

Gig Economy and National Economic Development: Insights from a Scoping Review of Global Evidence

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Abstract

The gig economy has become a key feature of the digital economy, changing labor market dynamics and broadening alternative forms of work. Supported by digital platforms, gig work allows flexibility and new opportunities for incomes as well as issues related to income volatility, low levels of social protection, and increasing precarity that it brings. The current paper provides a scoping review summary guided by PRISMA-ScR on cross-country evidence and experiences on gig worker evidence on the contribution of the gig economy to national economic development. Literature published between 2015 and 2025, including peer-reviewed articles, policy papers, and institutional reports, was systematically identified and analyzed. Four key themes were identified. First, the gig economy broadens access to employment and supplemental income, particularly for workers outside formal labor structures. Second, platform-based work contributes to digital transformation and emerging economic value chains, although standardized measures to quantify its contribution to GDP remain limited. Third, notable disparities exist between developed and developing economies, shaped by differences in digital infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and workforce digital skills. Fourth, persistent challenges, such as precarious working conditions and inadequate social protection, limit the sector's potential for inclusive and sustainable development. Overall, the findings indicate that the gig economy contributes meaningfully yet unevenly to national development. The study highlights clearer standards of measurement, stronger mechanisms of governance, and more comparative research as what is needed to better articulate the economic and social implications of gig work

Keywords: Gig economy, national economic development, scoping review, labor market, digital economy.

1. Introduction

Over the last twenty years, with the rise of digital technology, a new economic model sprang up. This is the gig economy. It was a project-based or short-term work system that would later be mediated by digital platforms such as Uber, TaskRabbit, Grab, Fiverr, and Upwork among others. As part of a global transformation towards a digital economy, this phenomenon increases flexible working opportunities and involves more people in work across borders (Mamadiyarov et al., 2025a;

Venkateswaran et al., 2025). The gig economy is rapidly growing as an important strategy for addressing youth unemployment and supporting entrepreneurial innovation due to increased digital connectivity in developing countries (Jeyaraj et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the gig economy has complex socioeconomic consequences. Flexible work arrangements also mean insecure incomes and weak social protection, not to mention the latest emergence of gender-based wage inequality (Han et al., 2024; Liang et al., 2018). In a macroeconomic context, a more valid argument regarding the gig economy's contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) growth and national productivity can be presented. Several studies prove that the gig economy is capable of absorbing surplus labor and increasing economic participation in the informal sector. However, its effects on long-term growth and macroeconomic stability are conditioned by labor market conditions and applicable regulations (Banik & Padalkar, 2021; Raimi, 2025).

Currently, obviously, digitization is the leading factor driving the global expansion of the gig economy. Hence, globally and nationally in Indonesia and other countries, labor market structures are being rapidly changed by automation and algorithmic management and platform-based business models (Patnaik et al., 2025). However, there has also been a digital divide highlighted by this research between urban and rural areas and infrastructural access disparities which constrain the inclusiveness of the digital economy (Li et al., 2022). Thus, investment in digital infrastructure as well as technological literacy are key elements to make sure that the increase in gig economy results in sustainable national economic development.

The effect of the emerging gig economy on economic development is multidimensional. On one side, gig work labor flexibility and alternative employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, other reinforcing income volatility and increasing social inequality, particularly applicable to female and young workers (Chibanda et al., 2022; Foong & Gerber, 2021). The study also highlights that the economic outcomes of the gig economy are more significantly influenced by worker characteristics and market conditions than technological factors alone (Akkermans et al., 2025). Hence, it emphasizes the effectiveness of the gig economy in national development through policy designs and regulatory adaptability (Fusco, 2020; Sun & Muldoon, 2024).

There is also a complex relationship between the nature of algorithmic management and workers' mental health. Even if it allows freedom and effectiveness through algorithm-based systems, many workers have revealed psychological pressure and stress because of high digital control (Cheng et al., 2024; Shi et al., 2025). Therefore, there should be such policies that balance the growth of the digital economy with a policy approach centered on worker welfare besides economic efficiency (A. Zhang et al., 2022).

