



## Original Research

# Between Freedom and Uncertainty: Psychological Dynamics of Well-Being in the Global Gig Economy

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**Abstract:** The expansion of the digital economy has transformed employment structures across societies, with the gig economy emerging as a common form of work, especially in emerging economies. While platform-based work offers flexibility and autonomy, it also exposes workers to ongoing uncertainty and limited access to social protection. This study examines how work engagement and flexible work arrangements shape gig workers' well-being, with job insecurity considered as a mediating condition. Using the Job Demands-Resources framework, engagement and flexibility are understood as supportive resources, while job insecurity reflects a structural condition embedded in digital labor platforms. Survey data were collected from 451 gig workers across various sectors in Indonesia, a context that reflects broader Global South labor conditions characterized by informality and platform dependence. Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The findings show that work engagement and flexibility are associated with higher well-being, while simultaneously increasing perceptions of job insecurity. Job insecurity partially mediates these relationships, revealing a paradox in which flexibility supports well-being while reinforcing vulnerability. This study contributes to interdisciplinary social and community research by highlighting how digital labor arrangements reshape worker well-being, social protection, and adaptive responses in the global gig economy.

**Keywords:** *Gig Economy, Worker Well-Being, Job Insecurity, Digital Labor, Platform Work*

## Introduction

The expansion of the digital economy has fundamentally reshaped employment structures across societies, giving rise to the gig economy as a widespread form of non-standard work. Digital labor platforms have altered how work is organized, distributed, and governed, offering workers flexibility and autonomy while simultaneously producing new forms of insecurity and social vulnerability. These dynamics are particularly pronounced in emerging economies, where high levels of labor informality and limited social protection systems intersect with rapid platform expansion. As a result, gig work has become not only an economic arrangement but also a social phenomenon that affects workers' well-being, community resilience, and access to collective support. Therefore, understanding how gig workers navigate the tension between flexibility and uncertainty is a critical concern for interdisciplinary social and community studies, especially in the context of global digital labor markets.

Previous studies on the gig economy have revealed the dual nature of platform-based work, namely as a source of flexibility and autonomy, but also as an arena of income uncertainty, job insecurity, and weakened social protection (Wood et al. 2019). Literature developed in the Global North context generally emphasizes the negative impact of job insecurity on workers' welfare, positioning it as a source of psychological stress that disrupts social stability and work life (Novi et al. 2023). Meanwhile, work flexibility is often reported to increase satisfaction and autonomy, but it is often examined separately from the structural vulnerabilities inherent in platform governance and algorithmic control (Pilatti et al. 2024). In addition, work engagement in many studies is still treated as an entirely positive resource, with assumptions rooted in standard employment relationships (Wittenberg et al. 2024) As a result, understanding of how work engagement and flexibility can simultaneously strengthen well-being while deepening vulnerability in the context of non-standard work remains limited. This study fills this gap by examining the mediating role of job insecurity in the relationship between work engagement, flexible work arrangements, and worker well-being. By placing Indonesia as an illustrative case from the Global South context, this study offers conceptual novelty for interdisciplinary social and community studies by showing that job insecurity does not merely function as an obstacle, but can also be perceived adaptively in an informal and highly competitive digital job market.

This study aims to examine the dynamics of gig workers' welfare in the global digital economy by analyzing the role of job attachment and flexible work arrangements as labor resources, as well as job insecurity as a structural condition that mediates these relationships. This study specifically seeks to explain how work attachment and work flexibility not only contribute positively to worker well-being but also simultaneously reinforce perceptions of job insecurity in platform-based work systems. By placing Indonesia as an empirical context that represents the characteristics of the Global South labor market, this study aims to broaden cross-disciplinary understanding of how gig workers navigate the tension between freedom and uncertainty. Furthermore, this study aims to provide theoretical contributions to the development of research on non-standard work and worker well-being, as well as to generate practical implications for social protection policies and platform governance that are more sensitive to the social conditions and communities of workers in the global gig economy.

