



THE RISE OF ALGORITHMIC BOSSES: RETHINKING WORKERS' RIGHTS IN NIGERIA'S DIGITAL LABOUR ECONOMY

By

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Abstract

The digital transformation of Nigeria's labour market has redefined traditional employment relationships, especially with the rise of gig platforms such as Uber, Bolt, and various food delivery services. At the heart of this transformation lies algorithmic management, where software, rather than human supervisors, dictates critical decisions about work assignments, pay, and performance. This article critically examines the adequacy of Nigeria's existing employment law framework in addressing the unique challenges posed by this form of technologically mediated labour. It contends that the current binary classification of workers as either employees or independent contractors is ill-suited to the realities of platform work, which often combines elements of both. Arguing for a more nuanced legal approach, the paper proposes a hybrid framework that introduces an intermediate status for digital workers, expands core labour protections, and ensures algorithmic transparency. Ultimately, it calls for a rethinking of employment rights that aligns with the imperatives of human dignity, fairness, and social justice in Nigeria's evolving digital economy.¹

Keywords: Algorithmic Management, Gig Economy, Employment Rights, Labour Law Reform, Digital Platforms, Worker Classification, Nigerian Labour Law

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The landscape of employment is rapidly evolving under the influence of digital technologies. In Nigeria, the expansion of app-based platforms such as Uber, Bolt, and Jumia Food has ushered in a new model of labour, one where algorithms, not human supervisors, assign tasks, evaluate performance, and even determine termination.

This shift has created a class of workers who, though vital to the functioning of these platforms, operate in a legal grey zone.² At the heart of this transformation is the phenomenon of *algorithmic management*, a system where data and automation shape the contours of employment relationships. While this model promises efficiency and scalability for businesses, it also introduces new forms of precarity for workers. Digital labour platforms often classify these workers as independent contractors, effectively excluding them from the protection of existing labour laws.³

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¹ Bérénice Schramm, "Algorithmic Management in the Platform Economy: Risks and Responses," *International Labour Review*, Vol. 161, Issue 1, 2022, pp. 67–89.

² *Uber BV v Aslam* [2021] UKSC 5.

³ Labour Act (Cap L1, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004).



This article examines whether Nigeria's employment legal framework is sufficient in light of the country's developing digital labour market. It argues that the binary classification of workers as either “employees” or “independent contractors” no longer capture the nuanced realities of gig work. More fundamentally, it questions whether a system built for industrial-age employment can respond meaningfully to algorithm-driven workplaces.⁴

Through comparative analysis and normative critique, the paper calls for a recalibration of legal definitions, statutory protections, and institutional mechanisms. It contends that a hybrid legal framework, one that recognizes the uniqueness of platform work while affirming essential rights, is necessary to safeguard dignity, fairness, and social justice for Nigeria’s growing digital workforce.

2.0 Understanding Algorithmic Management

Algorithmic management refers to the use of data-driven technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning systems, to oversee, evaluate, and direct workers’ performance. In digital labour platforms such as Uber, Bolt, and Jumia Food, core managerial decisions, task allocation, performance reviews, disciplinary actions, and even terminations, are increasingly automated. Human discretion is replaced by algorithms that operate at scale and with minimal transparency.⁶

While this technological model promises objectivity and efficiency, it also introduces significant challenges to fairness, accountability, and due process. Algorithms are not neutral arbiters; they encode the assumptions, priorities, and biases of their developers. For workers, this often translates into opaque systems of control where the criteria for ratings, penalties, or deactivation are neither clear nor open to contestation.

Moreover, algorithmic management fundamentally alters traditional employment dynamics. The power imbalance between platforms and workers is intensified as control is exercised remotely, impersonally, and continuously. Workers have limited input in how the systems operate, yet their livelihoods are profoundly shaped by algorithmic decisions made in real time.

This article seeks to unpack the implications of algorithmic management for the Nigerian labour context. It highlights the urgent need for regulatory frameworks that can ensure transparency, accountability, and worker protection in an economy where digital platforms are increasingly becoming the default workplace.

