

Blurred Boundaries: Maintaining Work-Life Balance in the Gig Economy

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ABSTRACT

The gig economy is a result of the digital developments occurring globally. With its high level of flexibility, the gig economy has transformed the landscape of modern work. However, behind the ease and flexibility, new challenges arise concerning work-life balance. This study analyzes how the boundaries between work and personal life have become increasingly blurred for gig workers. The research method used is a literature review method. A literature review is a research method that involves collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information from various relevant sources, such as scientific journals, books, articles, research reports, and other sources. Through literature reviews and case studies, this research identifies factors contributing to the work-life imbalance, such as high performance demands, constant accessibility, and the lack of social protection. The study concludes that a collective effort is needed from various parties, including platforms, governments, and gig workers themselves, to create a healthier and more sustainable work environment.

Keywords: Gig Economy, work-Life Balance

ABSTRACT

Ekonomi gig merupakan hasil dari perkembangan digital yang tengah terjadi di dunia. Dengan fleksibilitasnya yang tinggi, ekonomi gig telah mengubah lanskap pekerjaan modern. Namun, di balik kemudahan dan fleksibilitas tersebut, muncul tantangan baru terkait keseimbangan kehidupan kerja. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana batasan antara pekerjaan dan kehidupan pribadi menjadi semakin kabur bagi pekerja gig. Metode dalam penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka. Studi pustaka merupakan metode penelitian yang melibatkan pengumpulan, analisis, dan sintesis informasi dari berbagai sumber yang relevan, seperti jurnal ilmiah, buku, artikel, laporan penelitian, dan sumber lainnya. Melalui telaah pustaka dan studi kasus, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap ketidakseimbangan kehidupan kerja, seperti tuntutan kinerja yang tinggi, aksesibilitas yang berkelanjutan, dan kurangnya perlindungan sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa diperlukan upaya kolektif dari berbagai pihak, termasuk platform, pemerintah, dan pekerja gig sendiri, untuk menciptakan lingkungan kerja yang lebih sehat dan berkelanjutan.

Keywords: *Ekonomi Gig, Keseimbangan Hidup dan Kerja*



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1. Introduction

The development of technology in the era of globalization is no longer new, but has become an integral part of everyday life. Many aspects of life have experienced significant changes as digitalization progresses. The convenience, flexibility, and efficiency we enjoy today are the result of the great impact brought about by technological advancements. This digital transformation not only brings changes at the individual level but also creates new industries in the global economy, namely the digital economy.

The digital economy represents a fundamental shift in how we produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. This transformation is driven by rapid developments in digital technology, particularly the internet. Previously, economic activity was primarily focused on physical goods, but now data, information, and digital services have become highly valuable assets. This advancement has transformed how we interact in the business world and introduced a new economic system known as the "gig economy."

The gig economy is a modern economic phenomenon characterized by short-term jobs, freelance projects, or flexible tasks that are often facilitated by digital platforms. The term "gig" itself originated from the music world, initially referring to short performances by musicians. Now, the term has expanded to describe temporary work in various fields, ranging from delivery services to creative jobs.

One of the main attractions of the gig economy is the flexibility of working hours, independence, and the potential for unlimited earnings. Gig workers essentially offer their services to individuals or organizations, with digital platforms acting as intermediaries. These platforms not only connect workers with clients but also control most aspects of the tools or services being offered. This creates a new dynamic where gig workers do not fully control the services they provide, even though they gain freedom in terms of time and workspace.

The presence of digital platforms as intermediaries, flexible working hours, and high earning potential makes the gig economy particularly attractive, especially to the younger generation. In this digital age, where almost all aspects of life are transitioning to online systems, working in the gig economy sector is seen as a choice that aligns with modern lifestyles. This flexibility allows workers to balance work and personal life, although it also presents challenges, such as income uncertainty and the lack of social protection.

