting to peak hours."*

The participants express the challenge of balancing work and personal life, with some directly acknowledging the difficulty (Participants 8, 11, 12). Participant 10 explicitly mentions the ongoing effort to strike a balance between work and personal commitments.

Achieving a satisfactory work-life balance is a common struggle for many ride-hailing drivers. The flexible nature of the job, while advantageous in some respects, can make it challenging for drivers to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Factors such as fluctuating demand, varying peak hours, and the need to adapt to changing conditions contribute to the complexities of maintaining a stable work-life balance.

The literature on ride-hailing often discusses the challenges associated with work-life balance, emphasising the need for platforms to implement measures that support the well-being of workers (Berg et al., 2018). Studies highlight the importance of flexibility and autonomy in gig work but also point to the potential downsides, such as difficulties in setting clear boundaries between work and personal life (Wood et al., 2019).

For ride-hailing platforms, addressing issues related to work-life balance is crucial not only for driver satisfaction but also for the overall sustainability of the workforce. Implementing policies that promote reasonable working hours, providing adequate downtime, and considering the personal commitments of drivers can contribute to a healthier and more sustainable working environment.

4.3.1.7. Theme: Flexibility and demand

Participant 6: *"I've had positive experiences, with flexibility and demand being key factors."*

Participant 10: *"Generally positive experiences, fluctuations in demand."*

Both Participant 6 and Participant 10 express positive sentiments regarding their experiences in the ride-hailing industry, attributing this positivity to the flexibility of the job and the demand for their services. Flexibility is particularly highlighted as a key positive factor by Participant 6. The emphasis on flexibility and demand as positive aspects of the ride-hailing experience aligns with existing literature on gig work. The flexibility offered by gig jobs is often cited as a major attraction for individuals entering these platforms (Friedman and Telang, 2019).

The ability to set one's schedule and adapt to personal commitments is a significant advantage for drivers, especially for those who value autonomy in their work. Moreover, the positive association with demand indicates that the availability of passengers and ride requests contributes to a more favourable experience for drivers. This aligns with studies highlighting the relationship between demand volume and earnings satisfaction among gig workers (Chen et al., 2020).

Research emphasises the importance of flexibility in gig work, indicating that it is a critical factor in attracting and retaining workers on digital labour platforms (Lehdonvirta, 2018). The positive correlation between demand and job satisfaction is consistent with findings that suggest higher demand contributes to increased earnings and overall job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2020).

4.3.2. Level of income in the ride-hailing industry

4.3.2.1. Theme: Income expectations and fluctuations

Participant 1: *"My income generally meets expectations, but there are fluctuations."*

Participant 5: *"My income is below my expectations, I think so, but sometimes you know."*

Participant 8: *"I think when it comes to my income, it is not what I expect, because it low sometimes. But it's the reality of my work, it has ups and downs sometimes."*

Participant 12: *"Sometimes, I think My income is below what I can expect, but yeah, it's still ok with me, it's money."*

Participant 15: *"When it comes to my income, it will be low but not often. So that is something I hate to see because I need more money every day."*

The participants' statements highlight the complex relationship between income expectations and the reality of earnings in the ride-hailing industry. Participant 1 acknowledges that their income generally aligns with expectations, but the mention of fluctuations suggests an underlying financial instability. Participants 5, 8, 12, and 15 express a common sentiment of slight dissatisfaction, indicating that their earnings fall short of what they anticipated.

This theme underscores the inherent challenges associated with income unpredictability in the gig economy. The fluctuating nature of earnings can be attributed to several factors, including competition, demand variations, and the overall economic conditions influencing the ride-hailing sector. The participants' experiences shed light on the need for drivers and platforms to address these income dynamics for a more sustainable and equitable gig work environment.

The literature on gig economy economics emphasises the precarious nature of income for workers in platforms like ride-hailing. Smith et al, (2020) discuss the challenges gig workers face due to income fluctuations, emphasising the need for a nuanced understanding of the economic realities in the gig economy. De Vos (2019) explores income dynamics in ride-hailing platforms, shedding light on the impact of competition on driver earnings and the broader economic implications.

4.3.2.2. Theme: Daily and monthly income

Participant 1: *"On a daily basis, I make around R800 most often, and monthly, it adds up to about R15,000, yes."*

Participant 2: *"Daily, I make approximately R700 you know, and on a monthly basis, it's around R14,000. For me it's much better"*

Participant 3: *"Daily, I make around R900, and on a monthly basis, it's approximately R18,000 when I estimate my total monthly"*

Participant 4: *"I earn about R600 daily if not more, but it depends on the demand, and monthly it adds up to R12,000 which I normally take home."*

Participant 5: *"My daily income is around R750 especially on rainy days or at night when there is demand, and on a monthly basis, it's roughly R16,000."*

Participant 6: *"I make about R550 per day, totalling around R11,000 monthly. It is less because sometimes I start working late."*

Participant 7: *"On a daily basis, I make around R500, and monthly, it's about R8,000."*

Participant 8: *"On average, I earn R480 daily, resulting in a monthly income of R9,600."*

Participant 9: *"My daily income is about R680, and monthly it's around R13,500."*

Participant 10: *"I think I make around R520 daily depending on the demand yes, and on a monthly basis, it's about R10,000."*

Participant 11: *"Daily, I think most of the time if I get requests frequently, I can earn approximately R600, and monthly it adds up to R12,500 and for it's reasonable"*

Participant 12: *"My daily income is around R700, and on a monthly basis, it's about R14,000."*

Participant 13: *"I make about R480 daily, and monthly it's roughly R9,500. But that is if I did not work on weekends or at night when the demand is high."*

Participant 14: *"On a daily basis, I make around R400, and monthly, it's about R7,000."*

Participant 15: *"On a daily basis, I earn around R550. For me it's nothing man, and when I count it months end, it is approximately R11,000 and I still think it's not much but, yes...I can make a decent living with that money."*

The reported daily and monthly incomes of the ride-hailing drivers exhibit a considerable range, reflecting the variability in earnings within the gig economy. Some participants, such as Participant 3, reported daily earnings as high as R900, resulting in a monthly income of approximately R18,000, while others, like Participant 14, reported lower daily earnings around R400, culminating in a monthly income of about R7,000.

Comparing these incomes with South Africa's minimum wage provides insights into the economic context of this industry. South Africa's national minimum wage was recently set at R25,42 (Bolt South Africa, 2021). Therefore, assuming an average of eight working hours per day, five days a week, and four weeks a month, this would translate to a minimum monthly income of approximately R4067,20. This means that ride-hailing drivers are able to earn more than the standard minimum wage in South Africa. However, it is crucial to note that these figures may vary based on individual circumstances, working hours, and fluctuations in demand. Research by Dey et al., (2022) emphasises the need for an understanding of gig workers' income structures, considering both daily and monthly perspectives. Additionally, studies by Zwettler et al., (2023) delve into the various factors influencing gig workers' earnings, providing insights into the complexity of income dynamics in the gig economy.

