

# **DECODING FLEXIBILITY: IMPACT OF AN EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION ON THE PERCEPTION OF LABOR PRECARITY IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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## **Abstract**

The study analyzes the impact of an educational intervention on the platform economy in 3rd-year EPET N°14 students. The research, with a descriptive-quantitative approach, used pre- and post-intervention surveys (N=20 and N=15) to evaluate the change in knowledge about labor rights, the monotributo (simplified tax regime), and the risks of working on digital platforms. Pre-test results showed high confusion: only 45% recognized basic labor rights, and 90% felt unprepared to understand a contract. After the workshop, knowledge improved significantly: 93.3% correctly identified the transfer of responsibility from the app to the worker and understood that the delivery person assumes their own expenses in case of accidents. Furthermore, self-perception of preparedness exceeded 93%. The intervention was highly effective, allowing young people to question the "flexibility" discourse of the platform economy and recognize the precarity and externalization of risks it implies.

**Keywords:** Labor precarity, Platform economy, Educational intervention, Labor literacy, High school students, Argentina.

## **Introduction**

As university students, we observe a growing disconnect between the public discourse on work and the material reality of those who perform it, especially among young people. We see classmates, friends, and even younger siblings joining the labor market through delivery applications (such as Pedidos Ya or Rappi) under the narrative of "being your own boss." This idea of flexibility and autonomy, however, seemed to us to strongly contrast with the lack of

basic protection we observed: no accident insurance, no paid vacations, no stability. This project was born from that concern, anchored in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) N° 8: "Decent Work and Economic Growth."

The academic literature on outsourcing and labor precarity is extensive. Previous research (Wolszczak-Derlacz & Parteka, 2011; Zwysen, 2021) had already demonstrated how outsourcing and offshoring in the European manufacturing industry negatively impacted low-skilled workers, fragmenting employment and increasing inequality. What we see today is the evolution of that same logic, enhanced by digitalization. Mendonça et al. (2023), studying food delivery in the United Kingdom, identify how digital platforms enable informal subcontracting practices ("account rental"), creating a state of "hyper-precariety."

However, we identified a significant gap: while the precarity of the "platform economy" is well documented, there are few educational interventions aimed at the population most vulnerable to its discourse: high school students, who are about to make their first labor decisions.

Our central **hypothesis** was that a focused educational intervention, peer-to-peer (university students to high school students), could significantly correct misconceptions about "labor flexibility" and increase critical awareness of the risks of precarity in the platform economy.

To verify this, we posed the following **research questions**:

1. What is the baseline knowledge level of high school students about basic labor rights and contractual figures (e.g., *monotributo*) used in the platform economy?
2. Can a one-hour workshop modify students' perception of who assumes the risks (e.g., accidents) in delivery work?
3. Is this intervention effective in "decoding" the discourse of flexibility and autonomy ("being your own boss")?

The **general objective** of this article is, therefore, to evaluate the impact of our educational intervention on the level of labor literacy of 3rd-year EPET N°14 students. The **specific objectives** were: (1) to diagnose students' prior knowledge on the subject; (2) to impart key concepts (labor rights of Art. 14 bis, difference between employee and *monotributista*, risks of platforms and the phenomenon of "account rental"); and (3) to measure the change in understanding and risk perception post-intervention.

This study contributes to the discipline not only by describing a problem but by testing a practical and replicable model of pedagogical intervention. It demonstrates that early "labor literacy" is a fundamental tool for civic education to face new forms of work.

## 2. Materials and Methods

To address our objectives, we designed a descriptive and quantitative study, based on an

educational intervention with a pre-test and post-test design.

## 2.1 Participants

The selection of participants was carried out through convenience sampling, managing authorization with the authorities of EPET N°14 in our city. Participants were 3rd-year high school students (approximately 15 to 17 years old). We obtained 20 complete responses for the pre-test questionnaire and 15 responses for the post-test questionnaire, a variation that we attribute to student attendance on the day of the intervention.

## 2.2 Instruments and Sources of Information

The sources of information for the content of our intervention came from the review of the Argentine National Constitution (especially Art. 14 bis), the Labor Contract Law, and academic articles on outsourcing and platform economy cited in our introduction.

The **instruments** used were:

1. **Educational Material:** A PowerPoint presentation and complementary videos, designed by our research group to be visually appealing and use accessible language.
2. **Questionnaires (Google Forms):** Two questionnaires were designed.
  - *Pre-Test:* Administered before the talk, it contained questions to diagnose baseline knowledge about rights, the employer's figure in apps, and risk perception (e.g., who pays in an accident?).
  - *Post-Test:* Administered at the end of the talk, it contained analogous questions to measure the change in understanding of the same concepts.

