
A literature Study: The Positive Impact of The Gig Economy on Unemployment in The Indonesian Labor Force

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Abstract

In February 2025, Indonesia recorded a total of 3.67 million workers, reflecting a continuous increase in the labor force and posing significant challenges to the national labor market. In this context, the gig economy has emerged as a transformational model that offers alternative income sources through platform-based digital work. This type of employment includes online transportation services, delivery services, and project-based freelance work. By leveraging digital technology, the gig economy enables interactions between service providers and consumers to occur more quickly, efficiently, and flexibly. This study is a literature review that aims to analyze the positive impact of the gig economy on unemployment in Indonesia. The findings indicate that the gig economy has the potential to absorb millions of workers within a relatively short period, thereby helping to reduce unemployment levels. Moreover, the gig economy creates inclusive employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, including individuals with low education levels and workers affected by layoffs. Its flexibility also allows workers to manage their schedules, choose suitable types of work, and earn income to meet their economic needs. In addition to its role in labor absorption, the gig economy contributes to national economic growth through the increase of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), expansion of access to productive activities, and strengthening of household purchasing power. Although the gig economy provides tangible benefits in reducing unemployment, its long-term sustainability depends on adaptive labor policies that address issues related to worker protection, social security, and job security. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of strengthening the role of the gig economy not only as a short-term solution to unemployment but also as a strategic instrument in developing an inclusive and sustainable labor market in Indonesia.

Keywords: gig economy, unemployment, platform-based digital work, labor, Indonesia.

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology and the increasing penetration of the internet have fundamentally transformed the way people work and interact with the labor market. This digital transformation marks the emergence of the gig economy, an economic system based on short-term, flexible, and project-based work that utilizes digital platforms as intermediaries between service providers and clients (Kässi & Lehtonvirta, 2018). In this system, workers are no longer bound by

long-term employment contracts as in the conventional labor model but instead work independently with a high degree of flexibility in terms of time and place (De Stefano, 2016).

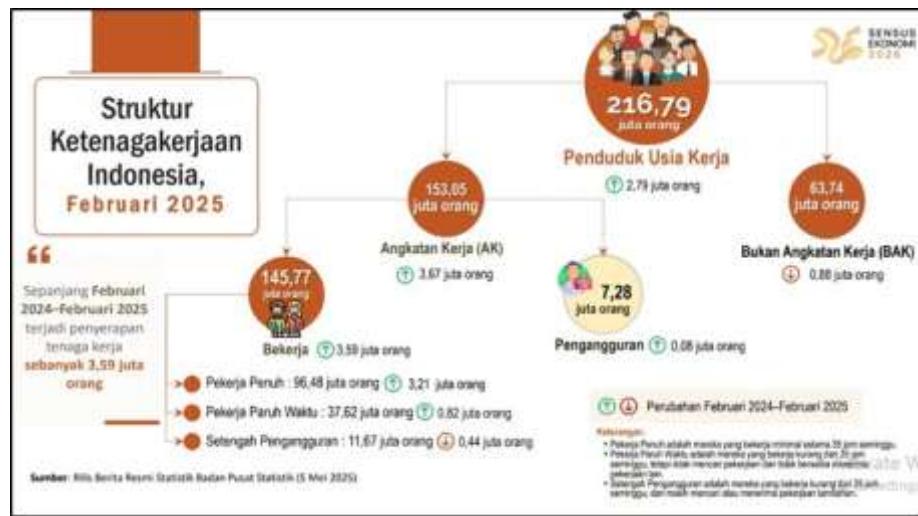


Figure 1. Structure of Employment in Indonesia, February 2025

Source: Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik), 2025

In Indonesia, the gig economy phenomenon has grown rapidly in line with technological advancements and the increasing use of digital platforms. Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2025) indicate that the number of Indonesia's labor force in May 2025 reached 153.05 million people, an increase from the previous year's figure of 152.11 million. This increase demonstrates the vast potential of a productive workforce but also presents challenges in providing sufficient employment opportunities amid the limited capacity of the formal sector. In this context, the gig economy emerges as an alternative employment model capable of absorbing workers in the informal and semi-formal sectors through the utilization of digital technology and the expansion of internet access (Pratomo et al., 2024).

