



Work-Life Balance as a Pathway to Improve Gig Workers Performance in Indonesia: The Role of Flexible Work Arrangement and Job Autonomy (Study of Transportation Sector in West Java, Central Java, East Java Provinces)

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of the gig economy in Indonesia's transportation sector offers workers a high degree of flexibility and autonomy, but it also poses challenges in maintaining a work-life balance, which impacts performance. This study analyzes the influence of Flexible Work Arrangements and Job Autonomy on Gig Worker Performance, with Work-Life Balance as an intermediary variable. Using a quantitative survey approach, data was collected from gig workers in West Java, Central Java, and East Java who met specific criteria. The findings aim to provide insights into how flexible work structures and autonomy influence performance through work-life balance. These findings are expected to contribute to academic discussions and practical policies to enhance the well-being and productivity of gig workers in the digital economy.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital platforms has driven the growth of the gig economy in Indonesia, particularly in the transportation sector. Gig workers are individuals who work independently through digital platforms to complete tasks on demand within a certain period (Taylor, Marsh, Nicol, & Broadbent, 2017; Afifa, Khailany, Dzulkirom, Sitompul, & Savirani, 2021). This work system offers high flexibility and autonomy, allowing workers to set their own schedules and choose which platforms to use simultaneously (DoorDash, 2021).

However, this flexibility also presents challenges, such as unpredictable workloads, income uncertainty, and difficulty maintaining a work-life balance (Donovan, Bradley, & Shimabukuro, 2016; Schmidt, Dellen, Philip, & Islam, 2023). Data from the 2024 National Labor Force Survey (Sakernas) by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that gig workers in Indonesia are concentrated in three main provinces: West Java, Central Java, and East Java, which collectively account for 74% of the national gig worker population (Permana, Izzati, & Askar, 2023; BPS, 2024).

The performance of gig workers is highly dependent on their ability to balance work flexibility and professional demands. When flexibility and autonomy are not supported by a conducive work system, workers are vulnerable to stress and fatigue, which negatively impact performance (Keban, Hernawan, & Novianto, 2021; Pakpahan, 2020). In this context, work-life balance plays an important mediating role in linking the influence of flexible work arrangements and job autonomy on performance (Guduru & Santhanam, 2024).

Although previous studies have examined the gig economy from economic and legal perspectives, empirical studies that specifically explore the relationship between work flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, and the performance of gig workers in Indonesia are still very limited (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). However, according to BPS (2024), the majority of the workforce in Indonesia is still in the informal sector, which shares similar characteristics with the gig economy.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of Flexible Work Arrangements and Job Autonomy on Gig Workers' Performance, with Work-Life Balance as a mediating variable. The focus of this study is on the transportation sector in the provinces of West Java, Central Java, and East Java. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of human resource management and serve as a practical reference for the formulation of work policies on digital transportation platforms to support the well-being and productivity of gig workers in Indonesia.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Gig Economy

The gig economy is a short-term task-based economic model facilitated by digital platforms. Work in the gig economy is demand-driven, paid based on output, and usually without a permanent employment contract (Stanford, 2017; Wood, Lehdonvirta, & Graham, 2018). Gig workers tend to have flexibility in terms of time, location, and work methods, as well as autonomy in choosing suitable projects (Taylor et al., 2017).

Gig Workers Performance

Gig worker performance refers to the quality of work output, time efficiency, and client satisfaction (Koopmans, 2012; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Unlike permanent employees, gig worker performance evaluations are more short-term and rely on direct feedback from customers or digital platform rating systems (Ran & Zhao, 2023).

Flexible Work Arrangement

Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) refers to the extent to which workers have control over the time, location, and manner in which they complete their work (Carlson, 2010). FWA consists of three dimensions: time flexibility, timing flexibility, and place flexibility. In the context of the gig economy, this flexibility is considered one of the main attractions that gives workers freedom in managing their workload and time (Anwar & Graham, 2021).

Previous research by Guduru & Santhanam (2024) shows that FWA has a significant influence on the performance of gig workers, with work-life balance as a mediator. Research by Wulandari & Luturlean (2022) also supports that work flexibility can directly improve work-life balance and performance.