Both questionnaires included closed questions (multiple choice), scale questions to measure self-perception, and open questions to capture students' reasoning in their own words.

## 2.3 Procedure

The implementation of our project felt less like a laboratory experiment and more like a university extension experience. The procedure was divided into four stages:

1. **Research and Preparation:** We dedicated several weeks to collecting and synthesizing information. The challenge was to translate complex legal and sociological concepts (such as "risk externalization") into concrete and relevant examples for a 16-year-old.
2. **Institutional Management:** We presented our proposal to EPET N°14, who were very receptive and provided us with a space of approximately one hour of class.
3. **Classroom Implementation:** This was the central phase. (a) We began by applying the pre-test questionnaire. (b) We conducted the workshop, encouraging participation and discussing practical cases about Pedidos Ya and Rappi. (c) We closed with the post-test questionnaire and a brief space for final reflections.
4. **Data Analysis:** Google Forms data was processed using descriptive statistics (calculation

of frequencies and percentages). Open responses were read, grouped, and categorized thematically to identify patterns of understanding.

### 3 Results

The data presented below shows a drastic conceptual change in students as a direct result of the intervention.

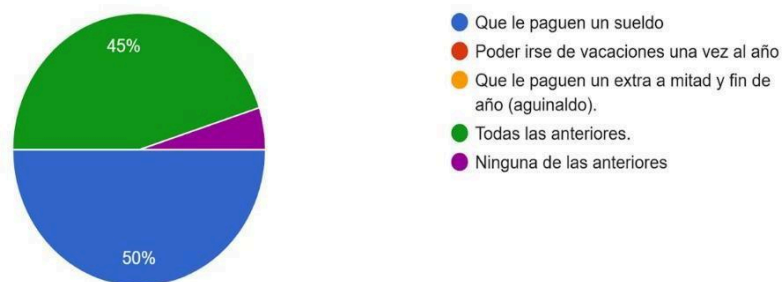
#### 3.1 Initial Diagnosis (Pre-Test): Confusion and Lack of Knowledge

The pre-test revealed a profound lack of knowledge about the labor structure.

- **Knowledge of Basic Rights:** When asked what rights an office worker should have, responses were divided: 50% selected "That they be paid a salary" (a correct but incomplete answer) and only 45% selected "All of the above" (which included aguinaldo and vacations).

Si una persona trabaja 8 horas por día, todos los días, en una oficina, ¿cuál de estas cosas crees que es un "derecho" que debería tener?

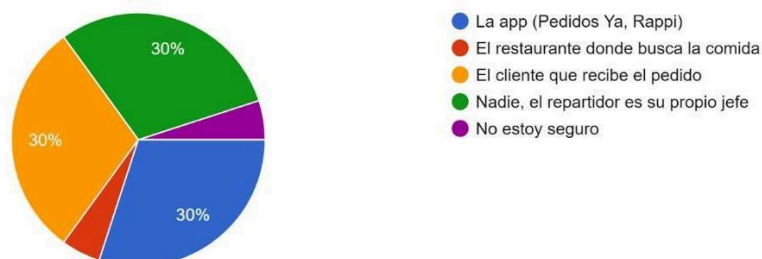
20 respuestas



- **Employer Figure:** Confusion was total regarding who the boss of an app delivery person is. Responses were divided equally (30% "The app," 30% "The client," 30% "Nobody, he is his own boss"), demonstrating the effectiveness of the "autonomy" discourse.

Cuando un repartidor trabaja para "Pedidos Ya" o "Rappi", ¿quién crees que es su jefe?

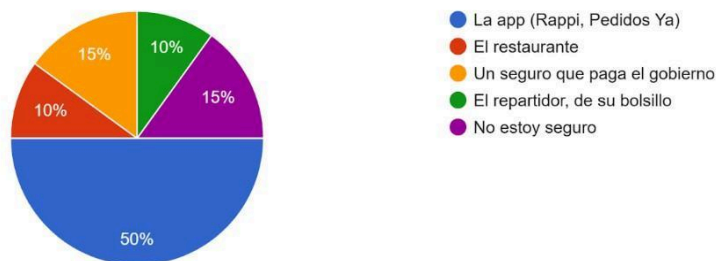
20 respuestas



- **Inverted Risk Perception:** The most worrying finding was that 50% of students believed that, in case of an accident, medical expenses were covered by "The app (Rappi, Pedidos Ya)." They believed that there was a safety net that is actually non-existent.