This study departs from the basic assumption that platform-based work in the gig economy contains a structural paradox, whereby the flexibility and autonomy offered cannot be separated from the systemic level of job insecurity. In this context, job attachment and flexible work arrangements are assumed to function as resources that enable workers to maintain subjective well-being and adaptive capacity but at the same time reinforce exposure to income uncertainty, job sustainability, and minimal social protection (Benlian et al. 2022). Unlike the dominant assumption in the literature that positions job insecurity solely as a factor that reduces welfare, this study argues that in informal and competitive digital labor markets, such as those commonly found in the Global South, job insecurity can be perceived

more adaptively as part of a strategy for survival and economic mobility. Thus, the well-being of gig workers is understood as the result of a dynamic interaction between labor resources, structural demands, and the social-community context in which workers operate, rather than solely as a direct consequence of individual working conditions.

While alternative perspectives such as labor process theory and institutional theory have been widely used to examine power asymmetries and regulatory gaps in platform work, this study adopts the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework because it allows for a more nuanced analysis of how individual resources and structural demands interact simultaneously to shape workers' well-being. Unlike labor process theory, which primarily emphasizes control and exploitation, or institutional theory, which focuses on regulatory environments, the JD-R framework enables the examination of job insecurity not only as a structural demand but also as a mediating psychological mechanism within the lived experience of gig workers in the Global South.

## Literature Review

### Worker Well-Being

Worker well-being refers to the overall well-being experienced by workers during and as a result of work, including cognitive evaluation (e.g., job satisfaction), affect (positive-negative emotions), psychological functioning (meaning, engagement), and physical and relational aspects in the workplace (Ray and Pana-Cryan 2021). This concept is multifaceted because (Wijngaards et al. 2022) proposing a four-dimensional taxonomy to map various constructs and their boundaries, so that researchers do not confuse “feeling good” with “functioning well” when measuring. Determinants are typically grouped into job demands (load, role conflict, uncertainty) and job resources (autonomy, supervisor support, fairness, opportunities for growth) that interact with workers' self-regulation capacity. Within the JD-R framework, consistently high demands and low resources can trigger strain that develops into burnout, especially when self-regulation strategies become maladaptive (Bakker and de Vries 2021). In addition, individual factors such as coping, self-efficacy, and home-work conditions can strengthen or weaken the effects of resource demands, making it important to map individual, team, and organizational levels.

The impact of worker well-being is seen at the individual and organizational levels: higher well-being is associated with work engagement, performance, and retention, while low well-being is associated with stress, depression, and burnout, which erode productivity and increase turnover (Marenus et al. 2022; Hanim et al. 2025). Work culture influences well-being through norms, practices, and signals of support; for example, a strong “workplace culture of health” supported by leadership, policies, programs, and support from supervisors and colleagues is associated with higher engagement and lower stress/depression (Hanim et al. 2026; Marenus et al. 2022). Conversely, a toxic culture that normalizes bullying/ostracism

reduces well-being and ultimately weakens employee engagement (Rasool et al. 2021). Case studies of healthcare workers during COVID-19 show that safety attitudes and perceptions of working conditions correlate with burnout, anxiety, and depression (Denning et al. 2021). Other studies highlight the importance of organizational learning culture in hospitals to strengthen team communication during crises (Alonazi 2021). As a result, organizations need to build psychological safety, manage workloads, and provide easily accessible mental health support on a regular basis.