H1: Flexible Work Arrangement has a positive effect on Gig Workers Performance

H4: Flexible Work Arrangement has a positive effect on Work-Life Balance

Job Autonomy

Job autonomy is the degree of freedom that workers have in scheduling their work, choosing their working methods, and making decisions in the performance of their duties (Johari, 2018). In the gig economy, job autonomy is a key component that allows workers to manage their work activities without direct supervision (Pichault & McKeown, 2019).

Research by Syakarofath & Suryowibowo (2024) states that job autonomy can strengthen the positive impact of flexibility on performance. Guduru & Santhanam (2024) also confirm that job autonomy directly influences the performance of gig workers, with work-life balance as a mediating pathway.

H2: Job Autonomy has a positive effect on Gig Workers' Performance

H5: Job Autonomy positively influences Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance refers to an individual's ability to harmoniously balance the demands of work and personal life (Fisher, 2009). In flexible work ecosystems such as the gig economy, work-life balance is important because workers are prone to stress, fatigue, and irregular working hours (Warren, 2021). Research by Samantha (2021) and Tamunomiebi & Oyibo (2020) shows that good work-life balance can improve job satisfaction and performance. Guduru & Santhanam (2024) prove that work-life balance acts as a significant mediator between work flexibility and gig workers' performance.

H3: Work-Life Balance has a positive effect on Gig Workers' Performance

H6a: Work-Life Balance mediates the influence of Flexible Work Arrangements on Gig Workers' Performance

H6b: Work-Life Balance mediates the influence of Job Autonomy on Gig Workers' Performance

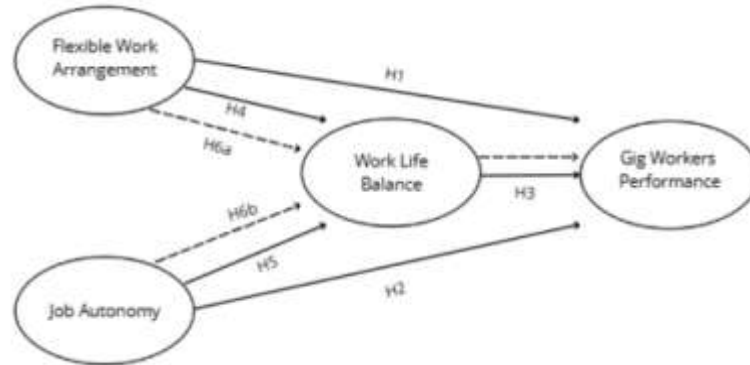


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to analyze the influence of Flexible Work Arrangement and Job Autonomy on Gig Workers' Performance, with Work-Life Balance as a mediating variable. This study was conducted on gig workers in the digital platform-based transportation sector, such as Gojek, Grab, and Maxim.

The population in this study consists of gig workers in the transportation sector operating in three provinces with the highest concentration of gig workers in Indonesia, namely West Java, Central Java, and East Java. The sample was determined using purposive sampling with the following criteria: minimum age of 17 years, minimum of 3 months of work experience, minimum of 40 working hours per week, and use of digital transportation platforms in carrying out their work.

The number of respondents included in the sample for this study was 210 gig workers. Data was collected through an online questionnaire designed based on indicators from each research variable.

The data analysis technique used was Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software. This analysis was used to test the direct relationship between variables, as well as the mediating role of Work-Life Balance between Flexible Work Arrangement and Job Autonomy on Gig Workers' Performance. The validity and reliability of the instruments were tested through the outer model (convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability), while the relationships between variables were tested through the inner model (path coefficient, R-square, and mediation test).

RESEARCH RESULTS

The characteristics of the respondents in this study consist of gig workers in the digital transportation sector residing in three main provinces, namely West Java, Central Java, and East Java. A total of 300 respondents were successfully

collected through the distribution of online questionnaires. The majority of respondents were from West Java, followed by East Java and Central Java. Most respondents were male and in the productive age range of 25 to 40 years old, which is the dominant age group in the gig economy. The respondents' educational backgrounds varied, ranging from high school graduates to university graduates, with the largest proportion being high school/vocational school graduates.

