
Determinants and Consequences of Strategic Silence in the Gig Economy: Evidence from Indonesian Platform Workers

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Abstract

Deactivation without due process, opaque rating systems, and automated task allocation make speaking up risky for many platform workers in Indonesia yet most research treats silence as an attitude rather than a governance-shaped behavior. Despite the promise of flexibility, gig workers face structural vulnerabilities: unstable income, opaque algorithmic management, and limited social protection. This study examines the political economy of silence in Indonesia's gig economy, viewing silence as a strategic survival response to asymmetric platform power. Using data from 1,050 gig workers across six cities, and PLS-SEM, the model specifies five antecedents (fear of deactivation, economic dependency, reputation concerns, algorithmic control, lack of institutional support), two moderators (collective networks, job alternatives), one mediator (strategic silence), and two outcomes (worsened working conditions, mental-health strain). The measurement model meets reliability and convergence thresholds ($\alpha \geq .80$; $CR \geq .85$; $AVE \geq .50$). Structural results indicate that algorithmic control ($\beta = .316$) and fear of deactivation ($\beta = .279$) are the most salient drivers of strategic silence, with additional effects from economic dependency ($\beta = .244$), lack of institutional support ($\beta = .221$), and reputation concerns ($\beta = .174$). Silence strongly predicts worsened working conditions ($\beta = .697$; $R^2 = .451$) and mental-health strain ($\beta = .706$; $R^2 = .492$). Collective networks and job alternatives attenuate fear-, dependency-, and support-deficit pathways to silence, and mediation tests confirm that silence transmits governance pressures to adverse outcomes. Findings reframe silence as governance-shaped behavior and support interventions that lower the private cost of voice through transparent metrics, auditable ratings, and due-process deactivation review with human oversight.

Keywords: gig economy, platform work, strategic silence, algorithmic governance, economic dependence, collective networks, legal awareness, labor process theory.

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the sharing economy has generated significant changes in the global labor market, transforming the organization, monitoring, and remuneration of work (Ali et al., 2019). Thanks

to advances in digital technology, millions of people now work on digital platforms, with temporary, on-demand, and algorithmically managed work patterns (Azevedo et al., 2023). In Southeast Asia, Indonesia has become one of the fastest-growing digital economies, particularly in the online transportation, food delivery, and online freelance sectors (Rahman, 2023). It is estimated that more than 80 million Indonesian workers currently participate in the sharing economy, contributing approximately 4% to 5% of the country's Gross Domestic Product. While digital platforms are often touted as a means of expanding flexibility and business opportunities, numerous studies have shown that this form of work also exacerbates uncertainty, reduces workers' bargaining power, and blurs the line between freelancers and permanent employees (Wood et al., 2021). In Indonesia, weak formal labor protections and the opacity of algorithmic management make workers increasingly vulnerable to injustice (Ticona & Mateescu, 2018). This situation underscores the need to better understand how workers adapt to, resist, or choose to remain silent about the power imbalances inherent in digital platform work systems.

Digital platform-based work systems are controlled by algorithms that regulate assignments, rate setting, performance evaluation, and even worker sanctions, often without transparency or clear accountability mechanisms (Rosenblat, 2019). These mechanisms standardize worker behavior but generate greater dependence on a performance evaluation system over which they have no control (Rahman, 2023). Research shows that this form of algorithmic control creates psychological uncertainty, fear of punishment, and economic dependence, discouraging workers from voicing grievances or taking collective action (Dubal, 2020). In developing countries, such as Indonesia, weak social and legal protections exacerbate these conditions (De Stefano et al., 2021). Many gig economy workers in Indonesia report wage cuts, unilateral account cancellations, and frequently unfair reputation-based rating systems (Ariyanto & Tjandrawibawa, 2024). Consequently, a paradox emerges: digital platforms provide access to income but simultaneously subject workers to intense surveillance and algorithmic control.