### Gig Economy

The gig economy, or platform-based economy, is characterized by short-term contracts and temporary employment relationships facilitated by digital technology (Jose et al. 2022; Wood and Lehdonvirta 2025; Huđek and Širec 2023). This working model provides freelancers with a high degree of flexibility and autonomy, allowing them to determine their working hours and location according to their preferences (Singha and Saikia 2024; Kougiannou and Mendonça 2025). Digital platforms act as intermediaries that connect workers and clients, while also regulating the work process through algorithms (Divya and Barani 2024; Verma and Mehta 2025). However, behind this flexibility, gig workers face unstable income, financial uncertainty, and the absence of social security and employment protection that are usually available to formal workers. These conditions increase the risk of stress and job insecurity, exacerbated by irregular working hours and challenges in maintaining work-life balance (Luo and Tharumarajah 2025; Zvavahera et al. 2024; Kougiannou and Mendonça 2025; Verma and Mehta 2025).

In addition, the gig economy reveals structural inequalities, including gender-based income gaps where female workers tend to earn less than men, even though their motives and participation rates are relatively similar (Peterson 2022; Churchill 2025). Some governments have responded to these vulnerabilities through social protection policies, such as the implementation of the Code on Social Security, 2020 in India to extend protection to platform workers (Divya and Barani 2024; Jose et al. 2022). Gig work also appeals to young workers because it offers flexibility, opportunities to gain experience, and skill development (Zainon et al. 2025; Peterson 2022). For individuals from low socioeconomic groups, gig work can be an alternative source of income and work experience, although it is often not fully aligned with long-term career aspirations (Shetty 2022).

### Job Insecurity

Job insecurity is a significant trigger of work-related stress, characterized by subjective perceptions of threats to job security, and is becoming increasingly common as social, economic, and organizational changes occur (Låstad et al. 2021; Cheng et al. 2005). Chronic job insecurity can have long-term effects on mental health, even when security improves in

subsequent periods (Graham et al. 2024). In addition, job insecurity increases the tendency to change jobs through a mechanism of contemplating the potential loss of employment, so this psychological factor needs to be managed to reduce turnover (Richter et al. 2020). The effect of job insecurity on mental health is also moderated by coping strategies: engagement strategies can mitigate negative effects, while disengagement strategies actually worsen an individual's psychological condition (Menéndez-Espina et al. 2019).

In addition to affecting individuals, job insecurity also has an impact on social dynamics in the workplace. Studies show that perceptions of job insecurity can encourage the formation of friendships in the workplace, which in turn increases team effort and performance through emotional solidarity (Mao and Hsieh 2013). In certain contexts, job insecurity can even increase team resilience, especially when the team perceives the situation as a challenge and works in conditions of high task interdependence (Xue and Liu 2025). However, job insecurity also has negative consequences for organizational factors. Perceptions of threats to job security can reduce psychological safety within teams, which in turn weakens commitment and lowers perceptions of organizational performance. Both variables have been shown to mediate the relationship between job insecurity and organizational performance (Kim 2020).

## **Method**

This study uses a quantitative survey design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the relationship between work attachment, flexible work arrangements, job insecurity, and worker well-being in the context of the global gig economy. This study is placed within the framework of interdisciplinary social and community studies, viewing platform-based work not only as an economic arrangement but also as a social structure that shapes workers' vulnerability, adaptive capacity, and well-being. Indonesia was chosen as the empirical context representing the characteristics of the Global South labor market, where the expansion of digital platforms is rapid amid high informality and limited social protection systems. This design enables the testing of theoretical relationships while generating contextual understanding relevant to the dynamics of cross-border digital work.

This study involved 451 gig workers operating in various urban and peri-urban areas in Indonesia. Participants came from various platform-based work sectors, including transportation and delivery services, digital freelancers, creative industries, online education, personal services, and the entertainment sector. This diversity of sectors reflects the structural heterogeneity of platform-based work that is also found in the global digital economy. Inclusion criteria included a minimum age of 18 and active involvement in platform-based work through recognized digital platforms or online job markets. Convenience sampling techniques were used with the support of online recruitment through worker communities, platform networks, and thematic social media groups. However, this study is not without

limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences regarding the dynamic relationships between work engagement, flexibility, job insecurity, and well-being. In addition, the use of convenience sampling, while common in gig economy research due to the fragmented and hard-to-reach nature of platform workers, may limit the generalizability of the findings. These limitations are acknowledged as part of the contextual and methodological constraints inherent in researching non-standard digital labor.

