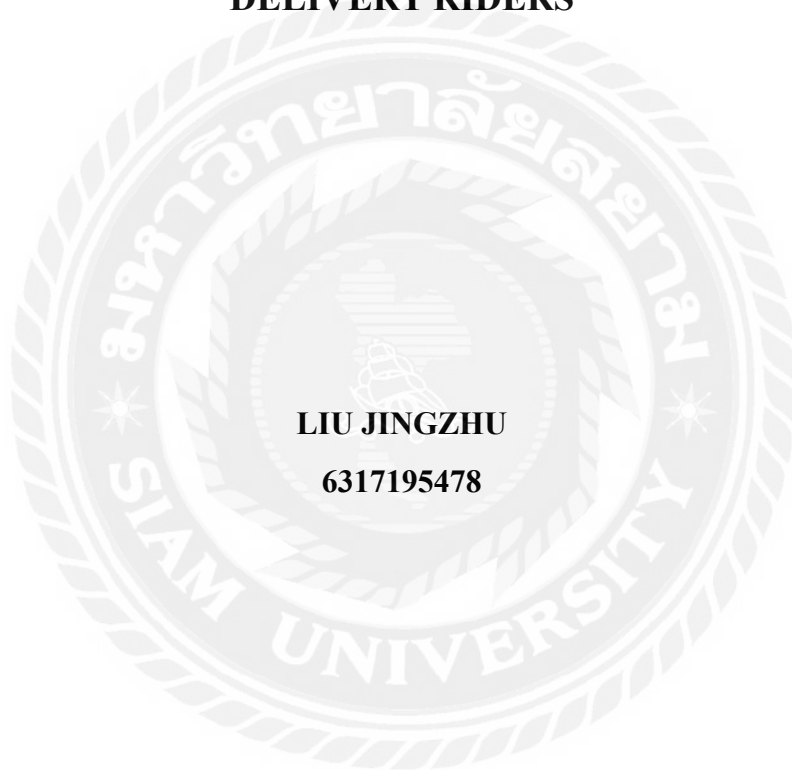




**THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE EMPLOYMENT STABILITY  
OF DELIVERY RIDERS: A CASE STUDY OF MEITUAN  
DELIVERY RIDERS**



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**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
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**2025**



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This Independent Study Has Been Approved as a Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Business Administration

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of food delivery platforms has led to a boom in employment. However, this trend has also been accompanied by a series of emerging issues. Prominent problems related to safety, labor rights, and social security have become increasingly evident, warranting further attention and discussion within society. As a typical representative of both new and flexible employment models, food delivery riders, therefore, the employment stability of delivery riders has become a critical issue. Therefore, this study aimed to achieve the following objectives: 1) To explore the influence of compensation level on employment stability of delivery riders; 2) To explore the influence of participation in social insurance programs on employment stability of delivery riders; and 3) To explore the influence of work stress on employment stability of delivery riders.

Adopting a quantitative research approach, this study designed a survey questionnaire that was distributed online to 392 Meituan delivery riders in Jintan District, Changzhou, with 374 valid responses collected. Reliability and validity tests confirmed that all measurement scales demonstrated good psychometric properties, which enhanced respondents' comprehension of the survey items and ultimately ensured the accuracy and authenticity of the collected data. Data analysis results indicated that 1) compensation level has a significant positive impact on employment stability of delivery riders; 2) participation in social insurance programs has a significant positive impact on employment stability of delivery riders; 3) work stress has a significant negative impact on employment stability of delivery riders. These findings provide important insights for platform companies in formulating human resource policies: 1) Perfecting the compensation and incentive system; 2) Improving

social security and reducing occupational risks; and 3) Implementing reasonable working hour management and self-regulation.

**Key words:** employment stability, delivery riders, compensation level, participation in social insurance programs, work stress



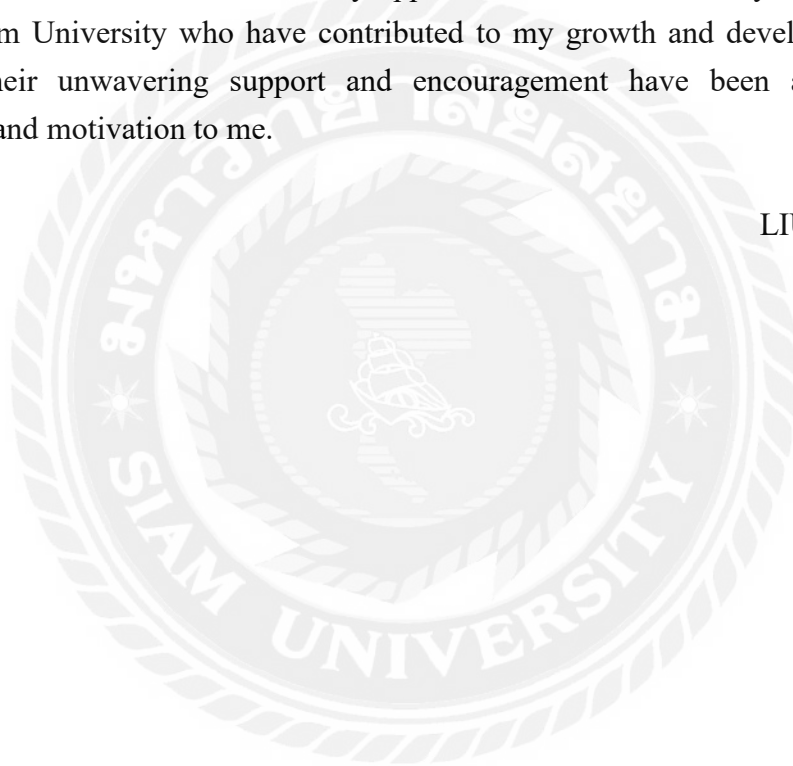
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LIU JINGZHU



## DECLARATION

I, Liu Jingzhu, hereby declare that this Independent Study entitled “*The Factors Affecting the Employment Stability of Delivery Riders: A Case Study of Meituan Delivery Riders*” is an original work and has never been submitted to any academic institution for a degree.