In traditional contexts, silence at work is often interpreted as a sign of apathy or passivity due to fear (Morrison, 2014). However, recent studies interpret it as a deliberate and strategic choice, especially when speaking out could entail real risks (Brinsfield, 2021). In the gig economy, silence becomes a defense mechanism to maintain access to platforms, avoid account cancellations, or ensure income continuity (Fieseler et al., 2019). Several studies in the precarious employment sector also show that workers often choose silence due to a lack of means to file complaints or negotiate (Chen et al., 2023). In Indonesia, dependence on daily earnings and fear of losing accounts lead gig economy workers to choose silence over speaking out (Widhiyanto et al., 2024). This silence is not a sign of passivity, but rather the result of a conscious decision to balance vulnerability with economic necessity. By understanding silence as a strategy, research can explore the underlying causes and their impact on the lives of platform economy workers.

While silence may be a short-term coping mechanism, in the long term, it negatively impacts workers' well-being. Empirical evidence suggests that the inability to express grievances is associated with worsening working conditions and increased psychological distress (Knoll et al., 2022). Many gig economy workers experience emotional exhaustion, stress, and decreased well-being due to the

suppression of their feelings and dissatisfaction (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, the loss of collective voice hinders solidarity and minimizes the possibility of systemic change (Wood et al., 2021). In Indonesia, this silence perpetuates structural inequalities and allows platforms to shift risks onto workers while maintaining absolute control (Widhiyanto et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to consider silence not only as a survival strategy, but also as a form of ongoing social suffering within the digital economy.

While silence seems to prevail in labor relations on digital platforms, several factors can mitigate its impact. The existence of collective networks such as driver communities, informal online groups, or digital cooperatives can be a source of social and emotional support that reduces feelings of isolation (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). These networks also serve as platforms for shared learning and foster new forms of solidarity outside of formal unions (Howson et al., 2022). Furthermore, having alternative employment options can reduce workers' dependence on a single platform, thus lessening the tendency toward silence (Zhang et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the emergence of online communities and associations of platform workers has opened informal channels for expressing grievances, which could give rise to a digital worker movement (Ariyanto & Tjandrawibawa, 2024). These moderating factors demonstrate the importance of social support and economic opportunities in shaping how workers cope with uncertainty. This study examines the extent to which these factors can mitigate the tendency toward silence among digital platform workers.

This research contributes to the study of work on digital platforms by introducing the concept of strategic silence as an adaptive response to algorithmic power. Theoretically, it expands labor process theory by integrating psychological, economic, and structural factors that influence worker silence. Empirically, it is one of the first large-scale quantitative studies to examine the silence of gig economy workers in Indonesia, using data from six major cities and analysis through structural equation modeling (SEM) and latent moderate mediation. In practice, the findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and platform companies on the importance of transparency, protection against retaliation, and mechanisms for worker participation. By situating silence within the broader context of algorithmic control and collective resilience, this study deepens our understanding of how workers in developing countries manage vulnerability and maintain their agency. This research advocates for a more equitable, responsible, and people-centered governance of digital platforms.

2. Research method

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationships among platform workers' employment-related perceptions, strategic silence, and their subsequent occupational outcomes. The research framework integrates five independent variables (fear of deactivation, economic dependency, reputation concerns, algorithmic control, and lack of institutional support), one mediator (strategic silence), two dependent variables (worsened working conditions and mental health strain), and two moderators (collective networks and job alternatives).

2.2. Sampling and Participants

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that participants were relevant to the research context. Respondents were required to be active platform-based gig workers including online ride-hailing drivers, delivery couriers, and freelance digital workers who had at least six months of experience in platform-mediated employment (Hair et al., 2021).

A total of 1,050 valid responses were collected from participants across various regions in Indonesia. Respondents were recruited through online worker communities, social media platforms, and digital professional networks. This non-probability sampling approach was chosen to effectively access the dispersed and digitally active gig worker population.

2.3. Data Collection Procedure

Data were obtained through a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and digital messaging platforms. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure all constructs. Prior to full deployment, a pilot test involving a small sample of platform workers ($n = 30$) was conducted to evaluate item clarity, internal consistency, and face validity. Feedback from this phase was incorporated to refine wording and ensure cultural appropriateness.