All research variables were measured using instruments widely validated in international literature and were selected based on their theoretical relevance and empirical validity. Employee well-being was measured using the Employee Well-being Scale (Pandey et al. 2025) consisting of eighteen items, covering affective, psychological, and social dimensions. Work engagement was measured using the short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) (Heveri et al. 2025), which assesses the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Flexible work arrangements are operationalized through a multi-item scale that captures work time autonomy, location flexibility, and adaptive work patterns that are key characteristics of platform-based work. Job insecurity is measured using a scale developed based on a conceptual framework (Llosa et al. 2023), which covers cognitive aspects related to job sustainability uncertainty and affective responses to potential job loss. All instruments underwent preliminary testing to ensure linguistic clarity, cultural appropriateness, and internal reliability in the context of gig workers.

Data analysis was performed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (Hair and Alamer 2022), which is suitable for testing predictive models and complex structural relationships between latent constructs in applied social research. The analysis begins with an evaluation of the measurement model through reliability testing of indicators, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Next, the structural model is tested to estimate direct and indirect relationships between work engagement, flexible work arrangements, job insecurity, and worker well-being. Mediation analysis was conducted using a bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure with five thousand resamples to obtain robust estimates of indirect effects and 95% confidence intervals. Demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, marital status, and job category were included as control variables to minimize potential bias and confounding effects.

This study has been approved by the relevant institutional ethics committee. All participants provided their consent to participate online after receiving an explanation of the research objectives, guarantees of anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation. Data was collected anonymously, stored with adequate digital security, and used exclusively for academic purposes in accordance with the principles of scientific research ethics.

## Results

### Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Reliability and convergent validity testing showed that all constructs in this study had excellent measurement quality. The instruments used were proven to be consistent and capable of accurately describing each latent variable. These results ensure that all indicators work in accordance with the concepts being measured, making them suitable for use in further analysis. These findings also strengthen the methodological basis of the study, as they show that the measuring instruments meet the standards recognized in quantitative research.

Table 1: Reliability and Convergent Validity

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>Result</i>
Work Engagement (X1)	0.954	0.964	0.651	Valid and Reliable
Flexibility Work Arrangement (X2)	0.968	0.973	0.682	Valid and Reliable
Job Insecurity (Z)	0.936	0.951	0.606	Valid and Reliable
Employee Well-Being (Y)	0.934	0.950	0.657	Valid and Reliable

Note: AVE > 0.50; Cronbach's alpha > 0.70; composite reliability > 0.70.

The results of the reliability and convergent validity tests in Table 1 show that all constructs meet the criteria for good measurement. The Work Engagement construct (X1) has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.954, a composite reliability of 0.964, and an AVE of 0.651; the Flexibility Work Arrangement construct (X2) shows an alpha value of 0.968, a composite reliability of 0.973, and an AVE of 0.682; the Job Insecurity construct (Z) has an alpha of 0.936, a composite reliability of 0.951, and an AVE of 0.606; while the Employee Well-Being construct (Y) has an alpha of 0.934, a composite reliability of 0.950, and an AVE of 0.657. All of these values exceeded the recommended minimum limits (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70; composite reliability > 0.70; AVE > 0.50), so the four constructs in this study were declared valid and reliable for use in further analysis.

The results of reliability and convergent validity testing show that all constructs in this study meet the required statistical criteria. Each variable has a very good level of internal consistency and demonstrates stable and reliable measurement capabilities. In addition, the convergent validity values for each construct are also at an adequate level, confirming that the indicators used are able to accurately explain the latent variables. Thus, all constructs are declared suitable for use in further analysis because they meet the measurement quality standards in quantitative research.

