

Factors Affecting the Quality of Work Life Among Gig Workers: A Bibliometric Analysis and Literature Review

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Abstract

This study aims to identify, review, and analyze scientific publication trends on the quality of work life (QWL) among gig workers. It examines how digital labor platforms and employment structures influence workers' well-being, autonomy, and inclusion within the evolving digital economy. Specifically, this research explores how internal–subjective factors, such as flexibility, self-efficacy, resilience, and technological competence, interact with external–structural factors, including algorithmic management, income insecurity, and limited social protection. The study adopts a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis using the VOSviewer software to map relevant publications indexed in Scopus between 2015 and 2025. Through co-occurrence analysis and full-text review of twelve eligible peer-reviewed articles, this study identifies dominant research themes, conceptual linkages, and knowledge gaps in the existing literature on gig workers' QWL. The results show that while gig work offers autonomy, flexibility, and income opportunities, it simultaneously generates new forms of precarity due to weak institutional safeguards, opaque algorithmic governance, and the absence of collective representation. The findings suggest the importance of formulating inclusive digital labor policies that ensure fair compensation, algorithmic transparency, and access to social protection. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and platform companies to strengthen institutional arrangements and promote a more equitable and sustainable digital labor ecosystem in Indonesia. It also contributes to the global discourse on decent digital work by emphasizing the need to balance technological innovation with workers' well-being and social justice.

Keywords: Gig economy, quality of work life (QWL), digital labor, indonesia, systematic literature review

1. Introduction

The fourth industrial revolution has profoundly reshaped the global labor landscape through the advancement of digital technologies and automation. The advancement of digital technology has facilitated new forms of economic interaction within an online-to-offline ecosystem, connecting service providers and consumers in virtual environments that support information exchange, commercial transactions, and intermediation services (Lee and Chau, 2022; Liu et al, 2024). This

transformation has enabled startups and individuals to participate in the market with lower entry barriers, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in diverse sectors, including transportation, food delivery, logistics, and digital freelancing (Tuomi et al, 2023; Yang, 2024). Within this new labor ecosystem, *gig work*, which can be defined as task-based, flexible, and digitally mediated, has become a defining characteristic of the contemporary economy. Yet, this innovation in work organization also challenges traditional employment relations, blurring the boundaries between dependent and independent labor (Manyika et al, 2016; Pichault and McKeown, 2019).

Gig work represents a form of non-standard employment that departs from conventional full-time and long-term labor arrangements (Allott, 2024; Kolomoets et al, 2023). Gig workers typically operate without formal employment contracts, performing tasks on demand and receiving compensation per completed job or project. This arrangement offers advantages such as flexibility, autonomy, and the possibility of multiple income streams (Manyika et al, 2016; Pichault and McKeown, 2019; Wood et al, 2019). However, it also exposes workers to vulnerabilities, including income instability, irregular working hours, lack of access to social protection, and limited opportunities for collective bargaining (Bielousov, 2023; Samsudin et al, 2024). Furthermore, the rise of algorithmic management, where digital platforms use data-driven systems to allocate tasks, evaluate performance, and enforce control, can create new asymmetries of power between workers and platforms (Curchod et al, 2020; Muldoon and Raekstad, 2023). These dynamics raise critical questions about fairness, justice, and well-being of gig workers in the digital labor markets.

The quality of life among gig workers is an important aspect of social and economic well-being, as their overall life satisfaction can be understood through both a broad assessment of quality of life and, more specifically, through the lens of quality of working life (QWL), which captures how work-related conditions shape their daily experiences and well-being. QWL encompasses workers' perceptions of satisfaction, safety, work-life balance, and overall well-being (Bhende et al, 2020; Ogunola, 2022; Szücs et al, 2011), reflecting both internal (subjective) and external (structural) dimensions of employment. In the gig economy, the meaning and measurement of QWL become increasingly complex. The flexible and decentralized nature of platform labor blurs the boundary between work and personal life, requiring a nuanced understanding of how workers experience autonomy, precarity, and fulfillment in digitally mediated work environments (Mendola, 2020; Sutherland et al, 2020; Venkateswaran, 2025).

