
Designing An Equitable Partnership: Ensuring Social Protection for Gig Workers in The Online Transportation Sector

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Abstract

The development of the digital economy has transformed employment relations in Indonesia through the emergence of the gig economy. One of the most prominent forms is the online two-wheeled transportation sector, where the relationship between app companies and drivers is constructed as a partnership. This model promises flexibility and income opportunities, but fails to guarantee basic worker rights in the form of social protection. This study aims to answer two main questions: (1) why partnership patterns in the online two-wheeled transportation industry fail to guarantee social protection for drivers; and (2) how to design a just partnership model that can provide adequate social protection. Using a qualitative approach with a case study of PT Go-Jek Indonesia and supported by quantitative data from surveys in Jakarta and Bandar Lampung, this study found that the lack of regulation, unclear legal status, and asymmetric information between companies and driver partners are the main causes of weak social protection. Internal programs such as work accident insurance and access to microfinance do not meet formal worker protection standards. This study proposes a Just Partnership Model through cross-ministerial regulatory intervention, mandatory social security participation for gig workers, and the establishment of a tripartite partnership council. The state needs to be present to ensure that the digital economy is not only efficient, but also fair and protects workers.

Keywords: gig workers, partnerships, sharing economy, social protection, online transportation

1. Introduction

Today, the world is rapidly advancing, experiencing what could be called a digital revolution. While we don't yet know exactly what the future holds, one thing is clear: the world must respond to these changes in an integrated and comprehensive manner, involving all global political stakeholders, from the public and private sectors, to academia, and, of course, civil society.

The emergence of the digital economic system stems from the fact that the world has now entered a new era known as the disruption era. Disruption itself is an innovation, replacing old, physical technologies with technologies that produce something completely new, more efficient, and more useful (Khasali, 2017).

This innovation has impacted the development of digital economic innovation, leading to dynamic changes in the job market, work standards, wages, and skills requirements across all economic sectors. The current gap between unemployment rates and job availability has the potential to support labor growth in the informal sector.

The rapidly growing digital industry, offering partnerships with a sharing economy system, is taking over and contributing to job creation in the informal sector. Technological developments in the era of disruption have indeed given rise to an increased role for the workforce through platforms or start-ups that identify opportunities and meet community needs. One of the most popular start-ups is online transportation services. The rise in the use of online transportation, especially for two-wheeled vehicles, has sparked controversy among Indonesians. Despite this, many online transportation users have welcomed the platform, despite its shortcomings, including the lack of clear regulatory standards, particularly regarding social protection. Online two-wheeled transportation users currently struggle to seek legal protection, as there is no regulation declaring two-wheeled vehicles public transportation.

Social protection in this study is limited to legal certainty that is fair and equal treatment before the law, certainty of the position of partnerships in the Employment Law, rationalization of basic fares according to distance traveled and social security for two-wheeled online transportation drivers.

This research is based on the current conditions as a result of technological innovation, namely that (1) two-wheeled online transportation is increasingly popular and popular with the public, because apart from being cheap, it is also considered practical and flexible, (2) the partnership work pattern applied in two-wheeled online transportation in Indonesia, especially that applied by PT Go-Jek Indonesia, has its legality questioned, thus giving rise to problems in social protection.

Various previous studies and research clearly demonstrate a research gap between this study and the research conducted in this paper. Previous research, both domestic and international, has never explored the welfare impacts of partnership work patterns with a sharing economy system in the online digital transportation industry, particularly for two-wheeled vehicles.

In relation to these conditions, this research will focus on the partnership work pattern and social protection in the digital industry with a sharing economy system in online two-wheeled transportation with a Case Study at PT Go-Jek Indonesia. The author's reason for conducting this research at PT Go-Jek Indonesia is the consideration that PT Go-Jek Indonesia is a fairly popular online transportation application and is most widely used by the public in Indonesia. The presence of Go-jek presents a solution to two problems at once: unemployment and alternative transportation solutions. Certainly, this is a socio-economic movement that can provide optimism for Indonesia's development amidst the uncertain global economic situation.

The government needs to support the expansion of job opportunities, but at the same time, it must ensure that employment opportunities like Go-Jek's do not create vulnerabilities for workers and their families. Millions of workers currently rely on platforms for income.

