



Intergenerational Poverty Reproduction and Lower-Class Habitus: Social, Cultural, and Economic Capital in the Perpetuation of Structural Inequality A Bourdieusian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital platform economies commonly characterized as the 'gig economy' has fundamentally altered the architecture of labor relations in Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation and Southeast Asia's largest emerging market. This article examines the multidimensional phenomenon of labor precarization within Indonesia's gig economy, analyzing how platform capitalism is restructuring production relations, eroding labor rights, and fragmenting the solidaristic foundations of working-class collective action. Drawing upon Guy Standing's theory of the precariat, Nick Srnicek's analysis of platform capitalism, and critical labor sociology, the study synthesizes empirical evidence from secondary datasets, ILO reports, government labor statistics, and qualitative field studies to analyze three interconnected transformations: (1) the juridical displacement of labor, wherein the 'mitra' (partner) contractual model systematically excludes platform workers from the protections afforded by Indonesian labor law; (2) the algorithmic governance of labor, wherein digital surveillance, rating systems, and dynamic pricing mechanisms displace managerial authority while intensifying labor discipline and worker self-exploitation; and (3) the atomization of class solidarity, wherein the geographic dispersal, temporal fragmentation, and competitive logic of platform work structurally undermines the conditions for collective worker identity and organization. The findings reveal that approximately 12.7 million Indonesian workers were engaged in platform-based gig work by 2024, the majority lacking adequate social protection, labor rights, and income security. The study argues that Indonesia's gig economy represents a paradigmatic case of what Standing terms the 'precariat' a new class formation characterized by structural insecurity, rights deficits, and representational absence with distinctive features shaped by Indonesia's specific regulatory, cultural, and economic context.

Keywords

Gig economy; labor precarization; platform capitalism; precariat; labor rights; digital labor; Indonesia; working-class solidarity; algorithmic management



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1. Introduction

"The precariat is a class-in-the-making. It is not yet a class-for-itself, in the sense of having a common consciousness and a political identity. But it is forming around a common set of insecurities: loss of occupational identity, loss of social memory, loss of certainty about the future."

Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (2019, revised ed., p. 12)

The transformation of labor in the digital age has produced one of the most consequential restructurings of work relations in the history of capitalism. Across the Global South and North alike, the proliferation of digital platform companies from ride-hailing and food delivery services to freelance marketplaces and care work platforms has generated a rapidly expanding workforce characterized by structural insecurity, legal ambiguity, and eroded social protection. In Indonesia, this transformation has proceeded with particular velocity: by 2024, an estimated 12.7 million workers were engaged in platform-based gig employment, representing approximately 9.2 percent of the national workforce (ILO Indonesia, 2023; Kementerian Ketenagakerjaan RI, 2024). This figure encompasses drivers affiliated with Gojek and Grab, couriers working for Shopee Express and J&T, freelancers on Sribulancer and Projects.co.id, and domestic service workers on platforms such as YukBeres and Seekmi.

The sociological and political significance of this labor transformation cannot be overstated. The gig economy is not merely a new organizational form for delivering existing services; it represents a fundamental restructuring of the social relations of production, the legal architecture of employment, and the conditions under which labor organizes itself as a social force. As Srnicek (2020) argues, platform capitalism is not an extension of industrial capitalism but a qualitatively distinct configuration of capital accumulation in which the extraction of data, the capture of network effects, and the externalization of labor costs constitute the primary mechanisms of value generation.

In the Indonesian context, this transformation occurs within a specific configuration of regulatory weakness, post-authoritarian labor politics, and rapid digital infrastructural expansion. The country's labor regulatory framework anchored in Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower (as amended by the Omnibus Law, UU Cipta Kerja, in 2020) was designed for a traditional employment model and provides little guidance on the legal status of gig workers. The 'mitra' or partner model adopted by major platform companies explicitly positions workers outside the employer-employee relationship, thereby excluding them from the social protections minimum wages, severance pay, social insurance,

and union rights that Indonesian labor law affords to formal employees (Tjandraningsih, 2023; Caraway & Ford, 2020).