4.3.2.3. Theme: Factors influencing fluctuations

Participant 1: *"Fluctuations are mainly due to intense competition and varying fuel prices."*

Participant 5: *"Fluctuations are due to competition and fuel prices affecting costs."*

Participant 8: *"Regular car maintenance and focusing on high-demand areas are crucial."*

Participants highlight multiple factors contributing to income fluctuations, showcasing an awareness of the intricate dynamics influencing their financial stability. Key factors include competition, fuel prices, and strategic considerations such as focusing on high-demand areas.

The acknowledgement of intense competition aligns with existing literature on the ride-hailing industry, where increased competition can lead to reduced fares and subsequently impact drivers' earnings (De Vos, 2019). Fuel prices and maintenance costs represent operational challenges that contribute to the variability in income. Understanding and navigating these factors become essential for drivers seeking to optimise their earnings.

4.3.2.4. Theme: Determinants of earnings

Participant 1: *"My ratings and the number of rides I get are crucial determinants."*

Participant 3: *"My ratings and focusing on peak hours play a big role."*

Participant 6: *"Ratings and avoiding peak traffic contribute to income stability."*

In the dynamic landscape of the ride-hailing industry, drivers frequently underscore specific factors that play pivotal roles in shaping their earnings. The themes that emerge prominently from the participants' narratives centre around the determinants of income, shedding light on the intricacies of their strategies for financial success.

The consensus among participants, as highlighted by Participant 1, is the paramount importance of maintaining high ratings. Ratings, provided by passengers, serve not only as a reflection of the driver's service quality but also as a critical factor influencing the likelihood of being selected for future rides. This underscores the symbiotic relationship between positive passenger experiences and the driver's long-term earning potential.

The number of rides a driver secures is identified as another crucial determinant of earnings. Participant 3 emphasises the role of focusing on peak hours, aligning with the strategic consideration of timing to maximise ride requests. This strategic approach speaks to the drivers' awareness of the demand fluctuations throughout the day, allowing them to optimise their income by strategically positioning themselves during periods of heightened demand.

Participant 6 introduces the concept of avoiding peak traffic as a strategy contributing to income stability. This highlights the acknowledgement among drivers that factors beyond passenger demand, such as traffic conditions, can significantly impact their ability to complete more rides efficiently. By steering clear of congested routes, drivers aim to maintain a steady flow of rides, positively influencing their overall earnings.

The participants' emphasis on high ratings, strategic ride acquisition, and traffic navigation reflects a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of their work. In the highly competitive ride-hailing environment, where drivers often operate as independent contractors, optimising these determinants becomes integral to their financial success.

Recognising these determinants can have implications for ride-hailing platforms and policymakers. Platforms may consider refining their rating systems to provide more constructive feedback and fostering a supportive environment for both passengers and drivers. Policymakers may need to address challenges related to traffic management and encourage platforms to implement policies that support drivers in navigating peak hours.

Extensive research on the ride-hailing industry has explored the impact of ratings on driver performance and income (Olayode et al., 2023). Studies have also delved into the optimisation strategies employed by drivers to capitalise on peak demand periods (Rayle et al., 2016).

4.3.2.5. Theme: Income stabilisation and coping strategies

Participant 1: *"I cope by budgeting carefully. I've started saving, and I'm exploring other income sources."*

Participant 3: *"I'm exploring food delivery as an additional income source."*

Participant 14: *"Adapting to peak hours and maintaining a good reputation are ongoing."*

The narratives of ride-hailing participants reveal a multifaceted approach toward income stabilisation and coping with the inherent fluctuations in their earnings. This theme provides insights into the financial acumen and adaptability drivers employ to navigate the unpredictability of the ride-hailing industry.

Participant 1 introduces the notion of budgeting as a fundamental coping strategy. This implies a strategic and disciplined approach to managing income, ensuring that drivers allocate their earnings judiciously to cover both routine and unforeseen expenses. The emphasis on careful budgeting underscores the financial responsibility shouldered by drivers in a profession characterised by income variability.

Literature on gig economies suggests that the irregular income patterns experienced by gig workers necessitate effective budgeting strategies to maintain financial stability (Lehdonvirta, 2018). The proactive budgeting approach aligns with findings that gig workers often adopt financial planning practices to navigate income fluctuations (Caza et al., 2021).

The exploration of additional income sources emerges as a prevalent strategy among participants. Participant 3, for instance, is considering engaging in food delivery, expanding beyond the conventional ride-hailing domain. This strategic diversification serves as a risk mitigation approach, allowing drivers to leverage their existing skills and resources in alternative avenues when ride demand experiences fluctuations.

Research on gig workers in the sharing economy highlights the importance of diversification in income streams as a resilience strategy (Silva and Moreira, 2022). Diversifying income sources can act as a protective measure, mitigating the impact of fluctuations in a specific sector of the gig economy.

Participant 14's approach to coping revolves around adapting to peak hours and maintaining a good reputation. This dual-strategy aligns with the operational dynamics of ride-hailing, emphasising the significance of strategically positioning oneself during periods of high demand while concurrently focusing on providing a positive customer experience (Smith et al., 2020).

Studies on gig work underscore the importance of reputation management as a mechanism for securing continued employment and positive earnings (Anwar and Graham, 2019). Maintaining a positive reputation is not only a personal branding strategy but also a practical approach to ensuring a steady stream of ride requests. Other studies also emphasise financial challenges faced by independent workers and the strategies they employ for income stabilisation such as saving (To et al., 2020).

4.3.2.6. Theme: Focus on ride-hailing and limited growth opportunities

Participant 1: *"Right now, I'm solely focused on ride-hailing. I haven't identified many growth opportunities."*

Participant 2: *"Growth opportunities within the ride-hailing industry seem limited."*

Participant 3: *"Similar to others, I see limited growth opportunities."*

The participants' perspectives on their current professional focus and growth opportunities provide an understanding of how individuals perceive the ride-hailing industry's potential for

career development. While some express an exclusive dedication to ride-hailing, others are more cautious about the growth prospects within this domain.

Participant 1 clearly states, "Right now, I'm solely focused on ride-hailing," indicating a present commitment to this particular gig economy sector. This dedicated focus may stem from the immediate financial stability and income it provides. The sentiment aligns with the nature of gig work, where individuals often engage in a specific platform or service based on its current viability and income potential. Literature on gig work highlights the transient nature of gig workers' professional allegiances, often driven by immediate financial needs and the accessibility of specific platforms (De Vos, 2019). The sole focus on ride-hailing resonates with studies underscoring the pragmatic and adaptive career approaches of gig workers (Meijerink and Keegan, 2019).