The Fairwork Indonesia 2025 Report reaffirms a worrying and ongoing trend: working conditions remain far below international decent work standards. Fairwork is an international initiative that

assesses working conditions on digital platforms based on five principles of decent work: (1) Fair Pay, (2) Fair Conditions, (3) Fair Contracts, (4) Fair Management, and (5) Fair Representation.

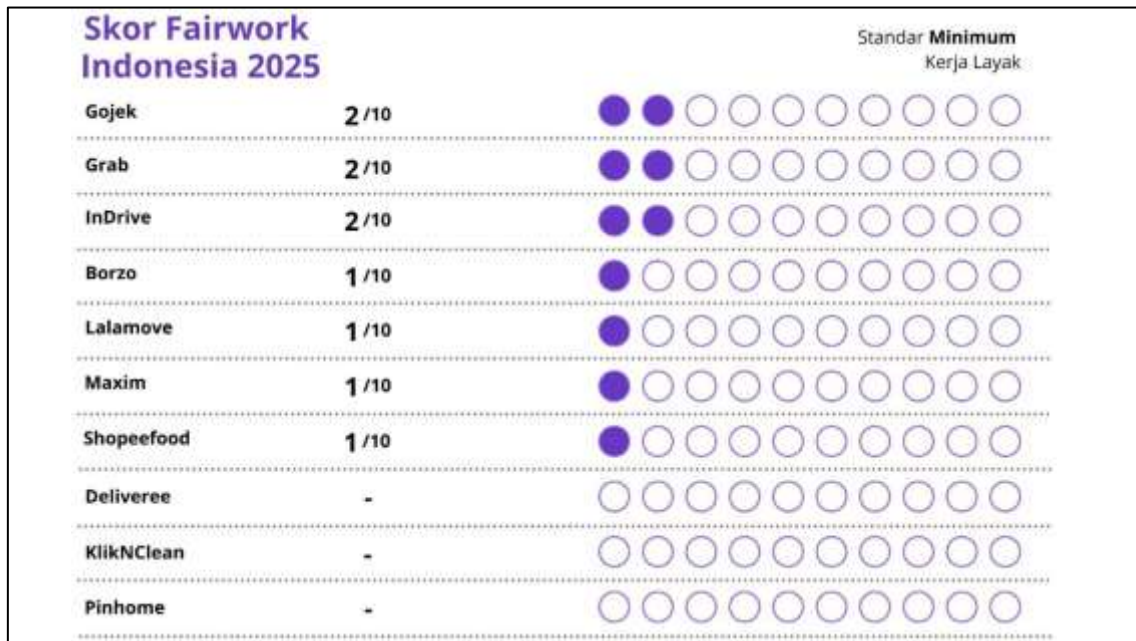


Figure 1. Indonesia's Fairwork Score 2025

Source: Indonesia Fairwork Ranking Report 2025

Of the ten platforms evaluated by Fairwork Indonesia in 2025, none scored higher than 2 out of 10. As workers' dependence on platform revenue increases, companies are gaining more power to unilaterally determine wages, work conditions, and sanctions.

Based on the above description, the research problem is formulated as follows: "The absence of appropriate social protection in the online two-wheeled transportation industry results in the risk being borne entirely by the driver partners." With a partnership work pattern, the partners should share profits and risks. Therefore, an alternative partnership work pattern model with a fair sharing economy system is needed to provide social protection."

2. Research methods

2.1. Research Approaches and Types

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method on PT Go-Jek Indonesia and falls into the category of policy research. Its primary objective is to generate policy recommendations to strengthen social protection for gig workers.

To enrich the findings, the study also used supporting quantitative data from questionnaires distributed to Go-Jek drivers in Jakarta and Bandar Lampung. The approach used was an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, in which the qualitative phase preceded quantitative data collection (Creswell, 2014).

2.2. Research Location and Informants

The research locations were chosen in DKI Jakarta and Bandar Lampung for reasons of different representation: Jakarta represents a large city with fast job market dynamics, while Bandar Lampung represents a medium-sized city with growing economic growth.

Informants consist of:

- Regulators (Ministry of Manpower, BPJS Employment, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Communication and Information, Ministry of SMEs);
- Business actor (PT Go-Jek Indonesia);
- Go-Jek (Go-Ride) drivers as the main partners;
- Employment observer and academic.