There is a research gap in the causal relationship between the expansion of the gig economy and macroeconomic development indicators. Most previous studies were focused on micro aspects such as job satisfaction, motivation, or social risks and hence do not integrate their relationship with national economic growth, digital transformation, and public policy into a comprehensive analytical framework. This study attempts to map the relationship between gig economy labor market structures at national levels and economic development through a cross-country scoping review. Thus, this study

will help in the conceptual and empirical formulation of inclusive and sustainable digital economic policies.

2. Research method

This paper uses a scoping review to systematically map both conceptual and empirical developments on the relationship between the gig economy and national economic development. The reason for choosing this approach is because studies which discuss the relationship between the gig economy and macro indicators such as GDP growth, productivity, digital inclusion, etc. are still very fragmented and not yet comprehensively synthesized (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Pollock et al., 2024). Scoping reviews differ from systematic reviews in that they do not primarily judge study quality but instead focus on mapping evidence, thematic trends, and research gaps (Cooper et al., 2021).

2.1. Determining Research Questions

The first stage was the formulation of a principal research question: “How does the gig economy contribute to national economic development based on global evidence published between 2015 and 2025?” This may be further broken down into the following sub-questions:

1. How is the gig economy involved in job creation and income generation across different countries?
2. How is it related to macroeconomic indicators, such as GDP, digitalization, and national productivity?
3. What factors related to institutions, regulations, and technology make the gig economy more or less important for economic development?

Questions are raised based on initial observation that literature on the gig economy shows wide thematic variation and different focuses between countries (Mamadiyarov et al., 2025a; Venkateswaran et al., 2025).

2.2. Identification of Relevant Studies

The researcher developed a search strategy in order to capture all pertinent literature. Academic databases such as Scopus were used in the searching process together with grey literature and policy documents from International Labour Organization, Indonesian Ministry of Power, and Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning among other institutions. A list of keywords was provided by the researcher together with their Boolean combinations: (“gig worker economy” OR “gig opportunities” OR “gig economy employment” OR “gig labor market”) AND (“gig economy contribution” OR “GDP contribution”) AND (“digital labor market” OR “global labor market”).

The researcher performed data retrieval and synthesis using the Watase UAKE application. To preserve quality and pertinence in this review, a set of rules for selections was applied by her. The span of years from 2015–2025 was selected since within the previous decade there has been enormous expansion thru digital platforms worldwide that also include algorithm-based work platforms (Cheng

et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022). Table 1 below summarizes the inclusion and exclusion criteria used in the selection of study materials.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Description
Inclusion	Peer-reviewed articles, policy papers, or conference proceedings published between 2015 and 2025; English language; focused on gig economy, gig employment, and gig economy contribution.
Exclusion	Publications not in English, theoretical works unrelated to gig economy, gig employment, and gig contribution on national economic development.

Source: processed by the author

2.3 Study Selection

The study selection procedure is illustrated in a PRISMA-ScR flow diagram (Figure 1) to clarify the process.