The gig economy itself has entered the Indonesian economy since 2015, marked by the emergence of online motorcycle taxi platforms. Gojek, Grab, Shopee Food, and Maxim are on-demand platforms that are popular among Indonesians. As we can see, the number of gig workers is currently increasing. Quoted from Kominfo East Java Province, gig workers in Indonesia have now reached 2.3 million people. RISED Director, M. Fajar Rahmadi M.Ec, said that, from an economic perspective, GIG workers in Indonesia earn an average of IDR 3,988,078 per month in total. If workers only work in gig work (as their main job), their average income is IDR 2,996,841. Meanwhile, a worker's monthly income is IDR 4,605,992 if he or she has a main job and does gig work on the side. This shows that side gig work can increase income by up to 50%, even higher than the main job.

Although considered to have many advantages, especially in terms of flexibility, the gig economy is considered not to provide welfare for its workers due to the lack of legal protection and their rights as decent workers. In terms of labor law, the relationship between gig companies and their workers is only limited to partnerships. The lack of regulation by the government also creates unrest for gig workers. This can be seen from the absence of regulations on legal recognition of partnerships in the gig economy. The flexibility of the gig economy has also resulted in gig workers losing their work balance. The balance between work and personal life is needed so that the welfare of life continues. However, flexibility leads to irregular working hours and in the end gig workers are required to always be on standby, accommodating work at any time in order to ensure a stable income. This leads to gig workers feeling overburdened and ultimately causing them to feel stressed.

The lack of adequate regulations and protection guarantees for gig workers has significantly negative impacts on their psychological well-being. The income instability experienced by gig workers often forces them to live in uncertainty, where the income they earn can vary drastically from month to month. This results in difficulties in financial planning, paying bills, and meeting basic needs, which in turn can lead to prolonged stress and anxiety.

Additionally, unpredictable workloads pose a major problem for gig workers. In many cases, they must be prepared to work irregular hours, with no guarantee of minimum hours or income. This situation creates additional pressure, where workers feel forced to accept every job offer available, even if it means sacrificing personal time, health, and work-life balance. Gig workers often find themselves trapped in a never-ending work cycle, which can potentially damage their mental and physical health.

Moreover, the lack of social security—such as health insurance, pension benefits, or protection against unfair dismissal—adds to the psychological burden faced by gig workers. They do not have adequate safety nets to protect themselves from unexpected risks, such as work-related accidents or illness. In situations where they have to confront health issues or job loss, gig workers often feel neglected and unsupported.

High competition in the gig labor market also contributes to the psychological distress of workers. With many workers vying for the same job offers, gig workers often feel pressured to continuously improve their performance and reputation on the platform. This can create feelings of inadequacy and increase anxiety about losing their jobs. All these factors contribute to an unhealthy work environment that can be potentially harmful to the mental well-being of workers.

Therefore, it is crucial for the government and platform providers to take proactive steps in creating regulations that protect the lives of gig workers, even if they are considered merely partners. Ignoring the partnership relationship in the gig economy without appropriate legal frameworks can become a ticking time bomb that not only complicates matters for workers but also affects the government and the overall labor conditions in Indonesia. The policies implemented now will determine the future direction of the gig economy and the well-being of its workers.

Not only does the potential for exploitation and protest disrupt economic activities, but the lack of protection also exposes gig workers to greater risks in times of crisis. In uncertain economic conditions, gig workers are often the most vulnerable, losing their sources of income without adequate support.

In many countries, there are already good examples of how to create relevant regulations regarding self-employment and the boundaries of partnership relationships. For example, France has taken the initiative to revise its Labor Law to adopt a 'third category' that provides legal protection for workers in partnership relationships. This initiative reflects an awareness of the importance of granting basic rights to workers without diminishing the flexibility offered by the gig work model. In the UK, through a legal ruling, it has explicitly stated that the relationship between Uber and its drivers cannot be classified as a typical partnership relationship, setting an important precedent for worker protection in the gig sector.