In the context of gig work, ensuring financial security is as crucial as maintaining autonomy, flexibility, and family time in enhancing workers' overall well-being. Strengthening economic stability can help mitigate the pressures and uncertainties inherent in platform-based employment, thereby improving workers' well-being (Kurian and Bindu, 2024; Warren, 2021). Previous studies have demonstrated that gig workers' psychological capital and overall quality of life are strongly linked to the availability of a financial safety net, levels of work engagement, recognition which are pivotal in shaping their well-being and everyday realities within the digital labor landscape, particularly for gig workers who often engage in multiple or low-paying jobs (Myhill et al, 2021; Wardani and Anwar, 2019; Warren, 2021).

In Indonesia, the gig economy has expanded rapidly over the past decade, fueled in part by

increasing internet accessibility and the proliferation of digital systems that have enabled more seamless participation in platform-based work. Yet, despite its rapid expansion, the regulatory and institutional frameworks governing gig work still need to be monitored and optimized. Most gig workers are classified as *independent contractors*, excluding them from formal labor protections such as minimum wage, social security, and occupational safety (Cherry and Aloisi, 2016; Harris, 2018; Stewart and Stanford, 2017). Prior studies on gig workers tend to focus on economic vulnerability, employment status, and legal issues, while few adopt a holistic framework that integrates economic, psychological, and social dimensions of workers' well-being. To address this gap, this study conducts a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature published between 2015 and 2025 to identify and analyze factors influencing QWL among gig workers.

2. Research Method

2.1. Study Design

A bibliometric analysis was conducted to explore the body of published research concerning the quality of work life among gig workers using VOSviewer. As bibliometric analysis may be unfamiliar to some readers, this study provides a detailed explanation of the methodological steps, including the identification of relevant sources, extraction of bibliographic data, and synthesis of findings to map research trends, and thematic clusters.

Articles were retrieved from Scopus, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles and it was limited to publications between 2015 and 2025, reflecting the period of rapid growth of the gig economy and digital labor platforms, particularly in Indonesia. Query words (Gao et al., 2022) in related literature to 'gig worker', 'gig work', 'gig economy', 'platform worker', 'platform work', 'platform economy', 'digital labor', 'digital labour', 'online labor', 'online work', 'crowdwork', 'on-demand work', 'freelance worker', 'independent contractor', 'ride-hailing driver', 'delivery driver', 'online driver', 'Gojek driver', 'Grab driver'. Similarly, words closely related to 'quality of work life' were identified: 'quality of work life', 'QWL', 'work-life balance', 'job satisfaction', 'employee well-being', 'occupational well-being', 'working condition', 'labor welfare', 'employment quality', 'decent work', 'work engagement', 'job quality', 'worker livelihood', 'Indonesia', 'Indonesian', 'developing countries', 'Southeast Asia'. Finally, the Boolean operators "OR" and "AND" were employed to link the selected keywords, allowing for a broader yet more precise search that maximized relevant results while filtering out irrelevant records. The extracted data were then analyzed using VOSviewer, a software tool designed for analysis, constructing and viewing bibliometric maps with bibliographic data from many databases (Hallinger and Chatpinyakoo, 2019; van Eck and Waltman, 2010).

2.2. Data Analysis

This study adopted the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework, originally designed for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher et al., 2009), as a guiding flowchart to structure the bibliometric review process. This approach improves transparency and consistency in identifying, screening, and analyzing literature on the quality of work life among gig workers in Indonesia.

In this study, we conducted a co-occurrence analysis using VOSviewer to identify and visualize research trends related to the gig economy and gig workers. The unit of analysis was set to all keywords, with the counting method set to full counting. A minimum occurrence threshold of five was applied, resulting in 87 out of 1,570 keywords meeting the inclusion criteria. This analysis enabled the identification of key research clusters, thematic relationships, and conceptual interconnections within the existing body of literature on gig work and its associated ecosystem.