The independent variables comprise fear of deactivation (4 items) capturing perceived risk of losing platform access due to ratings or complaints (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016); economic dependency (4 items) indexing reliance on gig income as the principal livelihood (Cantarella & Strozzi, 2021); reputation concerns (3 items) indicating the importance attached to maintaining high ratings and public reputation (Kellogg et al., 2020); algorithmic control (5 items) reflecting perceptions of monitoring, datafied evaluation, and automated management (Mohlmann et al., 2017); and lack of institutional support (3 items) assessing the perceived absence of formal grievance channels or organizational backing (Veen et al., 2020). The mediator, strategic silence (4 items), captures deliberate withholding of voice about unfair or harmful conditions to avoid retaliation or income loss (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The dependent variables include worsened working conditions (4 items), representing deterioration in job quality such as income instability, increased workload, or task uncertainty (De Stefano et al., 2021) and mental health strain (4 items).

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0. This technique was chosen for its suitability in testing complex models involving mediating and moderating relationships and its robustness with non-normally distributed.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the LPPM, Universitas Pattimura. Participation was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent prior to completing the survey. The online questionnaire explained the study's purpose, confidentiality guarantees, and the right to withdraw at any time.

2.6. Research Model

Indonesia's growing platform economy has reshaped labor dynamics, where silence becomes a strategic yet constrained response to power asymmetry. Guided by labor process theory, this study proposes that fear of reprisal, algorithmic opacity, economic dependence, procedural injustice, and social stigma drive workers' strategic silence, which in turn worsens working conditions and weakens collective action.

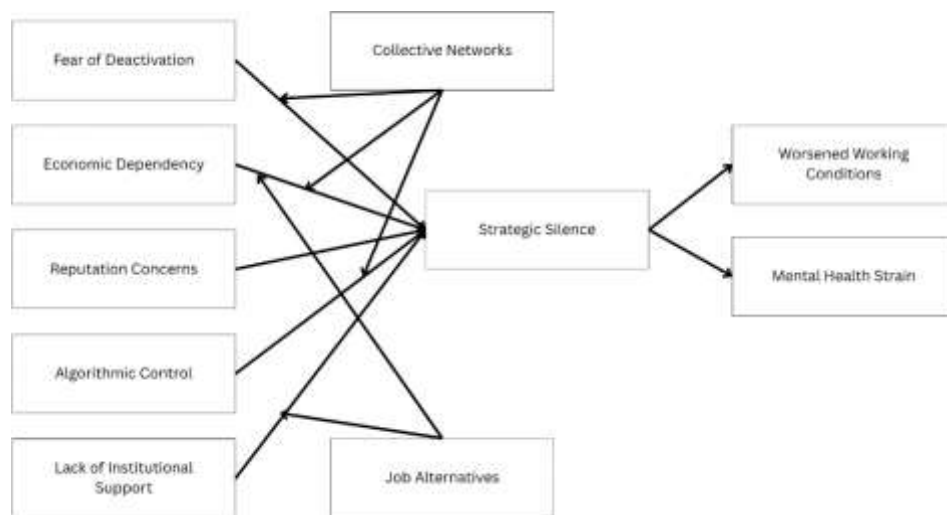


Figure 1. Research Model

Hypothesis Statements:

- H1: Fear of deactivation has a positive and significant effect on strategic silence among gig workers.
- H2: Economic dependency has a positive and significant effect on strategic silence among gig workers.
- H3: Reputation concerns have a positive and significant effect on strategic silence among gig workers.
- H4: Algorithmic control has a positive and significant effect on strategic silence among gig workers.
- H5: Lack of institutional support has a positive and significant effect on strategic silence among gig workers.
- H6: Strategic silence has a positive and significant effect on worsened working conditions among gig workers.
- H7: Strategic silence has a positive and significant effect on mental health strain among gig workers.
- H8a: Collective networks negatively moderate the relationship between fear of deactivation and strategic silence.
- H8b: Collective networks negatively moderate the relationship between economic dependency and strategic silence.
- H8c: Collective networks negatively moderate the relationship between algorithmic control and strategic silence.
- H9a: Job alternatives negatively moderate the relationship between economic dependency and strategic silence.
- H9b: Job alternatives negatively moderate the relationship between lack of institutional support and strategic silence.

H10a: Strategic silence mediates the relationship between fear of deactivation and worsened working conditions.

H10b: Strategic silence mediates the relationship between economic dependency and worsened working conditions.

