
Equality of Power Relations between Digital Platforms and Gig Workers: Implications for Decent Work

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Abstract

The rapid growth of the gig economy in Indonesia and globally has created new employment opportunities through digital platforms that offer flexibility and easy access to labor markets. Behind this flexibility lies unequal power between platforms and gig workers, dominated and controlled by digital platforms. This condition raises serious questions about the fulfillment of the Decent Work principles promoted by the International Labor Organization (ILO). This study aims to analyze the asymmetrical power relations between digital platforms and gig workers, and their implications for decent work indicators. The research applies a systematic Literature Review (SLR) and case study approach, reviewing journal articles, policy documents, and research reports published between 2015 – 2025. Findings reveal three major dimensions of power inequality: (1) how do digital platforms exercise power and control over gig workers through algorithmic management? (2) How do unequal power relations affect decent work, especially regarding fair income, job security, social protection, and collective representation opportunities? (3) What regulatory, institutional, or collective strategies can enhance power balance and promote decent work for gig workers in Indonesia? This condition has a direct impact on the low principles of decent work, especially in terms of job security, living wages, and social protection. In conclusion, the gig economy presents new opportunities for working, but also presents a significant form of unequal power relations between asymmetrical digital platforms and gig workers. Thus, unequal power emerges as platforms dominate, while gig workers remain subordinate, adapting to opaque and restrictive digital controls.

Keywords: Gig Workers, Power Relations. Decent Work, Industrial Relations, Social Protection

1. Introduction

The platform economy has significantly transformed labour intermediation in the past decade. Digital platforms—such as location-based services (ride-hailing, delivery) and online freelance marketplaces—provide rapid access to work, lower entry barriers, and highlight schedule flexibility as a key attraction for many workers. However, the swift expansion of these platforms also raises serious challenges: income uncertainty, weak social protection, and growing worker dependence on technical

mechanisms controlled by the platforms. Studies globally show that gig-work is rapidly growing, yet many workers lack access to basic labour protections such as social security and stable income (Hussein, 2023).

A critical theme emerging in the literature is the asymmetry of power relations between platforms and gig workers. Platforms deploy algorithms to assign jobs, set prices, monitor performance, and enforce reputation (rating/review) mechanisms that are often opaque to workers. This algorithmic control—including automated scheduling, score-based penalties, and account de-activation without detailed notice—creates structural dependency and limits workers’ capacity to negotiate or demand better labour conditions. Many reports indicate that algorithmic governance and data-driven management strengthen power imbalances between platforms and workers (Cheng, Yawen; Cheng, Wan-Ju; Lin, Ro-Ting; Ko, 2024).

From the perspective of workers’ rights and labour standards, this phenomenon directly impacts the goal of decent work as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO): work that is productive, yields a decent income, guarantees rights, secures social protection, and fosters equal opportunity. International organizations have cautioned that without regulatory intervention and effective collective mechanisms, the platform economy risks undermining the principles of decent work—such as through worker classification that avoids social obligations or through ineffective grievance-resolution mechanisms. The ILO itself has been active in developing recommendations and draft instruments to regulate platform work in order to realize decent work (Tepfer, 2025).

Systematic and bibliometric reviews identify three main clusters in gig-economy research: (1) analysis of platform business models and characteristics, (2) studies of worker experiences (income, well-being, safety), and (3) dynamics of collectivism and worker resistance. Although quantitative and qualitative studies have grown, there is consensus that research on **power relations**—particularly efforts to measure equality of power between platforms and workers and to link this directly to decent work indicators—is still relatively limited and fragmented. Moreover, methodological literature draws attention to challenges in measuring platform work (e.g., heterogeneity of platforms, closed data, and definitions of platform work), which complicates cross-study comparisons and evidence-based policy design (Yuliantina et al., 2025).

Empirically, a number of studies have documented control mechanisms and socioeconomic consequences for workers—e.g., income reduction because of algorithmic penalties, difficulty in obtaining compensation after accidents, and marginalisation in job access due to rating systems. However, many studies remain descriptive or focus on developed-country contexts; comparative research examining how institutional factors (national labour policy, union capacity, regulatory models) affect power equality and decent-work outcomes in developing countries remains relatively scarce. In Indonesia, decent-work policy agendas (e.g., the ILO’s Decent Work Country Programme for Indonesia 2020–2025) are under development, but detailed evidence on how power relations between platforms and gig workers affect decent-work indicators in local sectors is still limited (ILO.org/Jakarta, 2025).