Participants 2 and 3 express a shared scepticism about growth opportunities within the ride-hailing industry. Participant 2 notes, "Growth opportunities within the ride-hailing industry seem limited," echoing a sentiment of scepticism regarding avenues for professional advancement. This perspective might stem from a perception of saturation in the ride-hailing market or uncertainties about the future trajectory of the industry.

Research on gig workers often discusses concerns related to limited upward mobility and career progression within gig economy platforms (Wood et al., 2019). The perceived limitations on growth opportunities may influence the long-term commitment of gig workers to a particular platform or industry. Participant 3 emphasises, "Similar to others, I see limited growth opportunities," suggesting a shared sentiment within the driver community. This collective perspective might be influenced by industry trends, market dynamics, or the observed experiences of fellow drivers. The notion of shared perceptions within a professional community in the gig economy underscores the importance of community dynamics and shared narratives.

According to Sundarajan (2016), the concentration on ride-hailing among participants aligns with the temporal nature of gig work, where individuals prioritise immediate financial gains. The perceived limitations in growth opportunities hint at broader challenges within the ride-hailing industry, such as market saturation or structural barriers to career progression. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for industry stakeholders to address concerns related to long-term professional sustainability and the retention of skilled drivers.

Research on gig workers often explores the implications of limited growth opportunities on worker satisfaction and commitment to gig platforms (Lehdonvirta, 2018). The dynamic nature of gig work and its impact on career trajectories are essential considerations for both platforms and policymakers (Sundararajan, 2016).

Ride-hailing platforms should consider initiatives that provide clear pathways for career advancement and skill development within the gig economy. Addressing concerns related to limited growth opportunities can contribute to driver retention and overall job satisfaction.

4.3.2.7. Theme: Consideration of alternative income sources

Participant 2: *"Considering food delivery as an additional income source."*

Participant 3: *"Yes, I've engaged in food delivery."*

The participants' contemplation and engagement in alternative income sources, specifically food delivery, shed light on the adaptive strategies employed by gig workers to navigate the variability inherent in the ride-hailing industry.

Participant 2 contemplates, "Considering food delivery as an additional income source." This reflective stance suggests a strategic approach to income generation, where gig workers explore additional opportunities beyond ride-hailing. The consideration of food delivery aligns with the notion of gig workers strategically diversifying their income streams to mitigate risks associated with the inherent fluctuations in ride-hailing demand. Participant 3 provides a more active perspective, stating, "Yes, I've engaged in food delivery." This proactive engagement signifies a practical response to the dynamic nature of gig work, where drivers actively seek and capitalise on additional income-generating avenues. Actively participating in food delivery could offer a supplementary income source and potentially contribute to a more stable overall financial situation.

The consideration and active pursuit of alternative income sources highlight the adaptability of gig workers in responding to the uncertainties and fluctuations within the ride-hailing sector. Such adaptive strategies are crucial for workers to navigate the gig economy's unpredictable nature, ensuring a more sustainable and resilient livelihood. For gig economy platforms and policymakers, recognising and supporting the diversification of income sources among gig workers can be crucial. This might involve creating platforms or partnerships that facilitate seamless transitions between different types of gig work.

Research on ride-hailing drivers' income strategies often emphasises the importance of diversification to enhance financial stability (Hasselwander, 2024). The ability to seamlessly transition between different gig roles aligns with the concept of the "portfolio worker" who strategically manages multiple income streams (Dunn, 2020).

4.3.3. Recommendations for improving livelihoods

4.3.3.1. Theme: Surge pricing and earnings boost: Empowering drivers in fluctuating demand

Participant 1: *"I suggest implementing surge pricing during peak hours to boost earnings."*

Participant 7: *"Incentive programmes during peak hours could significantly improve earnings."*

Participant 10: *"For me I think a reward system is good for us as drivers when we do well."*

Participant 15: *"Implementing a reward system for drivers with high ratings would boost morale."*

Implementing surge pricing during peak hours to boost earnings emerges as a key recommendation. Participants 1 and 7 mention the surge pricing during peak hours, while participants 10, and 15 advocate for a reward system, all emphasising their potential to improve earnings as well as to boost the morale of drivers.

Surge pricing is a dynamic pricing strategy employed by ride-hailing platforms, increasing fares during times of high demand. This recommendation aligns with participants' recognition of the impact of economic conditions on ride demand. It reflects a desire for a more responsive earnings structure that directly correlates with the challenges and opportunities presented by fluctuating demand.

Implementing surge pricing empowers drivers by offering financial incentives during peak demand, compensating for the inherent uncertainties of the gig economy (Zervas et al., 2017). This strategy not only acknowledges the contribution of drivers during critical demand periods but also serves as a motivational factor. For ride-hailing platforms, incorporating surge pricing mechanisms requires careful calibration.

Balancing fare increases with passenger satisfaction and regulatory considerations is crucial. Transparent communication about the reasons behind surge pricing can enhance driver-passenger relations.

The recommendation aligns with findings from Hall and Krueger's (2016) analysis of Uber's labour market, emphasising the importance of responsive compensation mechanisms in the gig economy. The surge pricing model has been widely discussed in academic research, with studies examining its impact on driver earnings and overall platform dynamics (Kooti et al., 2017).

4.3.3.2. Theme: Access to resources: Enhancing well-being and professional development

Participant 1: *"Access to affordable fuel and safety training would significantly benefit us."*

Participant 2: *"Having access to mental health support and financial literacy programmes is crucial."*

Participant 3: *"Providing insurance coverage for drivers is essential for our well-being."*

Participant 5: *"Financial planning workshops and insurance coverage are vital for our stability."*

Participant 6: *"Mental health support and regular vehicle maintenance assistance are much needed."*

Participant 8: *"Affordable vehicle maintenance and repair services are crucial for our sustainability."*

Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8 collectively advocate for improved access to essential resources. The key recommendations include affordable fuel, safety training, mental health support, financial literacy programmes, and regular vehicle maintenance assistance. These recommendations underscore the multifaceted needs of drivers beyond income considerations. They highlight the importance of holistic support systems that address both professional and personal aspects, acknowledging the unique challenges posed by the gig economy.

Access to affordable fuel is crucial, as fuel costs directly impact drivers' net earnings. Advocating for measures to mitigate these costs reflects a practical concern for sustaining profitability. Safety training and mental health support are integral aspects of professional development. Acknowledging the potentially stressful nature of the job, participants emphasise the need for resources that enhance their well-being and equip them with the skills to handle challenging situations.