3.0 The Inadequacy of Nigeria’s Binary Worker Classification

A major legal issue for platform-based work is worker classification whether gig workers are employees eligible for labour protections or independent contractors. **Nigeria’s Labour Act (Cap L1, LFN 2004)** only distinguishes between employees and independent contractors, overlooking the complexities of digital work. Platforms often label workers as “partners” or “independent contractors” to avoid providing benefits like minimum wage, job security, pensions, and union rights.

However, the actual nature of gig employment is not reflected in this classification. Despite being labelled as “independent,” platform workers typically operate under significant control by the platform. Their tasks, pricing, customer interactions, and performance metrics are dictated by

⁴ ILO, 'Decent Work in the Platform Economy: Revisiting Worker Classifications', 2022.



algorithmic systems, leaving them with little autonomy. Moreover, they often face economic dependency on a single platform, a hallmark of traditional employment relationships.⁵

International jurisprudence provides compelling guidance. In the landmark case of *Uber BV v Aslam* (2021) UKSC 5, the UK Supreme Court ruled that Uber drivers were not self-employed contractors but "workers" under UK law. The Court emphasized the substantive reality of the working relationship over contractual labels, focusing on elements such as platform control, lack of negotiation power, and the structured nature of work.

Nigeria's courts and policymakers would do well to adopt a similar purposive approach. **Section 91** of the Labour Act defines a "worker" as any person employed under a contract of employment or apprenticeship.⁶

This definition should be interpreted expansively to reflect the economic realities of gig work, rather than strictly adhering to outdated labels. Such an approach would ensure that vulnerable workers are not excluded from basic protections merely because of how their contracts are drafted.

In short, as the boundaries of work evolve, so too must our legal definitions. The binary classification of the past is no longer adequate. A more flexible and context-driven framework is essential to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and justice in the digital labour economy.⁷

4.0 GIG WORK AND LABOUR RIGHTS UNDER NIGERIAN LAW

4.1 Right to Minimum Wage

The right to a fair and living wage is a cornerstone of decent work. In Nigeria, this right is codified in the **National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act, 2024**, which mandates a minimum monthly wage for employees across both public and private sectors. However, in the context of the gig economy, many digital platform workers remain excluded from this protection, primarily due to their classification as independent contractors rather than employees.

Gig workers, such as ride-hailing drivers and delivery riders, often earn below the statutory minimum wage once expenses like fuel, data, platform commissions, and maintenance are accounted for. They operate under a tightly controlled environment where pricing, availability, and performance benchmarks are dictated by the platform's algorithm. This economic and operational dependence undermines the claim that these workers are truly "independent."

This exclusion is not only unjust; it is legally and morally indefensible. The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** emphasizes that all workers, regardless of their contractual status, are entitled to fair remuneration. The effective denial of this right in Nigeria's gig economy risks normalizing a new form of digital exploitation.

International precedents are instructive. In South Africa, the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) found that Uber drivers qualified as employees under the Labour Relations Act, thereby entitling them to basic labour protections. Similarly, the **European Commission's Directive on Platform Work** pushes for the presumption of employee status unless platforms can prove otherwise - placing the burden of classification on the digital employer.

⁵ Bolt Nigeria, 'Driver Partnership Terms and Algorithmic Control Statement', 2023.

⁶ National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act, 2024.

⁷ Fairwork Project, Oxford Internet Institute, 'Ratings, Rankings and Accountability', 2023.



For Nigeria, legislative reform is essential. The National Minimum Wage Act should be amended to explicitly extend coverage to all forms of economically dependent labour, including platform-based work. In parallel, labour inspectors and courts must adopt a substance-over-form approach, examining the actual nature of the working relationship, rather than relying on the terms dictated by one-sided contracts.

Recognizing gig workers' right to the minimum wage is not just about compliance, it is a matter of economic justice and social protection in the digital age.