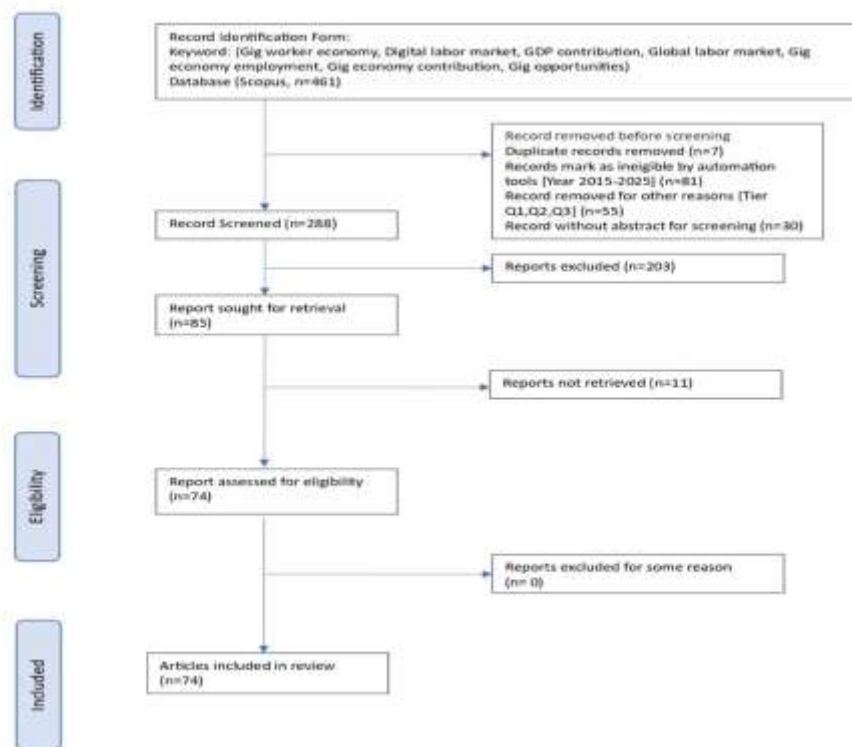


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart for Literature Selection

Source: Data Processed

2.4 Charting the Data

The researcher used a standard charting table that included thematic classifications, authors, and relevant insights to document pertinent publications. This charting table became the foundation for

conducting the thematic synthesis. The process ensured consistency and facilitated easy comprehension in the overall data management process.

2.5 Synthesis and Reporting of Findings

The synthesis process was carried out using thematic synthesis, allowing findings from different types of studies to be combined in a systematic and structured manner. Once all data was obtained through the extraction process, concept categories for each article were identified as a first step. These categories contained key issues of the gig economy included global labor market, digital labor market, and its contribution to macroeconomic indicators among others. This identification process helped keep the scope and focus of each study thus conceptual patterns could be recognized clearly.

The categories were then grouped under broad themes of the relationship between the gig economy and national economic development. This was carried out based on conceptual similarity, direction of findings, and context of study area[1]. However, through this process several themes emerged mapping out main story lines such as roles played by the gig economy in labor absorption; contribution to GDP growth and digital transformation; developed-developing country digital divide; regulatory challenges cascading into worker protection issues as well as sustainability of the digital ecosystem. The paper takes a thematic approach allowing for a greater understanding to be built on how at different country levels the gig economy contributes to macroeconomic structures.

At the final stage, research implications were drawn by considering cross-country variations, differences in digital readiness, and policy factors that influence the development of the gig economy. This helped reveal the fact that the economic impact of gig work is not universal, but is greatly influenced by institutional characteristics, labor market conditions, and regulatory capacity in each country. These findings give a strong room for forming more contextual policy recommendations, especially for developing countries with the dual challenge of digital inequality and weak social protection. The report writing process was based on PRISMA-ScR, hence transparent and consistent reporting of the flow from identification to conclusion in research (Pollock et al., 2024). Therefore, this report provides a scoping review giving a comprehensive summary of global literature while enhancing the credibility of the analytical process.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The process of identification and selection of literature in this study followed the PRISMA-ScR flowchart as shown in the flowchart. At the identification stage, researchers used the keywords: gig worker economy, digital labor market, GDP contribution, global labor market, gig economy employment, and gig opportunities. The search was conducted through the Scopus database and yielded 461 initial documents. All documents obtained were then compiled and processed using the Watase UAKE application to ensure data traceability and metadata extraction accuracy.

The next stage involved initial screening. Several documents were eliminated at this stage based on technical exclusion criteria. Seven (7) duplicate documents were first removed. Eighty-one (81)

documents automatically detected as being outside the valid range of years for consideration (2015-2025) were then removed. Fifty-five (55) documents from journals not meeting the minimum quality standard requirement of Q1-Q3 reputed journals were also eliminated. Thirty (30) more documents without abstracts and thus impossible to perform content screening, were also deleted. Two hundred eighty-eight (288) documents remained for further assessment after this initial screening.