2.3. Data collection technique

Data is collected through:

- In-depth interviews and participant observation;
- *Focus Group Discussion*(FGD) with stakeholders;
- Documentation study and literature review;
- Closed questionnaires were administered to 102 drivers at two research locations.

2.4. Data analysis

The analysis was conducted inductively, with stages of reduction, categorization, and interpretation of findings. Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories.

3. Results and Discussion

The research findings indicate that the working pattern established between PT Go-Jek and its driver partners is a partnership, thus failing to meet the requirements for an employment relationship under Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower. Based on regulations issued by the Ministry of Transportation, two-wheeled vehicles are considered illegal transportation because they are considered unsafe and do not meet the minimum service standards for public transportation. Law Number 22 of 2009 concerning Traffic and Road Transportation does not regulate two-wheeled vehicles as public transportation.

According to the Ministry of Finance regulations Cooperatives and SMEs, in Government Regulation Number 44 of 1997 concerning Partnerships, the term partnership in the regulation cannot be applied to the online digital transportation industry because online transportation drivers It does not have a legal entity or location (address) and is not a cooperative. This means that the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs' regulations on such partnerships cannot be used as a reference in matters of partnership with online two-wheeled transportation.

Currently, there are no regulations governing partnership work patterns in the digital sharing economy industry. Partnership agreements are currently included in the Civil Code, as they are called Ordinary Employment Agreements, making them a private matter for the partnering parties. However, establishing a partnership must meet several requirements, including equality, the principle of mutual benefit, and the existence of a partnership. Transparency or trust relationships. In the online transportation industry, partnership work agreements exist because drivers need work to earn income to meet their living expenses, so they must agree to the entire contents of the employment agreement. The company has provided the benefits, even though the driver partners feel the benefits are unbalanced (asymmetrical). They lack a strong bargaining position. Labor supply and demand influence the labor market balance, which is currently left to market mechanisms.

Partnership work patterns that do not yet have a clear legal umbrella will have an impact on the welfare of stakeholders Online transportation drivers. Online transportation drivers and their families do not yet receive social security protection. The current provisions regarding social security for informal sector workers are Law Number 402004 concerning the Guarantee System The National Social Security and Law Number 24 of 2011 concerning the Social Security Administering Body, have apparently not been able to protect this new model of informal sector workers, thus creating uncertainty in the continuity of the business (vulnerability) which ultimately impacts the vulnerability of the continuity of income for driver partners.

To address the issues surrounding informal workers' partnership work patterns within the sharing economy, this study proposes a partnership work pattern policy model that includes a social security scheme initiative for informal sector workers as partners. This model also involves various parties, including two-wheeled online transportation drivers as a form of appreciation to partners and placing partners in a position of equality with company (equality on partnership regulation).

With this policy model, the legal framework for online transportation driver partnerships will be clearer, ensuring that partnership principles are adhered to in agreements, eliminating information asymmetry between companies and drivers as partners. Through this policy model, social welfare efforts for online transportation drivers can be guaranteed by the government and supported by various parties, especially the user community, thereby ultimately improving the social welfare of online transportation drivers.

3.1. Asymmetry in Partnership Patterns and Social Protection Gaps

The relationship between app companies and drivers is subordinate. Although legally referred to as "partners," the companies retain control over algorithms, fare determination, and performance evaluation. This creates a high level of economic dependency, without the protections afforded by formal employment. Drivers find themselves in a "disguised employment relationship"—working like employees, but without legal recognition as workers.

The partnership model between PT Go-Jek and its driver-partners reflects a situation where drivers have no bargaining power over tariffs or penalty policies. The lack of specific regulations for platform workers means there is no legal basis binding the company to provide social protection. In this

situation, driver-partners function like salaried workers without formal employment status, thus lacking social security protections as stipulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 or the Job Creation Law.

Research data shows that 70% of Go-Jek drivers rely solely on independent BPJS programs (BPJS Kesehatan and BPJS Ketenagakerjaan), while less than 10% receive work accident insurance from their company's internal program. Most drivers bear the full cost of medical treatment and lost income when they experience an accident. Voluntary corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs cannot replace formal social security as stipulated in Law Number 24 of 2011 concerning BPJS.