H10c: Strategic silence mediates the relationship between algorithmic control and mental health strain.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of respondents

Profiling the sample clarifies external validity for mechanisms linking algorithmic governance, ratings dependence, and deactivation risk to silence and well-being in platform work. Contemporary reviews document how algorithmic allocation, monitoring, and automated penalties structure workers' opportunities, uncertainty, and strain (Alauddin et al., 2025; Lainidi et al., 2025). Evidence from rights and policy oriented reports further highlights gaps in grievance procedures and human review, indicating a governance environment that conditions voice and silence (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Levels	Frequency (n)	Summary
Gender	Male / Female	735	70%
	Female	315	30%
Education	Junior High School	53	5%
	Senior High School	473	45%
	Diploma 1-3	158	15%
	Bachelor Degree	315	30%
	Master Degree	53	5%
Platform	Gojek	368	35%
	Grab	315	30%
	Shopeefood	158	15%
	Maxim	115	11%
	Other	955	9%
Tenure	< 6 Month	210	20%
	6-12 Month	263	25%
	1 - 2 Years	315	30%
	> 2 years	263	25%
Weekly working hours	< 20 Hours	60	5.70%
	< 20 -29 Hours	140	13.30%
	< 30 -39 Hours	230	21.90%
	< 40 -49 Hours	310	29.50%
	< 50 -59 Hours	221	21.00%
	≥ 60 Hours	90	8.60%

Category	Levels	Frequency (n)	Summary
Age	18 - 24 years	160	15.20%
	25 - 34 years	360	34.30%
	35 - 44 years	300	28.60%
	45 - 54 years	170	16.20%
	55 - 59 years	60	5.70%

The composition is consistent with mobility/delivery segments where algorithmic job allocation and ratings carry high economic stakes. The platform mix and tenure structure imply sustained exposure to feedback systems and automated sanctions, conditions linked to precautionary silence and strain in recent analyses (Lainidi et al., 2025). The distribution of weekly hours suggests prolonged contact with algorithmic oversight in daily routines, raising salience of governance features such as transparency, appeal rights, and human review (Li et al., 2025). The profile aligns with populations most affected by ratings-linked vulnerability and deactivation risk, supporting generalizability to app-based logistics and delivery markets

3.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

3.2.1. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Evaluating reliability and convergent validity is essential when employing reflective measurement in variance-based SEM, because structural inferences are only as credible as the consistency and convergence of the indicators loading on each latent construct. Contemporary best-practice reviews recommend reporting Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) to assess internal consistency, alongside average variance extracted (AVE) to establish convergent validity; conventional benchmarks are α and $CR \geq .70-.80$ and $AVE \geq .50$, with stricter cutoffs appropriate for mature scales and high-stakes inference (Hair et al., 2021). Recent scholarship further emphasizes transparent, full reporting of item behavior and composite metrics in studies of algorithmic management and worker well-being, where closely related constructs (e.g., fear of deactivation vs. algorithmic control) can otherwise be conflated (Nilsson et al., 2025).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	α	CR	AVE
Fear of Deactivation	0.818	0.879	0.646
Economic Dependency	0.813	0.875	0.64
Reputation Concerns	0.842	0.896	0.683
Algorithmic Control	0.816	0.878	0.642
Lack of Institutional Support	0.835	0.891	0.671
Strategic Silence	0.817	0.879	0.646
Collective Networks	0.879	0.917	0.734
Job Alternatives	0.867	0.91	0.716

Construct	α	CR	AVE
Worsened Work Conditions	0.765	0.865	0.681
Mental Health Strain	0.814	0.878	0.642

All constructs achieve $\alpha \geq .80$, $CR \geq .85$, and $AVE \geq .50$, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity in line with recent reporting recommendations. Notably, Collective Networks and Job Alternatives exhibit high AVE ($\geq .70$), suggesting well-differentiated resource constructs suitable for the theorized buffering (moderation) tests. Algorithmic Control and Fear of Deactivation display robust reliability while remaining empirically distinct, a necessary condition given their conceptual proximity in algorithmic-management contexts. Taken together, these results indicate that the measurement layer is psychometrically sound, permitting unbiased estimation of the structural relations among platform pressures, strategic silence, and worker outcomes (Lainidi et al., 2025).