In line with the data above, the demographics of the gig economy, as reported in a study by Kamarudin and Arif (2024), indicate that the gig economy is particularly attractive to young individuals aged 25–35 years with at least a bachelor's degree. This reflects a global trend in which younger generations are more drawn to the flexibility offered by the gig economy. Moreover, the gig economy tends to attract individuals with higher education levels who possess digital skills and demonstrate adaptability to technology, as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Demographic Factors of the Gig Economy

Demographic Profile	Key Findings
Age	Predominantly aged 25–35 years, indicating that younger generations are more attracted to the flexibility offered by the gig economy.
Education	All respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree, indicating that the gig economy attracts highly educated individuals with digital skills and adaptability to technology.

Source: Kamarudin and Arif (2024)

The types of work within the gig economy in Indonesia are highly diverse. Some of the most common forms include online transportation services and delivery of food and goods (Putri, Prasetyo, & Rahma, 2023). In addition, the gig economy also encompasses digital and online freelance work such as graphic design and programming; jobs in the trade and e-commerce sectors such as Shopee and Tokopedia; domestic and personal care services such as house cleaning and repair services; digital content creation and influencer activities such as YouTubers and TikTokers; jobs in education and consulting such as Ruang Guru and business consultancy; as well as technical and specialized skills work such as photography and videography. This work model not only creates new opportunities for urban communities but also benefits those who previously had limited access to formal employment, including workers in regions with fewer job opportunities (Devi, Fatmawati, & Jariah, 2025). The gig economy contributes to reducing unemployment rates in Indonesia by absorbing vulnerable worker groups such as those affected by layoffs, recent graduates, and workers with lower levels of education (Tobing, 2024). According to the World Bank (2023), platform-based digital work promotes economic inclusivity by providing access to productive activities for groups that were previously marginalized by the formal employment system. The flexibility to choose one's working hours and type of job allows workers to adapt to their socio-economic conditions while simultaneously enhancing individual competitiveness in the digital era (ILO, 2022).

Several studies on the gig economy indicate that it plays a strategic role in reducing unemployment while simultaneously strengthening a national labor structure that is more adaptive to technological change. However, on the other hand, this model also presents new challenges in terms of social protection, industrial relations, and legal certainty for non-formal workers (Wibowo, 2025). Therefore, examining the positive impact of the gig economy on unemployment within Indonesia's labor force is essential to understanding the extent to which this phenomenon can serve as a strategic instrument in developing an inclusive and sustainable employment system. The following section presents the findings of relevant literature from various sources:

Table 2. Selected Findings from Relevant Literature Based on Previous Research Sources

Title	Author	Suggestions/Solutions
The Gig Economy Dilemma: Exploring Alternatives to Create Decent Work for Online Motorcycle Taxi Drivers in Indonesia	Henriko Tobing (2024)	The gig economy in Indonesia has successfully created employment opportunities; however, it also presents serious issues related to job insecurity, unstable income, and the lack of social protection for online motorcycle taxi (<i>ojol</i>) drivers.
Protection of Gig Economy Workers' Rights from the Perspective of Labor Law	I Gde Sandy Satria (2025)	Specific regulations that classify gig workers as formal legal subjects have resulted in the loss of their fundamental rights, such as access to social security, minimum wage entitlements, and

Title	Author	Suggestions/Solutions
The Impact of the Gig Economy on Income Stability and Workers' Welfare	Ananda Risma Ramadani ¹ , Anna Puspa Sari ² , Elita Awanda Usardi ³ , Fitri Novita Setiani ⁴ , Ahmad Gunawan ⁵ (2024)	protection against unilateral termination of employment. The gig economy offers significant flexibility for freelance workers; however, it also poses major challenges in terms of income stability.
Literature Review: Analysis of the Effects of Diverse Characteristics of Gig Economy Workers on the National Economy	Sevilla Ruhul Izza ¹ , Kharisma Dewantika Saharani ² , Della Ardiani ³ , Maria Lasma Franssisca ⁴ (2024)	There are significant impacts ranging from labor absorption and the expansion of employment sectors effectively carried out by workers as key resources in the economy, to the benefits generated that contribute to the growth of the national economy.
The Gig Economy: Opportunities and Challenges in the Era of Flexible Work	Ode Kamarudin ¹ , Arif ²	Most gig workers experience the benefits of increased income and the ability to adjust their working hours according to personal needs. However, significant challenges related to income instability and the lack of social protection may negatively affect workers' long term well being.