At this stage, researchers reviewed all the documents that had passed screening to check full-text availability. Out of a total of 85 documents finally determined as eligible for further in-depth analysis, 11 could not be accessed or downloaded in their entirety hence they could not be analyzed. The next stage was eligibility assessment. A total of seventy-four reports were obtained in full at this stage and then assessed based on their relevance to the research focus, which is the contribution of the gig economy to employment, economic growth (GDP), and digital transformation. There were no reports excluded at this stage, so all seventy-four reports have been considered eligible for analysis.

A total of 74 official articles addressed in this scoping review were obtained as a result of such organized selection. Later, the articles were analyzed thematically to fish out patterns that would show the gig economy's contribution to expanding employment opportunities, its contribution to GDP, its role in fostering digital transformation, and disparities between developed and developing countries in utilizing opportunities offered by the gig economy. After obtaining 74 research articles to be reviewed, it can be seen that the distribution of articles from 2015 to 2025 varies in frequency of appearance. Below is a figure of the distribution of the 74 selected articles.

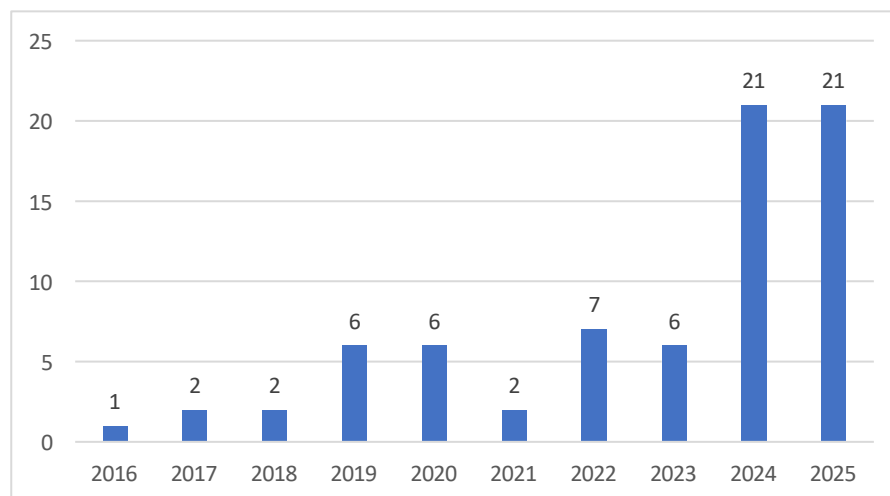


Figure 2. *Distribution of article appearances year by year*

Source: Data Processed

Based on the distribution above, the results of the scoping review show that the collected articles are divided into four main research themes. The following are the results of mapping the articles to the research themes:

Table 2. Frequency Distribution Table of Articles by Theme

Themes	Themes Description	Number of Articles
Theme 1 – Employment & Supplemental Income	discussing job access, additional income, flexibility, work motivation	18
Theme 2 – GDP & Digital Transformation	discussing the contribution of the gig economy to economic growth, digitalization, and national digital transformation	14
Theme 3 – Disparities Developed vs Developing Economies	discussing digital access inequality, platform bias, competency gaps, and the digital divide	16
Theme 4 – Regulation, Worker Protection & Vulnerability	discussing regulations, worker status, social protection, risks, mental health, exploitation	26
Total		74

Source: Data Processed

The themes frequency distribution shows that the most common issues discussed are regulation and protection aspects in addition to insecurity elements within gig economy literature by a total of 26 articles. This dominant thematic content affirms the persistence of key concerns on legal status, employment security, and vulnerability to exploitation among global country studies. The next most dominant theme is developed versus developing countries (16 articles) which indicate that digital divide, access to technology, digital literacy as other structural constraints remain important factors inhibiting ability emerging economies have realize opportunities provided by gig economy.