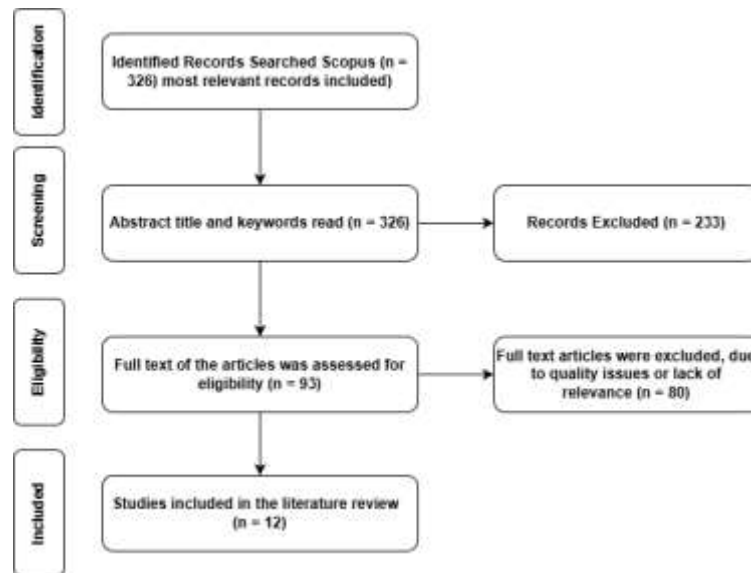


Figure 1. Study selection, assessment, and inclusion. Source: Processed by authors, 2025

At the initial stage, a total of 326 documents retrieved from 2015-2025 related to gig workers and their quality of work life were mapped and analyzed to identify emerging research trends based on Scopus database search results. Each study was examined and categorized according to its bibliographic characteristics. Each document was visualized, identified, and analyzed using VOSviewer version 1.6.20 based on its calculated weight and relevance to the topic of gig workers. Data visualizations were limited to items closely aligned with the study's focus to ensure analytical clarity.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

In the final section of this literature review, a bibliometric mapping was conducted using VOSviewer to visualize the global research landscape related to the *gig economy* and *quality of work life* between 2015 and 2025. The visualization demonstrates interconnected clusters of keywords that collectively depict the major research streams underpinning digital labor studies. As shown in Figure 1, the largest cluster centers on the term “gig economy”, which is closely associated with “platform work,” “digital labor,” “working conditions,” and “job quality.” These relationships indicate that scholarly attention has primarily focused on the structural and contextual dynamics of gig work, such as employment precarity, platform governance, and digital capitalism.

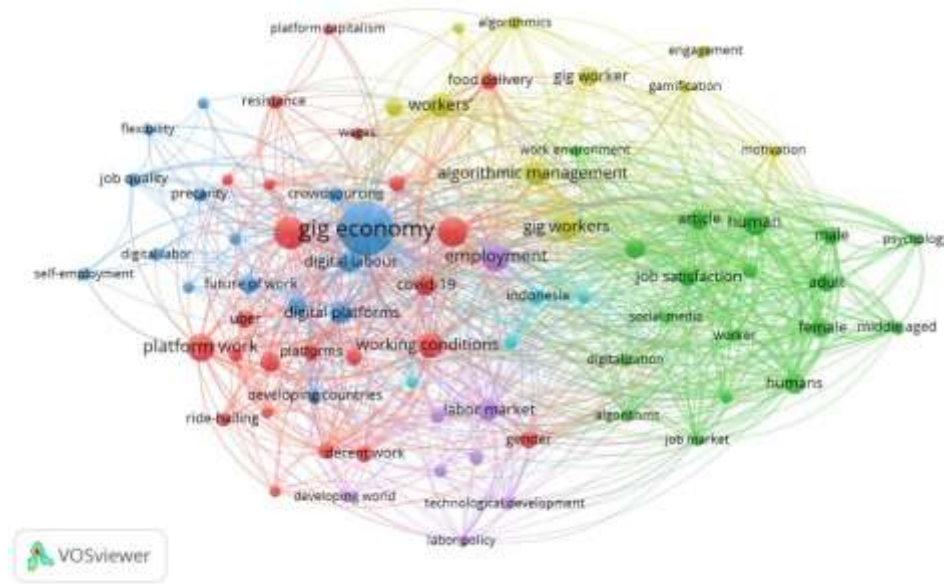


Figure 2. Several clusters of research topics regarding gig workers and their quality of work life (network visualization). Source: Processed by the authors, 2025.