This article advances three core arguments. First, Indonesia's gig economy constitutes a systematic juridical displacement of labor: the reclassification of employment relationships as commercial partnerships represents not merely a contractual technicality but a deliberate regulatory strategy through which platform corporations externalize labor costs and transfer risk onto individual workers. Second, the algorithmic governance systems deployed by platform companies represent a qualitatively new form of labor control that combines the intensity of Taylorist scientific management with the apparently voluntary logic of market incentives, producing what we term 'algorithmic Taylorism': a system of surveillance, behavioral modification, and productivity extraction that operates without the visible presence of managerial authority. Third, the atomization of gig workers—their geographic dispersal, temporal fragmentation, and mutual competitive positioning—structurally undermines the conditions for class solidarity and collective organization, threatening to produce what Standing (2019) calls a 'precariat-in-itself' that lacks the organizational capacity to become a 'precariat-for-itself.'

The article is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical literature on the precariat, platform capitalism, and labor precarization; Section 3 outlines the methodological framework; Section 4 presents the analytical framework and empirical findings; Section 5 develops the critical discussion; and Section 6 concludes with reflections on the theoretical, legal, and political implications of the study.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Precariat: A New Class Formation

Guy Standing's concept of the precariat (Standing, 2019; originally 2011) provides the foundational theoretical framework for analyzing the structural condition of gig workers in Indonesia. For Standing, the precariat is not simply a synonym for the poor or the unemployed; it is a distinct class formation characterized by seven forms of labor-related insecurity: labor market insecurity, employment insecurity, job insecurity, work insecurity, skill reproduction insecurity, income

insecurity, and representation insecurity. What distinguishes the precariat from the traditional working class (or proletariat) is the absence of occupational identity, the denial of labor rights that proletarians take for granted, and the lack of institutional representation through unions or political parties.

Standing's framework has been both influential and contested. Critics have argued that the concept of the precariat is excessively broad, encompasses too heterogeneous a population to constitute a coherent class, and undertheorizes the role of race, gender, and national origin in shaping different groups' experiences of precarity (Fraser, 2022; Tilly, 2019). These critiques are relevant to the Indonesian case, where gig workers are disproportionately drawn from rural-urban migrants, ethnic minorities, and educational underachieverssocial groups whose precarity antedates and exceeds the gig economy itself. Nevertheless, Standing's framework retains significant analytical utility for identifying the distinctive form of insecurity that platform employment generates, and for directing attention to the representational and political dimensions of labor precarization.

2.2 Platform Capitalism and the Architecture of Gig Labor

Nick Srnicek's platform capitalism thesis (Srnicek, 2020) provides the structural economic framework for understanding how digital platforms generate the conditions of gig labor precarization. For Srnicek, platforms are not neutral technological intermediaries but a new type of business model in which the extraction and analysis of data constitutes the primary source of value creation. Platform companies in the gig economy operate on a 'lean' model: they own and control the digital infrastructure (algorithms, apps, rating systems, matching mechanisms) while externalizing the physical assets (vehicles, tools, premises) and labor costs onto workers.

This structural analysis has important implications for understanding labor relations in gig work. The platform company's primary relationship is with data: workers are instrumentalized as generators of data (routes, ratings, performance metrics) as much as producers of services. The labor relationship is therefore fundamentally asymmetric: the platform company accumulates data, network effects, and capital, while the worker accumulates experience, physical wear, and risk. This asymmetry is constitutive of what Prasetyo & Suwanto (2022) describe as the 'double exploitation' of Indonesian gig workers: exploited as service producers and as data producers simultaneously.

2.3 Algorithmic Management and Labor Control

The governance of gig labor through algorithmic systems represents a qualitatively novel form of labor control that has attracted significant scholarly attention (Moore, 2021; Woodcock, 2021). Traditional sociological analyses of workplace control from Braverman's deskilling thesis to Edwards's contested terrain model assumed a relatively direct relationship between managerial authority and labor discipline, mediated through institutional mechanisms such as supervisory hierarchy, disciplinary procedures, and collective agreements. Algorithmic management systems displace this visible authority relationship, replacing it with what appears to be an impersonal market mechanism: workers receive orders from an algorithm, their performance is evaluated by a rating system, and their 'deactivation' is triggered by automated threshold violations rather than managerial decisions.