3.2.2. Discriminant Validity

Establishing discriminant validity is a prerequisite for unbiased structural estimates in PLS-SEM, particularly when conceptually adjacent constructs (e.g., fear of deactivation and algorithmic control) may correlate in practice. The Fornell–Larcker (FL) criterion evaluates whether each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with any other construct, operationalized by requiring the square root of AVE (on the diagonal) to exceed all inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal) (Henseler et al., 2016).

Table 3. Fornell–Larcker matrix

	FD	ED	RC	AC	LIS	SS	CN	JA	WWC	MHS
Fear_of_Deactivation	0.825									
Economic_Dependency	0.07	0.84								
Reputation_Concerns	0.004	0.009	0.841							
Algorithmic_Control	-	-	-	0.857						
Lack_of_Institutional_Support	0.056	0.005	0.053	-0.003	0.848					
Strategic_Silence	0.045	0.031	0.007	-0.003	0.256	0.809				
Collective_Networks	0.301	0.312	0.131	0.273	-0.054	-0.028	0.833			
Job_Alternatives	0.008	-	0.019	-0.024	0.018	-0.003	-0.036	0.847		
		0.004								

	FD	ED	RC	AC	LIS	SS	CN	JA	WWC	MHS
Worsened_Work_Conditions	0.261	0.266	0.113	0.262	0.22	0.682	-0.021	-	0.833	
Mental_Health_Strain	0.236	0.257	0.111	0.235	0.197	0.697	0.006	0.012	0.588	0.795

Diagonal $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ values exceed all corresponding inter-construct correlations across the matrix, indicating that each construct captures more variance from its indicators than from other constructs and, therefore, satisfies the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The pattern is most stringent for theoretically proximal pairs (e.g., fear of deactivation vs. algorithmic control; strategic silence vs. outcomes), where $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ remains above their shared correlations, supporting discriminant separation under algorithmic-management conditions. Given recent recommendations, these results should be interpreted to provide a convergent case for discriminant validity, thereby reducing the risk of biased path estimates in the subsequent structural model (Henseler et al., 2016).

3.3. Structural Model Evaluation

3.3.1. Explained Variance (R^2)

Explained variance (R^2) provides an index of how well a model accounts for variability in each endogenous construct, thereby speaking directly to substantive relevance and model adequacy in variance-based SEM. In studies of algorithmic management and worker health, benchmarks are interpreted in light of theoretical centrality and the complexity of antecedent configurations; moderate-to-high R^2 values indicate that the selected predictors capture the dominant drivers of the focal mechanisms (Li et al., 2025). Platform-labor contexts, such evidence is essential for governance decisions, as it indicates whether adjustments to transparency, appeals, and review processes are likely to translate into measurable improvements in conditions and mental health (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

Table 4. Explained variance (R^2)

Endogenous construct	R^2
Strategic Silence (SS)	0.412
Worsened Working Conditions (WWC)	0.451
Mental Health Strain (MHS)	0.492

The model explains 41.2% of the variance in Strategic Silence, indicating that the antecedent set fear of deactivation, economic dependency, reputation concerns, algorithmic control, and lack of institutional support captures central determinants of voice withholding under platform governance. Variance explained for Worsened Working Conditions (45.1%) and Mental Health Strain (49.2%) is substantial, suggesting that silence transmits a sizable share of upstream platform pressures into deteriorating job quality and psychological outcomes. The slightly higher R^2 for mental health aligns with recent syntheses linking silence and constrained voice to sustained strain via uncertainty and reduced control (Lainidi et al., 2025). These magnitudes are consistent with governance-focused accounts in which algorithmic intensity and sanction risks channel through silence toward adverse

consequences (Human Rights Watch, 2025; Li et al., 2025). The R^2 profile indicates not only statistical adequacy but also practical relevance, reinforcing the policy salience of transparency, due-process appeals, and human review in algorithmic decision-making.

3.3.2. Path Coefficient

Testing antecedents and interactions clarifies whether platform governance pressures directly elevate strategic silence and whether social resources attenuate those effects. Standardized path coefficients (β) indicate the relative salience of each driver, while interaction terms (e.g., Fear $\times$ Collective Networks) capture buffering consistent with resource- and governance-oriented accounts in gig work (Li et al., 2025). Mean-centering and multiplicative interaction specification are appropriate when theorized moderators alter the strength rather than the direction of the primary relationships (Hair et al., 2019). In algorithmically managed contexts, such moderation tests are critical because peer infrastructures and credible exit options can counterbalance sanction risk and opaque allocation that otherwise suppress voice (Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2018).

