Misbehaving for Deliveroo. How couriers' compliant (mis)behaviour boosts the platform company's business

Dr. Lorenzo Cini
Lecturer in Employment Relations and HRM, University College Cork, Ireland

Workplace misbehaviour has always been troublesome for employers. Workers have often exhibited conducts, such as absenteeism and pilferage, that are foreign to companies' norms and detrimental to their profits. Hence, various managerial theories have been developed over time with the aim of eliminating them. However, misbehaviour is still observed in the contemporary workplace. In this study, I show that, in the gig economy, where workers are controlled remotely by algorithms, platforms no longer seek to eliminate it, but even encourage its proliferation. My contention is that algorithms are designed to make misbehaviour consistent with company's interests. Considering the operation of the platform Deliveroo in Ireland and Italy as a case study, I illustrate how four misconducts (i.e., the utilization of multiple Deliveroo accounts, the utilization of bots, the rental of other people's accounts, the tricking of Deliveroo's accounts system) are in line with its organizational interest. I call these practices compliant misbehaviour. By it, I mean a set of illicit conducts performed by couriers during their working time, violating specific company norms, whose effect is though fully beneficial to its core business. The theoretical elaboration of this category is the main contribution of my study. To develop it, I carried out qualitative fieldwork research (in-depth interviews, daily observation of couriers' activities, document analysis) in both Ireland and Italy between 2022 and 2023.

Link per partecipazione via Teams: click here