A second major cluster links “algorithmic management,” “employment,” “job satisfaction,” “engagement,” and “motivation,” reflecting studies that examine workers’ experiences and perceptions under algorithmically controlled environments. This cluster emphasizes how automation, digital monitoring, and rating systems influence autonomy, fairness, and wellbeing, factors directly connected to QWL. Meanwhile, peripheral nodes such as “flexibility,” “self-employment,” “precarity,” “resistance,” and “decent work” suggest ongoing debates about the paradox of freedom versus insecurity that characterizes gig work globally. The presence of keywords like “Indonesia,” “developing countries,” and “labor policy” signifies a growing regional interest in understanding how digital labor systems evolve in emerging economies and how policy interventions might ensure inclusivity and protection for workers.

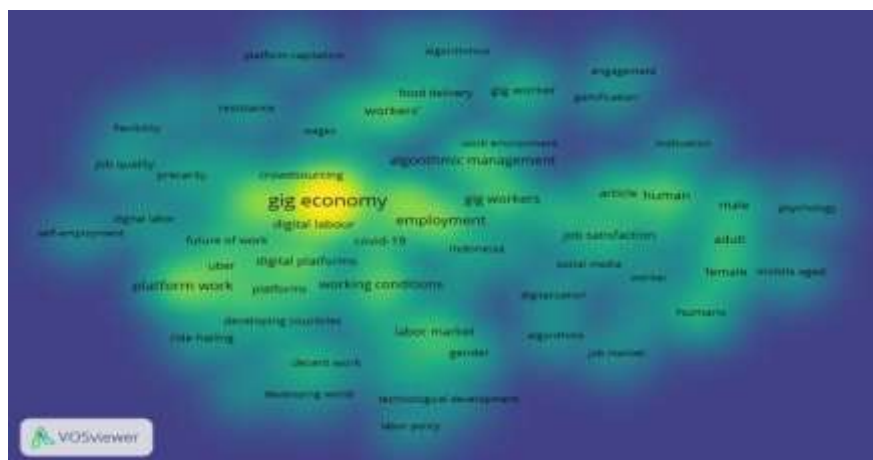


Figure 3. The density visualization map regarding gig workers and their quality of work life
Source: Processed by the authors, 2025.

Taken together, the bibliometric network reveals that the convergence of clusters, from *algorithmic management* to *decent work*, reflects a shift from economic analyses of digital platforms toward a multidimensional approach that incorporates social, ethical, and policy perspectives. This pattern reinforces the conclusion that ensuring decent QWL in the gig economy requires aligning technological innovation with institutional safeguards and social protection mechanisms, especially within Indonesia's rapidly expanding platform-based labor market. Building upon these interconnected themes, the following synthesis bridges the conceptual trends with empirical insights from prior studies. To provide a clearer overview of the existing body of knowledge, Table 1 summarizes the twelve peer-reviewed articles included in this review, highlighting their core findings, and authorship as below.

Table 1. Overview of Reviewed Studies on Gig Workers and Quality of Working Life.