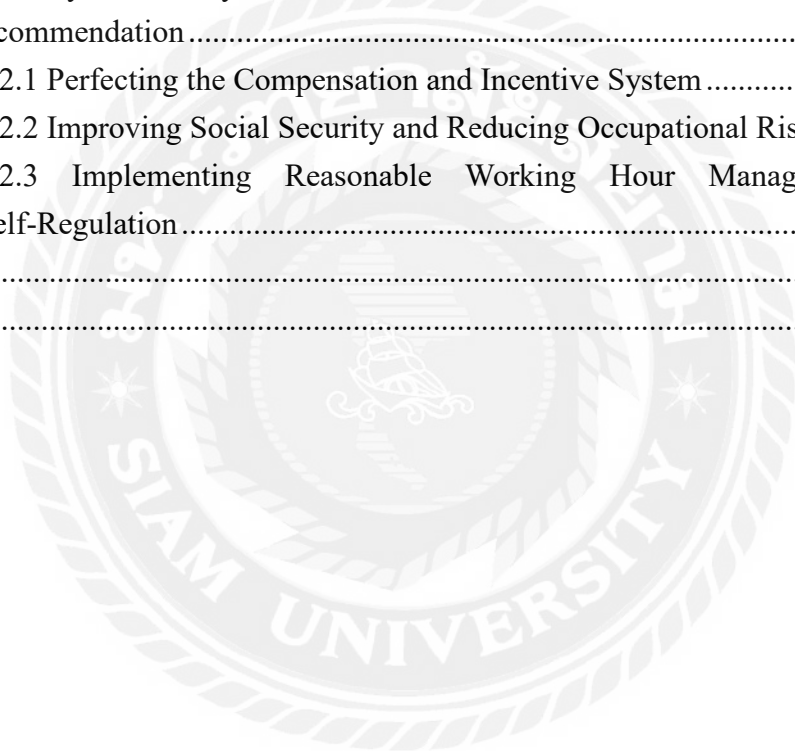
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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Employment is the cornerstone of people's livelihoods and an enduring challenge. Ensuring employment remains a major task in economic and social development. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the state has placed great emphasis on employment and put forward a series of important statements regarding employment-related work (Zhang, 2019). To maintain stable economic growth and promote sustained, healthy economic and social development, the "Six Stabilities" policy was first introduced in July 2018, prioritizing "stable employment." In response to a complex and ever-changing domestic and international environment, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China made timely adjustments in April 2020 by proposing the "Six Guarantees" on the basis of solidifying the "Six Stabilities," once again placing "guaranteeing employment" at the forefront (Zhao, 2023). It is evident that employment has always been a top priority for the Party and the state. How to ensure that the people enjoy stable employment and gradually achieve prosperity has become a crucial task.

In recent years, the rapid development of internet platforms has led to a sustained increase in platform-based employment. This trend accelerated significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Faced with layoffs, pay cuts, and business closures, many workers were forced to seek more flexible employment options. Against this backdrop, flexible occupations such as food delivery riders and couriers became the preferred choice for many migrant workers. These jobs offer advantages such as simple registration procedures, short training periods, and quick adaptation to urban environments, attracting a large number of migrant workers to join the sector (Yan & Chen, 2019).

According to the China Sharing Economy Development Report 2023, the user base of the food delivery industry reached 645.81 million, with a penetration rate of 61.44% among internet users (Huang et al., 2018). Statistics show that by 2022, Meituan had 6.24 million riders, while Ele.me had 1.14 million. Together, these two dominant players in the food delivery market employed a total of 7.38 million riders, though the actual number is likely even higher (Yang, 2018). The rapid growth of food delivery platforms has led to a boom in employment. However, this trend has also been accompanied by a series of emerging issues. Prominent problems related to

safety, labor rights, and social security have become increasingly evident, warranting further attention and discussion within society.

## **1.2 Questions of the Study**

As early as 2021, China's Government Work Report emphasized support for new forms of employment. This included ensuring timely and adequate distribution of social security subsidies to flexible workers and easing restrictions based on household registration that affect off-site workers' participation in social insurance (Li, 2018). These policy measures reflect the government's attention and concern for those in flexible employment. With the release of the 2022 Government Work Report, further emphasis was placed on improving social security policies for this group, demonstrating that the Party and the state are paying increasing attention to flexible employment, with relevant policies and safeguards gradually being enhanced (Chen, 2020). As a typical representative of both new and flexible employment models, food delivery riders, therefore, the employment stability of delivery riders has become a critical issue.

The healthy development of the labor market under new economic forms requires societal attention to the employment stability of food delivery workers, which is essential for achieving the long-term goal of improving overall employment quality for Chinese residents. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

Q1: Does compensation level affect employment stability of delivery riders?

Q2: Do participation in social insurance programs affect employment stability of delivery riders?

Q3: Does work stress affect employment stability of delivery riders?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Employment serves as the foundation of people's livelihoods. The Chinese government has implemented comprehensive measures to expand employment opportunities, with the fundamental objectives of increasing household income, sustaining economic growth, and maintaining social stability. As China's economy enters a new phase of high-quality development, the 14th Five-Year Plan period continues to prioritize employment expansion as a key governance principle, aiming

to enhance labor market capacity and achieve more stable, sustainable employment outcomes (Deng, 2018).

With the rapid development of China's flexible employment models under new economic forms, food delivery riders have become a significant component of this employment ecosystem. The employment stability of riders has consequently emerged as a critical socioeconomic concern. Therefore, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

O1: To explore the influence of compensation level on employment stability of delivery riders.

O2: To explore the influence of participation in social insurance programs on employment stability of delivery riders.

O3: To explore the influence of work stress on employment stability of delivery riders.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

Based on the literature review, the key variables in this study included compensation level, participation in social insurance programs, work stress, and employment stability. Among these, employment stability served as the dependent variable, while compensation level, participation in social insurance programs, and work stress function as independent variables. This study developed a model of factors influencing the employment stability of food delivery riders. A questionnaire survey was designed to examine how various factors affect the employment stability of delivery riders.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

### **1.5.1 Theoretical Significance**

With the continuous development of the economy, the emergence of food delivery riders as an occupational group has been facilitated by the growth of the platform economy, bringing to light accompanying concerns regarding their employment stability. This issue has gradually evolved into a significant social concern within the new economic paradigm. Current academic exploration of this subject remains relatively scarce. Existing literature primarily focuses on other demographic groups, such as middle-aged workers, while research specifically

addressing food delivery riders remains insufficient. Particularly lacking are studies examining the employment stability needs intrinsic to this occupational group. Therefore, this study focuses on food delivery riders as its research subjects. Through questionnaire surveys, it aims to investigate the employment stability challenges faced by this group, with the objective of enriching academic understanding of the factors influencing rider employment stability.