Based on the findings of the studies above, most research focuses on two main aspects of the gig economy in Indonesia: macroeconomic impacts, such as labor absorption and contribution to GDP, and classical labor issues, including social protection, income, and the legal status of gig workers. The distinct feature of this study lies in:

- 1) The mechanism or process through which the gig economy reduces unemployment, viewed from the perspective:
 - a. How the concept of the gig economy?
 - b. Whether the gig economy has a positive impact on unemployment within Indonesia's labor force?
 - c. Whether the opportunities provided by the gig economy conflict with the contemporary economy?
 - d. How informal labor is absorbed through digitalized platforms?
 - e. How the gig economy expands beyond urban areas (rural inclusion)?
- 2) Long-term impacts from a sustainability perspective. This perspective not only considers the current reduction in unemployment but also examines the long-term effects on job stability and

labor productivity, specifically evaluating whether the gig economy contributes to long-term employment readiness?

Therefore, this topic represents an interesting and worthwhile area for research, given the limited number of studies addressing it. As such, it can provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms or processes through which the gig economy positively impacts unemployment within Indonesia's labor force, as well as the long-term effects of the gig economy.

2. Research method

This study employs a literature review approach aimed at analyzing and synthesizing previous research findings on the gig economy. This approach was chosen because it provides a comprehensive overview of existing patterns, trends, and research gaps, while also strengthening both the theoretical and empirical understanding of the positive impacts of the gig economy on unemployment within Indonesia's labor force and its long-term implications. The data collection process relies on secondary literature, including scholarly journals and official institutional reports related to the main theme—the positive impact of the gig economy on unemployment in Indonesia's labor force. The collected literature was then analyzed, compared, and selected based on its relevance and significance to the context of Indonesia's labor market. The research framework is presented as follows.

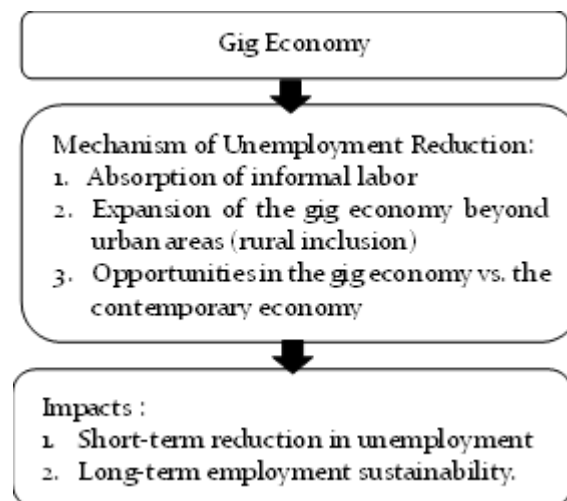


Figure 2. Research Framework

In Figure 2, the research framework illustrates the study's objective, which is to examine the relationship between the gig economy as a key factor in reducing unemployment. Through mechanisms such as the absorption of informal labor, rural inclusion, and adaptation to the contemporary economy, the gig economy contributes to a short-term reduction in unemployment. However, this study also explores the long-term impacts, specifically the extent to which the gig economy can support employment sustainability in the future.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Concept of the Gig Economy

The gig economy is an economic system characterized by an increase in project-based (gig) work that is temporary, flexible, and often facilitated by digital platforms (Friedman, 2014). In this model, workers are not bound by long-term contracts with employers but instead work independently for various customers or platforms, such as ride-hailing services (Gojek, Grab), freelancing platforms (Upwork, Fiverr), and delivery services. According to the flexible labor market theory (Atkinson, 1984), the emergence of the gig economy is a response to changes in the global economic structure, advancements in digital technology, and market demand for adaptive labor and cost-efficient workforce. Gig work has recently become a trend in the labor market because it offers a different work mechanism, one of which is job flexibility. In line with this, Wood et al. (2018) describe the gig economy as a term commonly used to depict a labor market dominated by freelance or temporary work.