From these literature gaps emerges the need for research that links three elements simultaneously: (1) mapping and measuring power relations between platforms and workers, (2) analysing how variation in these power relations affects decent-work indicators (decent income, job stability, social protection, safety, and collective opportunity), and (3) Assessing policy and collective measures to address power imbalances offers key evidence for developing policies that support decent work. (Pilatti et al., 2024). So, this article aims to fill the gap by examining the equality of power relations between digital platforms and gig workers, and analysing the implications for the fulfilment of decent-work principles. This study contributes to theory, method, and practice by enriching power relations literature and offering equitable digital work recommendations.

The problem addressed in this study is the persistent inequality of power relations between digital platforms and gig workers, driven by algorithmic control, opaque management systems, and weak regulatory protection. This imbalance limits workers' autonomy, bargaining power, and access to decent work conditions such as fair income, social protection, and job security. Despite gig economy growth, limited evidence shows how unequal power impacts decent work in developing countries like Indonesia. This study is guided by three main research questions; (1) how do digital platforms exercise power and control over gig workers through algorithmic management? (2) How do unequal power relations affect decent work, especially regarding fair income, job security, social protection, and collective representation opportunities? (3) What regulatory, institutional, or collective strategies can enhance power balance and promote decent work for gig workers in Indonesia?

This research provides a significant theoretical contribution to the growing body of literature on labour relations in the digital economy. By examining the equality of power relations between digital platforms and gig workers, the study enriches theoretical understanding of how control, dependency, and autonomy operate within platform-mediated work structures. It bridges concepts from industrial relations theory, labour process theory, and digital labour studies, offering an integrated analytical framework to assess how algorithmic management shapes employment relations. Additionally, this study contributes to the academic discourse on decent work by linking power asymmetries to measurable indicators of decent work—such as income security, social protection, and collective voice—thereby extending the conceptual and empirical relevance of decent work frameworks to the context of digital labour in developing economies like Indonesia.

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to inform policy development, labour regulation, and institutional design aimed at protecting gig workers' rights and promoting fairer working conditions. The research offers evidence-based insights for policymakers and labour authorities to craft regulations on worker classification, algorithmic transparency, and social protection coverage for platform workers. For trade unions and worker associations, the study provides a foundation for developing new strategies of representation and collective bargaining suited to the digital labour environment. Moreover, digital platforms themselves can benefit from understanding how more balanced power relations contribute to worker satisfaction, retention, and reputational sustainability. Ultimately, the research aims to support Indonesia's broader efforts to realize decent work for all, aligning national labour policies with global standards set by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

2. Research method

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review to examine power relations between digital platforms and gig workers regarding decent work. The SLR method was chosen to ensure a transparent, comprehensive, and replicable process of identifying relevant academic studies and reports. This approach allows for the systematic mapping of scholarly evidence, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings related to power asymmetries in the digital platform. The review process follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021), which outlines four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The SLR is particularly appropriate for this topic because existing literature on gig work and power relations is fragmented across disciplines—such as industrial relations, digital labor studies, and platform governance. Thus, the SLR integrates interdisciplinary insights to understand how algorithms, job insecurity, and weak regulations affect decent work in gig economy.

2.1. Search Strategy

A structured search identified studies from 2015–2025, covering the global rise of digital platform work. The search was conducted in five major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. In addition, relevant policy documents and working papers from reputable institutions—such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and World Bank—were included to capture non-academic but authoritative sources. This combination of terms was designed to capture studies focusing on the intersection between platform governance, worker relations, and labour standards. To enhance the credibility of the SLR, multiple measures were implemented to assure the reliability and validity of the data, the following inclusion criteria were applied:

- a. Studies that explicitly discuss power relations between digital platforms and gig workers.
- b. Articles addressing at least one dimension of decent work (e.g., fair income, job security, social protection, freedom of association).
- c. Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, or official institutional reports published between 2010–2025.
- d. Studies conducted in either global or developing country contexts, including Indonesia.