The lack of specific regulations for platform workers means there is no legal basis binding companies to provide social protection. The government also lacks an integrated cross-sectoral mechanism between the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, and the Social Security Agency (BPJS). Issues related to the limited division of authority among ministries/agencies that contribute to this lack of regulation include:

- The Ministry of Manpower only regulates formal employment relationships;
- The Ministry of Transportation only regulates transportation operations;
- BPJS Ketenagakerjaan opens voluntary participation for independent workers or non-wage earners, but there is no cross-sector policy integration to systematically protect gig workers.

3.2. Proposed Alternative Model for Partnership Work Pattern

If we study the Partnership Work Agreement applied by online two-wheeled transportation, especially at PT Go-Jek Indonesia, it is actually an agreement between 3 parties, namely PT Aplikasi Anak Bangsa (PT AKAB), PT Go-Jek Indonesia (PT GI) and Driver Partners. PT Aplikasi Anak Bangsa (PT AKAB) is the party that creates, owns and manages the Go-Jek Application which is used by registered consumers to obtain pick-up and/or delivery services for goods and/or people, delivery services for goods or other services with two-wheeled or four-wheeled motorized vehicles or other services. PT Go-Jek Indonesia is a company that manages cooperation with Partners and provides operational management services for Partners in connection with the use of the Go-Jek Application. Partners are parties that carry out pick-up and/or delivery of goods and/or people, delivery of goods that have previously been ordered by consumers, or other services through the Go-Jek application using two-wheeled motorized vehicles owned by the Partners themselves.

As an illustration, the following is a picture of the Partnership Work Pattern with the Sharing Economy System that is occurring in the current digital era.

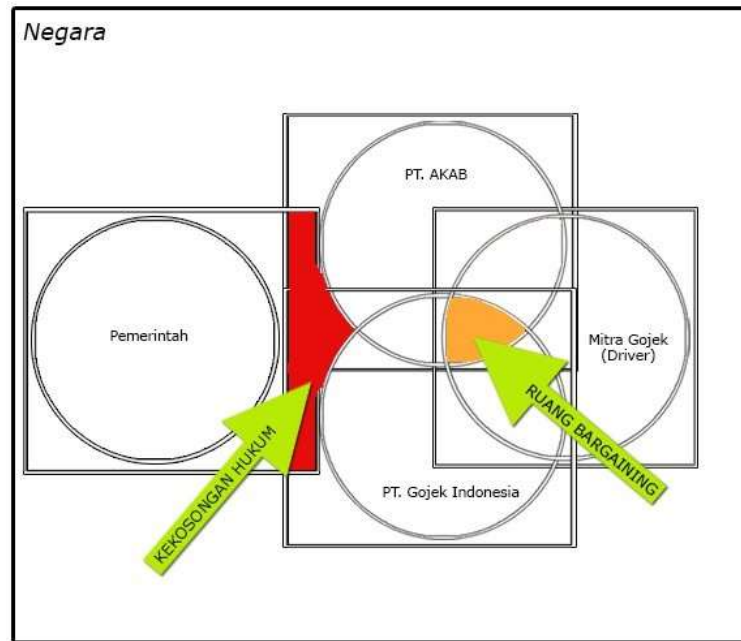


Figure 2. Partnership Work Pattern with a Sharing Economy System In the Digital Age

Source: Researcher's analysis, 2017

Image Caption 2:

- 1) Figure 5.1. is a Partnership Work Pattern with a sharing economy system that is currently occurring in Indonesia, especially in the online digital transportation industry.
- 2) In this condition, the cooperation agreement involves 3 stakeholders, each of whom is motivated by interests, in this case depicted in a rectangular box. These three stakeholders are (1) Individuals as Go-Jek drivers called Partners, (2) PT Go-Jek Indonesia (PT GI), a company that manages cooperation with Partners and provides operational management services for Partners in connection with the use of the Go-Jek Application, (3) PT Aplikasi Karya Anak Bangsa (PT AKAB) is the party that creates, owns and manages the Go-Jek Application which is used by registered consumers to obtain services.
- 3) These three stakeholders interact with each other to make a partnership work agreement before carrying out a work activity without going through a bargaining process.
- 4) This partnership agreement exists within a country, where the government has the authority to regulate the work through the relevant ministry (government). In this situation, the government's interests intersect with the interests of stakeholders, because the activities arising from the agreement are related to the public interest, namely carrying out work activities on highways. All activities concerning the public interest in a country should be regulated by the government through the relevant ministry. The current reality is that the government cannot touch all three stakeholders because there is no regulation governing partnership agreements in the digital industry with a sharing economy system. There is an empty space between the government and stakeholders called a legal vacuum (lack of regulation), so this will become a problem in the regulation if a conflict or problem arises in

the partnership agreement that has been agreed upon because there is no reference to the process of resolving it.