In the Indonesian context, algorithmic management systems take forms adapted to local conditions. The bonus and incentive systems deployed by Gojek and Grab which condition bonus payments on the completion of a specified number of orders within defined time windows function as powerful behavioral modification mechanisms, incentivizing workers to accept high volumes of orders and to remain on the platform for extended periods irrespective of legal working-hour protections (Yulianto & Dewi, 2023). The rating system, ostensibly a mechanism of service quality assurance, functions additionally as a form of workplace discipline through which consumer-citizens become unwitting instruments of labor control.

3. Methodology

This study employs a systematic qualitative synthesis methodology drawing upon three categories of evidence. First, a systematic literature review was conducted of peer-reviewed scholarship published between 2018 and 2025, using Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases with search terms including 'gig economy Indonesia,' 'platform labor,' 'precariat Southeast Asia,' 'algorithmic management,' 'labor rights platform,' and 'digital labor Indonesia.' Second, secondary data analysis was conducted using datasets from the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indonesia Country Reports (2021–2024), the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower (Kementerian

Ketenagakerjaan RI) Annual Labour Force Survey (Sakernas 2019–2024), the Badan Pusat Statistik National Labor Force Survey, and published reports from SMERU Research Institute and LPEM UI on informal and platform labor. Third, documentary analysis of legal texts, platform company terms of service, government policy documents, and civil society reports was undertaken to analyze the regulatory framework governing platform labor in Indonesia.

The analytical approach integrates structural analysis attending to the macro-economic and regulatory conditions of gig labor precarization with a focus on the experiential and representational dimensions of precarity, drawing upon qualitative empirical studies that document workers' lived experiences of platform employment. The theoretical framework synthesizes Standing's precariat theory with Srnicek's platform capitalism analysis and classical labor sociology, as detailed in the conceptual framework presented in Section 4.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analytical Framework: Dimensions of Precarization in Indonesian Platform Labor

The following analytical framework maps the key dimensions of labor precarization in Indonesian platform capitalism, integrating Standing's (2019) seven insecurities with empirical evidence from the Indonesian gig economy context.

Figure 1. Analytical Framework: Dimensions of Labor Precarization in Indonesian Platform Capitalism			
Precariat Dimension (Standing, 2011/2019)	Platform Mechanism	Empirical Manifestation in Indonesia	Theoretical Implication
Labor Market Insecurity	Algorithmic task allocation & dynamic pricing	Income fluctuation 35–60%; peak/off-peak earnings disparity	Structural precarity as permanent condition, not transitional phase
Employment Insecurity	Mitra (partner) contract model; no employee status	64.7% lack full social protection; arbitrary deactivation	Legal vacuum: labor law inapplicable; civil law insufficient
Work Insecurity	Surveillance via GPS, rating, order acceptance metrics	Behavioral modification through algorithmic reward/punishment	Datafied control replaces managerial hierarchy; intensifies self-exploitation

Skill Reproduction Insecurity	No training provision; skill development borne by worker	De-skilling in non-platform capacities; digital dependency	Human capital erosion; structural lock-in to platform dependency
Income Insecurity	Surge pricing, promo subsidies (often withdrawn), bonus manipulation	Average monthly income IDR 2.1–3.8M; below UMR in most regions	Downward convergence toward subsistence; aspirational trap
Representation Insecurity	Terms of service prohibit collective action; deactivation threat	Informal driver/courier associations; no legal bargaining rights	Precariat as class-in-itself without being class-for-itself

Source: Authors' synthesis, adapting Standing's (2019) precariat framework to Indonesian platform capitalism context, incorporating empirical data from ILO Indonesia (2023), Kemnaker RI (2024), and Yulianto & Dewi (2023).