4.2 Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The right to organize and engage in collective bargaining is a fundamental labour right enshrined in **International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 87 and 98**, both of which Nigeria has ratified. These conventions guarantee all workers, regardless of classification, the freedom to form and join trade unions, and to collectively negotiate terms and conditions of employment. However, in Nigeria's digital labour economy, these rights remain largely theoretical for gig workers.

Most platform-based workers are classified as independent contractors, a status that effectively strips them of collective bargaining rights under Nigerian law. This legal framing allows digital platforms to avoid engagement with worker associations, even where there is clear economic dependence and subordination. The result is a structural imbalance of power, where individual workers are left to navigate opaque, algorithm-driven systems without the benefit of collective representation.

Notably, platform workers in Nigeria have begun to organize despite legal and institutional hurdles. The **National Union of Professional App-Based Workers (NUPA-BW)** was established to represent ride-hailing and delivery drivers. Yet, their efforts to gain legal recognition and compel platforms to engage in good-faith dialogue have faced stiff resistance. Platforms frequently cite contractual terms that prohibit collective action or assert that workers are not employees, thereby denying the legitimacy of union demands.⁸

Comparative jurisdictions are moving in a more progressive direction. For instance, **Spain's "Rider Law"** recognizes delivery riders as employees, granting them full union rights. The **European Union's Platform Work Directive** similarly aims to secure collective bargaining rights for digital workers, irrespective of their legal classification.⁹

Nigeria must follow suit by removing formal barriers to collective organization among gig workers. Legal recognition should not hinge solely on employment status, but rather on the substance of the relationship between platforms and workers. Legislative reforms should:¹⁰ Amend relevant labour laws to explicitly affirm the right of platform workers to unionize and negotiate collectively; Prohibit anti-union retaliation and contractual clauses that restrict collective action; Establish a statutory duty for platforms to engage in meaningful dialogue with registered digital worker associations. Guaranteeing the right to organize and bargain collectively is essential for restoring balance in platform labour relations. It ensures that workers have a voice in shaping algorithmic rules that affect their income, safety, and well-being, thereby aligning Nigeria's labour framework with international best practices and constitutional principles of dignity and fairness.

4.3 Right to Fair Dismissal and Redress

⁸ NUPA-BW Constitution and Activities (Nigeria, 2021–2023).

⁹ Rider Law (Ley Riders), Spain, Royal Decree-Law 9/2021.

¹⁰ Valerio De Stefano, 'Algorithmic Bosses and the Platform Economy', *Comparative Labour Law & Policy Journal*, 2020.



One of the most pressing challenges facing gig workers in Nigeria's digital labour ecosystem is the absence of protections against arbitrary dismissal. On many platforms, workers can be “**deactivated**” - a term often used in place of “terminated”, without prior notice, explanation, or an opportunity to appeal. This unilateral and opaque decision-making process is typically driven by algorithmic assessments, often based on user ratings or performance metrics that workers have little ability to contest or contextualize.¹¹

Such practices stand in stark contrast to the principles of **fair labour practices and natural justice**. The National Industrial Court is empowered by Section 254C of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) to safeguard employees from wrongful termination and to guarantee adherence to international best practices. These constitutional guarantees, however, are yet to be meaningfully extended to platform workers, whose employment status remains undefined or deliberately obscured.¹²

The reality is that many gig workers are economically dependent on platform work as their primary source of income. The sudden loss of access to the platform, often triggered by automated decisions, can have devastating financial and personal consequences. The absence of any **clear redress mechanism or appeal process** deepens this vulnerability and reinforces the power imbalance between platform companies and their workforce.¹³

- In the **Netherlands**, courts have ruled that automated terminations must be subject to review, and workers have a right to know the rationale behind such decisions.