### **1.5.2 Practical Significance**

This study provides a decision-making basis for government support policies targeting flexible workers. By investigating how various factors influence employment stability, the research assists policymakers in developing more comprehensive labor rights protection measures. For platform companies, the findings offer valuable insights into workers' needs for stable employment, enabling enterprises to improve working conditions and safeguard labor rights. For delivery riders themselves, understanding these influencing factors allows them to make more informed choices about employment options that best suit their individual circumstances.

The development of new business models has created a substantial number of job opportunities in China, meeting the broad demands of the labor market. However, certain issues have also emerged, which to some extent reduce the attractiveness of employment in these new sectors and dampen workers' enthusiasm for joining them. Understanding the factors influencing employment stability can greatly contribute to the protection of these workers, alleviating their concerns about taking up such jobs, thereby enhancing the appeal of employment in new business models and also serving the purpose of promoting employment.

## **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1) Employment stability**

It refers to the ability of workers to maintain the continuity and sustainability of their employment positions, labor relations, and career development over a certain period of time.

### **2) Compensation level**

It refers to the relative positioning of an organization's pay structure compared to its competitors within the labor market.

3) Participation in social insurance programs

It refers to the process and status wherein workers or citizens, in accordance with national laws and regulations, join social insurance plans established and administered by the state or society.

4) Work stress

It refers to a dynamic physiological and cognitive adaptation process triggered by workplace stimuli, which may induce negative psychosomatic responses such as depression, fatigue, and tension.



## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundation

#### 2.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The theory categorizes human needs into five hierarchical levels, progressing from basic to advanced: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization (Peng, 2019). Physiological needs constitute the most fundamental survival requirements, including essentials like food and water that were crucial for sustaining life and health. Safety needs encompass physical well-being, personal security, and employment stability, all of which contributed to life security and predictability. Social needs involve interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging, reflecting humans' inherent desire for community acceptance and meaningful connections. Esteem needs include recognition of personal competence and the attainment of stable social status. Self-actualization represented the highest level of human aspiration, referring to the fulfillment of one's potential and the realization of personal ambitions (Gang et al., 2015).

The hierarchy of needs progresses from lower to higher levels, with each stage serving as a source of motivation and guidance for the corresponding groups (Shu 2019). Lower-level needs, which emerge before higher-level ones, exert a stronger psychological incentive on workers since they relate directly to survival. In contrast, higher-level needs are more complex and require workers to possess adequate social, economic, and political conditions in order to be fulfilled. Maslow suggested that these five levels of needs are not fixed. Individuals may experience multiple needs simultaneously across different life circumstances, and the importance of these needs can vary at various stages of life. The determining factor behind an individual's behavior is the level of need that currently requires the most satisfaction (Jie, 2023).

Delivery riders, having grown up in the internet era, share similar life experiences with their urban peers. They pursue not only career development but also aspire to settle permanently in cities. These riders have higher expectations for their work, including competitive compensation and benefits, safe working conditions, career advancement opportunities, social belonging, and professional recognition. This demonstrates their transition from basic survival needs to the pursuit of higher-level need fulfillment in Maslow's hierarchy (Chen, 2020).

### **2.1.2 Planned Behavior Theory**

The Theory of Planned Behavior is a key theoretical framework for exploring the motivations behind individual behavioral decision-making. Through a systematic analysis of actors' decision-making mechanisms, the influential Theory of Reasoned Action was proposed. This theory serves as an important foundation for understanding the formation of individual actions. Within the Theory of Reasoned Action, individuals are considered to have autonomous control over their actions and decisions. Behavioral attitudes and subjective norms are believed to directly influence an individual's behavioral intention, which in turn directly affects the occurrence of actual behavior (Qian et al., 2018).

However, this theory overemphasizes the role of individual subjective will while neglecting the impact of external environmental factors on behavior and the importance of behavioral control. An individual's perception of the difficulty of performing a certain behavior is often based on factors such as resources and abilities, which also influence their behavioral decision-making process (Meng & Wu, 2013).

Recognizing the limitations of Theory of Reasoned Action in explaining behaviors that are only partially under volitional control, the theory was expanded into the more nuanced Theory of Planned Behavior. As an extension and refinement of its predecessor, Theory of Planned Behavior emphasizes the influence of an individual's intention or willingness to perform a specific behavior on actual behavioral performance (Chen et al., 2017). This theory highlights how behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively shape behavioral intentions, which in turn affect whether an individual is willing and able to carry out the behavior.

Compared to Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behavior offers a more comprehensive framework for interpreting human behavior by better accounting for internal constraints faced by individuals. Empirical studies have demonstrated its strong predictive power in assessing both attitudes and behaviors. In both research and practical applications, understanding and applying Theory of Planned Behavior enables more accurate predictions of behavioral intentions and actual actions, thereby providing robust theoretical support for behavior-related studies (Zhang, 2019).

## 2.2 Delivery Riders

Delivery services existed even before the internet era, referring to the practice where restaurants package meals and deliver them to specified locations (Meng & Wu, 2013). Although such services were available prior to the internet age, the rise of the platform economy and the widespread adoption of online ordering have led to a rapid increase in demand for food delivery. Consumers place orders through mobile internet platforms, restaurants prepare the meals upon receiving orders, and delivery personnel, such as food delivery riders, are responsible for transporting the meals to designated addresses. In 2020, online delivery riders were officially included in China's National Occupational Classification Directory. The occupation is defined as service workers who, via mobile internet platforms or similar means, receive and inspect customer orders, and deliver ordered items to specified locations following platform-planned routes (Zhan & Yang, 2022).