Si ese mismo repartidor de la app choca con la bici o la moto mientras hace una entrega, ¿quién crees que paga los gastos del médico y el arreglo del vehículo?

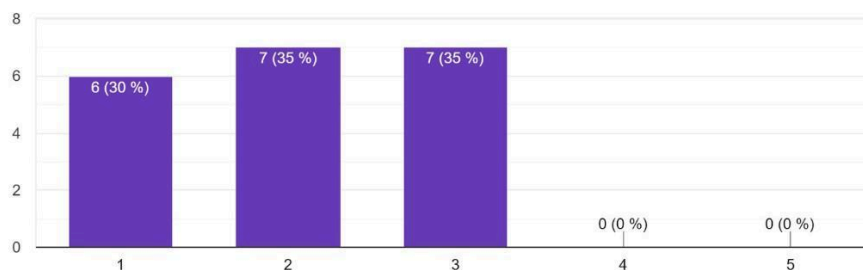
20 respuestas



- **Key Concepts:** Open questions about "monotributista" and "account rental" yielded responses such as "I don't know," "it's to pay less taxes," or "to earn more points in the application," indicating a complete lack of understanding of their legal and risk implications.
- **Self-Perception:** On a scale of 1 (Not prepared at all) to 5 (Very prepared), 90% of students scored between 1 and 3.

En una escala del 1 al 5, ¿qué tan preparado te sentís para entender un contrato de trabajo o saber si un trabajo es "justo" o no? (1 = Nada preparado / 5 = Muy preparado)

20 respuestas



### 3.2 Impact Evaluation (Post-Test): The Conceptual Change

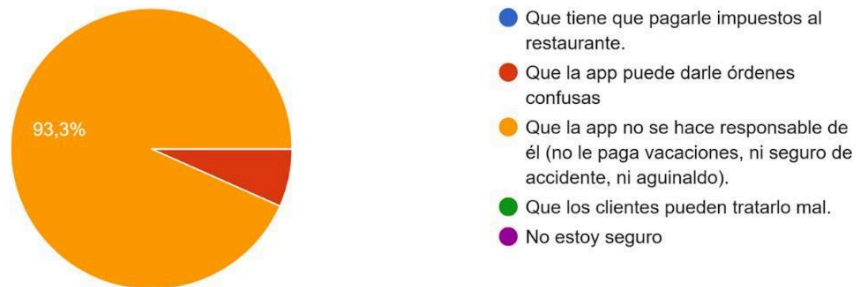
The post-test, administered one hour later, showed a robust internalization of key concepts.

- **Understanding of Rights (Art. 14 bis):** Open responses were precise. Students mentioned "Having a decent salary and rest," "paid vacations and work insurance," and "minimum vital and mobile wage."

- **The True Risk of "Flexibility":** 93.3% of students correctly identified that the main problem with being "your own boss" is "That the app is not responsible for him (it does not pay him vacations, accident insurance, or aguinaldo)."

Las apps dicen que el repartidor es "su propio jefe" (un contratista independiente). ¿Cuál es el principal problema o riesgo para el trabajador con esa idea?

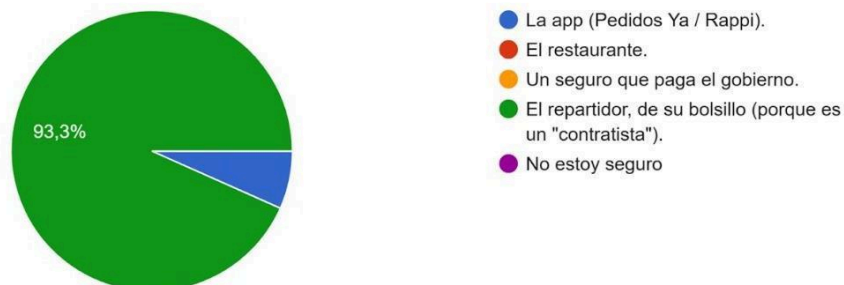
15 respuestas



- **The Real Cost of the Accident:** In a total inversion of initial perception, 93.3% now understood that, if the delivery person crashes, the person who pays the expenses is "The delivery person, out of his own pocket (because he is a 'contractor')."

Si un repartidor de app choca con la bici o la moto mientras hace una entrega, ¿quién termina pagando los gastos del médico y el arreglo?