Building a solid legal framework for gig workers is not just about individual protection, but also about creating a healthy and sustainable work environment. When gig workers feel safe and valued, they will be more motivated to provide quality services, which ultimately contributes to more inclusive and sustainable economic growth. In this context, collaboration between the government, platform providers, and the workers themselves is essential to achieving a balance between work flexibility and adequate protection.

2. Method

The method in this research uses literature study as the main approach. Literature study is a research method that relies on collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information from various relevant sources. These sources can be scientific journals, books, articles, research reports, and various other documents. By using literature studies, researchers can build a deep and comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

This approach was chosen with the aim of providing a strong theoretical foundation in understanding the characteristics of the gig economy, the work-life balance challenges faced by gig workers, as well as analyzing the various strategies implemented by gig workers, platform companies, or the government in dealing with these challenges.

This method allows researchers to not only identify findings from previous research, but also examine how the boundaries between work and personal life are often blurred in the gig economy environment. The literature review also provides a framework for researchers to examine the policies or interventions undertaken by various parties, and how these strategies can support or harm work-life balance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Uncertainty by Companies and Government

The gig economy is one of the results of digital transformation that has a huge impact on changes in the structure of the national and global economy. The gig economy is the result of the revolution of the word "gig" that applies in the world of music. The vocabulary gig appeared for the first time around 1790 which

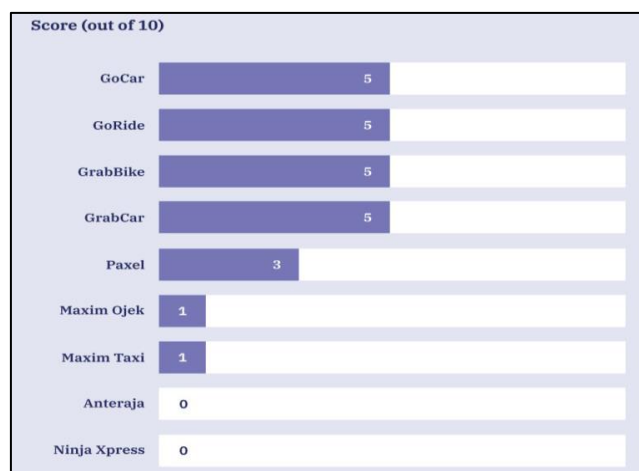
means "small ship" that moves bounce repeatedly. Initially, the term was used in the context of the music industry, where a musician would often perform short gigs at various venues. It wasn't until the late 20th century that the development of the word "gig" into the "gig economy" began to emerge on the job market landscape. As information technology and the internet advance, more and more individuals have access to digital platforms to offer their services and skills independently. The emergence of digital platforms such as Uber, Airbnb, and Upwork accelerated the growth of the gig economy. These platforms facilitate the connection between service providers (gig workers) and service seekers (customers).

Telles (2016) formulates the gig economy as a digital program based on a service model that enables flexible work arrangements. In an interview conducted by Harvard Business Review on 65 gig workers, it was concluded that those who live in the gig economy become more courageous individuals, living a life that leads to prosperity, both financially and mentally. Flexibility and independence are the main attractions of the gig economy. It is not only the gig workers who benefit from it, but also the service providers or platform companies. They can reach a wide range of workers because of the work from home option. Thus, companies can hire their workers anywhere. Not requiring a permanent work contract is also one of the benefits obtained by platform companies, which makes companies more flexible in establishing or terminating cooperation. Companies also do not need to feel burdened by the costs of insurance, leave, and other benefits.

From research conducted by the director of RISED, M. Fajar Rahmadi M.Ec, on the Plan to Limit Working Hours and Survey the Welfare of Gig Workers at Airlangga University in May, it shows that of the total female respondents 62% make gig work their main job. While of the total respondents, there were only 42% of men who made gig work their main job. This proves that the flexibility of the gig economy contributes to the potential for national economic growth through high income, active female labor force participation, and improved social welfare. In the social aspect, the gig economy provides opportunities to improve skills, expand social networks and reduce stress in the face of global economic uncertainty.