Delivery riders are service personnel operating on internet-based platform enterprises. Through mobile applications, they receive customer orders from merchants, collect the purchased goods, and deliver them to customers within specified timeframes (Zhao et al., 2019). Their income comprises multiple components: customer-paid delivery fees, platform subsidies, merchant incentives, and third-party company rewards.

The Chinese government and relevant authorities are continuously improving policies and regulations in the food delivery industry to protect the rights and interests of delivery riders and enhance overall industry standards. For instance, supervision over food delivery platforms has been strengthened, labor practices of delivery riders have been standardized, and efforts have been made to improve their compensation and welfare (Fan & Jiang, 2013). At the same time, with technological advancements and innovation, the food delivery sector is actively exploring new technologies and models. Emerging delivery methods such as drone delivery and robot-assisted distribution are gradually gaining traction, offering new possibilities and potential for growth in the industry. As an emerging service model, food delivery has experienced rapid development driven by internet technology. The Chinese government and relevant departments are actively guiding and regulating the healthy growth of this industry to better meet the needs of the people.

## **2.3 Employment Stability**

Despite considerable efforts by scholars both domestically and internationally to study the concept of "employment stability," there is still no internationally accepted definition. This may be because employment stability is a multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing implications at both the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, employment stability describes a situation in which the ratio of employed individuals to the total population remains relatively constant over a certain period (Li, 2018). This stability indicates that the socioeconomic system can maintain a certain level of labor force amid changes, thereby reducing social problems caused by large-scale unemployment. At the micro level, employment stability refers to the continuity and durability of an individual's engagement in a job (Wang et al., 2015). This encompasses not only one-time unemployment and reemployment but also the multiple fluctuations in employment status throughout an individual's career. Stability at this level is more closely related to personal quality of life and career planning.

According to Yang and Jiang (2017), employment stability not only refers to an individual worker's consistent engagement in employment over a certain period but also implies the maintenance of a stable standard of living. Meanwhile, Li and Wang (2010) equated employment stability with job position stability, where a high level of stability is reflected in longer labor contract durations, lower turnover intention, and promising career development prospects.

Since this study focuses on delivery riders of the new generation, the concept of employment stability is defined from a micro-level perspective, referring to the stability of employment at the individual worker level. Therefore, this study considers employment stability as the ability of workers to maintain the continuity and sustainability of their employment positions, labor relations, and career development over a certain period of time. Research has shown that compensation level, participation in social insurance programs, and work stress all exert significant influence on employment stability (Tong & Qi, 2018).

### **2.3.1 Compensation Level**

Compensation, in essence, refers to the return or reward provided by an organization in exchange for the labor contributed by employees. However, different users may define this term in varying ways. Generally, the concept of compensation includes salary (direct financial remuneration) and benefits (indirect financial remuneration). In practice, the combination of salary and benefits is often referred to

as total compensation, with salary termed as direct compensation and benefits as indirect compensation. Wei (2023) categorizes compensation into two types: variable pay and base pay. Among these, fixed compensation generally refers to base salary, while variable pay includes performance-based wages, bonuses, profit-sharing, stock plans, and various other hybrid compensation models.

The current compensation system provided by food delivery platforms to riders is essentially a traditional "piece-rate wage system." This is one of the oldest yet still widely used incentive plans. Wages are paid based on the worker rather than the position or type of work, meaning that each individual's pay is calculated as much as possible according to their skill and the labor exerted, rather than their job title. The aim is to counteract soldiering (deliberate inefficiency) among workers while also motivating them to perform better. For delivery riders as a specific group, a distinctive feature of their compensation is the absence of a base salary. In this case, their income effectively functions as a traditional piece-rate wage. Therefore, the intensity of performance pay directly reflects their overall compensation level.

Compensation level refers to the relative positioning of an organization's pay structure compared to its competitors within the labor market. The competitiveness of an organization's compensation level directly determines its capacity to attract and retain talent. The level of compensation directly influences food delivery riders' perception of income risk, which in turn affects their behavioral patterns (Zu et al., 2010). A well-structured compensation system serves to maximize employee motivation and initiative, thereby enhancing organizational performance. This virtuous cycle ultimately increases employee earnings, achieving a win-win outcome for both the organization and its workforce – a fundamental factor influencing long-term employee retention. The study by Xiao (2023) revealed a positive correlation between salary level and organizational identification, which in turn influences counterproductive work behavior through the mediating effect of organizational identification.

### **2.3.2 Participation in Social Insurance Programs**

Social insurance is a social security system designed to ensure basic living standards for workers who reach retirement age or lose working capacity due to aging. To qualify for basic pension benefits, participants must meet two statutory requirements: (1) fulfilling government-mandated retirement criteria, and (2) completing at least 15 years of contributions to the basic social pension scheme (Wang et al., 2015). As a cornerstone of China's social protection framework, this

program serves two vital functions: guaranteeing basic livelihood needs for elderly citizens and providing them with sustainable, reliable income security through systematic benefit disbursement (He & Zhang, 2021).

In this study, participation in social insurance programs refers to the process and status wherein workers or citizens, in accordance with national laws and regulations, join social insurance plans established and administered by the state or society. By fulfilling the obligation to pay social insurance contributions, they acquire the right to receive corresponding insurance benefits when specific eligibility conditions are met.

Some scholars argued that participation in social insurance programs was an important factor influencing the stability of workers' employment (Xue & Pang, 2020). China placed great emphasis on policies and regulations concerning social insurance and the protection of workers' rights, and strived to safeguard the legitimate interests of laborers. However, for certain groups of workers, such as delivery riders, there was still room for improvement in the relevant social security systems. Some platforms and companies failed to contribute to social insurance payments on behalf of their employees, and some workers were not even covered by social security protections. For workers, having their social insurance contributions supported by their platform or employer could alleviate concerns about the future, enabling groups like delivery riders to devote themselves more fully to their roles and enhancing the stability of their employment (Zhang & Yang, 2022).

For workers, when platforms or employers contribute to social insurance payments, it effectively alleviates their concerns about future security (Lin et al., 2018). This institutional support enables delivery riders and similar occupational groups to devote themselves more fully to their work, thereby enhancing employment stability.