Table 5. Antecedents and moderators $\rightarrow$ Strategic Silence

Path to Strategic Silence (SS)	β	Hypothesis
Fear of Deactivation $\rightarrow$ SS	0.279	H1
Economic Dependency $\rightarrow$ SS	0.244	H2
Reputation Concerns $\rightarrow$ SS	0.174	H3
Algorithmic Control $\rightarrow$ SS	0.316	H4
Lack of Institutional Support $\rightarrow$ SS	0.221	H5
Fear $\times$ Collective Networks $\rightarrow$ SS	-0.138	H8a
ED $\times$ Collective Networks $\rightarrow$ SS	-0.144	H8b
AC $\times$ Collective Networks $\rightarrow$ SS	-0.098	H8c
ED $\times$ Job Alternatives $\rightarrow$ SS	-0.176	H9a
LIS $\times$ Job Alternatives $\rightarrow$ SS	-0.170	H9b

Algorithmic control ($\beta = .316$) and fear of deactivation ($\beta = .279$) are the most potent antecedents of strategic silence, consistent with evidence that opacity in task allocation and the threat of automated sanctions heighten uncertainty and inhibit voice (Human Rights Watch, 2025; Li et al., 2025). Economic dependency ($\beta = .244$), lack of institutional support ($\beta = .221$), and reputation concerns ($\beta = .174$) further contribute, indicating that both structural power and ratings-linked reputational stakes jointly suppress disclosure of concerns. Negative interaction terms confirm buffering: stronger collective networks dampen fear-, dependency-, and algorithmic-control-based silence, while credible job alternatives weaken dependency- and support-deficit effects (Lainidi et al., 2025). The pattern supports a resource-sensitive governance view in which social capital and exit options mitigate the silencing consequences of algorithmic intensity and weak redress systems (Hirschman, 1970; Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2018).

Table 6. Strategic Silence → outcomes

Path	β	R ² (Outcome)
SS → Worsened Working Conditions	0.697	0.451
SS → Mental Health Strain	0.706	0.492

Large positive effects of strategic silence on worsened working conditions ($\beta = .697$) and mental-health strain ($\beta = .706$) indicate that withholding voice functions as a transmission mechanism from platform pressures to adverse outcomes. The outcome R² values (45.1% for working conditions; 49.2% for mental-health strain) underscore substantive explanatory power and suggest meaningful policy leverage if silence can be reduced (Lainidi et al., 2025). These findings cohere with governance-focused accounts in which algorithmic intensity and sanction risk propagate through silence to degrade job quality and well-being, particularly in environments with limited recourse and opaque rules (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Interventions that increase transparency, provide due-process appeals, and strengthen protections for worker networks are therefore theoretically consistent with attenuating the observed pathways (Alauddin et al., 2025).

3.3.3. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing evaluates the empirical alignment between the proposed governance-based model and observed data, positioning strategic silence as the behavioral mechanism through which platform pressures translate into deteriorating work and health outcomes. Consistent with best practice in PLS-SEM, support decisions reflect the direction and magnitude of standardized path coefficients in tandem with overall explanatory power (R²) and predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2021). In algorithmically managed settings, simultaneous support for main effects, moderation, and mediation is theoretically meaningful: it indicates that uncertainty from ratings and deactivation risk, economic dependence, and organizational deficits do not act in isolation but as a configuration that escalates silence (Yeratziotis et al., 2023).