Nigeria must adopt similar safeguards to ensure that all workers, regardless of classification, are protected against unjustified termination. Recommendations include:

- **Legally Mandating Transparent Dismissal Processes:** Platforms should be required to provide written explanations for any disciplinary action or deactivation, including access to relevant data.
- **Right to Appeal:** Workers must be given the opportunity to challenge algorithmic decisions before an impartial body or digital ombudsman.
- **Prohibiting Automated-Only Termination:** No worker should be dismissed based solely on an automated system, without human review and procedural fairness.
- **Access to Independent Redress Mechanisms:** Establish low-cost, fast-track dispute resolution systems specifically designed for digital labour disputes.
- Nigeria may stop the normalisation of capricious algorithmic governance and guarantee that justice is maintained during the shift to automated decision-making by bolstering the right to effective recourse and fair dismissal in the transition to digital work.

5.0 Comparative Perspectives

As digital labour platforms proliferate globally, governments and courts are grappling with how best to regulate the employment conditions of gig workers managed by algorithms. While approaches differ across jurisdictions, there is a growing consensus that existing legal frameworks, built around traditional notions of employment, are insufficient to address the nuances of algorithmic work. This

¹¹ ILO Convention No. 158: Termination of Employment, 1982.

¹² Wu, T. & Zhang, L., 'Human vs. Algorithmic Feedback in Online Work: A Behavioral Study', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2024.

¹³ Wu, T. & Zhang, L., 'Human vs. Algorithmic Feedback in Online Work: A Behavioral Study', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2024.



section examines key comparative developments in Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa, offering insights that may inform a forward-thinking Nigerian approach.

5.1 European Union: Toward Presumptive Employment and Algorithmic Accountability

The European Union has been proactive in addressing the challenges posed by platform work. The proposed **Platform Work Directive**, introduced by the European Commission in 2021, seeks to combat misclassification by establishing a legal presumption of employment where platforms exert control over working conditions, remuneration, or performance evaluation. The Directive also mandates algorithmic transparency, requiring platforms to disclose how automated systems influence work allocation, evaluations, and dismissals. The EU's larger commitment to maintaining social protections in the face of digital disruption is reflected in this project.¹⁴

5.2 United Kingdom: Judicial Expansion of Worker Protections

In the United Kingdom, the judiciary has played a central role in shaping the rights of gig workers. Uber drivers are considered "workers" under UK employment law, the Supreme Court ruled in the landmark decision of *Uber BV v. Aslam* [2021] UKSC 5, a classification that, while falling short of full employee status, entitles individuals to key rights such as minimum wage, paid leave, and protection from unfair dismissal. The court emphasized substance over contractual form, noting that Uber exercised significant control over its drivers' work. The ruling has since influenced the status of platform workers in other sectors.¹⁵

5.3 United States: Legislative Ambivalence and Hybrid Worker Status

The regulatory landscape in the United States remains fragmented. At the federal level, gig workers are generally treated as independent contractors, with limited employment protections. However, **California's Assembly Bill 5 (AB5)** sought to reclassify platform workers as employees by applying a strict "ABC Test." In response, industry-led lobbying led to **Proposition 22**, which removed AB5's app-based drivers and established a third group of "independent workers" with restricted access to benefits like accident insurance and healthcare subsidies. This model reflects an emerging trend: the creation of hybrid legal statuses that fall between traditional employment and self-employment.¹⁶

5.4 India: Extending Social Protection through Legislation

The Code on Social Security, 2020, which explicitly acknowledges gig and platform workers as a separate category, embodies India's response. While not classifying them as employees, the Code entitles such workers to welfare schemes including life and health insurance, maternity benefits, and social security contributions funded by platform operators. This approach acknowledges the economic realities of gig work while preserving flexibility for both workers and platforms. However, implementation remains a challenge due to limited administrative capacity and platform resistance.

5.5 South Africa: Judicial Willingness to Protect Platform Workers

South Africa provides Nigeria with a helpful model in Africa. In 2021, the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) ruled that Uber drivers should be treated as employees, particularly during the period they are logged into the app and available for work. The decision, later affirmed by the Labour Court, highlights a purposive interpretation of labour law, one that prioritizes the protection of economically dependent workers over rigid contractual

¹⁴ European Commission, *Proposal for a Directive on Improving Working Conditions in Platform Work*, 2021.