### Structural Model (Inner Model)

The conceptual model presented serves as a starting point for understanding the structure of the relationships between the variables that are the focus of the study. This framework helps to illustrate how various constructs are interconnected and form specific lines of influence, thereby providing clear direction before entering the stage of further analysis. By presenting these interrelationships systematically, this model provides a solid foundation for interpreting the dynamics that develop between key variables.

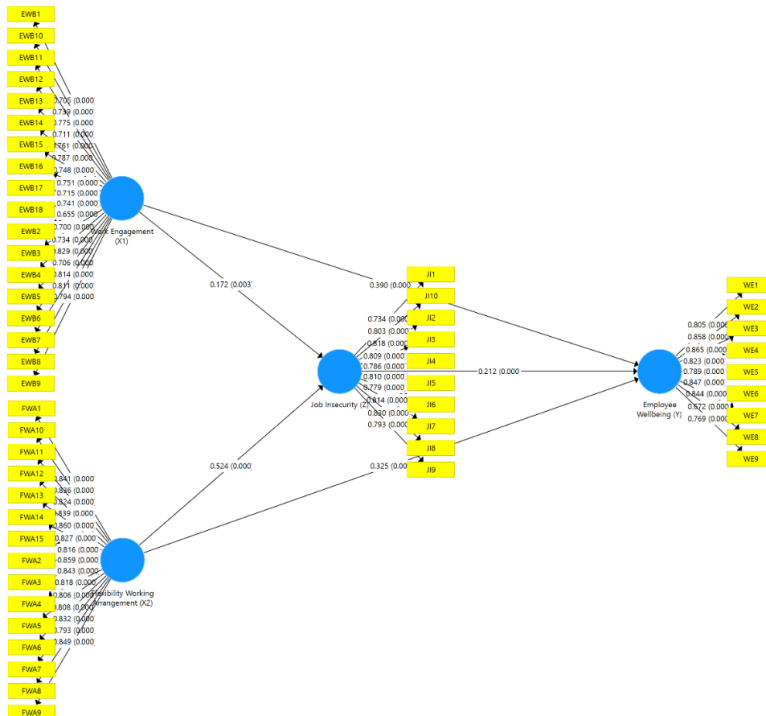


Figure 1: Structural Model of the Relationships Among Work Engagement, Flexibility, Job Insecurity, and Employee Well-Being

Figure 1 shows a structural model that illustrates the relationship between Work Engagement, Work Flexibility, Job Insecurity, and Employee Well-Being. This model displays the direction of the relationships between variables and how each construct influences the others within the conceptual framework of the study. This visual representation serves to clarify the flow of influence being analyzed, while also providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the factors that contribute to employee well-being.

The structural model used in this study shows the relationship between the main variables and the patterns of influence that occur between these constructs. Through this mapping, it can be seen how one variable can act as a trigger or intermediary in influencing

other variables. This representation helps explain the dynamics of the relationships analyzed, while providing a comprehensive picture of the mechanisms that shape the conditions under study. This model also serves as the basis for assessing the strength and direction of influence, which is then tested in further statistical analysis.

### Structural Model Analysis Results

This section presents the outcomes of the structural model analysis, which include the model's ability to explain the main variables, the strength of the relationships between variables, and the role of mediating variables in the overall conceptual framework. In addition, the results of hypothesis testing and demographic analysis are also presented to provide a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of the relationships that occur. This presentation serves as an important basis for understanding how each variable interacts with one another and the extent to which the model is able to describe the phenomenon being studied.

Table 2:  $R^2$  Values

<i>Endogenous Construct</i>	$R^2$	<i>Interpretation</i>
Employee Well-Being (Y)	0.647	Strong
Job Insecurity (Z)	0.424	Moderate

Note:  $R^2$  values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 are considered weak, moderate, and substantial.

Source: J. F. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2011

Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) was 0.421 for Employee Well-Being and 0.267 for Job Insecurity, both greater than zero, indicating acceptable predictive relevance.