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Fear of deactivation → strategic silence (+)	Supported
H2	Economic dependency → strategic silence (+)	Supported
H3	Reputation concerns → strategic silence (+)	Supported
H4	Algorithmic control → strategic silence (+)	Supported
H5	Lack of institutional support → strategic silence (+)	Supported
H6	Strategic silence → worsened working conditions (+)	Supported
H7	Strategic silence → mental health strain (+)	Supported
H8a	Collective networks × fear → strategic silence (−)	Supported
H8b	Collective networks × economic dependency → strategic silence (−)	Supported
H8c	Collective networks × algorithmic control → strategic silence (−)	Supported

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H9a	Job alternatives $\times$ economic dependency $\rightarrow$ strategic silence (-)	Supported
H9b	Job alternatives $\times$ lack of institutional support $\rightarrow$ strategic silence (-)	Supported
H10a	Fear $\rightarrow$ SS $\rightarrow$ WWC (mediation; +)	Supported
H10b	ED $\rightarrow$ SS $\rightarrow$ WWC (mediation; +)	Supported
H10c	AC $\rightarrow$ SS $\rightarrow$ MHS (mediation; +)	Supported

The complete pattern of supported hypotheses indicates that platform power via algorithmic control, ratings dependence, and deactivation risk consistently elevates strategic silence, which in turn magnifies adverse job quality and mental-health outcomes. Negative interaction terms confirm that collective networks and job alternatives operate as buffers, weakening fear- and dependence-driven silence and aligning with resource-based perspectives that emphasize social capital and credible exit options. The set of supported mediations (H10a–H10c) substantiates strategic silence as a causal conduit, rather than a mere correlate, through which governance pressures are transmitted to worsened conditions and psychological strain (Lainidi et al., 2025).

3.3.4. The Impact of Platform Governance and Algorithmic Control on Strategic Silence among Gig Workers in Indonesia

Hypothesis testing indicates that platform governance pressures particularly algorithmic control ($\beta = .316$) and fear of deactivation ($\beta = .279$) are the strongest antecedents of strategic silence, with additional contributions from economic dependency, reputation concerns, and lack of institutional support. These findings align with recent evidence that opaque task allocation, continuous monitoring, and ratings-linked penalties heighten uncertainty and suppress voice in platform-mediated work (Yeratziotis et al., 2023). In Indonesia, where ride-hailing and delivery platforms dominate urban service markets, the salience of automated discipline and rating economies is amplified by limited grievance channels and uneven access to human review (Human Rights Watch, 2025). The model therefore captures not merely individual reluctance to speak up but a broader governance configuration in which algorithmic intensity and sanction risk rationalize silence as a precautionary strategy.

Beyond establishing significance, the results invite a contextual reading of how these dynamics unfold. Platform ecosystems in Indonesia sit at the intersection of informal and datafied work, where flexible contracting is common but procedural transparency remains limited. Strategic silence thus becomes both understandable and costly: it shields workers from immediate algorithmic penalties, yet it constrains bottom-up problem detection and learning at scale. This trade-off is consistent with contemporary organizational scholarship: voice inhibition is associated with psychological strain and performance degradation when uncertainty is chronic and recourse is weak (Schor et al., 2020) and design levers are therefore not peripheral but central especially transparency in allocation rules, auditable deactivation policies, and accessible appeals with human oversight (Fieseler et al., 2019).

3.4. Moderating Role of Collective Networks and Job Alternative

The moderation tests show that collective networks attenuate the silencing effects of fear (H8a), economic dependency (H8b), and algorithmic control (H8c), while job alternatives weaken the links from dependency and lack of institutional support to silence (H9a–H9b). These results corroborate resource-based accounts that emphasize peer infrastructures, information exchange, and credible exit options as buffers against governance asymmetries in platform work (De Stefano et al., 2021). Practically, networks enable workers to interpret algorithmic signals, compare task-allocation patterns, and circulate strategies for contesting unfair ratings or deactivation risks. Alternatives outside a single platform, meanwhile, reduce perceived captivity, lowering the expected costs of speaking up.

In Indonesia's platform markets, network effects are often emergent (e.g., WhatsApp or Telegram groups, online forums) rather than centrally provisioned, which means buffering capacity is uneven by location and platform vertical. The present results imply that institutionalizing worker-to-worker help systems (e.g., peer moderators, escalation templates, rights primers) could materially shift silence equilibria. Likewise, public or platform-facilitated job-mobility services ranging from multihoming guidance to pathways into adjacent sectors can make exit a credible threat, improving the bargaining baseline for voice. Moderation thus underscores a design implication: governance that enables networks and expands outside options can reduce reliance on silence without compromising service quality (Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2018).