Meanwhile, exclusion criteria included:

- a. Articles focusing on consumer or technological aspects without labour implications.
- b. Non-academic publications (e.g., blogs, opinion pieces).
- c. Studies lacking methodological transparency or empirical basis.

2.2. Screening and Selection Process

The SLR followed the PRISMA 2020 flow process. During the identification stage, 55 records were retrieved from all databases. After removing duplicates, 35 records remained. During the screening stage, titles and abstracts were examined to assess relevance, resulting in the exclusion of 19 studies. The eligibility stage involved a full-text assessment of 13 articles, of which 3 were excluded for reasons such as irrelevance, lack of focus on labor relations, or insufficient data. Ultimately, 10 studies met the inclusion criteria and were incorporated into the final synthesis. The selection process was documented using a PRISMA Flow Diagram to ensure transparency in reporting. Each included

article was coded according to the year of publication, research method, geographical focus, theoretical framework, and key findings related to power asymmetries and decent work indicators.

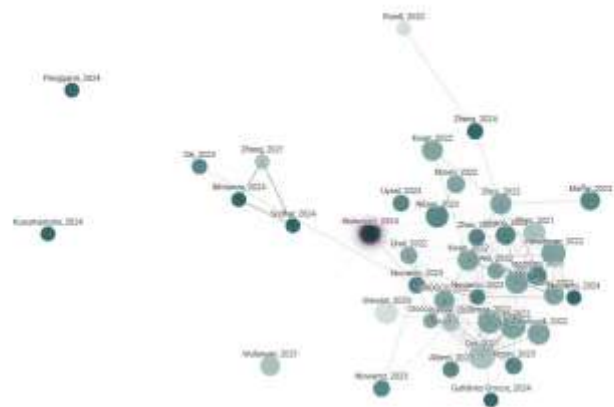


Figure 11. Co-occurrence graph of keywords from the 35 papers

After applying the PRISMA Checklist, the data used in this study were carefully selected through a structured and transparent screening process. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework was employed to ensure the validity, reliability, and reproducibility of the data selection. This process involved several stages, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. Initially, all potentially relevant studies were gathered from academic databases based on predefined keywords. Duplicates were then removed, and the remaining articles were screened based on titles and abstracts. Full-text evaluations were conducted to confirm their relevance to the research objectives. As a result, only studies that met all inclusion criteria—such as relevance to power relations, digital platforms, and decent work—were retained. Therefore, the final dataset used in this study is presented as follows.

Table 15. All Paper for SLR in assessing power relation over gig workers towards decent work.

No.	Author(s) & Year	Title of Study	Country/ Context	Platform Type
1	Wood, A. J., Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., & Hjorth, I. (2019)	<i>Good gig, bad gig: Autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy</i>	Global	Crowdwork & Ride-hailing
2	Rosenblat, A., & Stark, L. (2016)	<i>Algorithmic labor and information asymmetries: Uber's drivers in the on-demand economy</i>	United States	Ride-hailing
3	Duggan, J., Sherman, U., Carbery, R., &	<i>Algorithmic management and app-work in the gig economy: A research agenda</i>	Global	Platform labor (general)

No.	Author(s) & Year	Title of Study	Country/ Context	Platform Type
	McDonnell, A. (2020)			
4	van Doorn, N. (2017)	<i>Platform labor: On the gendered and racialized exploitation of low-income service work in the digital economy</i>	Europe & North America	Delivery & service
5	Tassinari, A., & Maccarrone, V. (2020)	<i>Riders on the storm: Workplace solidarity among gig economy couriers in Italy and the UK</i>	Italy & UK	Food delivery
6	Berg, J., Furrer, M., Harmon, E., Rani, U., & Silberman, M. S. (2018)	<i>Digital labour platforms and the future of work: Towards decent work in the online world</i>	Global (ILO Report)	Multiple platforms
7	Anwar, M. A., & Graham, M. (2022)	<i>Digital labor at the margins: Algorithmic control and gig work in Indonesia</i>	Indonesia	Ride-hailing & Delivery
8	Stewart, A., Stanford, J., & Hardy, T. (2021)	<i>The wages of non-standard work: Regulating gig labor for decent work</i>	Australia	Ride-hailing
9	Cant, C. (2019)	<i>Riding for Deliveroo: Resistance in the new economy</i>	United Kingdom	Food delivery
10	ILO (2021)	<i>World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The role of digital labor platforms in transforming work</i>	Global	Multiple platforms