Table 3: Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

<i>Path</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Result</i>
X1 → Y	0.390	7.636	0.000	Supported
X1 → Z	0.172	3.031	0.003	Supported
X2 → Y	0.325	5.657	0.000	Supported
X2 → Z	0.524	8.951	0.000	Supported
Z → Y	0.212	4.705	0.000	Supported

Note:  $p < 0.05$  indicates statistical significance.

Table 4: Indirect Effects

<i>Mediated Path</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Result</i>
X1 → Z → Y	0.037	2.613	0.009	Supported
X2 → Z → Y	0.111	4.112	0.000	Supported

The results also confirmed the mediating role of Job Insecurity. Specifically, Work Engagement had a significant indirect effect on Employee Well-Being through Job Insecurity ( $\beta = 0.037; p < 0.01$ ), and Flexibility Work Arrangement also exerted a significant indirect effect on Employee Well-Being via Job Insecurity ( $\beta = 0.111; p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H6 and H7 were supported.

Table 5: Total Effects

<i>Path</i>	<i>Total Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Result</i>
X1 → Y	0.427	0.000	Supported
X2 → Y	0.436	0.000	Supported
Z → Y	0.212	0.000	Supported

### Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing Results

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Result</i>
H1	Work Engagement → Employee Well-Being	Supported
H2	Flexibility Work Arrangement → Employee Well-Being	Supported
H3	Work Engagement → Job Insecurity	Supported
H4	Flexibility Work Arrangement → Job Insecurity	Supported
H5	Job Insecurity → Employee Well-Being	Supported
H6	Work Engagement → Job Insecurity → Employee Well-Being	Supported
H7	Flexibility Work Arrangement → Job Insecurity → Employee Well-Being	Supported

### Demographic Variable Significance

Table 7: Significance of Demographic Characteristics on Research Variables

<i>Category</i>	<i>Work Engagement (X1)</i>	<i>Flexibility Working Arrangement (X2)</i>	<i>Job Insecurity (Z)</i>	<i>Employee Well-Being (Y)</i>
Age	Significant ( $p = 0.012$ )	Significant ( $p = 0.002$ )	Significant ( $p = 0.019$ )	Not significant
Gender	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Last Education	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Significant ( $p = 0.008$ )
Job Type	Not significant	Not significant	Significant ( $p = 0.009$ )	Significant ( $p = 0.024$ )
Years of Work	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Working Hours/Day	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant

Monthly Income	Significant ( $p = 0.001$ )	Significant ( $p = 0.045$ )	Not significant	Significant ( $p = 0.026$ )
Other Main Job	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant

Note: All hypotheses were tested using PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure (five thousand resamples). A path is considered significant when  $p < 0.05$ . Supported = significant effect, Not Supported = non-significant effect.

The analysis results show that the model has a strong explanatory power for Employee Well-being with an  $R^2$  value of 0.647 and moderate explanatory power for Job Insecurity with an  $R^2$  value of 0.424, while the  $Q^2$  values of 0.421 and 0.267, respectively, confirm adequate predictive relevance. All direct paths proved to be significant, including the effect of Work Engagement on Employee Well-Being ( $\beta = 0.390$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and Job Insecurity ( $\beta = 0.172$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ), as well as the effect of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Well-Being ( $\beta = 0.325$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and Job Insecurity ( $\beta = 0.524$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Job Insecurity also significantly affects Employee Well-Being ( $\beta = 0.212$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Mediation analysis reinforced the role of Job Insecurity as a mediator, as indicated by the significant indirect effects of Job Commitment ( $\beta = 0.037$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ) and Flexible Work Arrangements ( $\beta = 0.111$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) on Employee Well-Being, which also supported hypotheses H6 and H7. The total effect results also show that both predictor variables have a significant overall effect on Employee Well-Being. All hypotheses (H1–H7) were supported. In addition, several demographic characteristics were found to have a significant effect, such as age, which affects three main variables; type of education and type of work, which affect certain variables; and monthly income, which affects most of the core variables. Meanwhile, gender, length of service, daily working hours, and additional main jobs did not show a significant effect.