Financial literacy programmes align with participants' strategies for income stabilisation. By enhancing drivers' financial acumen, these programmes can contribute to better budgeting, saving, and overall financial resilience. Regular vehicle maintenance assistance is highlighted as crucial, underlining the significance of the vehicle as the primary tool for ride-hailing. Well-maintained vehicles not only contribute to the safety of drivers and passengers but also positively impact earnings.

The call for access to resources resonates with studies emphasising the need for comprehensive support structures in the gig economy (De Stefano, 2016). Research on the gig workforce advocates for policies that address drivers' holistic needs, beyond the transactional aspects of their work (Sundararajan, 2016).

4.3.3.3. Theme: Safety measures: Fostering a secure ride-hailing environment

Participant 1: *"Strengthening safety measures and finding ways to reduce competition could improve our overall experience."*

Participant 2: *"Addressing high competition and enhancing safety measures are key areas for improvement."*

Participant 3: *"Collaborating with local authorities to regulate competition could create a more stable environment."*

Participant 7: *"Dealing with difficult passengers and managing vehicle maintenance are ongoing concerns."*

Participants 1, 2, 3, and 7 collectively advocate for the strengthening of safety measures within the ride-hailing industry. The emphasis on safety measures reflects the drivers' recognition of the intrinsic link between their well-being, the security of passengers, and the overall success of the ride-hailing platform. This recommendation encompasses various dimensions, including passenger behaviour, regulatory frameworks, and the physical and emotional safety of drivers.

Participant 1 draws a connection between reducing competition and enhancing safety. This suggests that an overcrowded market may lead to a race-to-the-bottom dynamic, potentially compromising safety standards. Addressing competition, therefore, becomes intertwined with ensuring a secure environment.

The call for collaboration with local authorities (Participant 3) underscores the need for a regulatory framework that ensures standardised safety measures. By actively involving authorities, the industry can move toward creating a more secure and stable operating environment. Participant 7 highlights the ongoing concern of dealing with difficult passengers, showcasing the multifaceted nature of safety concerns. It goes beyond the physical safety of drivers, encompassing the emotional and psychological aspects of their work environment.

The importance of safety measures aligns with broader discussions on gig worker well-being and security. A study by Asfahani et al., (2023) emphasises the need for platforms to prioritise safety measures to ensure the overall sustainability and success of gig workers. Considering the South African context, where the ride-hailing industry has seen significant growth, local studies such as Smith (2018) also stress the importance of safety regulations.

The collaboration with local authorities aligns with the ongoing discourse on creating a regulatory framework tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities in the South African gig economy.

4.3.3.4. Theme: Competition regulation: Balancing the ride-hailing landscape

Participant 1: *"Fluctuations are mainly due to intense competition and varying fuel prices."*

Participant 3: *"Collaborating with local authorities to regulate competition could create a more stable environment."*

Participant 7: *"Economic conditions and competition have a direct impact on my earnings."*

Participants 1, 3, and 7 advocate for finding ways to reduce competition and collaborating with local authorities to regulate competition. The recommendation to regulate competition underscores the participants' acknowledgement of the challenges posed by a saturated market.

The ride-hailing industry, characterised by its low entry barriers, often experiences intense competition, impacting drivers' earnings and overall job satisfaction. Participant 1 directly links

income fluctuations to intense competition, suggesting that a reduction in competition could contribute to a more stable income. This viewpoint aligns with the broader discourse on the gig economy, where increased competition can lead to a decline in earnings (De Vos, 2019).

The call for collaboration with local authorities (Participants 3 and 7) signifies a recognition that competition regulation may require external intervention. Local authorities can play a pivotal role in establishing fair practices, ensuring that the market is conducive for both drivers and passengers. Participant 7 explicitly mentions the direct impact of economic conditions and competition on earnings. This interconnection highlights the complex relationship between external economic factors and the internal dynamics of competition within the ride-hailing sector.

Research by Huws (2016) emphasises the need for regulatory frameworks to address the challenges associated with competition in the gig economy. Competition regulation is essential for fostering a sustainable and equitable environment for gig workers. In South Africa, where the gig economy has gained prominence, the role of local authorities in regulating competition is crucial. Local studies (Kaplan et al., 2019) stress the importance of adapting regulations to the unique characteristics of the South African context.

4.3.3.5. Theme: Driver incentives and training: Enhancing the driver experience

Participant 4: *"Ratings and choosing peak hours have a significant influence on my earnings."*

Participant 5: *"Improving the app to reduce driver downtime should be a priority."*

Participants 4 and 5 propose implementing driver incentives for high ratings, training programmes on handling difficult passengers, and regulating the number of drivers in peak areas. The recommendations emphasise a multifaceted approach to enhance the working conditions for ride-hailing drivers. They focus on improving the drivers' experience by addressing key elements like ratings, passenger interactions, and optimising service availability during peak hours.

The suggestion to implement driver incentives aligns with the participants' acknowledgement of the impact of ratings on their earnings. Participant 4 explicitly states that ratings and peak hours significantly influence income. Incentives for high ratings can motivate drivers to maintain service quality and contribute positively to their overall earnings. Addressing challenges related to difficult passengers is crucial for creating a safer and more pleasant

working environment. Training programmes, as recommended by Participant 4, can equip drivers with the skills needed to navigate challenging situations, enhancing their ability to provide satisfactory service.

The recommendation to regulate the number of drivers in peak areas (Participant 4) reflects an understanding of the potential oversaturation of drivers during high-demand periods. Regulating driver density can contribute to a more balanced system, ensuring that drivers have a fair chance of securing rides and maintaining consistent earnings. Participant 5 emphasises the importance of improving the app to reduce driver downtime. This recommendation aligns with the technological aspect of the ride-hailing industry, where app functionality plays a pivotal role in optimising the matching process between drivers and passengers.

Research by Malhotra and Van Alstyne (2014) highlights the significance of driver incentives in influencing driver behaviour and overall satisfaction. Additionally, studies on safety in the gig economy underscore the importance of training programmes to address safety concerns (Smith, 2020). In the context of South Africa, where ride-hailing platforms operate in diverse urban environments, the effectiveness of app functionalities and driver incentives can significantly impact the overall success of the gig economy.

4.3.3.6. Theme: Bonuses and financial planning: Empowering drivers for financial stability

Participant 5: *"Introducing bonuses for drivers with high customer ratings would boost morale."*

Participant 9: *"Adapting to peak hours and maintaining a good reputation are key."*

Participants 5 and 9 propose introducing bonuses for drivers with high customer ratings, organising financial planning workshops, and providing insurance coverage. The recommendations centre on financial empowerment and stability, acknowledging the importance of recognising and rewarding drivers for their performance. Additionally, the emphasis on financial planning workshops and insurance coverage highlights the need for holistic support in managing drivers' financial well-being and security.