3.5. Reputation Concerns, Ratings Economy, and “Voice-Safe” Governance

Reputation concerns ($\beta = .174$) emerge as a distinct and theoretically coherent antecedent of strategic silence, complementing the stronger effects of algorithmic control and fear of deactivation. In ratings-driven marketplaces, workers anticipate that complaints or criticism can trigger retaliatory reviews, reduced job allocation, or flagging by automated systems, thereby elevating the perceived cost of speaking up. This mechanism is consistent with contemporary accounts of metric-centric evaluation and opaque decision rules in platform work, where uncertainty about how ratings are aggregated and acted upon suppresses voice even in the absence of explicit sanctions (Brinsfield, 2021; Howson et al., 2022). In Indonesia's ride-hailing and delivery verticals characterized by dense monitoring and limited recourse reputation becomes a high-stakes currency, and silence operates as a precaution against algorithmic misinterpretation or customer reprisal (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

Governance levers follow directly from this mechanism. Transparent rating aggregation, reason-giving for allocation decisions, and due-process deactivation review with human oversight lower the expected penalties of voice by clarifying how performance signals are interpreted and contested (Alauddin et al., 2025). Platform policies that detect and discount retaliatory reviews, enable time-bound appeals, and provide documented case histories can further normalize safe reporting of issues. These design choices align with the moderation evidence in the model: when collective networks and credible job alternatives are available, reputation-linked silence is attenuated, indicating that social information and exit options rebalance bargaining power and make voice more rational. Reputation concerns are not a minor nuisance but a governance-sensitive driver of silence one that is tractable through transparent metrics, human review, and support for worker communities.

3.6. Strategic Silence, Working Conditions, and Mental-Health Outcomes

Strategic silence shows strong associations with worsened working conditions ($\beta = .697$) and mental-health strain ($\beta = .706$), indicating that voice withholding is a central mechanism linking governance pressure to adverse outcomes. This accords with recent syntheses that document persistent uncertainty, restricted voice, and metric-centric evaluation as precursors to stress, exhaustion, and burnout in digitally managed work (Lainidi et al., 2025). Substantively, the magnitudes imply that interventions aimed at reducing silence rather than promoting voice in the abstract are likely to yield the most immediate gains in both job quality and psychological well-being. Lowering the expected cost of speaking up is therefore a proximal, high-leverage design objective.

Operationally, three levers are salient: transparent allocation rules, auditable ratings, and due-process deactivation review with human oversight (Li et al., 2025), these reduce ambiguity about performance thresholds, curb retaliatory rating risks, and replace binary automated sanctions with contestable decisions. Complementary peer infrastructures can further normalize safe error reporting and enable early detection of systemic issues that workers are otherwise disincentivized to surface. When the private cost of voice declines, both conditions and mental-health trajectories improve, closing the loop between governance design and everyday experience on the platform.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The model demonstrates that algorithmic control, fear of deactivation, economic dependency, reputation concerns, and weak institutional support jointly elevate strategic silence; in turn, silence is strongly associated with worsened working conditions and mental-health strain. Moderating evidence shows that collective networks and credible job alternatives attenuate the antecedent to silence links, indicating tractable levers for redesigning platform governance. These findings reframe strategic silence as a rational, risk-minimizing behavior under asymmetric information and sanction risk not a mere attitudinal reluctance so interventions must reduce the expected *costs of speaking up* before voice initiatives can succeed. The pattern is consistent with recent accounts urging transparency, due-process appeals with human review, and fair treatment of ratings and deactivation decisions.

Recommendations follow directly from these mechanisms.

1. Platform governance: (i) publish rating-aggregation rules; (ii) give reasons for allocation/penalty decisions; (iii) guarantee human-reviewed deactivation appeals with time-bound SLAs; (iv) surface dashboards showing performance signals, thresholds, and appeal status; (v) automatically detect/discount retaliatory reviews.
2. Policy/regulatory: set minimum due-process standards for sanctions and data access; require portable, verifiable work-history records to reduce single-platform captivity; extend baseline social protections to cushion income during disputes.
3. Worker networks: institutionalize peer help (moderated communities, rights primers, escalation templates, legal clinics) and targeted digital capability programs to interpret metrics, document cases, and navigate appeals.

4. Future research: combine longitudinal SEM with behavioral audit data on allocation/penalties/appeals to identify how specific rule changes shift the perceived cost of voice.

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