Individuals working in the gig economy only perform tasks when there is demand, meaning their income depends on the availability of work (Bates et al., 2019). Gig workers are spread across various fields, such as ride-hailing services, food or goods delivery, programming, content creation, and other roles within app-based service companies. In academic debates, gig work practices have divided scholars into two main perspectives: proponents and critics. Generally, the debate focuses on the effects of flexibility and the mechanisms of work regulation (Collins, 2020; Wood et al., 2019). On one hand, platform-based work is considered to offer new work mechanisms, promoting both flexibility and income. Consequently, the growing interest in the gig economy indicates that this flexible work system has become an attractive option amid changes in the structure of Indonesia's labor market.

3.2. Labor Force in Indonesia vs. Unemployment in Indonesia

According to labor economics theory, the labor force includes all working-age individuals who are either actively employed or seeking employment (Todaro & Smith, 2020). The labor force serves as a key indicator for measuring a country's productive capacity. The larger the labor force, the greater its potential contribution to economic development, provided that adequate employment opportunities are available.

Meanwhile, unemployment is defined as a condition in which a portion of the labor force is not absorbed by the labor market due to limited job opportunities, skill mismatches, or structural changes in the economy (Mankiw, 2021). In the context of Indonesia, unemployment challenges are both structural and frictional, meaning that most workers are unemployed not solely due to a lack of jobs but because of a mismatch between their skills and the demands of the labor market (ILO, 2023).



Figure 3. General Employment Profile in Indonesia, February 2024

Source : Satudata Kemnaker | Portal Data Ketenagakerjaan RI

Based on Figure 3, which depicts the general employment profile in Indonesia in February 2024, the labor force amounted to 149.38 million people (69.80%). Meanwhile, data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) indicate that the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) in February 2025 was recorded at 7.28 million people, or 4.76%. Those not included in the TPT calculation consist of full-time students, homemakers not seeking employment, retirees, and non-productive-age individuals, such as those under 15 years old or elderly individuals who are neither working nor seeking work. The condition of the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) is presented as follows :



Figure 4. Employment Conditions in Indonesia, February 2025

Source: Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik)

Technological changes and the emergence of the digital economy have added complexity to unemployment issues. The shift toward digitalization, automation, and platform-based work has created new job opportunities while simultaneously eliminating certain types of conventional employment. In this context, the gig economy has emerged as an alternative solution, offering flexibility and employment opportunities for labor force segments not yet absorbed by the formal sector (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018; Pratomo et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of a growing labor force alongside a persistently large informal sector indicates that Indonesia faces a job–growth paradox: economic growth has not yet proportionally created sufficient decent employment (World Bank, 2023). In this context, the gig economy functions as a shock absorber, temporarily absorbing surplus labor. Nevertheless, according to De Ruyter and Rachmawati (2020), the gig economy model still has fundamental weaknesses in terms of social protection and income security. Many digital workers in Indonesia, such as online motorcycle taxi drivers, rely on gig work as their primary source of income rather than as a supplementary job. This reality demonstrates that the gig economy has served as an alternative employment option, particularly when the formal sector has not been able to optimally absorb new labor.

However, without being accompanied by adaptive labor policies, the gig economy risks further expanding job informality. The government needs to ensure that platform workers receive social security, minimum income guarantees, and adequate legal protection so that this flexible work model continues to contribute positively to reducing unemployment and improving worker welfare (ILO, 2023; Wibowo, 2025). Therefore, it can be concluded that the increase in Indonesia’s labor force presents significant opportunities for national economic development on one hand, but on the other hand, it requires policies capable of balancing job creation, improving workforce quality, and expanding access to inclusive and sustainable digital employment.