### **2.3.3 Work Stress**

Work stress refers to a dynamic physiological and cognitive adaptation process triggered by workplace stimuli, which may induce negative psychosomatic responses such as depression, fatigue, and tension. This conceptualization establishes stress factors as the core components of occupational stress. High-intensity work pressure can significantly impact workers' physical and mental health, as well as their behavior, often leading to thoughts of resignation (Su, 2021). Delivery riders, in particular, face considerable work-related stress, as they are constantly subjected to pressure from multiple sources, including the platform, merchants, and customers.

When riders are unable to receive adequate support in coping with such high levels of stress, they may find it difficult to adapt and manage, potentially resulting in psychological issues such as anxiety and depression (Li, 2019). In turn, can increase their tendency to leave their jobs, thereby undermining employment stability.

The purported "work autonomy" of platform-based food delivery riders is essentially a digitally engineered illusion, where this pseudo-autonomy significantly undermines employment stability through multifaceted stress transmission mechanisms (Li & Li, 2020). Under the panoptic surveillance of intelligent dispatch systems, riders' superficial freedom to accept orders is systematically deconstructed by sophisticated algorithmic governance: mandatory order assignment rates (reaching 92%) and rejection penalty mechanisms effectively nullify substantive choice, while real-time navigation and countdown functionalities reduce riders to mere execution terminals on algorithmic assembly lines (Bian, 2016).

When gig workers employed by platforms face job demands and work pressure set by the platform, they tend to assess the pressure in relation to their own capabilities. If they perceive themselves as lacking sufficient ability to cope effectively with the pressure, they may experience feelings of frustration and develop a psychological tendency toward withdrawal and disengagement. For example, studies such as Lin et al. (2020)'s investigation into gig workers on food delivery platforms like Meituan and Ele.me in Beijing have confirmed that the work pressure experienced by these individuals has a direct positive effect on their emotional and physical exhaustion, which in turn may lead to passive and withdrawal behavioral tendencies.

## **2.4 MeiTuan Delivery**

Meituan Delivery, operated by Meituan and developed by Beijing SanKuai Online Technology Co., Ltd., is a food delivery platform officially launched on December 19, 2013. It offers search and delivery services for nearby restaurants, as well as supports ordering from supermarkets and fresh produce markets. Users can place orders quickly and easily through its mobile app, which features a simple and user-friendly interface designed for convenience.

During the order process, Meituan Delivery provides services such as order reminders and refunds. Users can easily request order updates, and the refund process

is straightforward. The platform also supports online payments and frequently offers various promotions.

As of December 31, 2021, Meituan Delivery recorded 14.4 billion annual food delivery orders, with 5.27 million active riders, and an annual transaction value exceeding RMB 700 billion (Chen, 2020). In 2022, the platform's peak daily order volume surpassed 60 million, and the average annual number of transactions per user reached 40.8. On June 18, 2025, Meituan announced that since mid-June, its daily food delivery order volume had exceeded 90 million, accounting for 70% of the market share.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

This study develops a model of factors influencing the employment stability of food delivery riders (see Figure 2.1). This section reviews the existing literature on the variables included in the model, covering conceptual definitions, structural dimensions, and causal mechanisms related to employment stability, delivery riders, compensation level, participation in social insurance programs, and work stress. Through a systematic review and analysis of these key variables, the study preliminarily explores the potential correlational or causal relationships between these factors and the employment stability of food delivery riders.

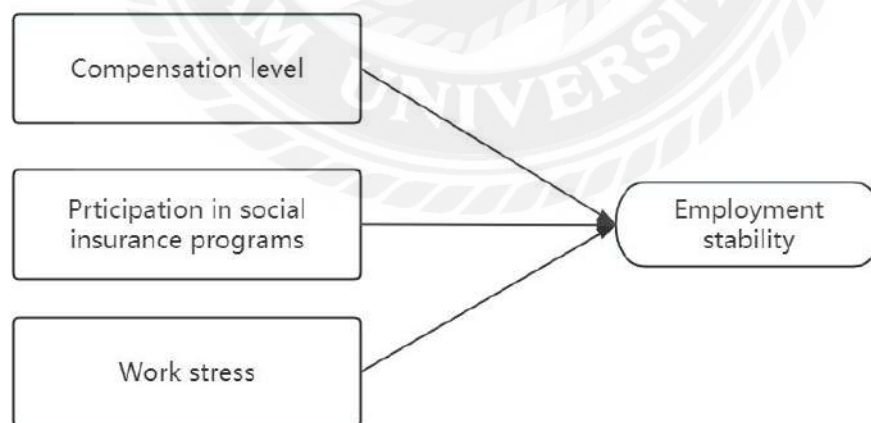


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

## **Chapter 3 Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

Based on a review of the existing literature, this study focused on investigating the factors influencing the employment stability of delivery riders. A questionnaire survey was designed drawing on established measurement scales and practical considerations within the industry. The aim of the survey was to examine how various factors affect the employment stability of delivery riders. Through quantitative data analysis, the research hypotheses proposed in this study were tested.

### **3.2 Population and Sample**

Adopting a quantitative research approach, this study designed a survey questionnaire that was distributed online to 392 Meituan delivery riders in Jintan District, Changzhou, with 374 valid responses collected.

This study selected Meituan delivery riders in Jintan District, Changzhou as the research sample, primarily due to the area's representativeness in China's urbanization process and research feasibility. As a typical mid-sized city in the Yangtze River Delta region, Jintan exhibits characteristics of accelerated urbanization while retaining certain socio-economic structures of urban-rural transitional zones. This allowed for a better reflection of the working and living conditions of platform-based workers in non-first-tier cities. With a moderately developed food delivery market and a diverse rider population, including both local residents and migrant workers, the area provides a suitable context for examining the mechanisms influencing employment stability.

### **3.3 Hypothesis**

Based on an analysis of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Theory of Planned Behavior, along with existing academic research, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Compensation level has a significant positive impact on employment stability of delivery riders.

Hypothesis 2: Participation in social insurance programs has a significant

positive impact on employment stability of delivery riders.

Hypothesis 3: Work stress has a significant negative impact on employment stability of delivery riders.