In terms of work experience, most respondents have been working as gig workers for more than one year, indicating a fairly high level of involvement in the gig economy ecosystem. Most respondents work full-time with working hours exceeding 40 hours per week, with some even reaching over 60 hours, indicating a fairly high workload. The most commonly used digital platforms among respondents include Gojek, Grab, and Maxim. Respondents also cited diverse motivations for working, ranging from time flexibility, financial needs, to the lack of alternative job options. These characteristics highlight the complex social and economic dynamics of gig workers in the transportation sector, which require careful consideration in the formulation of future labor policies.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis of Flexible Work Arrangement Variable

Variable	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Percentage
<i>Flexible Work Arrangement</i>	FWA1	3	10	54	178	55	1172	78.13%
	FWA2	1	2	38	157	102	1257	83.80%
	FWA3	0	3	41	131	125	1278	85.20%
	FWA4	1	3	47	126	123	1267	84.47%
	FWA5	0	1	39	134	126	1285	85.67%
	FWA6	0	1	46	120	133	1285	85.67%
Total							7544	
Average							1257.33	
Percentage							83.82%	
Category							High	

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Job Autonomy Variable

Variable	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Percentage
<i>Job Autonomy</i>	JA1	2	10	38	164	86	1222	81.47%
	JA2	4	9	36	127	124	1258	83.87%
	JA3	1	3	42	126	128	1277	85.13%
	JA4	1	4	44	129	122	1267	84.47%
	JA5	2	2	45	131	120	1265	84.33%

Variable	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Percentage
	JA6	0	3	41	124	132	1285	85.67%
Total							7574	
Average							1262.33	
Percentage							84.16%	
Category							Very High	

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Work-Life Balance Variable

Variable	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Percentage
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	WLB 1	9	17	32	156	86	1193	79.53%
	WLB 2	3	16	39	132	110	1230	82.00%
	WLB3	3	9	48	129	111	1236	82.40%
	WLB4	1	10	43	134	112	1246	83.07%
	WLB5	0	6	39	142	113	1262	84.13%
	WLB6	0	3	38	139	120	1276	85.07%
	WLB 7	0	3	37	124	136	1293	86.20%
	WLB8	0	14	40	118	128	1260	84.00%
Total							9996	
Average							1249.5	
Percentage							83.30%	
Category							High	

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis of Gig Workers Performance Variable

Variable	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Percentage
<i>Gig Workers Performance</i>	GWP1	2	4	39	163	92	1239	82.60%
	GWP2	0	4	47	138	111	1256	83.73%
	GWP3	0	4	48	138	110	1254	83.60%
	GWP4	0	1	46	124	129	1281	85.40%
	GWP5	1	4	47	127	121	1263	84.20%
	GWP6	0	4	30	118	148	1310	87.33%
	GWP7	0	0	35	137	128	1293	86.20%
	GWP8	1	4	32	122	141	1298	86.53%
	GWP9	0	9	34	126	131	1279	85.27%
	GWP10	0	6	30	140	124	1282	85.47%

Variable	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Percentage
Total							12755	
Average							1275.5	
Percentage							85.03%	
Category							Very High	