There are also 18 articles on widening and expanding employment opportunities and extra income describing how the gig economy makes accessible such flexible work for people who cannot find space in the formal labor market. This last theme on GDP contribution of the gig economy and digital transformation contains 14 articles summarizing how digital platforms play a role in productivity increases through prodding and acceleration of digitalization. Generally, this pattern of distribution reveals that gig economy literature is multidimensional hence social, economic, and policy aspects give a holistic view of dynamism in digital work both nationally and globally.

Table 3. Annual Thematic Trends

Year	Dominant Themes
2017–2019	Digital labour, global platforms, algorithmic control
2020	Worker vulnerability & the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
2021–2022	Digital transformation & economic contribution (GDP)
2023	Digital divide & inequality between developed and developing countries
2024–2025	Regulation, policy reform, worker protection, social inclusion

Source: Data Processed

The trend of thematic focus shows a profound change in the main focus of gig economy studies between 2017 and 2025. In 2017–2019, research highlighted as main issues the bases of work via platforms: digital labor, global platforms, algorithmic control. By 2020, the research theme had dramatically shifted to worker vulnerability and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The studies emphasize income insecurity, health risks, and minimal social protection. Meanwhile, this can be viewed as an emerging macro perspective with regard to transformation through digital economies and national economic development that considers productivity (through) platforms and global labor market integration (through) platforms.

By 2023, the digital divide and disparity between developed and developing economies were emphasized as barriers to access to technology, geographic bias, and differences in digital capacity. Trends in research for 2024–2025 comprise dominant issues on regulation, worker protection, and governance of platforms. Increased attention is reflected by the legal status of workers, social protection, mental health, and digital justice. Generally speaking, thematic evolution means that the study on the gig economy is shifting from structural matters to an analysis of socio-economic impacts and regulations-in fact acknowledging the dual role that the gig economy plays both as an economic phenomenon and public policy issue within the context of global development.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Gig Economy's Role in Expanding Employment and Supplemental Income

The gig economy plays an essential role in increasing the provision of access to job opportunities. Digital platforms allow for easier entry into and participation in the labor market for many individuals, as reported by Martindale et al. (2024). Platform workers in the UK can choose and engage in various forms of work-from transport and delivery service work to micro-tasks-that create new forms of inclusive employment opportunities through accessible avenues to previously less attainable work. This corroborates with Giustini (2025) findings, who found that digital platforms in Japan connect employees with increasingly digitized demand for services, thus facilitating people to secure jobs that were previously hard to get formally.

The gig economy has also been shown to provide employment opportunities for vulnerable groups who were previously marginalized in the traditional labor market. An article on workers with

disabilities shows that digital platforms open up wider access for individuals with mobility impairments or discrimination in the formal sector, due to the flexible nature of the work and the lack of rigid physical presence requirements (Harpur & Blanck, 2020). Meanwhile, Altenried (2024) highlights migrant workers and mobile workers utilize gig work to earn income in a labor market context that often limits their participation through strict regulations and administrative requirements.

Apart from widening avenues for jobs, the gig economy happens to be a source of extra earnings for most workers engaged in it. Centeno Maya et al. (2022) found that food couriers in Mexico City use platform jobs as a secondary income that is highly flexible and can easily adjust to the economic needs of the household. Their finding is supported by an article on unemployment and labor force participation, which explains that gig work serves as a financial mitigation mechanism for individuals who are unemployed or experiencing reduced working hours since platforms provide instant access to work that can be immediately monetized (Huang et al., 2020). Flexibility remains the top features of attractions within gig economy jobs, hence workers can adjust hours and intensity of work as suited to their needs. Lükemann (2024) further explains that this kind of flexibility allows not only the adjustment of jobs to personal circumstances but also helps in increasing labor force participation from such groups who find it difficult to commit fixed working hours, like part-timers, parents with household responsibilities, or those who have a main job.

Other dynamics are found in developing countries. A study by Insebayeva & Beyssembayev (2023) in Kazakhstan found that digital platforms increase labor force participation, especially among youth who cannot easily enter the formal labor market. However, Au-Yeung et al. (2025a) emphasized that increased access to work does not necessarily mean stable income since adequate labor protection and social security are lacking, thus making inequality benefits experienced by workers.