### 3.4 Research Instrument

The first section of the questionnaire covers the respondents' basic demographic information, while the second section explores factors influencing employment stability. The questionnaire employs a five-point Likert scale, with each question offering five response options ranging from “Very Agree” to “Very Disagree,” corresponding to scores of 5 to 1 respectively. The specific items for the second section are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Scale Design

<b>Compensation level scale</b>	
1	My income is commensurate with the amount of labor and time I invest.
2	I believe my current pay is competitive compared to other similar platforms.
3	The platform's pricing rules (base pay, subsidies, incentives) are clear and transparent.
4	The platform's incentive programs (e.g., order volume bonuses, peak-time bonuses) effectively motivate me to take more orders.
5	I find the platform's penalty/deduction rules to be reasonable and fair.
6	Overall, I am satisfied with my current income level.
7	I am confident that I can increase my income through hard work in the future.
<b>Participation in social insurance programs scale</b>	
8	I believe that social insurance (e.g., pension, medical, employment injury) is very important for delivery riders.
9	I believe the platform or agency has a responsibility to contribute to social insurance for riders.
10	I am concerned about future pension and medical issues, so I believe contributing to social insurance is necessary.
11	If the platform offered subsidies or assistance with enrollment, I would be more willing to participate.

<b>Work stress scale</b>	
12	I am able to easily handle order time limits and rarely feel stressed.
13	The platform's performance assessment standards (such as order volume and ratings) are very reasonable and easy for me to achieve.
14	Even when working in complex traffic environments, I am able to stay relaxed and maintain a calm mindset.
15	At the end of a day's work, I usually still feel energetic.
16	I am able to balance work and life well and do not bring irritability caused by work pressure to my family or friends.
<b>Employment stability scale</b>	
17	I intend to continue working as a food delivery rider for the foreseeable future (e.g., within the next year).
18	I am satisfied with my current income from this job.
19	I believe that being a food delivery rider is a career with promising prospects.
20	Even if other job opportunities arise, I would prefer to stay with my current platform.
21	I can adapt to the pace and demands of delivery work and maintain a good physical and mental condition.

### **3.5 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Scale**

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire Reliability Analysis**

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measurement scale, meaning the extent to which repeated measurements of the same concept using the same questionnaire yield consistent results. This study adopted the widely recognized Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient to assess the internal consistency of the scale. As shown in Table 3.2, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values for all variables exceed 0.8, indicating good internal consistency and satisfactory reliability of the questionnaire, which meets the standard requirements for survey research.

Table 3.2 Reliability Analysis Results

Scale	N	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Compensation level scale	7	0.853

Participation in social insurance programs scale	4	0.827
Work stress scale	5	0.841
Employment stability of delivery riders scale	5	0.825

### 3.5.2 Questionnaire Validity Analysis

Validity refers to the extent to which the items of a scale effectively measure the research variables. This study examined the construct validity of the scale using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test. As shown in Table 3.2, the KMO value exceeds 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire used in this study has good construct validity.

Table 3.3 Validity Analysis Results

The KMO Values and the Bartlett's Sphericity Test		
Number of KMO Sampling Suitability Quantities		0.742
The Sphericity Test of the Bartlett	Approximate chi-square	1475.361
	df	414
	Sig.	0.000

### 3.6 Data Collection

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire distributed through WeChat work groups. A total of 392 responses were collected. After review, 18 invalid questionnaires, including those with duplicate IP addresses or containing errors and omissions, were excluded, resulting in 374 valid responses. The effective recovery rate of the questionnaires was 95.4%.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

This study utilized SPSS software to process the collected data on delivery riders. Reliability and validity tests confirmed that all measurement scales demonstrated good psychometric properties, which enhanced respondents' comprehension of the survey items and ultimately ensured the accuracy and authenticity of the collected data.

Descriptive statistics were first conducted on the demographic variables, followed by correlation analysis of the research variables to examine their

interrelationships. Specifically, correlation analysis was performed on compensation level, participation in social insurance programs, work stress, and employment stability of delivery riders as measured in the questionnaire. To further examine the extent to which these factors influence the employment stability of delivery riders, multiple linear regression analysis was employed.



## Chapter 4 Findings

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1 Demographic Analysis Results

Items	Category	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	347	92.8
	Female	27	7.2
Age	25 and below 25 years old	97	25.9
	26-35 years old	164	43.8
	36-43 years old	113	30.3
	Over 44 years old	0	0
Marital status	Married	244	65.2
	Single	130	34.8
Educational background	Primary school or below	21	5.6
	Junior high school	79	21.1
	Senior high school / Vocational secondary / Technical school	158	42.2
	Associate degree or higher	116	31.1
Total		374	100

The survey sample comprises 347 male respondents (92.8%) and 27 female respondents (7.2%), revealing a significant gender disparity that reflects the male-dominated nature of the food delivery industry in Jintan District. This pronounced imbalance suggests that frontline delivery work involves substantial physical demands that favor male workers due to the occupation's rigorous intensity and strength requirements.

The delivery rider demographic exhibits distinct age stratification: riders aged 25 and younger account for 25.9% (97 individuals), while the core workforce consists of 26-35 year-olds (43.8%, 164 individuals), with middle-aged riders (36-43 years) representing a substantial 30.3% (113 individuals). Notably, no respondents are recorded above 44 years old.

Corresponding marital status data reveals 65.2% of riders are married (244 respondents), compared to 34.8% unmarried (130 respondents). Educational background follows a spindle-shaped distribution: vocational secondary or technical school graduates form the largest cohort (42.2%, 158 respondents), followed by those

with associate degrees or higher (31.1%, 116 respondents), while junior high school or below accounts for 26.7% (100 respondents), including a mere 5.6% (21 respondents) with only primary education.

This demographic profile indicates the industry primarily attracts 26-35 year-old workers with intermediate-to-higher educational qualifications, nearly 30% of whom hold post-secondary credentials, reflecting rising professional standards. Significantly, despite the occupation's physical demands, middle-aged riders maintain considerable representation, with married individuals constituting the majority. This phenomenon likely relates to the platform economy's role in absorbing urban workers undergoing career transitions.