15 respuestas

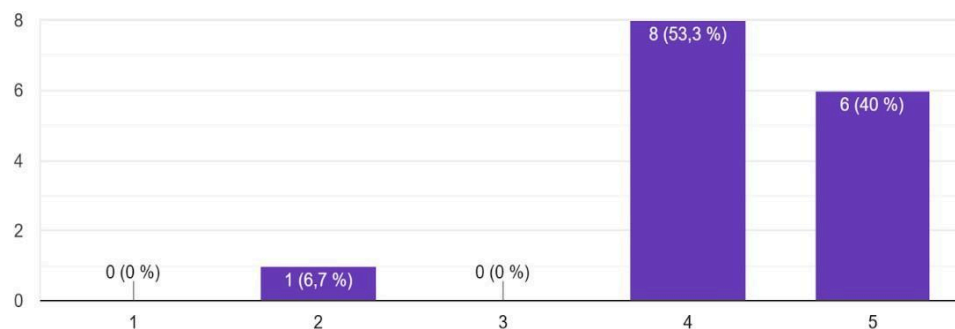


- **Conceptual Clarity:** Open responses now reflected a clear understanding of the dichotomy. On the difference between employee and monotributista: "The employee has more security, the monotributista does not"; "An employee works in a dependency relationship, a monotributista works independently and is not owed the payment of these benefits." On the risk of renting an account: "He is more unprotected, because he works 'off the books within the off the books,' he does not appear anywhere"; "If he rents the account and something happens to him, he has no way to prove that he was working."

- **Self-Perception of Preparedness:** Confidence in their knowledge was inverted. 93.3% rated themselves with 4 (53.3%) or 5 (40%), feeling prepared to evaluate the fairness of a labor relationship.

Después de esta charla, en una escala del 1 al 5, ¿qué tan preparado te sentís para entender un contrato de trabajo o saber si un trabajo es "justo" o no? (1 = Nada preparado / 5 = Muy preparado)

15 respuestas



## 4 Discussion

The results were not just numbers; for us, as a research team, they were real-time confirmation of our hypothesis. We saw how, in less than an hour, confusion transformed into clarity.

The discussion of these findings focuses on three axes. First, the talk managed to **demystify the figure of the "monotributista."** Students stopped seeing it as a form of "small business" (as the pre-test indicated) and began to understand it as what it is in the context of platforms: a legal mechanism used by companies to avoid a dependency relationship and, therefore, evade their responsibilities as an employer.

Second, and perhaps the most significant finding, was the "aha! moment" related to **the transfer of risk.** The 93.3% turnaround in the question about who pays the expenses of an accident (Graph 3) is the most conclusive evidence. Students understood that the discourse of "flexibility" has a hidden cost: the total externalization of risk (accidents, illness, vehicle maintenance) from capital (the company) to the worker (the "contractor"). They understood that "being your own boss" means, in practice, "assuming all the risk alone."

Third, the concept of **"account rental"** consolidated as the most extreme symptom of this precarity. Students went from seeing it as a "strategy" to earn more points (pre-test) to defining it as "working 'off the books within the off the books'" (post-test).

They understood that it is a situation of absolute vulnerability, where the worker has no record or legal identity before the company, remaining unprotected not only against the app but also against the account owner.

Our study, therefore, advances existing literature. While other studies (Mendonça et al., 2023) describe hyper-precarity, our work provides empirical evidence of a simple and replicable pedagogical intervention that acts as an antidote. We demonstrate that early labor literacy is a powerful tool to counteract the dominant narrative of the gig economy.

Naturally, our study has **limitations**. The sample size (N=20/15) is small and is based on convenience sampling in a single institution, which limits the generalization of the results. Furthermore, we did not conduct long-term follow-up to measure knowledge retention. Finally, the fact of being university students, close in age to the participants, may have facilitated a connection ("peer-to-peer") that positively influenced the results and that might not be replicable in other contexts.

## 5 Conclusion

This research project confirms our hypothesis: the educational intervention was highly effective in transforming high school students' knowledge and critical perception of labor precarity in the platform economy.

A significant conceptual change was achieved. Participants can now **decode the discourse of labor flexibility**. They understand that the "being your own boss" model promoted by platforms is not synonymous with autonomy, but a sophisticated mechanism for externalizing risk and evading corporate responsibilities, transferring all costs and dangers to the individual worker.

As students who carried out this research, the experience went beyond an academic requirement. It was a practical exercise in civic education. We firmly believe that we have provided these young people with a fundamental critical tool for their future: the awareness to question their working conditions and demand decent treatment.

## 6 Acknowledgments

We deeply thank the authorities, teachers, and students of EPET N°14 for their time, trust, and valuable participation, without which this study would not have been possible.

## 7 References (APA 7th Edition)

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