Globally, evidence reveals the gig economy as a key factor in supplementary income and employment opportunities for those groups which are hard to incorporate into formal employment. Thus, this kind of impact is highly responsive to the country's regulatory context and economic conditions at any positive impact and vulnerability to income uncertainty if not accompanied by adequate policies on workers' protection.

3.2.2. Gig Economy's Contribution to GDP and Digital Transformation

The results of the scoping review illustrated how intensely engaged the gig economy is in better productivity, widening the labor market, and opening avenues to accelerate digital transformation in deeply driving national economic growth. In a macroeconomic analysis, Finkelstein Shapiro et al. (2024) emphasized new efficiencies created by digital platforms in labor allocation output increased through more responsive market mechanisms and very indirect contributions to GDP growth via increased productivity in the service sector as one of its by-products. Pilatti et al. (2024) found that programs of the digital economy in different countries encourage technology diffusion, expanding platform-based value chains with a multiplier effect on national economic activity.

Digital transformation is also visible in the method gig platforms quicken the infusion of technology into work processes. Aksenova et al. (2024) articulate how economic efficiency is

improved when there is digital platform modernization of public and private sectors, and how the use of data and algorithms supports a more mature digital ecosystem. Insebayeva & Beysembayev (2023) add from a developing country context that gig work drives economic growth via enlarged labor market participation and increased technology adaptation, but its contribution to GDP is still not measured by standard means.

Another factor that determines how much the gig economy contributes to digital transformation is changes in labor market structures. According to Giustini (2025), digitization introduces new forms of work beyond geographical boundaries through which productivity can be realized across different regions. On the other hand, Au-Yeung et al. (2025a) insist that digital platforms are not only job providers but also economic infrastructure that strengthens market connectivity and the diffusion of digital technology.

Around the globe, the gig economy creates economic value through service innovation, labor flexibility, and increased efficiency of an informal sector toward a digital market structure. However, despite its obvious contribution to economic growth and digitalization, standards remain limited on measuring the output of the gig economy, wherein estimates contributions to GDP are, more often than not, recorded explicitly.

3.2.3. Significant Disparities between Advanced and Developing Economies in Capturing Gig Opportunities

Structural and socioeconomic factors are majorly responsible for differences in the provision of enabling environments between developed and developing countries to harness opportunities from the gig economy. In the developed countries, there is an instituted regulatory framework that attempts at least to protect platform workers by trying to classify them as employees-for instance, cases within the European Union (Aloisi, 2016). Structural and socioeconomic factors are majorly responsible for differences in the provision of enabling environments between developed and developing countries to harness opportunities from the gig economy. In the developed countries, there is an instituted regulatory framework that attempts at least to protect platform workers by trying to classify them as employees-for instance, cases within the European Union (Aloisi, 2016)

The digital divide is one of the most significant barriers in developing countries. As stated by Lehdonvirta et al. (2019), workers from a poor country have to pay high costs for the internet, face unstable connections, and lack access to technological devices. Developed countries have more than 80 percent internet penetration while many developing countries still have less than 50 percent, where workers do not have enough access to global platforms.

Differences in skill levels also widen the gap. Stephany (2017) shows that gig workers from developed countries possess higher educational attainments and are more digitally literate, thus better capable of accessing high-value jobs on professional platforms like Upwork or Toptal. On the other hand, lack training and skill development confine workers from developing countries to low-value jobs.

There is higher income volatility and greater financial vulnerability for workers in developing countries. Wood et al. (2019) found that it was simply impossible for African and South Asian workers to ever be out of work long enough to experience such a spell of unemployment; instead, incomes are just highly volatile, with high competition and no social safety net. Their burdens are compounded by payment systems unfriendly to developing countries, likely limited access to PayPal among other restrictions, and high transaction costs (Lehdonvirta et al., 2019).