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.2 Correlation Analysis Results

	<b>Compensation level</b>	<b>Participation in social insurance programs</b>	<b>Work stress</b>	<b>Employment stability</b>
<b>Compensation level</b>	1			
<b>Participation in social insurance programs</b>	0.421**	1		
<b>Work stress</b>	0.318**	0.310**	1	
<b>Employment stability</b>	0.397**	0.413**	-0.374**	1

Compensation level was significantly positively correlated with employment stability ( $r = 0.397, p < 0.01$ ), indicating that higher income was associated with greater employment stability among delivery workers.

Participation in social insurance programs was significantly positively correlated with employment stability ( $r = 0.413, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that social insurance coverage contributed to improved employment stability.

Work stress was significantly negatively correlated with employment stability ( $r = -0.374, p < 0.01$ ), meaning that higher work stress was linked to lower

employment stability.

#### 4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis Results

	Standardized coefficient	
	Beta	p
(Constant)	-	0.000
Compensation level	0.219	0.010
Participation in social insurance programs	0.374	0.007
Work stress	-0.462	0.002
F	19.68	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.485	
Adjusting R <sup>2</sup>	0.492	

The multiple regression analysis results indicated that the three independent variables - compensation level, participation in social insurance programs, and work stress - all had statistically significant effects on employment stability ( $F=19.68$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with the model explaining 48.5% of the variance (adjusted  $R^2=0.492$ ). Specifically, compensation level showed a significant positive impact on employment stability ( $\beta=0.219$ ,  $p=0.010$ ); participation in social insurance programs demonstrated a significant positive effect ( $\beta=0.374$ ,  $p=0.007$ ); and work stress had a significant negative influence ( $\beta= -0.462$ ,  $p=0.002$ ).

## **Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

#### **5.1.1 Compensation Level Has a Significant Positive Impact on Employment Stability of Delivery Riders**

The results indicate that compensation level has a significant positive impact on the employment stability of delivery riders, thus supporting Research Hypothesis 1. Specifically, higher compensation levels correspond to greater employment stability among delivery riders. This positive relationship may stem from multiple mechanisms: higher pay not only directly enhances riders' job satisfaction and professional identity but also improves their sense of economic security and occupational belonging, thereby significantly reducing short-term turnover intention and career mobility. Furthermore, a more competitive compensation structure can attract more workers to remain in the industry long-term, reducing staff turnover frequency and contributing to the overall stability of the employment structure within the sector. Therefore, as a key economic incentive, compensation plays an important role in maintaining the employment stability of delivery riders.

#### **5.1.2 Participation in Social Insurance Programs Has a Significant Positive Impact on Employment Stability of Delivery Riders**

The results indicate that participation in social insurance programs has a significant positive impact on employment stability of delivery riders, thus supporting Research Hypothesis 2. This positive relationship may be attributed to multiple factors. Social insurance provides riders with essential protections including medical care, pension benefits, and work related injury coverage, which reduces their occupational risks and alleviates financial pressure. Furthermore, it strengthens their professional belonging and long term career commitment. The coverage of social security also helps to enhance riders trust in the platform and reinforces their organizational identification, thereby reducing turnover intention and fostering more stable employment relationships.

#### **5.1.3 Work Stress Has a Significant Positive Impact on Employment Stability of Delivery Riders**

The results indicate that work stress has a significant negative impact on employment stability of delivery riders, thus supporting Research Hypothesis 3.

Specifically, higher levels of work stress correspond to lower employment stability among riders. Exposure to excessive work pressure can lead to emotional exhaustion among employees, manifesting as passivity, depression, and fatigue. Such stress contributes to both physical and mental depletion, which in turn may trigger withdrawal behaviors, ultimately exerting a negative impact on individual job stability.

## **5.2 Recommendation**

### **5.2.1 Perfecting the Compensation and Incentive System**

The current piece-rate compensation system widely adopted by delivery platforms lacks basic salary guarantees, resulting in riders' income being highly dependent on the number of orders completed. This leads to significant volatility and unpredictability in earnings levels. Although such a compensation structure may stimulate work motivation to some extent, its failure to provide a stable and predictable income foundation easily undermines riders' sense of job security, thereby adversely affecting overall employment stability.

Delivery platforms should reassess the design of their existing compensation systems, focusing not only on the intensity of monetary incentives but also on the stability and predictability of income levels. It is recommended that platforms develop a more scientific compensation structure by appropriately increasing the proportion of fixed salary while maintaining performance-based incentives, so as to provide riders with a more secure income base. Furthermore, platforms should establish a wage growth mechanism linked to years of service and job performance. By raising overall compensation levels, they can enhance the attractiveness of the occupation and promote long-term stability within the rider workforce.

Competitive compensation and benefits packages are crucial for attracting and retaining next-generation delivery riders. Platform companies should establish comprehensive support systems, including: monthly communication subsidies (200-300 RMB); special extreme weather allowances; regular provision of professional delivery equipment and customized care packages for birthdays and traditional holidays

### **5.2.2 Improving Social Security and Reducing Occupational Risks**

Some companies or platforms, at times motivated by self-interest, refrain from

signing formal contracts with delivery riders or providing social insurance coverage, thereby undermining the protection of riders' labor rights. Additionally, some workers have low risk awareness and are reluctant to participate in social insurance programs. Individuals from different backgrounds exhibit varying levels of risk perception when making decisions. For certain riders, there is a stronger preference for immediate income rather than engaging in long-term security mechanisms.

These riders, who lack adequate risk assessment awareness, are not only exposed to high occupational hazards but also lack basic social protection. It is imperative for the government to provide active guidance and support to such vulnerable groups. The government should strengthen publicity efforts to enhance risk awareness among delivery riders.

On one hand, the government can utilize various channels to promote and explain relevant policies. On the other hand, given the rapidly growing Internet-based platform employment model, the government should urge and supervise companies and platforms to take greater social responsibility. Platforms can be leveraged to communicate relevant policies to riders, safeguard their legal rights, and improve their risk assessment awareness. Such efforts would encourage riders to actively and voluntarily participate in fundamental social insurance systems.