Flexibility can be a first-time benefit for workers. However, at the same time, it can also be a weakness of the gig economy. The infinity of working hours makes it difficult for them to separate work life from personal life. Not only that, the absence of guaranteed legal protection is also a weakness in this economic system. The relationship between platform providers and gig workers is simply a "partnership". According to Law No. 9/1955 on small businesses, partnership is a business cooperation between small businesses and large businesses accompanied by guidance and development by medium or large businesses by showing the principles of mutual need, mutual strengthening, and mutual benefit. In the gig economy, a partnership is a unique working relationship between a digital platform provider and the workers registered on the platform. For example, the company Grab and its drivers. In this context, workers are often referred to as "partners". This is different from the conventional employment relationship between workers and companies, where there is a clear hierarchy and stronger legal protection for workers. The term partnership relationship does not appear in Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower and its implementing regulations, but in the Law on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. It should be noted that the context of partnerships regulated in this law is different from the partnerships that currently occur in the field.

In the gig economy, there is a "triangular" concept that refers to the three main parties involved in the system. The first party is the digital platform or the company that provides the platform to connect the service provider with consumers. The second party is the service provider or commonly referred to as "partner". The last party is the consumers who use the services provided through the platform. The main problem that arises in this triangular relationship is that there is no clarity in the employment status. The relationship between platforms and partners is described as a "partnership". A partnership is supposed to be a mutually beneficial relationship, but in practice there is no legal protection for the service provider. There have been responses stating that partnerships are another form of labor commodification that views labor as a commodity. A study suggests that gig workers in Indonesia work an average of 12 hours a day. This is far above the working hours allowed by the Labor Law, which is 7-8 hours per day, with a maximum limit of 40 hours per week. In terms of income, the research found that the income of Indonesian gig platform partners also continued to decline from 2018 to 2020.



Picture 1 . Scores obtained by major gig economy platforms in Indonesia based on minimum decent work standards

From the table above, it can be seen that the highest score obtained by the platform is only 5. There are two platforms that show 0, which means they fail to meet the minimum decent work standards. It can be concluded that gig economy platforms in Indonesia are still unsuccessful in meeting decent labor justice standards plus there is an imbalance between the workload and the wages earned by their workers. When viewed from the Grab website, they say that drivers who become partners will become “their own bosses” where they will get “flexibility in earning income” because they can determine “when, where and how often” they work (Grab, 2021) . In reality, however, such flexibility is illusory for the workers as they have to tolerate the vulnerability and injustice they experience.

Employment law in the UK clearly distinguishes between employees and independent contractors. The nature of the relationship between the employer and the worker is a key factor in determining rights and obligations under employment law. To determine whether someone is an employee or an independent contractor, UK courts use several approaches, such as the control test, integration test, and reality test. These tests help identify how integrated the worker is within the company's structure and how much control the employer has over the worker's activities.

A notable example in the development of UK employment law occurred on 19 February 2021, when the UK Supreme Court ruled to change the status of Uber drivers from independent contractors to workers with broader rights. This ruling reclassified more than 70,000 Uber drivers in the UK as workers entitled to minimum wage, holiday pay, and access to pension schemes. This case marked a significant moment in UK employment law history, particularly for workers in the gig economy. The decision sends a clear message to gig economy companies that they must comply with labor standards and provide adequate protection for their workers.

A similar step was taken in the Netherlands. In March 2021, the Amsterdam District Court ruled that Uber drivers in the Netherlands should be classified as employees rather than independent contractors. This decision was also considered a significant victory for workers' rights in the gig economy. While some business groups expressed concerns about the potential impact on their business models, labor unions and human rights organizations welcomed the decision, viewing it as a major step forward in the fight for workers' rights in the digital age.