Document Title	Findings (Summary of Abstract)	Authorship
Influence of Employee Well-Being and Work Flexibility on Innovative Work Behavior and Job Performance: A Comparative Study of Full-Time and Gig Workers in Digital Business	Work flexibility enhances innovative work behavior, especially for gig workers, which improves job performance indirectly. Employee well-being has no direct effect but supports innovation and adaptability.	Duanguppama, S., Jadesadalug, V., & Ponchaitiwat, K. (2025)
Living a Calling Despite the Challenges of the Gig Economy? The Role of Meaning-Making and Work Alienation	Gig work challenges lower the sense of "living a calling" via work alienation, but meaning-making helps buffer this negative effect.	Affolter, L., Spurk, D., & Straub, C. (2025).
Algorithm-Based Job Flexibility Paradox and Job Insecurity Among Gig Workers: The Full Mediation of Work-Family Conflict	Algorithmic monitoring undermines job flexibility and raises job insecurity through work-family conflict. Rebalancing algorithmic oversight can improve worker stability.	Chen, J., & Chen, M. (2025)

Document Title	Findings (Summary of Abstract)	Authorship
Investigating Engagement and Burnout of Gig Workers in the Age of Algorithms: An Empirical Study in Digital Labor Platforms	Algorithmic compensation, autonomy, and communication increase engagement; insecurity and algorithmic injustice drive burnout. Resources buffer these effects differently.	Hajiheydari, N., & Delgosha, M. S. (2024)
From the Table to the Sofa: The Remote Work Revolution in a Context of Crises and Its Consequences on Work Attitudes and Behaviors	Remote educators' health and perceived organizational support affect job satisfaction and engagement, influencing turnover intention.	Xavier, H. B., de Barros Sampaio, S. C., Falcão Sobral, M. F., & Cormican, K. (2024).
Dark Side of Algorithmic Management on Platform Worker Behaviors: A Mixed-Method Study	High algorithmic control reduces service quality and referral behavior; heavy workloads mitigate these effects slightly.	Lu, Y., Yang, M. M., Zhu, J., & Wang, Y. (2024).
Algorithmic Monitoring Increases Unethical Behavior in Gig Workers: The Mediating Role of Moral Disengagement	Algorithmic monitoring fosters unethical behavior via moral disengagement and displacement of responsibility; individualism moderates this effect.	Gao, S., Jia, Y., Liu, B., & Mu, W. (2024).
Navigating the Gig Economy: Exploring Challenges and Motivations for the Wellbeing of Gen Y and Gen Z Gig Workers	Motivation improves wellbeing and quality of life, while challenges and stress reduce both. Stress mediates and personal traits moderate these relationships.	Kurian, J. S., & Bindu Madhavi, N. (2024).

Document Title	Findings (Summary of Abstract)	Authorship
Gig Work Self-Efficacy and Its Effects on Flexibility, Career Adaptability, and Adoption in the Metaverse: A Moderated Mediation Model	Self-efficacy enhances flexibility and adaptability, leading to higher gig work adoption in the metaverse. Professional isolation weakens this link.	Khan, N. A., Zhang, J., & Akhtar, M. (2024).
Gamifying the Gig: Transitioning the Dark Side to Bright Side of Online Engagement	Gamification increases job satisfaction and productivity, lowering turnover. High-performance work systems show limited influence.	Behl, A., Sheorey, P., Jain, K., Chavan, M., Jajodia, I., & Zhang, Z. J. (2021).
Enforced Remote Work During COVID-19 and the Importance of Technological Competency: A Job Demands-Resources Perspective	Technological competency strengthens the positive link between resilience and job performance during remote work. Training enhances engagement and outcomes.	Karaca, A., Aydogmus, M. E., & Gunbas, N. (2023)
Shadow of Cyber Ostracism Over Remote Environment: Implication on Remote Work Challenges, Virtual Work Environment and Employee Mental Well-Being During a COVID-19 Pandemic	Cyber ostracism negatively affects engagement and mental wellbeing through loneliness, poor communication, procrastination, and work-home interference.	Yang, L., Murad, M., Mirza, F., Chaudhary, N. I., & Saeed, M. (2022)

Source: Processed by the authors, 2025.