The results of the analysis show that the model has good explanatory power and adequate predictive relevance to the main variables studied. All direct relationships between variables proved to be significant, confirming the consistency of the pattern of influence formulated in the theoretical model. In addition, a strong mediating role was found in one of the intermediate variables, clarifying the mechanism of indirect relationships between variables. When all influences were calculated as a whole, the results continued to show consistency in the direction and strength of the effects that supported the conceptual framework used. All hypotheses tested were supported, providing a solid empirical basis for the overall model. The analysis of demographic characteristics also showed that certain factors had a significant influence on the core variables, while other factors did not contribute significantly. These findings enrich our understanding of how model dynamics can vary based on individual conditions.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the proposed conceptual model has strong explanatory power regarding the well-being of gig workers, as reflected in the high  $R^2$  value and adequate

predictive relevance. These findings confirm that work engagement, flexible work arrangements, and job insecurity are key constructs in understanding the dynamics of worker well-being in the global gig economy (Salmah et al. 2024). The consistency and excellent quality of measurements across all constructs also strengthen the methodological foundation of this study, allowing the results of the structural analysis to be interpreted with confidence. Overall, these findings support the argument that the well-being of gig workers cannot be understood in isolation but rather as the result of complex interactions between labor resources, structural demands, and the social context in which platform-based work operates (Affolter et al. 2025).

The finding that work engagement has a positive and significant effect on worker well-being is consistent with global literature that views engagement as an important psychosocial resource in the world of work. However, in the context of the gig economy, this finding takes on a more complex meaning. Work engagement does not merely reflect commitment to a formal organization but rather the active involvement of workers in managing job uncertainty, platform algorithms, and fluctuating market demands (Liu and Yin 2024). Thus, work attachment among gig workers can be understood as a form of adaptive strategy that allows individuals to maintain a sense of meaning, competence, and self-control within an unstable work structure (Lin et al. 2026). This finding expands the theoretical understanding of work attachment by showing that its function remains relevant, even in the context of non-standard work with minimal institutional guarantees.

The study also shows that flexible working arrangements contribute positively to the well-being of gig workers, reinforcing cross-country findings that emphasize the value of flexibility as a key attraction of platform-based work (Kervola et al. 2024). Flexibility in terms of time and location allows workers to integrate work with their social and community lives, which is particularly important in the Global South context where many workers rely on gig work as a household economic strategy (Sharma and Sharma 2025). However, these findings also underscore that flexibility is not a neutral condition. In platform-based work systems, flexibility is often accompanied by a shift in risk from institutions to individuals, so that the subjective benefits felt by workers coexist with increased structural vulnerability (Schor et al. 2020).

One of the most significant findings in this study is the positive effect of job attachment and flexibility on job insecurity. This finding confirms the existence of a structural paradox in the global gig economy, where resources that improve welfare simultaneously reinforce perceptions of job uncertainty (Müller et al. 2025). High flexibility often means the absence of long-term contracts, income security, and social protection, while job insecurity can increase workers' exposure to platform demands that are not always transparent (Cirillo et al. 2023). In this context, job insecurity is not merely an individual psychological condition but rather a reflection of the structure of digital work, which is characterized by asymmetrical power relations between platforms and workers (Cheng et al. 2024).

Interestingly, the results of the study show that job insecurity has a positive effect on worker well-being and acts as a mediator in the relationship between work engagement, flexibility, and well-being. These findings challenge the dominant assumption in Global North literature, which generally positions job insecurity as a factor that undermines well-being (Kalleberg and von Wachter 2017). In the context of the Global South, job insecurity seems to be perceived more adaptively as part of the reality of work that must be negotiated (Langerak et al. 2022). For some gig workers, job insecurity can encourage the development of coping strategies, diversification of income sources, and skill enhancement, which ultimately contribute to a sense of empowerment and subjective well-being (Chuang et al. 2025). This finding enriches the global discourse by showing that the meaning and impact of job insecurity are contextual and not universal.