¹⁵ Ekundayo Oluwole, 'Hybrid Worker Status in the Age of Algorithms', *African Journal of Labour Law*, 2024.



classifications. South African courts have also emphasized the importance of balancing innovation with social justice.

5.6 Lessons for Nigeria

These comparative examples reveal key principles that Nigeria can adopt:

1. Substantive worker protections: Rather than treating the words in a contract as decisive, the law should look at the real facts of the relationship; does the platform set prices, direct hours, control task allocation, monitor workers in real time, or make them economically dependent on the platform? Tests that courts and regulators use around the world include; the control test (who directs the work), the integration test (is the worker part of the business), and the economic-reality test (does the worker depend on the work for livelihood).

Why substantive worker protections matter for platforms

- Platforms can draft contracts saying “independent contractor” while exercising managerial control through apps. A reality-based approach prevents legal form from defeating worker protections.

Practical step for Nigeria

Amend or interpret the Labour Act so courts and labour officers must assess these indicia (control, dependence, substitution, exclusivity) before deciding status. This would align legal outcomes with the actual work arrangements workers face.

2. Presumptive employment frameworks: A legal presumption means that when certain objective indicators (for example, the platform sets pay, or the worker cannot substitute another person) are present, the relationship is presumed to be employment unless the platform proves otherwise. This reduces the long, costly litigation that individual gig workers traditionally face to prove employment an especially important fix where workers have low bargaining power.

So, how could Nigeria adopt this?

- Insert a statutory presumption in labour law: if platform indicators A–D (e.g., algorithmic allocation, pay-setting, rating-based de-activation, no real right of substitution) exists, the default legal classification is employment for core protections (minimum wage, social security, compensation) subject to rebuttal by the platform.

3. Algorithmic transparency and oversight: Platforms make consequential managerial decisions via code: who gets work, how long they wait, deactivation, performance scores. Without transparency and human oversight, these systems can be opaque, biased, and unaccountable.

What strong rules look like (international best practice)

- Mandatory disclosure of automated decision-making systems that affect work (what they measure, how scores are computed at a high level).
- Rights for workers to receive explanations, access data about them, and appeal automated decisions.
- Human oversight where algorithms make safety-critical or livelihood-ending decisions (e.g., suspensions, de-activation). International bodies and recent OECD/ILO work emphasize these protections.

4. Recognition of hybrid models (a “dependent contractor” third category): Some gig workers are neither clearly employees nor genuinely independent businesspeople, they are



commercially contracted but economically dependent on one platform and subject to substantive controls. A new legal status captures that middle ground and lets the law attach a tailored package of rights. What “*dependent contractor*” would mean in practice:

- Statutory definition might combine factors such as economic dependence (majority income from one platform), inability to set prices, limited substitution, and platform control over tasks or performance metrics.
- Rights attached could be a floor (minimum earnings guarantee, social security contributions, occupational injury coverage, limited scheduling protections) without full employment obligations like detailed PTO regimes.

International backing on “*dependent contractor*”: The ILO and statisticians have long discussed the concept of “dependent contractor” and the need to measure and regulate dependent self-employment as a distinct category. WIEGO and other labor researchers have advocated similar third-category approaches.

How to make it workable in Nigeria

- Create a statutory definition with clear objective criteria (income share, exclusivity, substitution rights, algorithmic control).
- Prescribe a core package of protections for dependent contractors (social security contributions, minimum earnings floor, injury compensation, collective-representation rights).
- Allow flexible contracting above this floor: platforms and workers retain business freedom so long as the statutory protections are respected.