Also, inequality is increased by algorithmic discrimination and customer bias. Lehdonvirta et al. (2019) found evidence that the work quality of workers from certain countries was rated at a lower level even though it was of the same standard as others. Another important aspect is the “race to the bottom” in which global competition puts extreme pressure on wages, particularly for workers from poorer countries (Anwar & Graham, 2020)

Professional connections and near time zones give another extra advantage to workers from developed countries, according to Lehdonvirta et al. (2019). Therefore, the technology- and skills-based inequality of the gig economy is also a result of systemic interaction between infrastructure and institutions and socio-economic conditions. Such interaction can only be addressed through comprehensive policies that include digital investment, regulatory reform, improvements in human capital, and better rules on platforms.

3.2.4. Ongoing Challenges Related to Regulation, Worker Insecurity, and Limited Social Safety Nets

Globally, particularly in developing economies, gig workers continuously face regulatory challenges on restricted access to social safety in the volatility of their incomes and inadequate legal protection. Most gig workers lack basic benefits such as health insurance and social security due to weak welfare systems (Agarwal et al., 2025; Nagina, 2025; Zvavahera et al., 2024). The project-oriented nature of gig work leads to income instability and job insecurity (Agarwal et al., 2025; Nagina, 2025; Verma & Mehta, 2025; Zvavahera et al., 2024). Many countries from the Global South still miss strong legal systems to ensure fair labor standards thus creating a situation where workers are exploited and have unstable job situations (Agarwal et al., 2025; Albornoz & Chávez, 2024; Ayentimi et al., 2023; Kalbalia & Koushik, 2025; Zvavahera et al., 2024).

Digital access restrictions widen disparities, particularly in rural locations marked by inadequate internet connectivity and low digital literacy. It also develops challenges on algorithmic management such as job distribution bias and performance evaluation while occupational health and safety issues remain for workers in physical sectors such as delivery and domestic work. There is evidence from India, South Africa, Ecuador, and Indonesia that highlights highly contextual challenges like gender inequality issues, infrastructural inadequacy, inconsistency of laws with the interaction between employment legislation and digital banking legislation (Albornoz & Chávez, 2024; Kalbalia & Koushik, 2025; Lesala Khethisa et al., 2020; Sudirman & Disemadi, 2023). The policy should focus on fair remuneration and social protection improvement besides addressing the enhancement of algorithmic transparency through cooperation between policymakers- platforms- workers towards a just sustainable gig economy (Albornoz & Chávez, 2024; Kalbalia & Koushik, 2025; Nagina, 2025; Zvavahera et al., 2024).

Globally, the government has responded by developing policy and regulatory interventions towards better labor protection in the gig economy interventions of extremely diverse designs and effectiveness across jurisdictions. In 2019, China's State Council Guiding Opinion introduced stronger legal accountability for platforms in worker injury cases (Xie et al., 2025). Legislation continues to waver in the United States, with California attempting to redefine gig workers' employment status (Cherry, 2025). The Directive on Platform Work aims at harmonized protection within the European Union member states (Cherry, 2025). Malaysia was urged to enhance programs providing social protection and financial resilience for gig workers during crises and other times (Mohd Daud et al., 2024; Uchiyama et al., 2022), while the Hong Kong government remains ambiguous over the occupational status of gig workers who complicate access to welfare benefits (Au-Yeung et al., 2025b).

There have also been wider moves towards collective bargaining, including the proposed exemption of platform workers from competition laws to allow for representation (Daskalova et al., 2021). However, in countries like Sweden, where structural inequalities or the vulnerability of migrant workers is never on the policy agenda and taxation remains at the center of debate (Webster & Zhang, 2025), such developments are instructive. Australia has a very restricted sector-based approach (Rawling & Schofield-Georges, 2018), while governance scholars call for new forms of social equity-oriented labor regulation that supports minorities most inadequately addressed around the world (Endress, 2024; Nagina, 2025). Gig workers' wages- and benefits-related entitlements and that too in a unified way through comprehensive social protection remain largely unaddressed due to different political priorities and regulatory approaches across countries (Nagina, 2025).