2.3. Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction was conducted systematically using a data extraction matrix, which included the following categories: author, year, country, research design, platform type, key findings, and implications for decent work. This enabled cross-study comparison and thematic synthesis. A thematic analysis was applied to categorize findings into three major dimensions:

- Mechanisms of Power and Control – including algorithmic management, rating systems, and performance surveillance;
- Worker Autonomy and Resistance – including strategies for collective action, digital solidarity, and self-regulation;

- c. Decent Work Implications – covering dimensions such as income stability, social protection, and occupational safety.

The analysis process combined inductive and deductive reasoning, allowing the researcher to identify emerging patterns while aligning them with the theoretical framework of decent work (ILO/Geneva, 2021) and power relation theory.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

As this research involves secondary data obtained from published literature, no direct human subjects were involved. However, ethical standards were maintained by properly citing all sources and ensuring accurate representation of original authors' findings and interpretations in line with academic integrity principles.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. How Digital Platforms Exercise Power Relation and Control over Gig Workers

Digital platforms exert power relation and control over gig workers through three interrelated mechanisms—algorithmic management, data-driven monitoring, and platform governance—that together redefine managerial authority in the digital economy. Although platforms often claim to offer flexibility and independence, evidence from multiple studies indicates that these technological and institutional mechanisms reproduce, and even intensify, traditional forms of labor control under a guise of autonomy (Wood et al., 2019; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Duggan et al., 2020).

Table 16. Power Relations and Control over Gig Workers

Power Relations and Control over gig workers		Findings
Description of Platform Practices		- Algorithm assign tasks, monitor performance, and impose penalties - Uber withholds data on demand, pricing, and performance - Algorithm simulate autonomy through ratings and incentives - Constant tracking and ratings determine task access - Platform algorithms reward availability and compliance - Platforms control access to clients, ratings, and pay - Workers monitored through GPS and rating metrics - Platforms classify workers as “independent contractors” - Platform algorithms dictate routes and shifts - Platforms determine prices, access, and ratings unilaterally
Impact on Gig Workers		- Platforms determine prices, access, and ratings unilaterally - Workers operate under uncertainty; psychological pressure - Encourages self-surveillance and competition - Reinforces inequality and precarity - Reduces autonomy; fosters digital dependency

	- Unstable income and exclusion risks - Psychological stress, limited mobility, income instability - Lack of access to benefits and bargaining rights - Workers respond with informal resistance networks - Creates global dependency networks
Implications for Decent Work	- Undermines autonomy and voice; weakens decent work pillars - Creates dependency; weakens fair work conditions - Reduces collective agency; erodes labor protections - Violates principles of equality and job security - Limits freedom of association and social protection - Challenges to fair income and job security - Weakens security, equity, and dignity in work - Requires legal recognition for fair employment conditions - Emergence of digital solidarity improves bargaining power - Highlights need for regulation to ensure decent work

3.1.1. Description of Platform Practice: Algorithmic Management as Invisible Managerial Power

Algorithmic management represents the core mechanism through which platforms coordinate, evaluate, and discipline workers. Algorithms automatically allocate tasks, determine pricing, assess performance, and impose penalties or rewards based on digital metrics (Wood et al., 2019). This automated process replaces human supervision with computational authority, creating what Duggan et al. (2020) describe as “algorithmic governance of labor.” Workers’ autonomy is limited because algorithmic decision-making operates as a “black box”—opaque, non-negotiable, and data-driven (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). For instance, online’s drivers often lack transparency over how fares are calculated or how customer ratings influence their access to future gigs. As a result, workers must continuously adapt to unpredictable algorithmic rules, internalizing platform expectations in order to maintain access to work (Anwar & Graham, 2022). Thus, algorithmic management enforces disciplinary control through technological opacity, subtly transforming gig workers into self-regulating digital subjects.