The recommendation to introduce bonuses for drivers with high customer ratings aligns with the acknowledgement of the significance of ratings in the ride-hailing industry (Participant 5). Recognising and rewarding drivers for consistently delivering a positive experience can enhance their motivation and job satisfaction. The suggestion of financial planning workshops

(Participant 9) indicates a proactive approach to support drivers in managing their earnings effectively. Financial literacy is crucial for gig workers, and workshops can provide valuable insights into budgeting, savings, and overall financial well-being.

The call for insurance coverage (Participant 9) reflects an understanding of the potential risks and uncertainties associated with the ride-hailing profession. Insurance can serve as a safety net for drivers, offering financial protection in case of accidents or unforeseen events, contributing to their overall security. Participant 9 highlights the importance of adapting to peak hours and maintaining a good reputation. While not explicitly mentioned as recommendations, these aspects are integral to the overall strategy for financial stability and success in the ride-hailing industry.

Research by Chen et al., (2020) emphasises the importance of financial planning and risk management for gig workers. Additionally, studies on the gig economy highlight the need for insurance coverage to address the unique challenges faced by independent workers (Ravenelle et al., 2021). In the South African context, where economic conditions and income stability are concerns for ride-hailing drivers, the implementation of these recommendations can contribute to a more supportive and secure environment.

4.3.3.7. Theme: App improvement: Enhancing driver efficiency and experience

Participant 5: *"Improving the app to reduce driver downtime should be a priority."*

Participant 5 recommends improving the ride-hailing app to reduce driver downtime. The recommendation underscores the importance of technology in the ride-hailing industry and how optimising the app's functionality can positively impact drivers' efficiency and overall experience. The call to improve the app reflects an understanding that the efficiency of the platform directly influences driver downtime. An enhanced app could streamline processes, reduce waiting times, and improve overall productivity for drivers, contributing to increased earnings.

In the gig economy, the role of technology is pivotal. Apps serve as the primary interface between drivers and the platform, influencing their work experience. Enhancements such as real-time navigation, efficient matching algorithms, and user-friendly interfaces can significantly contribute to reducing downtime and improving overall satisfaction. Research by Slee (2016) emphasises the importance of platform design in shaping the experiences of gig workers. An efficient app design not only benefits drivers by reducing downtime but also

enhances the overall competitiveness and attractiveness of the platform. In the South African context, where the ride-hailing industry is a significant source of income for many, app improvements align with the broader narrative of leveraging technology for economic empowerment (Giddy, 2019). The implementation of this recommendation can contribute to a more seamless and rewarding experience for drivers.

4.3.3.8. Theme: Incentive programmes and financial assistance

Participant 7: *"Incentive programmes during peak hours could significantly improve earnings."*

Participant 8: *"Providing incentives for drivers during peak hours would be a great motivator."*

Participant 10: *"Implementing a reward system for drivers with high ratings would boost morale."*

Participant 11: *"Providing incentives for drivers during peak hours is a great way to boost earnings."*

Participants 7, 8, 10, 11, and 13 propose implementing incentive programmes during peak hours and providing financial assistance during economic downturns. The recommendations highlight the importance of creating a supportive environment for ride-hailing drivers by implementing incentives during peak hours.

According to Chamorro-Obra and Fukuda (2020), incentive programmes during peak hours can serve as a motivational tool for drivers, encouraging them to be more active during high-demand periods. This not only benefits individual drivers by increasing their earnings but also contributes to a more dynamic and responsive ride-hailing ecosystem. The proposal for financial assistance during economic downturns recognises the vulnerability of drivers to economic fluctuations (Chamorro-Obra and Fukuda, 2020). This recommendation reflects an understanding of the financial challenges drivers may face during challenging times and emphasises the need for platforms to play a role in providing stability.

Research by Kenney and Zysman (2016) highlights the precarious nature of gig work and the importance of policies and platform practices that provide economic stability for workers. Incentive programmes and financial assistance align with this perspective by addressing some of the economic uncertainties faced by drivers.

4.3.3.9. Theme: Partnerships with local businesses and organisations

Participant 7: *"Collaborating with local businesses for driver benefits would enhance our overall experience."*

Participant 8: *"Developing partnerships with local organisations for mutual benefits is a positive step."*

Participants 7 and 8 advocate for developing partnerships with local businesses for mutual benefits. The recommendation to form partnerships with local businesses underscores the potential for collaboration between ride-hailing platforms and nearby enterprises, highlighting the mutual benefits that can be derived. Collaborations with local businesses can provide drivers with additional perks, benefits, or discounts, thereby enhancing their overall experience within the ride-hailing ecosystem. This can contribute to increased job satisfaction and loyalty among drivers.

Developing partnerships with local businesses and organisations not only benefits drivers individually but also fosters a sense of community. This collaborative approach creates a network of support, potentially leading to a more cohesive and resilient driver community. Research by Berg et al., (2018) emphasises the importance of understanding the social and economic context in which gig workers operate. Collaborations with local businesses align with this perspective by acknowledging the local environment and integrating gig work into broader community dynamics. In South Africa, building partnerships with local businesses and organisations provides a strong sense of community and relations.

4.3.3.10. Theme: Expanding on counselling and collaborations

Participant 10: *"Introducing mental health support, counselling services, and collaborating with local authorities for better safety measures."*

Participant 11: *"Providing mental health support, counselling services, and collaborating with local authorities for better safety measures."*

Participant 12: *"Counselling services and collaborating with local authorities for better safety measures are crucial for our well-being."*

Participant 13: *"Mental health support, counselling services, and collaborating with local authorities for better safety measures should be made available."*

Participant 15: *"Mental health support, counselling services, and collaborating with local authorities for better safety measures are crucial for our well-being."*

The participants' recommendations for mental health support, counselling services, and collaboration with local authorities reflect a recognition of the multifaceted challenges faced by ride-hailing drivers. Mental health support is crucial not only for the individual well-being of drivers but also for creating a more resilient and stable workforce. Collaborating with local authorities is seen as a strategic move to address safety concerns and contribute to the overall improvement of working conditions.

The ride-hailing industry, characterised by long working hours, traffic stress, and occasional challenging interactions with passengers, can impact the mental health of drivers negatively. Studies indicate that employees in high-stress occupations, such as transportation, benefit significantly from mental health support services (Henke, 2022). Investing in mental health support can lead to increased productivity and job satisfaction among drivers. Research has shown that employees who receive mental health assistance are more likely to be engaged and satisfied in their roles (Bakker et al., 2019).

Counselling services can provide drivers with effective coping mechanisms to deal with the daily challenges they face. This includes strategies for managing stress, handling difficult interactions with passengers, and finding a healthy work-life balance. Counselling can also contribute to skills development, helping drivers enhance their interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and resilience in the face of adversity (Bakker et al., 2019).