Based on the literature review summarized in Table 1, it can be seen that the quality of work life (QWL) among gig workers emerges from the intersection of individual psychological resources and structural labor conditions shaped by digital platforms. Internally, gig workers are attracted to the

flexibility, autonomy, and self-determination that platform work offers, as these features enable them to balance personal goals and professional engagement. Studies by Duanguppama et al. (2025) and Karaca et al. (2023) show that flexibility can foster innovation, self-motivation, and performance by granting workers a sense of ownership over their tasks. However, this flexibility also generates paradoxical effects, such as unstable income, extended working hours, and blurred work–life boundaries, which ultimately reduce job satisfaction and increase emotional fatigue (Affolter et al., 2025). Similarly, Khan et al. (2024) found that self-efficacy and career adaptability improve acceptance of gig work, yet these benefits are weakened by professional isolation and the absence of institutional career support.

Psychological factors such as resilience, technological competence, and engagement play a crucial role in mediating the stress and demands of digital labor. Karaca et al. (2023) emphasized that technological literacy enhances workers' capacity to cope with uncertainty and maintain productivity under algorithmic systems, while Yang et al. (2022) highlighted that digital loneliness and cyber ostracism undermine mental health and social belonging. These findings suggest that sustaining QWL in gig work requires not only self-regulation and adaptability but also organizational and community support to prevent burnout and alienation.

From a structural perspective, algorithmic management, data surveillance, and governance opacity are among the most critical determinants of QWL in digital labor markets. Studies by Chen and Chen (2025), Gao et al. (2024), and Lu et al. (2024) reveal that algorithmic monitoring and rating systems often exacerbate job insecurity, limit autonomy, and intensify moral disengagement. The absence of transparency in performance evaluation mechanisms further erodes trust between workers and platforms. In addition, Hajiheydari and Delgosha (2024) observed that algorithmic injustice, unequal reward distribution and punitive evaluation, significantly contributes to burnout, while resources such as autonomy and fair compensation only partially mitigate these effects.

External interventions such as gamification strategies, including recognition systems and digital rewards, may temporarily increase motivation and reduce turnover intentions (Behl et al., 2021). However, these technological solutions cannot replace the need for formal labor protection and social safety nets, which remain limited for platform-based workers. The persistence of income insecurity, lack of employment status, and weak collective representation underscores that structural vulnerabilities remain dominant challenges in sustaining gig workers' QWL (Nieborg, 2025; Graham, 2025).

Taken together, these findings suggest that improving QWL among gig workers in Indonesia's rapidly growing digital economy requires a multi-dimensional strategy. On the individual level, strengthening psychological capital, through resilience training, digital upskilling, and social support, is essential to maintain engagement and well-being. At the structural level, policy reforms ensuring fair compensation, algorithmic transparency, and access to social protection are crucial to address systemic inequities. Thus, the sustainability of Indonesia's gig economy depends on aligning technological innovation with institutional safeguards that protect workers' dignity, fairness, and quality of working life (Duanguppama et al., 2025; Affolter et al., 2025; Hajiheydari & Delgosha, 2024).

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this systematic review reveal that the quality of work life among gig workers is shaped by the interplay between internal–subjective dimensions, including autonomy, flexibility, and psychological resources, and also external–structural dimensions, including algorithmic management, job insecurity, and limited institutional protection. This highlights a paradox: while platform work offers autonomy, flexibility, and opportunities for self-regulation, it simultaneously produces new forms of precarity, shaped by unstable income, algorithmic control, and weak social protection systems. This duality reflects a fundamental transformation in labor relations, one that shifts traditional employment toward a technology-mediated model emphasizing efficiency over worker welfare.

From a theoretical standpoint, the reviewed studies collectively support the argument that internal psychological capital, such as resilience, technological competence, and adaptability, plays a critical role in sustaining engagement and performance under uncertain working conditions (Karaca et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2024). However, psychological resources alone are insufficient to compensate for the external structural inequalities that define platform work. Without the presence of stable labor frameworks, fair compensation mechanisms, and procedural justice, workers' well-being remains highly dependent on individual coping capacities rather than institutional guarantees. This potentially indicates a need for a multi-level intervention framework that bridges micro-level (individual) resilience with macro-level (systemic) protections.

