

Modern Slavery in the Gig Economy: Analysing the Exploitation of Gig and Freelance Workers through AI-Driven Communication Strategies and Automated Surveillance

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Abstract

This article aims to explore how modern communication and AI technologies contribute to modern slavery within the gig economy by focusing on understanding the mechanisms through which AI-driven communication systems and automated surveillance techniques impact the autonomy, earnings, and rights of gig and freelance workers. Through qualitative research, this article responds to how AI-driven communication and automated surveillance practices aggravate or mitigate the exploitation of gig and freelance workers. Moreover, what role does digital communication play in perpetuating or resisting such exploitation? The authors interviewed twenty-two gig and freelance workers and six managers who employed gig and freelance employees. Moreover, Foucault's Theory of Surveillance, Labour Process Theory, and Technological Mediation Theory helped to understand the crossroad between technological control, economic exploitation, and moderated communication. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that AI-powered communication systems improve efficiency and task distribution. However, they concurrently create power imbalances. Besides, this encourages continuous monitoring and algorithmic control, which creates employee dissatisfaction and marginalization.

Keywords: Modern Corporate Slavery, Gig Economy, Freelance, Artificial Intelligence, Communication