Collaborating with local authorities reflects a shared responsibility for ensuring the safety of drivers. This can include initiatives such as enhanced law enforcement in areas frequented by ride-hailing drivers, improved lighting in pick-up and drop-off locations, and collaboration on traffic management. Local authorities play a crucial role in establishing and enforcing regulations that create a secure environment for both drivers and passengers. Collaborative efforts can lead to the development of effective regulatory frameworks that address safety concerns within the ride-hailing industry (Smith et al., 2020).

The literature supports the idea that addressing mental health concerns is essential for overall employee well-being, especially in high-stress work environments (Henke, 2022; Bakker et al., 2019). Ride-hailing drivers, facing unique challenges, can benefit significantly from mental health support services. Collaboration with local authorities is crucial for addressing safety

concerns within the transportation industry. Research emphasises the need for regulatory support to ensure the well-being of drivers and passengers (Smith, 2020).

In summary, the participants' recommendations for mental health support, counselling services, and collaboration with local authorities highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach to addressing the well-being and safety of ride-hailing drivers. These initiatives not only contribute to individual resilience but also foster a more supportive and secure working environment within the industry.

4.4. Discussing the relationship between motivating theory and the findings

The findings of the study resonate strongly with Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation and job satisfaction, providing a theoretical framework to understand the factors influencing the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers. Herzberg's theory, developed in the mid-20th century, introduced the idea that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not on a single continuum but rather exist as separate constructs influenced by different factors (DiMichael, 1959).

According to DiMichael (1959), the first dimension of Herzberg's theory involves motivation factors, also known as intrinsic factors, which contribute to job satisfaction. The second dimension comprises hygiene factors, or extrinsic factors, which, when inadequate, lead to job dissatisfaction. The application of this theory to the study's findings enhances our understanding of the complex interplay between various elements impacting ride-hailing drivers' experiences. Firstly, the theme related to surge pricing and earnings boost aligns with Herzberg's motivation factors.

In the context of the study, factors such as favourable working conditions, safety, income level, and personal growth are identified as contributors to job satisfaction. Implementing surge pricing during peak hours directly addresses the income level factor, acting as a motivational incentive for drivers during periods of high demand. This financial boost serves as a positive reinforcement, aligning with Herzberg's concept of motivation factors contributing to job satisfaction.

The access to resources theme, encompassing affordable fuel, safety training, mental health support, financial literacy programmes, and vehicle maintenance assistance, touches upon both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. While financial aspects like affordable fuel and income stability directly relate to hygiene factors, safety training, mental health support, and personal growth align with motivation factors (De Stefano, 2016; Henke, 2022; Bakker et al., 2019). Herzberg's

theory suggests that even if hygiene factors are present, true job satisfaction is achieved only when motivation factors are also fulfilled (DiMichael, 1959). Therefore, access to resources contributes to overall job satisfaction by addressing a spectrum of intrinsic and extrinsic needs.

The safety measures theme resonates strongly with Herzberg's hygiene factors. Strengthening safety measures, reducing competition, and collaborating with local authorities address external variables impacting the work environment, contributing to job dissatisfaction when lacking Asfahani et al., (2023). By emphasising the need for regulatory frameworks, standardised safety measures, and addressing the emotional and psychological safety of drivers, the study aligns with Herzberg's concept that dissatisfaction is primarily caused by external elements.

Competition regulation, a key theme, further highlights the role of external factors in determining job satisfaction. Herzberg's theory suggests that economic conditions, job security, and competition directly impact an individual's perception of their job. The participants advocating for reduced competition and collaboration with local authorities recognise the external challenges posed by a saturated market, aligning with Herzberg's assertion that dissatisfaction can arise from factors external to the work itself (DiMichael, 1959; Huws, 2016; Kaplan et al., 2019). Enhancing the driver experience through incentives, training programmes, app improvements, and loyalty programmes touches upon both intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Chamorro-Obra and Fukuda, 2020; Kenney and Zysman, 2016).

The importance of ratings, passenger interactions, app functionalities, and the overall working environment contributes to job satisfaction by addressing motivational factors. Simultaneously, bonuses, financial planning workshops, and insurance coverage contribute to financial stability, addressing hygiene factors according to Herzberg's theory.

The collaborative approaches with local businesses and the introduction of loyalty programmes align with Herzberg's idea of personal growth and development as motivation factors. By fostering a sense of community, mutual benefits, and positive experiences, these recommendations contribute to the overall job satisfaction and well-being of ride-hailing drivers (Berg et al., 2018).

In summary, Herzberg's two-factor theory provides a framework for understanding the relationships within the study's findings. The identified themes align with Herzberg's intrinsic and extrinsic factors, showcasing the relevance of this theoretical perspective in the dynamic context of the ride-hailing industry. The study affirms Herzberg's notion that job satisfaction is

a multidimensional construct influenced by various factors, both internal and external to the work environment.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings shed light on the intricate dynamics influencing ride-hailing drivers' livelihoods in Polokwane. Economic challenges, competition, and the gig economy's unpredictability impact income levels. Participants' recommendations span various dimensions, emphasising the importance of surge pricing, resource access, safety measures, competition regulation, and technological improvements.

Notably, suggestions for mental health support, collaboration with local authorities, and loyalty programmes highlight a comprehensive approach beyond financial aspects. The study advocates for a balanced strategy to enhance the overall well-being and community resilience of ride-hailing drivers. These insights lay the groundwork for informed decision-making and future interventions, offering a nuanced understanding of the industry's challenges and opportunities in the South African context.

The next chapter will provide the conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the findings presented. The purpose of the next chapter is to provide a synthesis of the study's findings by offering insights derived from the participants regarding the topic under investigation, as well as to propose actionable recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter serves as a summary of the study, presenting a comprehensive conclusion and actionable recommendations. The purpose of this study was to explore the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD, by delving into the factors influencing their experiences, income levels, and propose recommendations for improvement. Throughout, the reader will gain an understanding of the study's outcomes and their potential impact on improving the working conditions and overall well-being of ride-hailing drivers in this industry.

The study has three specific objectives which are as follows:

1. To explore the factors affecting the livelihoods of these drivers
2. To determine the level of income within the ride-hailing industry in Polokwane's CBD
3. To document recommendations aimed at improving the overall well-being and working conditions of ride-hailing drivers.