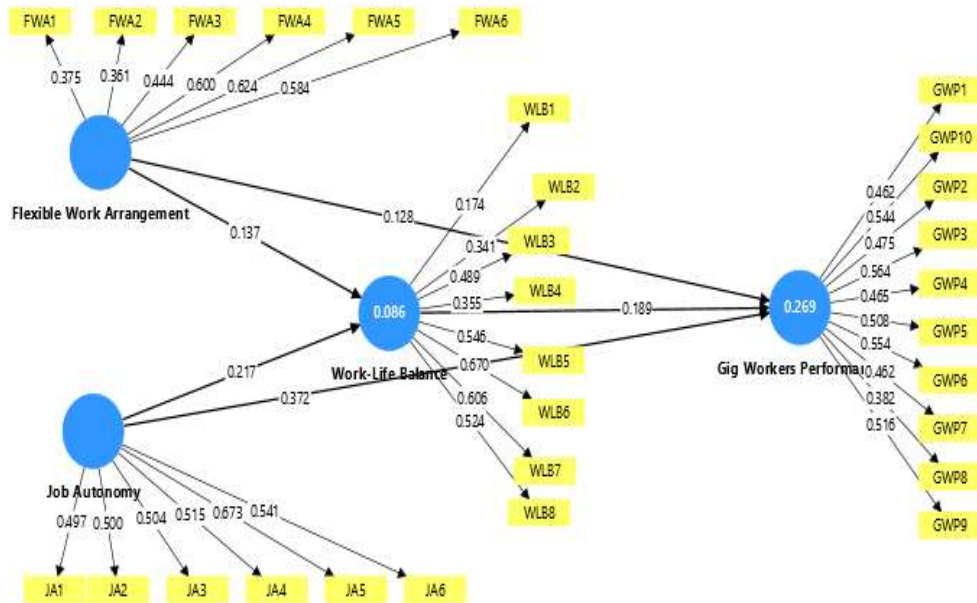


Figure 2. Path Diagram Outer Model

Several indicators in each variable in this study showed low outer loading values and did not meet the validity threshold, namely FWA1-FWA3 (Flexible Work Arrangement), JA1 (Job Autonomy), GWP1, GWP2, GWP4, GWP7, GWP8 (Gig Workers Performance), and WLB1-WLB4 (Work-Life Balance). Therefore, these indicators were eliminated from the model, and the simplified model was retested. The result was a new model structure that only included statistically valid indicators and served as the basis for further analysis, with the following results:

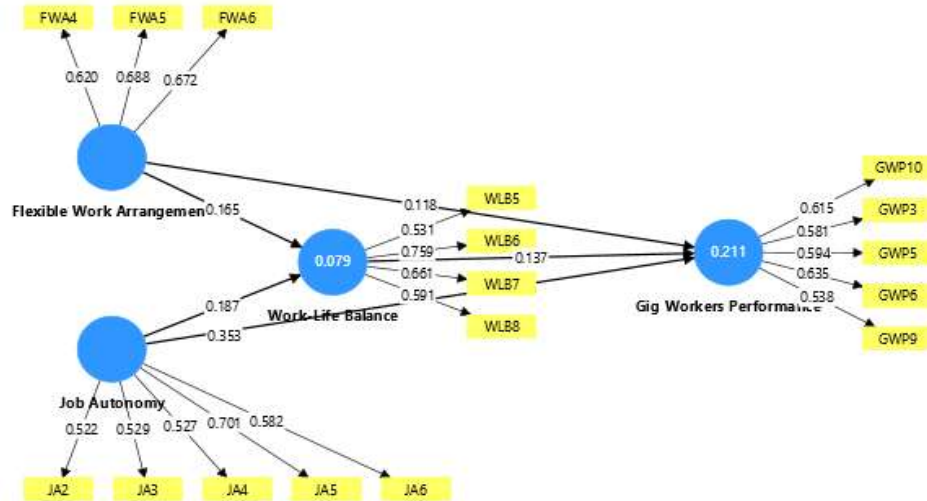


Figure 3. Path Diagram Outer Model -Valid

With these validity criteria fulfilled, the evaluation of the quality of construct measurement can proceed. Next, the researchers present the model measurements as shown in the following table:

Table 5. Outer Loading Result

Indicator	Flexible Work Arrangement	Gig Workers Performance	Job Autonomy	Work-Life Balance
FWA4	0.620			
FWA5	0.688			
FWA6	0.672			
GWP10		0.615		
GWP3		0.581		
GWP5		0.594		
GWP6		0.635		
GWP9		0.538		
JA2			0.522	
JA3			0.529	
JA4			0.527	
JA5			0.534	
JA6			0.701	
WLB5				0.531
WLB6				0.759
WLB7				0.661
WLB8				0.591

The construct reliability test was conducted by looking at the composite reliability value, as shown in the following table:

Table 5. Reability Test

Variable	Composite Reability	Critical Value
Flexible Work Arrangement	0,699	.>0,6
Gig Workers Performance	0,730	
Job Autonomy	0,730	
Work-Life Balance	0,733	

Based on the composite reliability test results, all variables in this study showed values above the minimum threshold of 0.6, indicating that the four constructs have adequate reliability. The Flexible Work Arrangement variable has a value of 0.699, while Gig Workers Performance and Job Autonomy each have a value of 0.730, and Work-Life Balance has a value of 0.733. This indicates that the indicators for each variable are consistent and reliable in measuring the intended constructs.