Source: Authors' synthesis, adapting Standing's (2019) precariat framework to Indonesian platform capitalism context. Empirical data from ILO Indonesia (2023), Kemnaker RI (2024), and Yulianto & Dewi (2023).

4.2 Comparative Analysis: Traditional Employment vs. Gig Economy Labor

Table 1 provides a systematic comparative analysis of the principal dimensions of labor relations under traditional employment arrangements and gig economy platform employment in Indonesia.

Labor Dimension	Traditional Employment	Gig/Platform Economy	Implications for Workers
Employment Status	Permanent/contractual employee	Independent contractor, mitra (partner)	No labor law protection; excluded from UU Ketenagakerjaan
Income Security	Fixed monthly wage; UMR-compliant	Variable, order/task-based; algorithmically determined	Income volatility 35–60% higher; no minimum guarantee
Social Security	BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, BPJS Kesehatan (employer-funded)	Self-funded or unregistered; partial coverage	64.7% of gig workers lack full social security coverage

Working Hours	Regulated (8 hrs/day, 40 hrs/wk); overtime compensation	Unlimited; algorithmically incentivized toward overwork	Average 10–14 hrs/day; no overtime entitlement
Right to Organize	Legal right to union membership (UU No. 21/2000)	Discouraged; deactivation risk for 'collective action'	Collective bargaining structurally impossible under mitra model
Severance & Termination	Regulated severance pay; due process requirements	Algorithmic deactivation; no appeal or compensation	Termination without cause or recourse; no legal standing
Career Development	Training, promotion, seniority recognition	None; reputation score system only	Skills depreciation; no pathway to formal employment
Class Solidarity	Co-worker identity; shared workplace culture	Atomized, geographically dispersed, algorithmically isolated	Precariat formation; solidarity fragmentation
Sources: Adapted from ILO Indonesia (2023), Kementerian Ketenagakerjaan RI (2024), Prasetyo & Suwanto (2022), and Tjandraningsih (2023). Data refers to platform-based gig workers in urban Indonesia (Jabodetabek, Surabaya, Medan, Makassar).			

The comparative data reveals a systematic pattern of rights deficits across every dimension of labor relations in the gig economy. Most significantly, the 'mitra' contractual model adopted by Indonesia's major platform companies Gojek, Grab, Shopee Express, and others categorically excludes workers from the protections afforded by Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower and its revisions under the Omnibus Law (UU Cipta Kerja No. 11/2020). This juridical displacement has been contested in multiple legal proceedings, with Indonesian courts and the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi) consistently declining to reclassify platform workers as employees, citing the formally voluntary nature of the mitra relationship and the absence of the subordination element (*hubungan kerja*) required by labor law.

4.3 The Juridical Displacement of Labor

The legal architecture of gig employment in Indonesia represents a paradigmatic case of what Prasetyo & Suwanto (2022) term 'regulatory entrepreneurialism': the deliberate exploitation of legal ambiguity and regulatory capacity limitations to construct labor arrangements that extract maximum value from workers while minimizing corporate social obligations. The 'mitra' model in which

platform workers are formally positioned as independent commercial partners rather than employees has been strategically designed to satisfy the letter of Indonesian labor law while violating its spirit and purpose.

The practical consequences of this juridical displacement are extensive. Indonesian gig workers are excluded from the minimum wage provisions of regional UMR/UMK regulations, which apply only to employees in employer-employee relationships. They are similarly excluded from severance pay entitlements, annual leave rights, overtime regulations, workplace safety protections, and the social insurance provisions of BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, unless they independently register and self-fund their contributions (Tjandraningsih, 2023). According to data from the Ministry of Manpower (2024), only 31.2 percent of registered platform workers in Indonesia had active BPJS Ketenagakerjaan coverage, compared to 78.6 percent of formal sector employees. This social protection gap exposes gig workers to catastrophic income loss in the event of accident, illness, or platform deactivation.