The main methodology employed for this study involved a qualitative approach, with a focus on in-depth interviews with 15 ride-hailing drivers, as well as using both the traditional thematic analysis method and NVivo data analysis software to analysis data and provide an understanding of their experiences and perspectives in the ride-hailing industry. The findings of this study include the following:

5.1.1. Factors affecting livelihoods

The study delves into various factors influencing the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD. Participants highlighted the dynamic nature of the gig economy, with income fluctuations tied to intense competition in the industry, varying fuel prices, and economic conditions. Additionally, challenges such as safety concerns, stressful interactions with passengers, and the demanding nature of the job contribute to the complexity of ride-hailing work. These findings underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by drivers beyond economic factors (Smith, 2020; Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2022).

5.1.2. Level of income in the ride-hailing industry

The examination of income levels within the ride-hailing sector reveals a landscape shaped by external and internal dynamics. Participants note the impact of economic conditions, competition, and fluctuating fuel prices on their earnings. The gig economy's inherent unpredictability is evident, emphasising the need for adaptive compensation mechanisms. Surge pricing during peak hours emerges as a key recommendation, aligning with participants' recognition of the necessity for a responsive earnings structure that mirrors the demands of the market. This study suggests that platforms could consider providing insights or tools to help drivers identify high-demand time slots, fostering a more efficient and profitable gig economy ecosystem. This suggestion is in line with Wilmans and Rashied's (2021) finding which states that achieving financial stability in the ride-hailing industry requires a delicate balance between responding to market dynamics and ensuring driver well-being.

In conclusion, the study's findings both confirm and extend existing literature on ride-hailing drivers' livelihoods. In confirming previous research, the study found that drivers in Polokwane's CBD experience income fluctuations due to competition, varying fuel prices, and economic conditions, echoing the dynamic nature of the gig economy (Smith, 2020; Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2022). Additionally, the study supports the existing literature on safety concerns and stressful interactions with passengers as common challenges faced by ride-hailing drivers, aligning with prior findings (Smith, 2020).

Moreover, the study extends the existing literature by highlighting the importance of surge pricing as a key factor in ride-hailing driver income. While surge pricing is recognised in previous research, this study suggests that platforms could further support drivers by providing tools to help them identify high-demand times, thus enhancing their earnings. This finding contributes to a more understanding of adaptive compensation mechanisms in the gig economy (Wilmans and Rashied, 2021).

In essence, the findings contribute to the existing literature by providing a deeper insight into the challenges faced by ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD and proposing practical recommendations to improve their livelihoods. By confirming previous findings and extending the understanding of surge pricing and income fluctuations, the study enhances the knowledge base on ride-hailing drivers' experiences, ultimately aiming to support their well-being and working conditions.

5.1.3. Recommendations for improving livelihoods

Participants suggested several recommendations to enhance the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers. These recommendations span various themes, reflecting the diverse needs and challenges faced by drivers. Notable suggestions include the implementation of surge pricing during peak hours, safety training, strengthened safety measures within the ride-hailing industry, and improved access to essential resources such as affordable fuel.

BusinessTechSA (2022) has previously emphasised that South Africans have faced significant increases in petrol and diesel prices over the past two years. PricewaterhouseCoopers economists suggest reforming the fuel pricing structure to lower costs. Around 46% of the petrol price consists of taxes, levies, and duties, making it a target for reform. The government has made some changes, such as removing certain levies and implementing temporary price relief campaigns. The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) has noted ongoing discussions to review the petrol price, but there was no mention of this in the latest budget statement. Different perspectives exist on the measures that could be taken, with the SARB identifying seven elements within the fuel price that could be reformed.

In addition, the myTank app, developed by South African Rob Gardner, helps drivers in South Africa find the best deals on fuel amid soaring petrol and diesel prices. It identifies the cheapest stations to refill at in an area, aiming to save consumers money. The app covers both diesel, which is unregulated and can vary station by station, and petrol, where prices are regulated. Users can compare prices based on loyalty programs that they are a part of, with 14 different options available. The app has been well-received since its launch in December 2022, with 57,000 users and 290,000 unique location searches. It is available on the Google Play Store and through a browser (Brederode, 2023).

Furthermore, Discovery Insurance Group (2024) reports that Discovery clients with Vitality Money can earn up to 20% back in Discovery Miles on fuel spend, in addition to the existing 50% cash back already offered by Discovery Insure. In order to access these incentives, clients need to use their Discovery Bank credit card to pay for fuel at BP and select Shell service stations. If they are not Discovery Bank clients, they can sign up to take advantage of this benefit. Clients can save up to 15% when spending Discovery Miles in the Vitality Mall, at online and in-store partners, or on prepaid products and services. They can also get up to 30% off on Miles D-Day.

Moreover, proposals for competition regulation, driver incentives, financial planning support, and app improvements also underscore the complex strategies needed to create a supportive and sustainable ecosystem for ride-hailing drivers. Therefore, this study emphasises the importance of a holistic approach, addressing financial, safety, and well-being aspects to ensure the overall improvement of drivers' livelihoods in the South African ride-hailing context.

5.2. Limitations and areas of future research

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the study's findings are context-specific to the South African ride-hailing industry, and generalisation to other regions should be approached with caution. Additionally, the research is based on self-reported data from participants, introducing the potential for biases or social desirability effects. This is emphasised by Lira et al., (2022) who state that self-reported data is prone to bias because of conceivable misreporting from participants in a particular context.

The study's scope is also limited by the constraints of time and resources, which may have impacted the depth of data collection and analysis. The dynamic nature of the gig economy implies that the industry's landscape may evolve, potentially influencing the relevance of certain recommendations over time.

Furthermore, the study does not delve into the perspectives of ride-hailing platforms, passengers, or regulatory authorities, providing a driver-centric viewpoint. A more holistic examination involving multiple stakeholders could offer a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics within the ride-hailing ecosystem. In light of this, future research should consider adopting a more holistic approach involving multiple stakeholders. These considerations emphasise the need for ongoing research to explore the evolving complexities of ride-hailing ecosystems globally.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several key recommendations can be made to enhance the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers.

1. Firstly, the implementation of surge pricing during peak hours is crucial to empower drivers during periods of heightened demand. This dynamic pricing strategy aligns with

the participants' recognition of the impact of economic conditions on ride demand and serves as a motivational factor, which is also in line with Herzberg's two-factor theory's aspect of motivating factors. A study by Hall and Krueger (2016) on Uber drivers found that surge pricing significantly increases drivers' earnings during peak demand, emphasising the positive impact of dynamic pricing strategies.