The following figure presents the results of structural model testing (inner model) that describes the relationship between research variables:

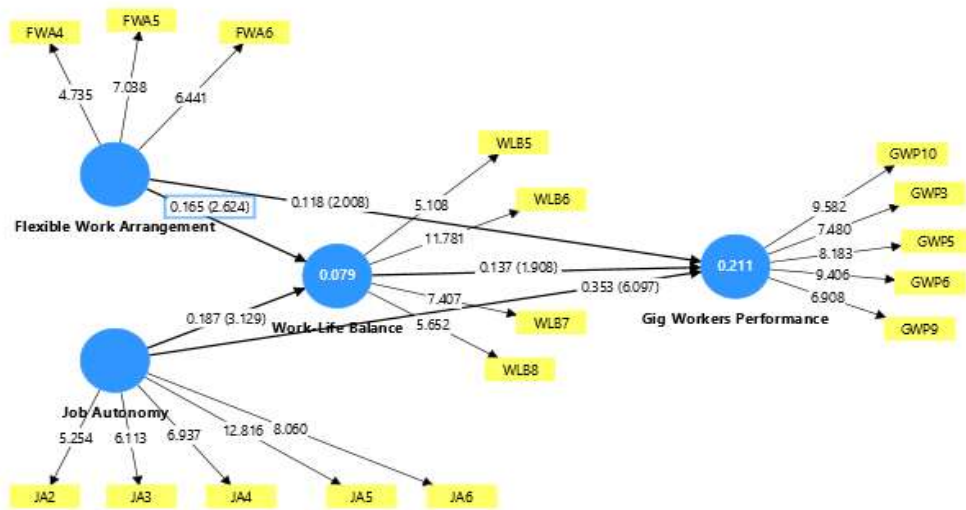


Figure 4. Path Diagram Inner Model

Table 6. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	P Value	95% Confidence Interval		T Statistic	VIF	F Square	R Square	Q Square
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit					
			Direct Effects						
<i>Flexible Work Arrangement → Gig Workers Performance</i>	0.118	0.045	0.006	0.235	2.557	1.115	0.016	0.211	0.160
<i>Flexible Work Arrangement → Work-Life Balance</i>	0.165	0.009	0.046	0.293	2.624	1.085	0.070	0.079	0.052
<i>Job Autonomy → Gig Workers Performance</i>	0.353	0.000	0.243	0.470	6.937	1.123	0.141	0.211	0.160
<i>Job Autonomy → Work-Life Balance</i>	0.187	0.002	0.078	0.311	3.129	1.085	0.035	0.079	0.052
<i>Work-Life Balance → Gig Workers Performance</i>	0.137	0.056	-0.001	0.284	1.908	1.086	0.022	0.211	0.160
Indirect Effects									
<i>Flexible Work Arrangement → Work-Life Balance → Gig Workers Performance</i>	0.023	0.146	-0.001	0.059	1.456	-	0.028	-	-
<i>Job Autonomy → Work-Life Balance → Gig Workers Performance</i>	0.026	0.131	-0.001	0.065	1.512	-	0.026	-	-

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing, four hypotheses were accepted, namely H1 that flexible work arrangements have a significant effect on gig workers' performance, H2 that flexible work arrangements have a significant effect on work-life balance, H3 that job autonomy has a significant effect on gig workers' performance, and H4 that job autonomy has a significant effect on work-life balance. Meanwhile, three hypotheses were rejected: H5, which states that work-life balance affects gig workers' performance, and H6a and H6b, which

state that there is an indirect effect through the mediation of work-life balance, both of which were not statistically significant. Thus, it can be concluded that the direct effects of flexible work arrangements and job autonomy are more dominant in explaining gig workers' performance than the indirect effects through work-life balance.

DISCUSSION

This study found that Flexible Work Arrangements and Job Autonomy significantly influence Gig Workers' Performance, with Work-Life Balance acting as an important mediator. Flexibility in work time and location, as well as freedom in determining work methods, enables gig workers to achieve a better work-life balance, which in turn enhances their productivity and service quality. This indicates that support for flexibility and work autonomy is crucial for optimal gig worker performance and the reputation of transportation service provider platforms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, Flexible Work Arrangements and Job Autonomy improve gig worker performance, both directly and through Work-Life Balance. Balanced gig workers are more productive and motivated. However, work-life balance does not directly affect gig workers' performance. Therefore, transportation sector gig worker platforms must continue to develop work systems that support flexibility in terms of time, duration, and location to improve performance through better work-life balance.

FURTHER STUDY

This study is limited to gig workers in the transportation sector in Java (West Java, Central Java, East Java), so the results may not apply to all regions or sectors. Further studies could expand the geographical and sectoral scope and use mixed methods for a deeper understanding of gig workers' experiences.

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