Analysis of demographic variables further emphasizes the importance of social context in understanding the well-being of gig workers (Margerison et al. 2025). The influence of age, education level, occupation, and monthly income on the main variables shows that welfare dynamics are inseparable from social position and individual resources (Quansah et al. 2023). Meanwhile, the insignificance of variables such as gender, daily working hours, and length of employment indicates that in the global gig economy, uncertainty and flexibility tend to be experienced equally across specific groups (Sarker et al. 2024). Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the welfare of gig workers is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction between individual factors, platform structures, and the social-community context. The implications of these findings emphasize the need for policy and platform governance approaches that are sensitive to the diversity of global contexts, balancing work flexibility and social protection to support the sustainability of worker well-being in the global gig economy.

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest concrete pathways for policymakers and platform operators, including the development of portable social protection schemes, transparent algorithmic management practices, and community-based support mechanisms that recognize the adaptive strategies of gig workers. Platforms may also operationalize these insights by integrating well-being indicators into performance systems and offering flexible yet predictable work allocation models that reduce uncertainty without undermining autonomy.

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to examine the psychological dynamics of gig workers' well-being in the global digital economy by analyzing the role of job attachment, flexible work arrangements, and job insecurity within the JD-R framework. Based on survey data from gig workers in Indonesia, the findings show that job commitment and flexibility serve as important resources that enhance worker well-being but at the same time reinforce perceptions of job insecurity. The structural model confirms that job insecurity acts as a partial mediator in this

relationship, revealing a fundamental paradox in platform-based work: conditions that enable autonomy, meaningful work, and subjective well-being coexist with increased structural vulnerability and job uncertainty. These findings confirm that gig work cannot be understood dichotomously as either empowerment or exploitation but rather as a hybrid work arrangement that simultaneously carries benefits and risks.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on non-standard work and worker welfare by challenging the dominant assumption that positions job insecurity solely as a source of harmful psychological stress. In the context of the Global South, job insecurity appears to be integrated into workers' adaptive strategies for surviving in an informal and highly competitive labor market. The positive relationship between job insecurity and well-being suggests that uncertainty in gig work is often normalized and managed as part of everyday economic reality, rather than being perceived exclusively as a threat. By emphasizing the mediating role of job insecurity, this study extends the application of the JD-R framework to the context of digital work, and highlights the importance of understanding psychological constructs in relation to the structural and institutional conditions shaped by platform governance (Hanim and Triratnawati 2024).

In practical and policy terms, the findings of this study have significant implications. The insignificant influence of gender, daily working hours, and length of employment indicates that exposure to flexibility and uncertainty in the gig economy tends to be experienced relatively evenly across certain groups, thus requiring a collective policy approach rather than one based solely on individual characteristics. However, the significance of variables such as age, education level, job type, and income confirms that social inequality continues to influence how workers experience and utilize platform-based work. Therefore, policymakers and platform managers need to go beyond the narrative of flexibility alone by developing inclusive social protection mechanisms, more transparent platform governance, and community-based support. Further research is recommended to use longitudinal and cross-country comparative designs to deepen understanding of how gig workers' adaptive strategies evolve over time and how institutional interventions can rebalance the relationship between freedom and uncertainty in the global gig economy.

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developing analytical explanations and structuring argumentative sections. The prompts used include: “help elaborate the legal analysis in this section” and “strengthen the analytical connection between findings and regulatory framework.” The output was used as supportive drafting material and were critically reviewed and substantially revised by the authors. While the author acknowledges the usage of these digital tools, she maintains that she is the sole author of this article and takes full responsibility for the content therein, as outlined in COPE recommendations.

## **Informed Consent**

This study was conducted with the informed consent of all participants. Participants were informed of the study’s purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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