The structural discussion of QWL among gig workers is inseparable from the influence of algorithmic management. Algorithms function not merely as managerial tools but as governance mechanisms that dictate access to work, evaluate performance, and enforce behavioral compliance. This aligns with findings from Chen and Chen (2025) and Hajiheydari and Delgosha (2024), which reveal that algorithmic opacity and surveillance intensify job insecurity and moral disengagement. Such control undermines perceived fairness and trust between workers and platforms, transforming autonomy into a conditional privilege rather than a genuine right. These dynamics suggest that improving QWL requires a recalibration of digital governance frameworks that balance efficiency with transparency, accountability, and ethical oversight.

Another major implication emerging from the reviewed literature is the need for policy coherence and institutional adaptation in responding to digital labor realities. In the Indonesian context, the coexistence of rapid digitalization and a large informal workforce underscores the urgency of establishing mechanisms that protect gig workers' welfare while fostering, rather than constraining, innovation. Legal recognition of gig workers, expansion of social protection schemes, and the promotion of collective representation are vital steps in this direction (Nieborg, 2025; Graham, 2025). Furthermore, partnerships between government, platforms, and civil society can facilitate a more inclusive governance model, ensuring that technological progress translates into equitable work outcomes.

Lastly, the quality of work life within the gig economy must move beyond economic performance indicators toward a human-centered approach to digital work. Interventions such as gamification and digital incentives may improve short-term engagement (Behl et al., 2021), but they cannot substitute

for systemic changes addressing fairness, psychological safety, and decent working conditions. Therefore, advancing gig workers' QWL demands a holistic perspective that integrates technological design, psychological well-being, and labor policy. As the gig economy continues to expand in Indonesia, its sustainability will depend on how effectively technological innovation is aligned with institutional safeguards and social justice principles that uphold workers' dignity and long-term well-being.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Today's digital transformation goals must move beyond technological advancement alone and be directed toward creating healthier labor ecosystems, more equitable digital communities, and sustainable digital economies. Within this context, it becomes essential to find meaningful, collective, and institutional approaches to reach and protect gig workers, who increasingly represent a vulnerable yet growing segment of Indonesia's workforce.

The fundamental objective of this systematic review was to understand how quality of work life among gig workers has been conceptualized and studied and to identify the key internal and external factors that shape it. Using bibliometric analysis with VOSviewer, this study mapped the development of scholarly work related to gig workers and QWL, revealing significant trends and thematic clusters within the literature. The rapid increase in publications over the last decade illustrates growing global attention to the digital labor economy; however, studies with a focus on Indonesia remain limited in both volume and policy integration.

The review identified recurring themes within the literature, including algorithmic management, job precarity, autonomy, resilience, digital competence, and social protection. These themes demonstrate that while digital platforms provide flexibility and new income opportunities, they simultaneously create new inequalities through opaque governance, income volatility, and weak institutional protection. Furthermore, gig workers' well-being is influenced not only by their psychological adaptability but also by systemic issues such as lack of labor rights, limited access to welfare systems, and absence of collective representation. This situation is particularly pressing in Indonesia, where rapid digitalization coexists with a large informal workforce, amplifying risks of digital exclusion and income insecurity if not managed through inclusive policy interventions.

The study also acknowledges two main limitations. First, the bibliometric review was conducted solely using the Scopus database, which may exclude relevant literature from regional or non-indexed sources. Second, the interpretation of findings may carry subjective bias due to the authors' analytical framing. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, this systematic and bibliometric review provides empirical evidence that research on QWL among gig workers is not only a scholarly necessity but also a policy imperative for Indonesia's digital future.

In conclusion, achieving decent digital work requires viewing technological progress not merely as an economic opportunity but as a moral and social responsibility. Sustainable improvement of gig workers' QWL will depend on how effectively Indonesia integrates technological innovation, institutional safeguards, and human-centered values to ensure that the digital economy advances equity, security, and well-being for all.

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