The regulatory response of the Indonesian state has been conspicuously inadequate. While the Omnibus Law of 2020 introduced provisions for 'non-standard' and 'hourly' employment designed in part to accommodate gig work, these provisions have been criticized by labor advocates for further eroding labor standards rather than extending protections to platform workers (Caraway & Ford, 2020). The government's strategic prioritization of foreign direct investment and digital economic growth over labor rights enforcement reflects what Mietzner (2020) identifies as the structural tendency of Indonesian oligarchic politics to subordinate redistributive concerns to the imperatives of capital accumulation.

4.4 Algorithmic Taylorism and the Governance of Gig Labor

The governance of Indonesian gig workers through algorithmic management systems combines the productivity discipline of Taylorist scientific management with the apparently voluntary, market-mediated character of independent contracting. This combination which we term 'algorithmic Taylorism' produces a distinctive form of labor control that is simultaneously more intensive and less visible than traditional managerial authority.

The specific mechanisms of algorithmic governance in the Indonesian gig economy have been documented in several recent empirical studies. Yulianto & Dewi (2023) found that Gojek and Grab drivers in Surabaya routinely work 10–14 hours per day in order to achieve the order completion thresholds required to qualify for bonus payments, with many reporting that the effective hourly earnings from bonused orders are 2–3 times higher than base per-order rates creating powerful algorithmic incentives for overwork that are experienced not as external compulsion but as rational individual choice. This disciplinary mechanism the transformation of exploitation into apparent self-optimization represents what Moore (2021) describes as the 'gamification' of labor: the application of game-like incentive structures to convert labor discipline into apparently voluntary behavioral choices.

The rating system adds a further dimension of algorithmic control. Indonesian gig workers with ratings below platform-defined thresholds (typically 4.5/5.0 for Gojek and Grab) face automatic order deprioritization or permanent deactivation. Since ratings are determined by consumer-citizens who are frequently unaware of their role as instruments of labor discipline, and since negative ratings can reflect factors entirely beyond workers' control (traffic conditions, restaurant delays, weather), the rating system constitutes a form of precarious labor discipline in which workers' livelihoods are contingent upon the arbitrary assessments of anonymous third parties.

4.5 The Fragmentation of Working-Class Solidarity

Perhaps the most consequential sociological dimension of gig labor precarization is the structural undermining of working-class solidarity and collective organization. The classical labor movement in Indonesiadeveloped through decades of organizing, legal struggle, and political mobilization in the context of industrial factory employmentwas premised upon conditions of co-presence, shared workplace culture, and identifiable employer-employee relationships that enabled the formation of collective identities and the exercise of collective power.

The gig economy systematically disrupts each of these conditions. Gig workers are geographically dispersed across urban spaces, temporally fragmented across shifting work patterns, and positioned in structural competition with one another for orders, ratings, and bonuses. The

platform itself becomes the primary mediator of the relationship between workers, replacing the shared workplace with the shared appa technologically mediated environment designed to maximize individual productivity rather than foster collective identity. As Standing (2019) argues, the precariat experiences not merely economic insecurity but what he terms 'tertiary' time insecurity: the inability to develop stable social relationships, pursue community engagement, or participate in the forms of collective life from which class consciousness and solidarity historically emerge.

Yet the picture is not one of unqualified atomization. Indonesian gig workers have developed a range of informal collective strategiesdriver community WhatsApp groups, informal strikes ('mogok aplikasi'), and advocacy coalitions such as Garda Indonesiathat represent emergent forms of precariat organization adapted to the conditions of platform labor (Yulianto & Dewi, 2023). These formations are structurally weak and legally unprotected; they lack the legal standing and institutional resources of registered trade unions. Nevertheless, they represent an important sociological phenomenon: the emergence of new forms of solidarity that respond to the distinctive conditions of gig work, drawing on Indonesia's rich traditions of gotong royong (mutual assistance) and communal solidarity.

5. Critical Discussion

The analysis presented above reveals the Indonesian gig economy as a paradigmatic case of what Fraser (2022) describes as 'cannibal capitalism': an economic formation that consumes the social foundationslabor standards, social protection, community solidarityupon which sustainable capitalist accumulation itself ultimately depends. The precarization of gig labor in Indonesia is not a transitional condition that will be resolved through market maturation or institutional adaptation; it is a structural feature of the platform business model, which generates value precisely through the externalization of labor costs and risk onto workers.