3.3. Opportunities of the Gig Economy vs. the Contemporary Economy

Based on the literature review, the gig economy is generally defined as an economic system based on short-term or project-based work, in which workers do not have formal employment ties with employers but operate through digital platforms that serve as intermediaries (De Ruyter & Rachmawati, 2020; Heeks, 2017). This model allows workers to offer services flexibly according to market demand and individual capabilities.

In contrast, the contemporary economy, or modern conventional economy, is still based on the principle of formal employment relationships between workers and employers. This system emphasizes job stability, security, as well as social protection and fixed wages (Montgomery & Baglioni, 2021). In the contemporary economy, work typically occurs within hierarchical organizational structures with clearly defined roles and long-term contracts.

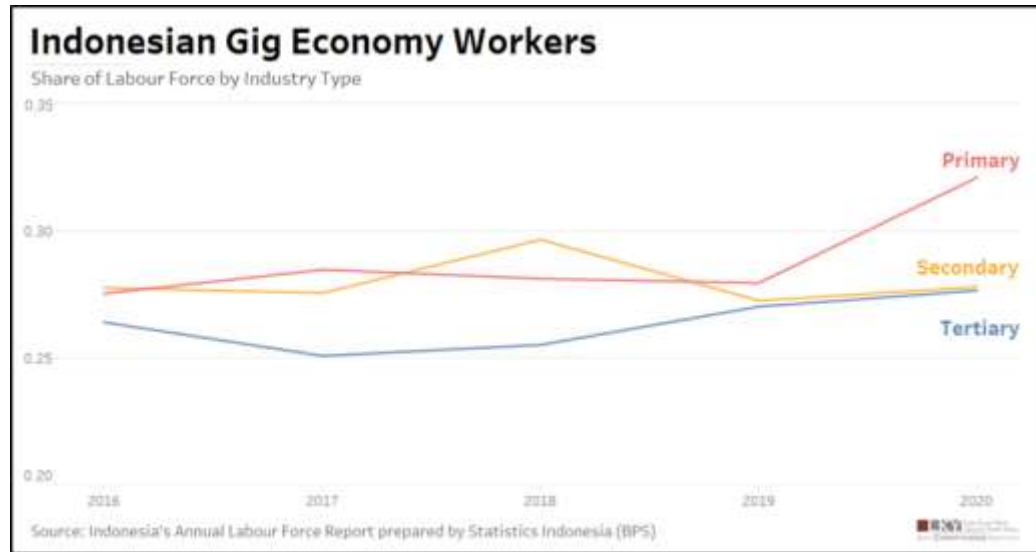


Figure 5. Indonesian Gig economy Workers

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik 2020

Based on the figure above, the gig economy has grown rapidly alongside the development of information and communication technology and the increasing internet penetration in Indonesia (BPS, 2025; Google, Temasek, & Bain, 2023). Meanwhile, the contemporary economy has developed more slowly due to labor regulations and a more rigid bureaucratic structure. Conceptually, the main difference between the gig economy and the contemporary economy lies in :

- 1) The absorption of digitalized informal labor is a distinctive feature of the gig economy. Digitalization enables faster and more efficient matching between service providers and consumers, thereby creating employment opportunities for individuals who previously had limited access to formal jobs. Workers with low education levels or limited skills can also enter the labor market through short platform-based training. Research by Putri, Prasetyo, and Rahma (2023) further demonstrates that platform-based work helps vulnerable groups, such as those affected by layoffs, to re-engage in the labor market through digital activities.
- 2) Expansion of employment access beyond urban areas (rural inclusion). With the support of digital technology, people in rural areas can now participate in economic activities without having to move to major cities. This also supports the equitable distribution of job opportunities and the strengthening of local economies.

IDinsight (2023) reports that approximately 4.5 million Indonesian workers are active as app-based transportation and delivery drivers. The presence of these platforms provides quick access to employment without the need for complex formal recruitment processes, enabling the absorption of a large workforce in a relatively short period. Some positive impacts of the gig economy are as follows:

- 1) Rapid absorption of informal labor: Individuals who lose formal employment can quickly transition to becoming online drivers or couriers to maintain their income. This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the digital sector served as a lifeline for household economies (ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook, 2021).