3.1.2. Impact on Gig Workers

Beyond technological systems, platforms maintain power through governance mechanisms—including contractual classification, access control, and rating-based hierarchies (Stewart et al., 2021; ILO, 2021). By defining workers as “independent contractors,” platforms legally avoid responsibilities typically associated with employment, such as providing minimum wages, social protection, or collective bargaining rights (Stewart et al., 2021). This structural asymmetry enables platforms to externalize labor risks while preserving unilateral control over key aspects of the labor process—pricing, work availability, and disciplinary measures (Berg et al., 2018). The governance model also employs gamification techniques that simulate choice and flexibility but, in reality, reward constant availability and compliance (Duggan et al., 2020). Thus, the governance structure serves as both a legal shield and a behavioral control tool, reinforcing the power imbalance between platforms and workers.

3.1.3. Implications for Decent Work

The intersection of algorithmic management, data-driven surveillance, and exploitative governance mechanisms poses significant challenges to the realization of decent work as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 1999). Specifically, gig workers often lack:

- a. Fair income due to unpredictable pay algorithms and lack of transparency;
- b. Job security because of unilateral platform control and worker classification as independent contractors;
- c. Social protection as platforms deny responsibility for insurance, health coverage, and benefits;
- d. Freedom of association given that algorithmic control discourages collective resistance and replaces worker voice with individualized ratings.

Nevertheless, there are emerging forms of resistance and digital solidarity. Studies by Tassinari and Maccarrone (2020) and Cant (2019) highlight that gig workers are increasingly organizing through online communities and cooperatives, reclaiming agency in algorithmic environments. Such collective actions represent an embryonic counter-power that seeks to redefine the terms of fairness, transparency, and worker participation in digital labor governance.

3.2. How Unequal Power Relations Influence the Realization of Decent Work

Table 17. Unequal Power Relations Influence the Realization of Decent Work

Unequal Power Relations Influence the Realization of Decent Work	
Fair Income	• Unstable and Unpredictable Earnings – Gig workers face income uncertainty due to piece-rate payments and algorithmic pricing fluctuations. • Lack of Transparency – Platforms unilaterally control pricing and pay systems, offering limited insight into how earnings are calculated. • Below-Standard Wages – Many workers receive pay rates lower than local minimum wage or labour standards. • Unpaid and Invisible Work – Tasks like waiting time or unpaid hours are not compensated, reducing overall income fairness. • Distorted Incentive Structures – Performance-based incentives promote overwork and unrealistic income expectations without guaranteeing stable pay.
Job Stability	• Unpredictable Work Hours – Gig workers experience irregular schedules and inconsistent task availability. • Lack of Formal Employment – No binding contracts; workers can be deactivated at any time without notice. • High Turnover and Insecurity – Absence of guaranteed hours and tenure results in unstable employment. • Limited Career Progression – Fragmented gig tasks hinder long-term growth and professional development. • Platform-Induced Instability – Competitive and gamified systems further reduce job continuity across sectors.

Social Protections	• Lack of Insurance and Benefits – Gig workers receive no health insurance, sick leave, or formal employment benefits. • No Pension or Health Contributions – Platforms do not contribute to pension funds or healthcare schemes. • Exclusion from Labor Laws – Workers are not covered under national labour or social security systems. • Absence of Occupational Safety – They are excluded from workplace safety, welfare, and statutory protections. • High Vulnerability – Without universal protection systems, workers face burnout, insecurity, and financial precarity.
Collective Representation	• Weak Collective Voice – Individualized work structures limit workers' ability to organize and express shared concerns. • Platform-Induced Isolation – Digital platforms discourage organizing and create barriers to collective communication. • Fear and Lack of Formal Channels – Workers fear retaliation, and no formal mechanisms for representation or bargaining exist. • Informal Resistance – Collective action emerges through informal or grassroots unions challenging algorithmic control. • Fragmented and Limited Organization – Algorithmic sorting and digital isolation weaken global solidarity and coordinated mobilization.