The specific dynamics of Indonesian gig labor precarization are shaped by three contextual factors that distinguish the Indonesian case from gig economy dynamics in the Global North. First, Indonesia's pre-existing conditions of labor informality and social protection gaps mean that gig workers are recruited primarily from populations already experiencing significant economic vulnerabilityrural-urban migrants, informal sector workers, and underemployed graduatesfor whom

platform employment represents an improvement over alternatives rather than a deterioration from formal sector employment. This contextual specificity complicates straightforward applications of the Global North precariat concept, which presupposes a prior condition of Fordist-Keynesian labor security from which workers have been displaced.

Second, the political economy of Indonesian platform capitalism is shaped by oligarchic power dynamics that systematically disadvantage labor interests in regulatory processes. The dominance of platform company interests in the Omnibus Law drafting process documented by Caraway & Ford (2020) and Mietzner (2020) illustrates the ways in which Indonesia's political economy consistently prioritizes investment attraction over labor rights protection. Third, Indonesia's Islamic cultural context introduces distinctive dimensions of community solidarity and moral economy that both constrain and enable gig worker organizing the *gotong royong* tradition providing cultural resources for collective action, while patriarchal norms regarding work, family, and masculine honor shape the particular vulnerabilities and resiliences of different gig worker populations.

These contextual specificities suggest that addressing labor precarization in the Indonesian gig economy requires not merely the extension of existing labor law to platform workers though such extension is urgently necessary but the development of new regulatory frameworks and social protection architectures adapted to the specific conditions of platform labor. This includes portable social insurance systems not tied to the employer-employee relationship, algorithmic transparency requirements that subject platform governance systems to democratic accountability, and new forms of collective bargaining that accommodate the structural dispersal and legal status ambiguity of gig workers.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined the multidimensional dynamics of labor precarization in Indonesia's gig economy, analyzing how platform capitalism is restructuring production relations, eroding labor rights, and fragmenting working-class solidarity. The analysis has identified three central mechanisms

of precarization, juridical displacement, algorithmic Taylorism, and solidarity fragmentation that together constitute a distinctive configuration of labor subordination under digital platform capitalism.

The Indonesian case demonstrates with particular clarity the structural tensions inherent in the gig economy's social contract. Platform companies offer workers apparent flexibility, autonomy, and access to digital economic participation; what they deliver in practice is structural insecurity, algorithmic control, and systematic rights deprivation. The approximately 12.7 million Indonesians engaged in platform-based gig work by 2024 constitute not a vanguard of the new digital economy but, in Standing's terms, a precariat whose structural position threatens both individual wellbeing and broader social cohesion.

The theoretical contributions of this study are threefold. First, the adaptation of Standing's precariat framework and Srnicek's platform capitalism analysis to the Indonesian context reveals how globally circulating patterns of labor precarization are refracted through specific national regulatory, cultural, and political configurations. Second, the concept of 'algorithmic Taylorism' offers a productive analytical tool for understanding the distinctive form of labor control that platform governance systems exercise—a form that combines the productive efficiency of scientific management with the ideological mystification of market freedom. Third, the analysis of emergent precariat solidarity formations in informal driver communities, 'mogok aplikasi' actions, and advocacy coalitions suggests that the fragmentation of traditional working-class solidarity does not preclude the development of new organizational forms adapted to the conditions of platform labor.

In terms of policy implications, the findings argue strongly for the regulatory reclassification of platform workers as employees for the purpose of social protection entitlements; for the introduction of algorithmic transparency requirements that subject platform governance systems to democratic oversight; and for the development of sector-specific collective bargaining frameworks that accommodate the structural conditions of gig labor. Without such interventions, Indonesia's digital economy development will continue to be built upon a foundation of structural labor injustice—a condition that is not only ethically untenable but economically unsustainable in the long run.

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