6.0 Contextual legal reforms: adapt rather than transplant: India, South Africa, the EU have taken different paths because social security systems, labour administration and industrial relations histories differ. Nigeria should borrow principles, not verbatim laws. Here are some suggested practical strategy for Nigeria:

- Start with a policy framework and stakeholder consultation (platforms, worker groups, unions, regulators) and pilot sectoral rules (e.g., ride-hailing, delivery, crowdwork).
- Use phased implementation with review points and flexible instruments (regulations, codes of practice, sectoral orders) so the law can be refined based on experience. Turning the “dependent contractor” idea into an operational legal framework (concrete steps)

Below is a pragmatic, sequenced reform plan that turns the concept into law, regulation, and institutions.

A. Legislative changes (what the Labour Act / new law should do)

1. Insert a clear definition of three statuses: employee, independent contractor, and *dependent contractor*. Draft the dependent-contractor test as a list of objective factors (e.g., >50% income from one platform; inability to set price; algorithmic control; inability to supply a substitute). ***This will shift the debate from labels to measurable facts.***
2. Create a statutory presumption: where two or more listed platform indicators are present, the relationship is presumed to be employment or dependent contracting (depending on the mix), with the platform bearing the burden to rebut.



3. Attach floor rights to dependent contractors: access to social security contributions, occupational injury coverage, minimum earnings guarantee or transparent pay model, notice rights for suspension/deactivation, and simplified grievance routes.
4. Mandate platform registration and periodic reporting (income paid, number of workers, algorithmic systems used).
5. Prescribe penalties for misclassification, opaque algorithms, failure to contribute to social protection, and unlawful deactivation.

B. Regulatory measures (what agencies must require)

1. Algorithmic transparency rules: platforms must publish plain-language algorithm statements, maintain audit logs, and provide individual explanations on request; prohibit fully automated firing without human review.
2. Social protection mechanism: require platforms to contribute to a gig-worker social fund (a fixed percentage or band of turnover/payment) that finances pensions, injury compensation, and a safety net (learn from India's Social Security Code approach requiring employer/turnover contributions).
3. Data and privacy alignment: integrate NDPA obligations so worker profiling, scoring, and surveillance comply with data protection rights, including access, correction and contestation.
4. Transparent dispute resolution: establish a fast-track tribunal or arbitration channel for platform disputes (deactivation, pay disputes), with low costs and tight timelines.

C. Institutional reforms (who enforces and how)

1. Create a Digital Labour Unit inside the Ministry of Labour (or a dedicated Office for Platform Work) to register platforms, review algorithmic impact statements, and coordinate enforcement.
2. Equip labour inspectors with technical training and tools to audit platforms (access logs, run impact audits).
3. Independent audit capacity: fund third-party algorithmic audits and require platforms to submit audit results periodically.
4. Social partner engagement: legally recognise the right of dependent contractors to organise and bargain collectively (even if they are not full employees); enable sectoral bargaining where appropriate.

D. Implementation and safeguards (practical politics)

1. Phase in changes by industry (start with high-risk sectors like ride-hailing and food delivery).
2. Exemptions / thresholds for micro-task platforms under a revenue/worker threshold, to avoid overburdening very small operators.
3. Impact reviews at set intervals (e.g., 18 months) to measure economic effects and tweak parameters (income thresholds, contribution rates).
4. Sunset clause for experimental rules if Parliament wants time-limited pilot reforms.

Anticipating trade-offs and how to manage them

1. Flexibility vs protection: platforms will argue that strict employment classification destroys flexibility. The dependent-contractor status is a compromise: it preserves autonomy where genuine, but guarantees basic protections for economically dependent workers.
2. Compliance costs: phased rules, thresholds, and clear guidance reduce uncertainty. Regulatory predictability encourages platforms to adapt business models rather than exit.



3. Enforcement capacity: build technical capacity in labour inspectorates and partner with NDPC (data commission) and the courts to handle algorithmic and classification disputes.

6.1. Amend Labour Legislation to Recognize Algorithmic Work

- **Legal Recognition:** The Labour Act and relevant employment statutes should be amended to incorporate terms such as *platform worker*, *dependent contractor*, and *algorithmic management*.
- **Expanded Protection:** Statutory rights; such as minimum wage, paid leave, protection from unfair termination, and health benefits, should be extended to workers under this hybrid status, especially where there is clear economic dependence and algorithmic control.