2. Improving access to essential resources, including safety training, mental health support, financial literacy programmes, and regular vehicle maintenance assistance, is essential. Holistic support systems that address both professional and personal aspects contribute to the overall stability and success of ride-hailing drivers in the gig economy. Research by Chen et al., (2020) highlights the importance of comprehensive support systems for gig economy workers, including access to resources such as safety training, mental health support, and financial literacy programmes.
3. Strengthening safety measures within the ride-hailing industry is paramount. This includes collaboration with local authorities to regulate competition, ensuring standardised safety measures, and addressing challenges related to difficult passengers. A secure and stable operating environment is crucial for the well-being of both drivers and passengers. According to a study by Shaheen et al., (2016), safety concerns are a significant factor for ride-hailing drivers, and collaboration with local authorities to enforce safety regulations is crucial for creating a secure operating environment.
4. Competition regulation, in collaboration with local authorities, is recommended to create a more stable landscape. Acknowledging the impact of economic conditions and competition on earnings, regulatory frameworks tailored to the unique characteristics of the South African gig economy are essential for fostering sustainability and equity. A report by the World Bank (2019) emphasises the need for regulatory frameworks in the gig economy, tailored to local conditions, to address issues of competition and economic sustainability for workers.
5. Enhancing the driver experience through incentives, training programmes, app improvements, and loyalty programmes is pivotal. Recognising the influence of ratings, addressing challenges related to difficult passengers, and optimising app functionality contribute to a more balanced and satisfying working environment for ride-hailing

drivers. Research by De Stefano and Knittel (2019) suggests that enhancing the driver experience through incentives, training programmes, and improvements in app functionality positively impacts driver satisfaction and overall well-being.

6. Financial empowerment and stability can be achieved through the introduction of bonuses for high customer ratings, financial planning workshops, and insurance coverage. These measures address the economic uncertainties faced by drivers and contribute to their overall security and success in the ride-hailing industry. A study by Berg et al., (2017) underscores the importance of financial planning and insurance coverage for gig workers to achieve economic stability and security.
7. Collaborating with local businesses for mutual benefits and forming loyalty programmes for both drivers and frequent passengers fosters a sense of community and support within the ride-hailing ecosystem. These collaborative approaches contribute to a more cohesive and resilient driver community. Findings from a study by Hamari et al., (2016) indicate that collaborative approaches, such as forming partnerships with local businesses and implementing loyalty programmes, contribute to a more cohesive and supportive community within the gig economy.

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7. APPENDICES

APPENNDIX A: INFORMATION LETTER

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

Dear Respondent

I Choene Arthur Morakaladi, am currently registered as a Master of Business Administration (MBA) student, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Student email: 222055379@stu.ukzn.ac.za, cellphone number: 0768874012.

I am undertaking this research project under the supervision of Professor M.G. Chasomeris as partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Business Administration, and you are invited to participate in the study titled:

EXPLORING THE LIVELIHOODS OF RIDE-HAILING DRIVERS IN POLOKWANE'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT.

Through your participation in this study, I aim to address the following objectives:

4. To explore the factors affecting the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD.
5. To determine the level of income in the ride-hailing industry among ride-hailing drivers Polokwane's CBD.
6. To document the recommendations to improve the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's CBD.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC): approval number

Any concerns that may arise can be raised with the researcher at 0768874012 or 222055379@stu.ukzn.ac.za or alternatively with the UKZN HSSREC on the following details:

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION,
Research Office: Ethics, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building, Private Bag x54001,
Durban 4000, Tel: +2731 260 4557, email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za.

By expressing interest in participating in this study, you will be expected to answer the researcher's questions, and your answers will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis. Your personal identity will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Importantly, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, which means that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence to you. Your participation in the study will take approximately 30 minutes, and you are urged to answer all questions as truthfully as possible.

Participating in this study will involve no cost to you as a participant, and there will be no compensation offered to you as an incentive. The findings of this investigation will be compiled in the research dissertation which will be presented to the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The information gathered in this study will be beneficial in forming part of knowledge about the subject under study and thus improving the understanding about the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers operating in and around Polokwane's CBD.

Name of researcher: Choene Arthur Morakaladi

Student number: 222055379

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B: OFFICIAL CONSENT FORM

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

I the participant, thus consent to participate in this study, titled “Exploring the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane’s central business district” by Choene Arthur Morakaladi. Through an information letter, the researcher in this study provided me with appropriate information on the nature of the study, and I understand what is required of me as a participant. I have answered the questions to my utmost satisfaction and declare that my participation in this study is completely voluntary, that I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time and that my withdrawal would have no implications.

I understand that any questions or concerns regarding the study can be discussed with the researcher at 0768874012 or 222055379@stu.ukzn.ac.za or alternatively with the UKZN HSSREC on: HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION, Research Office: Ethics, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building, Private Bag x54001, Durban 4000, Tel: +2731 260 4557, email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za.

I hereby consent to participate in this study.

I hereby provide consent to audio-record my interview YES / NO

Participant signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE



Interview questions:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. What is your nationality?
2. How long have you been in the ride-hailing industry as a driver?
3. What attracted you into being a ride-hailing driver?
4. Is there any diversity in the industry?

FACTORS AFFECTING LIVELIHOODS:

- a) Can you describe your experiences as a ride-hailing driver in Polokwane? What are the significant factors that have influenced your livelihood in this profession?
- b) How do you perceive the impact of external factors, such as economic conditions, competition, or government regulations, on your livelihood as a ride-hailing driver?
- c) What are the main challenges you face in maintaining a sustainable livelihood as a ride-hailing driver in Polokwane?

LEVEL OF INCOME IN THE RIDE-HAILING INDUSTRY:

- a) How would you describe your overall income from ride-hailing activities in Polokwane? Has it met your financial expectations and needs?
- b) What is your daily and monthly income?
- c) Have you experienced any fluctuations in your income as a ride-hailing driver? If so, what factors do you attribute these fluctuations to?
- d) What are the primary determinants of your earnings in the ride-hailing industry, and how do you cope with income variations?

- e) How do you cope with the challenges and uncertainties you encounter as a ride-hailing driver to sustain your livelihood?
- f) Have you considered diversifying your income sources or engaging in other activities alongside ride-hailing to enhance your livelihood? If so, how do you manage multiple sources of income?
- g) In your view, are there any opportunities for personal or professional growth within the ride-hailing industry in Polokwane? If so, how have you pursued such opportunities?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS:

- a) In your opinion, what measures can ride-hailing platforms or authorities implement to enhance the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane?
- b) Based on your experiences, what support or resources would be beneficial in improving your well-being and overall livelihood as a ride-hailing driver?
- c) How can the ride-hailing industry in Polokwane be made more sustainable and conducive to improving the livelihoods of drivers?

Name of researcher: Choene Arthur Morakaladi

Student number: 222055379

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: Ethical Clearance



17 October 2023

Dr Choene Arthur Morakaladi (222055379)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Dr Morakaladi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006111/2023

Project title: Exploring the livelihoods of ride-hailing drivers in Polokwane's central business district

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 07 September 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/departments for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 17 October 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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