3.2.1. Fair Income: Algorithmic Control and Wage Volatility

Unequal power relations manifest most visibly in the erosion of fair income, a central pillar of decent work. Digital platforms exercise unilateral control over pricing algorithms, pay rates, and access to tasks, leaving workers with little or no bargaining power over their compensation (Wood et al., 2019; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). Pay structures are typically piece-rate and performance-based, meaning workers are only compensated for completed tasks and not for time spent waiting, traveling, or addressing customer-related issues (van Doorn, 2017). The opacity of algorithmic pricing further amplifies income insecurity. For instance, Gojek drivers or delivery riders often experience sudden fare changes or pay reductions without explanation, illustrating a one-sided economic dependency on platform decisions (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). Such instability forces workers to engage in longer working hours to reach a living wage, effectively reducing the autonomy and flexibility that platform work claims to offer. In developing economies like Indonesia, this income precarity is intensified by weak labor protections and limited alternative employment opportunities (Anwar & Graham, 2022).

3.2.2. Job Stability: Precarity under Algorithmic Governance

Job stability within the gig economy is severely compromised by the structural power of platforms to deactivate workers or restrict access to work opportunities at will. The algorithmic management

systems that allocate tasks and evaluate performance effectively function as digital gatekeepers, determining who works, when, and how much they earn (Berg et al., 2018). The absence of formal employment contracts further reinforces this instability. Workers are labeled as “independent contractors,” stripping them of rights to job continuity, redundancy pay, or dismissal protection (Stewart et al., 2021). Instead, algorithmic evaluation systems—often based on opaque customer ratings—become mechanisms of automated discipline, where a single low score or complaint can result in instant deactivation (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). This dependence on algorithmic approval fosters what Duggan et al. (2020) describe as “digital precarity”—a constant fear of losing income and platform access. In such conditions, job stability becomes contingent upon continuous compliance rather than contractual security, violating the ILO’s decent work principle of “security at work and protection against job loss.”

3.2.3. Social Protection: The Institutional Exclusion of Platform Workers

Unequal power relations are also reflected in the systematic exclusion of gig workers from social protection systems such as health insurance, sick leave, unemployment benefits, and retirement contributions (ILO, 2021). Platforms classify workers as self-employed, effectively transferring the burden of social risk from employer to individual (Berg et al., 2018). This governance model allows platforms to avoid the financial and legal responsibilities traditionally associated with employment relationships. Consequently, workers bear the full cost of work-related risks, including accidents, illness, and downtime. In the Indonesian context, although some platforms have introduced voluntary insurance schemes, participation remains low due to the absence of employer contributions and workers limited financial capacity (Anwar & Graham, 2022). This institutionalized exclusion not only violates the principle of social security for all workers but also deepens inequality by disproportionately affecting low-income and marginalized groups. The result is a widening gap between the rhetoric of “flexibility” and the reality of insecurity, as platform governance prioritizes efficiency and profit over worker welfare.

3.2.4. Collective Representation: The Fragmentation of Worker Solidarity

Another significant consequence of unequal power relations is the erosion of collective representation and voice. Platforms maintain control through technological and spatial fragmentation—isolating workers who rarely meet physically and whose performance is individually ranked by algorithms (Duggan et al., 2020; van Doorn, 2017). This digital atomization makes traditional forms of union organizing difficult, as workers compete for visibility and ratings rather than cooperating for shared goals.

Furthermore, platform terms of service often prohibit collective bargaining or classify it as a breach of contract. As Stewart et al. (2021) note, this legal framing positions collective action outside the scope of “independent contracting,” effectively silencing workers’ ability to negotiate. Nevertheless, emerging studies show that new forms of digital solidarity are beginning to challenge these structures. Grassroots organizations such as the Deliveroo Riders’ Collective in the UK and informal online groups in Italy and Indonesia are mobilizing through digital channels to demand fairer working conditions (Cant, 2019; Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). These movements signal an evolving form of “platform unionism,” although they remain limited in scale and impact due to the absence of

institutional support. Overall, unequal power relations constrain collective representation, perpetuating what the ILO (2021) calls “voice deficits” in platform work—a structural silencing of worker participation in shaping the conditions of their own labor.

3.2.5. Integrative Analysis: Decent Work in the Age of Algorithmic Power

Synthesizing across these dimensions, the literature demonstrates that unequal power relations are the central barrier to achieving decent work in the platform economy. The combination of algorithmic control, data-driven surveillance, and exploitative governance structures consolidates platforms’ dominance while eroding workers’ rights and protections.