Directly, disparities in regulations and uneven policy responses result in the persistence of worker insecurity and income volatility within the platform economy. A summary of the literature indicates that gig workers suffer high job insecurity, income volatility, and inadequate protection through any form of employment legislation because of the precarious nature of work on platforms. The short-term and self-employed structure of gig contracts fosters instability and lack of mutual commitment between workers and employers which translates to chronic job insecurity (Chafe & Kaida, 2020; Pankaj & Jha, 2024). The same is manifested in emotional stress reflected an imbalance between work life with women being more affected (Luo & Tharumarajah, 2025; Singh et al., 2024). Income volatility is another central issue-around 70% share gig workers whose incomes are unstable resulting in food insecurity as well as financial stress-a problem that increased during COVID-19 pandemic (Nagina, 2025). Most gig workers fall under the category of non-standard employees. Minimal employment protection policies apply to them, hence they cannot be brought under any traditional benefits for health insurance and safety regulations and income security (Pankaj & Jha, 2024)(8). This shall include algorithmic transparency and targeted reforms widening worker protection policies that address vulnerabilities through a minimum wage policy proposed by scholars (Nagina, 2025; Singh et al., 2024). Other gig workers have adapted by pursuing higher education or using gig work as a secondary income source, thus indicating structural precarity with the whole trend in the gig economy (Chafe & Kaida, 2020).

The implementation and design of the social safety nets indicate disparities between countries. The differences reflect the institutional capacities and orientations at different policies. In China, gig workers among them food delivery drivers may opt to voluntarily participate in a social insurance program which has low participation rates compared to compulsory employer-sponsored insurance covering a larger number of recognized employees or subcontractors as workers (H. Zhang & Liu, 2025). Frameworks such as Fairwork Project frame fair labor practices across dimensions including pay, working conditions, and management accountability (Graham et al., 2025). Targeted legislations on issues like bogus self-employment and ensuring access to social protection for platform workers have been initiated in Belgium while Denmark allows the self-employed and platform workers access to unemployment insurance albeit eligibility barriers and voluntary participation (Lenaerts & Gillis, 2025; Jacqueson, 2024). In the case of Malaysia, there is no comprehensive inclusion of gig workers under traditional labor acts. This leaves significant gaps in wages, sick leave, and social security coverage (Abdullah et al., 2024). Wider issues remain pertinent globally: the occupational precarity, limited collective bargaining, health vulnerabilities, and exploitation of legal loopholes due to lack of adequate regulation (Mamadiyarov et al., 2025b). The protection also largely varies by region; localized intervention remains a pressing need on developing flexibility with fairness in the gig economy (Taneja, 2024).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This scoping review highlights the fact that the gig economy is increasingly playing an important role in expanding employment opportunities, supporting digital transformation, and national economic development. In fact, even though it allows for more flexibility in the labor market and provides new channels of income, its share of GDP can hardly be determined due to a lack of relevant standardized frameworks for measurement. The review further reveals large disparities between advanced and emerging economies results owing to differences in digital infrastructure and access to technology, skills, and regulatory preparedness. The persisting challenge on worker precarity, algorithmic control, and limited social protection strongly highlighted governance needs within the digital labor markets.

However, this study has several limitations. The selection of literature depends on auto extraction from the Watase UAKE system which may miss relevant studies due to incomplete metadata. More so, the analysis is also based mainly on titles and abstracts thus limiting in-depth thematic interpretation. There is inadequate geographic representation particularly from the Global South and meanwhile, the quality of studies included varies since scoping reviews do not assess methodological rigor. These constraints indicate a necessity for wider database coverage involving full-text analysis with more standardized indicators assessing the economic impact of the gig economy.

Hence, policies should immediately focus on adaptive regulatory frameworks that ensure decent working conditions and social protection benefits accompanied by algorithmic transparency. A sound digital infrastructure program together with digital literacy in the world's developing economies would help cushion disparities globally. Further research work can consistently develop measures on the

output of the gig economy across countries for comparative analyses to better understand dynamics in a gig economy and thus support more inclusive yet sustainable development policies.

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