The real condition related to the shift in work patterns that occurs due to technological innovation, is a condition where currently the government is not yet present in the process of partnership work agreements with a sharing economy system, so an ideal partnership work agreement pattern is needed in the midst of technological innovation, where the state can be present if a conflict occurs.

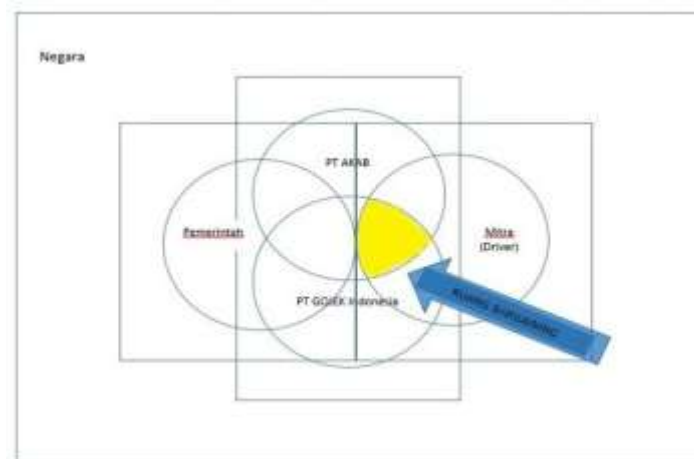


Figure 3. Partnership Work Pattern with a Sharing Economy System The Ideal (Present State)

Source: Researcher Processing (2017)

Caption for Figure 3:

- 1) Figure 3. is a Partnership Work Pattern with a sharing system *economy* The ideal means that the state is present in this agreement through regulations governing the Partnership Work Agreement between the 3 stakeholders.
- 2) The existence of these regulations can serve as a reference in the event of a conflict. The presence of the state is mandatory and essential in any activity that impacts the public interest within a country. And online transportation activities clearly involve and impact the general public because they operate on the roads.

Based on research and analysis of the efficiency–equity trade-off theory and economic democracy, a Fair Partnership Model is proposed, positioning the state as an active actor in bridging the interests of platforms and driver-partners. This model consists of three main levels: operational, institutional, and policy.

At the operational level, partnerships are established through tripartite agreements between app companies, operational managers, driver partners, and the government. A social security contribution scheme of 1% of a driver's monthly income for the JKK and JKM programs, which is deposited into the BPJS Ketenagakerjaan (Social Security Agency). At the institutional level, relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, and the BPJS, work together in the Online Transportation Partnership Council to establish welfare and safety standards. At the policy level, the government establishes tariff standards, minimum social protection, and algorithmic

transparency mechanisms as a basis for fairness in the digital ecosystem, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. Digital industry partnership work pattern policy model with the Sharing Economy System at the Policy level

	Ministry of Communication and Information	Ministry of Transportation	Ministry of Manpower	Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs
Institutional Coordination Mechanism	Output standardization For example: Go Jek application	Output standardization Example: Performance index	Worker standardization	Worker Welfare Standardization
Coordination mechanism of Complementary Organizations	Standardization of IT technology used	Standardization of service output and security	Standardization of work processes	Standardization of Norms
Exploiting the limits of fluidity	Regulation of community-based technology utilization and user security	A mix of industry membership and self-employed workers	Mix of workers and self- employed	A combination of community and industry membership

Source: Researcher Processing (2018)

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that the current partnership model in the online two-wheeled transportation sector is not equitable and fails to guarantee social protection for drivers. The proposed equitable partnership model positions the state as the regulator and balancer of the relationship between companies and drivers, with a mandatory social security system and transparency mechanisms that favor workers.

Based on the conclusions of the research findings, the proposed equitable partnership model includes:

- State intervention through cross-ministerial policies to regulate platform-based working relationships;
- BPJS membership obligation for all drivers, with joint financing;
- Openness of the platform's pricing system and algorithms;
- Driver involvement in monitoring and decision-making mechanisms.

Thank-you note

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