- a. Fair income is undermined by algorithmic opacity and one-sided pricing systems.
- b. Job stability is weakened by the absence of employment recognition and automated deactivation mechanisms.
- c. Social protection is eroded by legal misclassification and risk externalization.
- d. Collective representation is fragmented by digital isolation and contractual prohibitions.

As a result, the platform economy perpetuates a model of “controlled flexibility”, where workers bear the risks of entrepreneurialism without its rewards. These dynamics challenge the sustainability of decent work and highlight the urgent need for policy and institutional reforms that realign platform governance with labor standards grounded in fairness, dignity, and equality.

3.3. Toward Balanced Power Relations and Decent Work in Indonesia’s Platform Economy

The findings from the systematic literature review highlight that the transformation of labor relations in the digital platform economy demands a multifaceted regulatory and institutional response. The evidence suggests that no single approach can adequately rebalance power relations between platforms and gig workers. Instead, an integrated strategy—combining regulatory reform, institutional strengthening, and collective empowerment—is essential to ensure the realization of decent work in the Indonesian context.

3.3.1. Regulatory Frameworks and Legal Recognition

A consistent theme across the literature is the critical need to clarify the employment status of gig workers. In Indonesia, the current labor laws—specifically Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower and Law No. 11/2020 on Job Creation—remain ambiguous regarding the classification of digital platform workers. This legal gap allows platforms to categorize workers as independent contractors, thereby avoiding obligations related to wages, social protection, and collective bargaining rights (Anwar & Graham, 2022).

Comparative international studies offer valuable lessons. In Australia, Stewart, Stanford, and Hardy (2021) propose an intermediate employment category, such as “dependent contractor,” to grant essential labor protections without compromising flexibility. Similarly, the European Union Directive on Platform Work (2021) introduces a presumption of employment, which automatically classifies platform workers as employees unless the platform can prove genuine self-employment (De Stefano & Aloisi, 2021). These approaches directly challenge information asymmetry and help prevent the strategic misclassification of workers.

For Indonesia, adopting such a hybrid employment framework could strengthen protections for gig workers while accommodating the flexibility valued in platform work. The adaptation of these principles into Indonesia's Manpower Law or the creation of a specialized Digital Labor Regulation would align with the International Labor Organization's (ILO, 1999) Decent Work Agenda and Recommendation No. 198 on the employment relationship..

3.3.2. Institutional Mechanisms and Social Dialogue

In addition to legal reform, the literature underscores the importance of institutional mechanisms that enable structured dialogue between the government, platforms, and workers. The ILO Jakarta (2023) report emphasizes that tripartite structures—traditionally composed of government, employers, and workers—should evolve to reflect the realities of digital labor. This means incorporating digital platforms as new actors and gig workers' associations as legitimate representatives.

Indonesia's National Tripartite Council could be restructured to include digital platform stakeholders, allowing for the co-creation of policies concerning algorithmic transparency, pay fairness, and data governance. At the same time, initiatives such as the Fairwork Project (2022) demonstrate the potential of multi-stakeholder governance models. Through annual ratings of platforms on labor standards—such as fair pay, conditions, and representation—Fairwork creates reputational pressure that indirectly promotes fairer practices. Regionally, the Asia Foundation (2023) highlights the need for harmonized regulatory frameworks within ASEAN, focusing on issues like cross-border social protection portability and data transparency. This regional alignment can mitigate the “race to the bottom” in labor standards and ensure consistent protection for gig workers across Southeast Asia.

3.3.3. Collective Strategies and Worker Empowerment

Beyond formal regulation, collective and grassroots strategies play a critical role in rebalancing power relations. Studies by Tassinari and Maccarrone (2020) and Cant (2019) demonstrate that digital unionism and worker-led networks have emerged as significant tools for mobilization, advocacy, and mutual support in Europe and the UK. These movements use social media and digital platforms—the very technologies that enable control—to organize protests, negotiate with companies, and resist unfair deactivations.