6.2. Enact Algorithmic Transparency and Accountability Legislation

- **Mandatory Disclosures:** Digital platforms must be required to disclose how key employment-related decisions are made through automated systems, including job assignments, performance evaluations, and deactivations.
- **Algorithmic Impact Assessments (AIAs):** Platforms should periodically conduct and report AIAs to evaluate risks of systemic bias, discrimination, or harm to worker well-being.
- **Right to Explanation:** Workers should have a legally enforceable right to receive clear, timely explanations for any algorithmic decisions that materially affect their livelihood.

6.3. Establish a National Digital Labour Commission (NDLC)

- **Mandate:** Create a dedicated statutory body responsible for monitoring digital labour platforms, enforcing compliance, and advising the government on trends in platform work.
- **Regulatory Authority:** The Commission should have powers to investigate complaints, impose penalties for non-compliance, and require remedial actions.
- **Digital Platform Registry:** Maintain a public database of licensed digital platforms, including compliance audits and worker satisfaction indices.

6.4. Develop Independent Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

- **Digital Labour Ombudsman:** Establish an independent ombudsman office to handle complaints regarding unfair treatment, wrongful deactivation, or wage disputes.
- **Fast-Track Adjudication:** Implement specialized labour tribunals with jurisdiction over platform-related disputes, ensuring decisions are rendered within a 30-day timeframe to reduce financial hardship for workers.

6.5. Guarantee Worker Data Rights and Portability

- **Access to Work-Related Data:** Workers should be entitled to ongoing access to their personal performance metrics, including ratings, complaint records, and algorithmic flags.
- **Data Portability:** Legislation should require platforms to allow workers to export their performance data in standard formats, facilitating mobility and bargaining power across platforms.

6.6. Introduce Fairness-by-Design Principles into Platform Governance



- **Bias Audits:** Platforms must conduct regular, transparent audits to assess and address algorithmic biases, such as location-based exclusion, gender discrimination, or profiling.¹⁷
- **Worker Representation:** Workers and their representatives should be included in decisions related to algorithm design, operational rules, and changes in terms of engagement.¹⁸

6.7. Implement Mandatory Licensing and Compliance Certification

- **Regulatory Licensing:** All digital labour platforms operating in Nigeria should be required to obtain licences subject to compliance with fair labour standards.
- **Compliance Scorecards:** Publish periodic scorecards on each platform's labour practices, covering areas like pay fairness, dispute resolution, and worker satisfaction, to encourage self-regulation through public accountability.

6.8. Promote and Protect Digital Worker Unionization

- **Legal Recognition of Collectives:** Digital labour collectives and associations should be legally recognized as trade unions or interest groups, regardless of workers' classification status.
- **Duty to Engage:** Platforms must have a statutory obligation to engage in good-faith dialogue and negotiations with registered digital worker unions on matters such as pay rates, safety protocols, and platform governance.

7. The Role of the Judiciary and Legal Practitioners

The courts have a critical role in interpreting existing employment laws in ways that reflect contemporary realities of digital labour. Judges must adopt purposive interpretations that prioritize fairness and substance over formalistic worker classifications. Legal practitioners, for their part, must become active agents of reform by litigating exploitative practices, advising worker groups, and engaging in strategic public interest litigation to push for a more equitable regulatory framework.

Furthermore, the Nigerian Bar Association, legal clinics, and human rights organizations should provide support to gig workers in asserting their rights. Legal education must also evolve to include emerging issues in digital labour law, algorithmic accountability, and technological governance.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The rise of algorithmic bosses in Nigeria's gig economy has outpaced the protective reach of existing labour laws. Without urgent reforms, this trend threatens to deepen inequality and erode fundamental labour rights.

By adopting a hybrid legal framework, enforcing transparency, and learning from international models, Nigeria can protect its digital workforce while fostering innovation. The future of work must be inclusive, just, and human-centered, even in a world run by algorithms.