In the context of Indonesia, the gig economy has become a crucial part of the national economy. For example, Gojek alone has contributed around IDR 246 trillion, equivalent to 1.6% of Indonesia's GDP. This highlights the significant role the gig economy plays in driving economic growth. However, reports from CfDS UGM and Fairwork in 2021 and 2022 revealed that gig platforms in Indonesia, including Gojek , have not yet

provided adequate working conditions. Most platforms have not paid their workers fair wages, considering their working hours and additional costs incurred during their tasks.

One of the main reasons for this issue is the lack of sufficient legal protection from the government for gig workers. In Indonesia, there is no specific legislation that governs the rights and protections for gig workers. Although these workers are considered "partners," they should be entitled to the same protections as regular employees, including social security, health insurance, fair wages, and other welfare initiatives. The absence of these protections exposes workers to the risk of exploitation, which could hinder the future growth of the gig economy.

Therefore, it is crucial for the Indonesian government and platform companies to collaborate in creating regulations that ensure protection for gig workers. Gig workers play a significant role in supporting the digital economy, and it is only fair that they receive clear legal protections and fair compensation. The government should introduce specific legislation that provides certainty for gig workers, while platform companies should also contribute by developing welfare programs and social protection initiatives for their partners. With the right regulations and good collaboration between all parties, the gig economy in Indonesia can grow in a healthier and more sustainable way, offering security and comfort for the workers involved.

3.2. Welfare of gig workers

Worker well-being is a condition in which a worker feels satisfied and happy in their work, both in physical, mental, and social terms. This includes various aspects, ranging from comfortable working conditions, to rewards and recognition for good performance. As we can see from the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No.13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, every worker is entitled to protection, decent wages, and guarantees for their welfare. This is also in accordance with the five global principles stated by fairwork on decent work standards. The five principles are Fair Pay, Fair Conditions, Fair Contracts, Fair Management, and Fair Representation (Fairwork , 2021). Legal protection for workers plays a very important role in protecting workers' normative rights and ensuring equal opportunities, fair treatment, and welfare. Marshall's theory states that setting a minimum wage allows workers to be more productive over the long run. This can promote the long-term welfare of workers. Social security will also improve the welfare of workers because it can help the survival of their families in the event of work accidents to these workers while they are carrying out their duties and their families will get social assistance from the government through social security. This protection should apply to all workers. However, in reality, gig workers, first known as freelancers, do not receive all legal protections and guarantees. The application of legal protections and guarantees for gig workers has not been applied in all countries that use the gig economy system. One of them is Indonesia. The Indonesian government is considered indifferent to the welfare of gig workers. This is evident from the absence of laws that regulate specific legal guarantees and protection for gig workers.

Gig economy jobs cover a lot of ground. Some are online or location-based (superapp). The online-based gig economy offers a variety of services, such as business and information technology services, health services, to education services or online teachers. Meanwhile, the location-based gig economy (superapp) refers to a combination of platforms that provide a variety of services, such as passenger transportation services, food delivery, and courier services. Based on research conducted by Google and Temasek in 2018, the ride hailing sector or online transportation services alone reached a digital economic value of IDR 82.5 trillion. Gig workers on Grab services have contributed as much as IDR 77.4 trillion to the Indonesian economy in 2019 based on research conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Southeast Strategic in 2020. Thus, it is clear that the role of gig workers have a positive impact on the national economy.

The national economic growth generated by gig workers is not directly proportional to the improvement of the welfare of its workers. Various challenges and difficulties faced by gig workers in Indonesia. Starting from the lack of workers' rights because they are not classified as workers in the Indonesian Labor Law, poor working conditions, unstable income and the absence of health and social security provided by the service provider platform. The problem of competition also cannot be ignored in the gig economy. Gig workers are willing to sacrifice their personal time to continue working to achieve targets. The income received does not meet the applicable minimum wage. The income of the drivers is determined by the number of orders received and still has to be cut again according to the platform's policy. This is enough to illustrate the welfare felt by gig workers in Indonesia. Therefore, the role of the government is needed to regulate adaptive and

balanced regulations in order to take comprehensive steps to maximize the role of gig workers so that they can continue to produce positive impacts on the social economy.