In Indonesia, similar forms of mobilization are beginning to emerge, notably among ride-hailing drivers and delivery couriers, who have organized through informal associations and social media communities (Anwar & Graham, 2022). To strengthen these initiatives, Indonesia's Trade Union Law (Law No. 21/2000) can be leveraged to recognize gig worker organizations as legitimate representatives in industrial relations processes. Moreover, civil society and NGOs could facilitate the creation of cooperatives or digital labor collectives that empower workers to negotiate more equitably with platforms. These collective strategies not only restore worker voice but also enhance the social legitimacy of digital labor, aligning with ILO's Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (No. 87) and Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98).

3.3.4. Advancing Decent Work in the Indonesian Context

The synthesis of literature reveals that unequal power relations within the platform economy obstruct the realization of decent work, particularly in the areas of fair income, job stability, social protection, and collective representation. Algorithmic control and opaque pay systems limit workers' earning predictability and autonomy (Wood et al., 2019), while unilateral deactivation policies erode job stability.

In terms of social protection, most gig workers remain excluded from the Indonesian social security system (BPJS *Ketenagakerjaan* and BPJS *Kesehatan*). The ILO and OECD (2022) recommend developing social protection portability schemes with flexible contribution models to include self-employed and platform workers. Implementing such systems in Indonesia would redistribute economic risk away from workers and toward more equitable sharing among stakeholders. To operationalize these reforms, Indonesia could adopt a multi-level governance model consisting of:

- a. Legal frameworks that define rights and responsibilities in digital labor relations.
- b. Institutional coordination between the Ministry of Manpower, BPJS, and platform operators.
- c. Participatory mechanisms that ensure worker representation in decision-making.

This integrated approach would not only protect workers but also promote sustainable growth within Indonesia's expanding digital economy, ensuring that technological innovation aligns with the ILO Decent Work Agenda—embracing productivity, equity, security, and dignity.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Digital platforms exert power and control over gig workers primarily through algorithmic management, data-driven monitoring, and unilateral governance mechanisms. The algorithms that allocate tasks, evaluate performance, and determine compensation create a form of digital Taylorism, where workers are constantly monitored, rated, and ranked through opaque data systems. These algorithms not only structure the pace and nature of work but also function as tools of disciplinary control, where access to jobs or income depends on compliance with platform-determined metrics. As a result, decision-making authority is centralized in the platform, while workers remain atomized and dependent on the system's opaque logic. This asymmetrical information environment enables platforms to obscure wage calculations, manipulate incentives, and deactivate workers with little to no accountability—consolidating managerial power without traditional employment obligations.

The concentration of power within platforms has direct implications for the realization of decent work. The unequal power relations inherent in platform governance erode the four pillars of decent work—fair income, job stability, social protection, and collective representation. Gig workers often experience unpredictable income due to dynamic pricing systems and algorithmic task allocation that prioritize efficiency over equity. Job insecurity is compounded by unilateral deactivations and the absence of employment contracts, leaving workers in a state of perpetual precarity. Moreover, the exclusion of gig workers from formal social protection schemes, such as BPJS *Ketenagakerjaan* and BPJS *Kesehatan*, transfers the burden of economic risk entirely onto individuals. Opportunities for collective representation remain limited, as the platform model discourages worker organization and leverages digital fragmentation to weaken solidarity. Consequently, algorithmic control not only intensifies labor exploitation but also normalizes the erosion of labor rights within the digital economy.

To move toward balanced power relations and the advancement of decent work in Indonesia's platform economy, a combination of regulatory reforms, institutional mechanisms, and collective strategies is essential. Legally, Indonesia must clarify the employment status of gig workers through a hybrid or dependent contractor framework, ensuring access to minimum wages, social protection, and grievance mechanisms. Institutionally, the government should expand tripartite structures to include platform companies and gig worker associations, enabling dialogue on algorithmic transparency, data governance, and fair labor standards. Collectively, empowering gig workers through digital unionism, cooperatives, and multi-stakeholder alliances can enhance bargaining power and ensure that their voices shape policy and practice. Ultimately, embedding these reforms within the broader ILO Decent Work Agenda will enable Indonesia to build a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable platform economy—one where technological innovation serves not as a tool of domination, but as a means of shared prosperity and social justice.

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