- 2) Increased participation of the young labor force: Young generations tend to be more adaptive to technology and attracted to the flexibility offered by platform-based work, enabling them to enter the digital labor market more quickly.
- 3) Source of income: Gig economy workers can utilize these opportunities to earn income, thereby reducing pressure on unemployment.

However, in reality, although the gig economy has a positive impact on unemployment, it has several limitations, including the lack of formal labor protections such as social security and employment insurance, fluctuating income dependent on market demand and platform algorithm policies, and limited job security due to the temporary nature of contracts (Pratomo, 2024). Therefore, while the gig economy can reduce unemployment, the quality of work does not fully meet the “decent work” criteria as required by the ILO. Its contribution is largely quantitative in lowering unemployment but does not qualitatively enhance job quality. Thus, the gig economy mechanism focuses not only on creating new employment opportunities but also on transforming work structures toward a system that is more inclusive, flexible, and adaptive to technological developments. This implication reinforces the view that the gig economy has strategic potential in supporting sustainable employment development in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the contemporary economy remains essential in ensuring job stability and sustainability. Therefore, both should be seen not as opposing systems but as complementary components of the economy that collectively create an inclusive and equitable labor ecosystem (Novianto et al., 2023).

3.4. Absorption of Digitalized Informal Labor

The growth of the gig economy has progressed alongside the expansion of Indonesia’s digital economy sector. According to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kementerian Kominfo, 2023), Indonesia’s digital economy was valued at approximately US\$82 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach US\$124 billion by 2025, making it the largest in Southeast Asia. This sector contributes directly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through digital consumption, logistics, online services, and the creation of new employment opportunities. The World Bank (2021) also notes that a 1% increase in labor participation in the digital sector can raise GDP by up to 0.25% through multiplier effects in transportation, trade, and financial services.

The gig economy not only generates direct income for workers but also stimulates supporting sectors, such as the automotive and fuel industries, telecommunications, and digital financial services. Thus, the gig economy acts as a driver for lower- and middle-income economic activity while accelerating national digital transformation. The integration between labor absorption and economic growth can be explained through three main mechanisms: mass labor absorption, which reduces unemployment and increases household purchasing power; increased purchasing power, which stimulates domestic consumption and consequently raises aggregate demand; and the expansion of national economic output, which contributes to higher real GDP.

Although it provides tangible contributions, the challenges to the gig economy’s sustainable impact on GDP include the lack of formal regulations and legal protections for workers, which can limit long-term productivity; the urban-rural digital divide, which prevents the equitable distribution

of digital economic potential; and limitations in statistical measurement, as data often only cover the informal sector and are not fully captured in official GDP calculations (ILO, 2022). Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the gig economy in Indonesia has provided a dual contribution to the national economy: increasing labor absorption, particularly among young and informal workers, and positively influencing economic growth and national GDP through multiplier effects across various sectors.

3.5. Expansion of the Gig Economy Beyond Urban Areas (Rural Inclusion)

The growth of the gig economy in Indonesia tends to be concentrated in urban areas such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, and Medan. This is aligned with the availability of digital infrastructure, internet penetration, and a higher density of online platform users in major cities. However, as access to digital technology expands, the gig economy is beginning to spread to rural areas. The government and technology companies are making efforts to expand digital inclusion so that non-urban populations can participate in the platform-based work ecosystem. According to Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company (2023), approximately 52% of new digital economy users in Indonesia come from non-metropolitan areas, indicating an expansion of the digital economy into rural regions.

Thus, the expansion of the gig economy beyond urban areas largely depends on two main factors: the availability of digital infrastructure (networks and internet) and the enhancement of digital literacy among rural communities regarding the use of digital platforms to increase income diversification. Despite its significant potential, implementing the gig economy in rural areas faces several challenges, including limited digital infrastructure, especially in underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost regions (3T); low digital and financial literacy, which restricts the community's ability to access platforms; lack of digital capital to purchase devices, data packages, or transportation; and gaps in regulations and social protection, as most gig workers in rural areas still operate informally. Therefore, it can be concluded that the expansion of the gig economy into rural areas represents a strategic opportunity for Indonesia to promote equitable digital economic development, reduce the urban-rural economic gap, and strengthen household economic resilience in rural communities. The success of this expansion heavily relies on inclusive digital policies, equitable infrastructure development, and the empowerment of rural communities to compete in the global digital economy.