The status of “partnership” also becomes an issue in achieving the welfare of gig workers. There is a clear distinction between employees and partners. These differences are evident in terms of legal status, work relationships, and legal protections. Employees are individuals who work based on an employment agreement or contract, which provides them with rights and obligations protected by labor laws. In contrast, partners are entities that collaborate with companies within the framework of a more flexible business agreement, but they do not receive the same rights as regular employees. This has sparked debates regarding the rights and obligations that should be implemented, especially concerning suspension policies and partnership terminations frequently carried out by platform companies. The “partner” status is often misused by platform providers to avoid providing minimum wage guarantees, health insurance, overtime pay, vacation rights, and proper working hours. Furthermore, the agreements made between the platform and its partners regarding income can sometimes be unfair and lack transparency. Partners may be exploited, receiving only a small portion of their earnings.

Despite the significant growth of the gig economy, the government is still perceived as indifferent when it comes to estimating the population of gig workers. In fact, a considerable portion of the country's population has already benefited from the gig economy. Therefore, government regulations are needed to govern this sector to ensure that all workers experience fair treatment and legal protection. Collaboration between service-providing platforms and the government is also essential to ensure protection for gig workers and improve the welfare of gig economy partners.

4. Conclusion

The digital economy represents a fundamental transformation in how we produce, distribute, and consume goods and services, driven by rapid advances in digital technology, particularly the internet. The gig economy is a modern economic phenomenon characterized by short-term jobs, independent projects, or flexible tasks often facilitated through digital platforms. The term "gig" originally referred to brief performances by musicians, which has now expanded to encompass short-term work across various fields. Although the gig economy is considered to offer numerous advantages, especially in terms of flexibility, it has not yet provided adequate welfare for its workers due to a lack of legal protection and recognition of their rights as deserving employees.

From the perspective of labor law, the relationship between gig companies and their workers is limited to a partnership. The absence of government regulation creates ease among gig workers, evident in the lack of laws recognizing partnerships within the gig economy. In this economy, there is a "triangular" concept referring to the three main parties involved in the system. The primary issue arising from this triangular relationship is the ambiguity surrounding the employment status of the workers. The relationship between the platform and the partners is described as a "partnership." Ideally, partnerships should be mutually beneficial, but in practice, there is no legal protection for service providers. Some argue that this partnership is simply another form of labor commodification, viewing labor as a commodity. A study indicates that gig workers in Indonesia work an average of 12 hours a day, significantly exceeding the working hours permitted by labor laws, which are set at 7-8 hours per day, with a maximum limit of 40 hours per week.

According to research conducted by Google and Temasek in 2018, the ride-hailing sector, or online transportation services, reached a digital economy value of IDR 82.5 trillion. Gig workers in Grab services contributed approximately IDR 77.4 trillion to Indonesia's economy in 2019, based on a study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Tenggara Strategic in 2020.

The growth of the national economy driven by gig workers does not correspond to an increase in the welfare of these workers. Various challenges and difficulties are faced by gig workers in Indonesia, including a lack of workers' rights as they do not fall under the classification of employees in Indonesia's Labor Law, poor working conditions, unstable income, and the absence of health and social guarantees provided by service platforms.

The government should adopt a comprehensive approach to addressing the gig economy. On one hand, it is essential for the government to provide clear regulations and adequate protections for gig workers. On the

other hand, the government should also encourage the growth of the gig economy by supporting entrepreneurs and fostering innovation. By doing so, the gig economy can become a source of inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

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