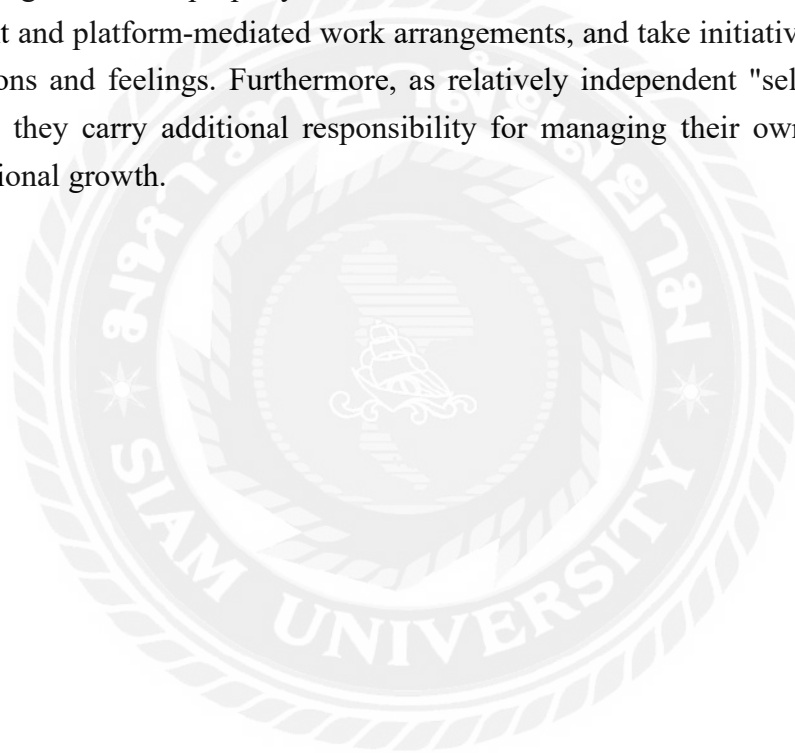
In light of the occupational characteristics of delivery riders - including widespread geographic distribution, substantial income volatility, and employment instability - implementing a uniform social insurance contribution standard could impose undue financial hardship. This reality necessitates that municipal authorities and social security agencies develop a flexible, multi-tiered contribution framework that accommodates riders' varying economic circumstances. Such an adaptive system might incorporate reduced contribution brackets below existing minimum thresholds or recalibrated premium bases that better reflect gig workers' actual earning capacities, thereby balancing social protection objectives with financial feasibility for this vulnerable workforce.

### **5.2.3 Implementing Reasonable Working Hour Management and Self-Regulation**

Delivery riders represent a workforce at the peak of familial responsibilities, simultaneously supporting aging parents and young children, a dual caregiving burden unique to this demographic. As essential service providers in urban economies, these prime-age workers demonstrate more acute needs for work-life balance than traditional industrial laborers. This reality necessitates fundamental restructuring of

current employment mechanisms: implementing flexible scheduling systems that accommodate riders' caregiving obligations, enforcing 1.5x wage standards for overtime deliveries exceeding statutory working hours, and providing hazard pay during extreme weather conditions. Most critically, establishing institutionalized family support systems, including childcare emergency hotlines and subsidized family visitation travel, would address the core stressors affecting this vulnerable workforce.

For delivery riders, it is important to actively mobilize their cognitive resources to acknowledge and accept their identity as gig workers and adapt to the platform-based work model, thereby establishing a sense of value and meaning in their jobs. Secondly, in the absence of traditional organizational support, riders should practice self-guidance to properly understand the differences between conventional employment and platform-mediated work arrangements, and take initiative to regulate their emotions and feelings. Furthermore, as relatively independent "self-employed" individuals, they carry additional responsibility for managing their own well-being and professional growth.



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## Appendix

Hello! We are currently conducting an academic survey on employment stability and kindly invite you to participate.

This questionnaire aims to understand your current employment situation. Your responses will be used solely for academic purposes and will be kept strictly confidential.

Please select the options that best reflect your actual circumstances. We truly appreciate your valuable time and support.

Thank you for your participation, and we wish you all the best in your work and beyond!

### Pat 1: Basic information

- 1) Your gender:  
 Male  Female
- 2) Your age:  
 25 and below 25 years old  26-35 years old  
 36-43 years old  Over 44 years old
- 3) Your Marital status:  
 Married  Single
- 4) Your Educational background:  
 Primary school or below  Junior high school  
 Senior high school / Vocational secondary / Technical school  
 Associate degree or higher

1 means very disagree;

2 means disagree;

3 means neutral;

4 means agree;

5 means very agree.

<b>Compensation level</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1	My income is commensurate with the amount of labor and time I invest.					
2	I believe my current pay is competitive compared to other similar platforms.					
3	The platform's pricing rules (base pay, subsidies, incentives) are clear and transparent.					
4	The platform's incentive programs (e.g., order volume bonuses, peak-time bonuses) effectively motivate me to take more orders.					
5	I find the platform's penalty/deduction rules to be reasonable and fair.					
6	Overall, I am satisfied with my current income level.					
7	I am confident that I can increase my income through hard work in the future.					
<b>Participation in social insurance programs</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
8	I believe that social insurance (e.g., pension, medical, employment injury) is very important for delivery riders.					
9	I believe the platform or agency has a responsibility to contribute to social insurance for riders.					
10	I am concerned about future pension and medical issues, so I believe contributing to social insurance is necessary.					
11	If the platform offered subsidies or assistance with enrollment, I would be more willing to participate.					
<b>Work stress</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
12	I am able to easily handle order time limits and rarely feel stressed.					
13	The platform's performance assessment standards (such as order volume and ratings) are very reasonable and easy for me to achieve.					
14	Even when working in complex traffic environments, I am able to stay relaxed and maintain a calm mindset.					
15	At the end of a day's work, I usually still feel energetic.					

16	I am able to balance work and life well and do not bring irritability caused by work pressure to my family or friends.					
<b>Employment stability of delivery riders</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
17	I intend to continue working as a food delivery rider for the foreseeable future (e.g., within the next year).					
18	I am satisfied with my current income from this job.					
19	I believe that being a food delivery rider is a career with promising prospects.					
20	Even if other job opportunities arise, I would prefer to stay with my current platform.					
21	I can adapt to the pace and demands of delivery work and maintain a good physical and mental condition.					

The survey is now complete. Thank you once again for your cooperation. We wish you every success in your work and all the best in life!