3.6. Long Term Impact on Job Stability and Labor Productivity

The gig economy refers to an independent work system based on short-term contracts, yet it is becoming increasingly popular. The appeal of the gig economy lies in income generation through multiple platform-based jobs, access to broader markets, and work flexibility. Despite these opportunities, the gig economy faces several challenges. De Stefano (2016) indicates that gig workers experience different welfare outcomes compared to contemporary economy workers, particularly regarding social security, income stability, and legal protection, which are typically provided in the formal sector (Friedman, 2014). Highly flexible work patterns can reduce worker loyalty and attachment to organizations, potentially hindering the development of long-term productive capacity. Workers who frequently switch between platforms without formal career development also face the risk of skills stagnation (Wood et al., 2019). Without supportive policies for training, digital

certification, and adaptive labor protections, this situation may exacerbate productivity gaps across labor segments (Collins, 2020).

Kamarudin and Arif (2024) explain that challenges in the gig economy include income uncertainty, lack of social protection, limited access to training and skills development, regulatory and policy issues, as well as social stigma perceiving gig work as unable to provide security and welfare. Therefore, government policies should focus on strengthening training systems, platform-based social protection, and regulatory support for digital workers to ensure that this transformation contributes to sustainable economic development.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

Based on the results of the review and discussion, it can be concluded that the gig economy has emerged as a new economic phenomenon playing a significant role in Indonesia's labor market dynamics. The development of digital technology, increased internet penetration, and changes in the structure of the global labor market have driven the emergence of a flexible work system capable of absorbing a large workforce, particularly among young people and the informal sector. The gig economy has proven to provide tangible opportunities for reducing unemployment by creating accessible platform-based work alternatives without the need for complex formal recruitment processes.

However, behind these opportunities, the gig economy still faces several fundamental challenges. Income uncertainty, the absence of social security and formal labor protections, and the lack of clearly defined employment relationships between workers and platforms are major issues that distinguish the gig economy from the more stable and legally bound contemporary economy. Therefore, adaptive and responsive labor policies are required to ensure that digital work flexibility can coexist with adequate social protection.

Furthermore, the expansion of the gig economy into rural areas (rural inclusion) presents a strategic opportunity for Indonesia to promote equitable digital economic development and reduce regional disparities. The success of this transformation heavily depends on the availability of digital infrastructure, the enhancement of digital literacy among communities, and supportive inclusive policies. In the long term, the gig economy is expected not only to serve as a temporary labor absorber but also to become part of a sustainable employment development strategy that balances flexibility, protection, and national labor productivity.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the analysis and conclusions of this study, several strategic recommendations can be considered by the government, digital platforms, and other stakeholders to optimize the role of the gig economy in employment development in Indonesia:

1) Strengthening Regulations for Gig Economy Workers

The government needs to formulate regulations that explicitly govern the employment relationship between digital platforms and gig workers. These regulations should include basic social protection, occupational safety standards, and minimum income guarantees proportional to workload and working hours.

2) Enhancing Access to Digital Training and Certification

To enhance the productivity and competitiveness of gig workers, policies are needed to expand access to technology-based training, such as digital upskilling programs and micro-certification. These measures can help prevent skills stagnation and ensure the long-term sustainability of worker productivity.

3) Data Integration and Cross-Sector Collaboration

A system for integrating digital labor data involving the Ministry of Manpower, digital platforms, and educational and training institutions is needed. This cross-sector collaboration is essential for monitoring the dynamics of the digital labor market and formulating more evidence based policies.

4) Expansion of Adaptive Social Protection Programs

Social security schemes need to be expanded to cover non-formal and platform-based workers. Programs such as BPJS Ketenagakerjaan could develop special membership categories for gig workers with flexible contribution mechanisms based on income.

5) Further Research on the Socioeconomic Impact of the Gig Economy

Future research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of the gig economy on family welfare, social mobility, and gender equality. This approach is important for understanding the social dimensions of digital economic transformation in Indonesia.

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