



# The Effect of Work Flexibility and Perceived Platform Fairness on Psychological Distress via Job Insecurity Among Go-Ride Driver-Partners on the Island of Java

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the effect of work flexibility and perceived platform fairness on psychological distress among Go-Ride driver-partners in Java, with job insecurity as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative explanatory design and PLS-SEM analysis with SmartPLS 4, data were collected through a structured questionnaire from active drivers.

The findings show that job insecurity significantly increases psychological distress and serves as a key mediating mechanism in the model. Work flexibility is found to increase both job insecurity and psychological distress, indicating a paradox within gig work conditions. Meanwhile, perceived platform fairness reduces job insecurity and psychological distress, highlighting its protective role in platform-based work environments.

Overall, the study confirms that psychological distress in the gig economy is strongly shaped by job insecurity as a central mechanism linking platform work characteristics to workers' mental health.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have driven a major transformation in the structure of the global labor market through the emergence of the gig economy. This work model allows individuals to earn income through digital platforms that connect service providers directly with consumers. Unlike conventional employment relationships, jobs in the gig economy are generally flexible, task-based, and do not always come with formal employment relationships or adequate labor protections (De Stefano, 2016). This phenomenon is growing rapidly in various countries, including Indonesia, particularly in the online transportation sector, delivery services, and other app-based services (Kuhn & Maleki, 2023).

Behind the flexibility it offers, the gig economy also gives rise to various forms of precarious work. Platform workers often face income uncertainty, minimal social security, and limited legal protections compared to formal workers (Purnomo & Hidayati, 2024). In the Indonesian context, this situation is evident among Go-Ride driver-partners, who have the freedom to set their own work hours but remain dependent on the platform's algorithmic system for receiving orders, incentives, and performance evaluations (Budiono, 2023; Kamim & Khandiq, 2019). This situation demonstrates that work flexibility that supposed to be a key characteristic of the gig economy, is not always accompanied by adequate job security.

One consequence of these precarious working conditions is the emergence of job insecurity. Job insecurity refers to an individual's perception of threats to job security, income stability, and future employment opportunities (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2025). In a platform-based work environment, perceptions of job insecurity can arise due to income fluctuations, changes in platform policies, unclear order-distribution mechanisms, or the lack of social protections available to workers (Bentley et al., 2021). Various studies indicate that gig workers experience relatively higher levels of job insecurity compared to workers in formal employment relationships due to their dependence on platform systems that are dynamic and difficult to predict (Koutsimani et al., 2021; Kuhn & Maleki, 2023).

The rise in job insecurity is a major concern because it is closely linked to workers' psychological well-being. The literature indicates that perceptions of job insecurity can trigger various forms of psychological distress, such as stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and impaired psychological well-being (Llosa et al., 2018). Wahyutomo et al. (2024) found that job insecurity contributes to increased burnout among employees, while Prayoga et al. (2025) demonstrated that job insecurity can reduce work performance by increasing psychological pressure. Similar findings were reported by Hakim et al. (2025), who explained that job insecurity is negatively associated with workers' psychological well-being through increased work-related stress. In the context of non-permanent workers, Jalil et al. (2023) found that job insecurity significantly affects a decline in psychological well-being. More broadly, studies by Bentley et al. (2021) and Koutsimani et al. (2021) confirm that job insecurity is one of the main factors affecting workers' psychological health in the digital platform economy.

In addition to job insecurity, the psychological well-being of platform workers is also influenced by the characteristics of the digital work environment itself. One of the most widely studied characteristics is work flexibility. Flexibility allows workers to determine their work hours, location, and workload according to their personal needs (Kuhn & Maleki, 2023). However, a number of studies indicate that work flexibility in the gig economy is paradoxical. On the one hand, flexibility provides autonomy; on the other hand, it can increase income uncertainty and workload if not balanced by an adequate protection system (Budiono, 2023).

These conditions have the potential to heighten perceptions of job insecurity, which ultimately affects workers' psychological well-being.

Another factor that is receiving increasing attention in the study of the platform economy is perceived platform fairness. In an algorithm-driven work environment, platform systems play a role in determining the distribution of work, the allocation of incentives, and the evaluation of worker performance. When these processes are perceived as lacking transparency, workers tend to develop a sense of unfairness that can erode trust in the platform (Anwar & Graham, 2021). Research by Veen et al. (2023) shows that algorithmic control influences workers' perceptions of fairness and impacts their job satisfaction and work behavior. In the context of the gig economy, perceptions of platform unfairness also have the potential to increase job insecurity because workers feel they have little control over the factors that determine the continuity of their employment.

Research on the relationship between job insecurity and workers' psychological well-being has actually expanded quite extensively. Previous studies have examined the effects of job insecurity on burnout (Wahyutomo et al., 2024), emotional exhaustion (Latifah & Hendarsjah, 2023), psychological well-being (Hakim et al., 2025; Jalil et al., 2023), mental health (Pires, 2025), and turnover intention (Qurnain et al., 2025). On the other hand, studies on gig workers have also addressed labor vulnerability, job insecurity, and their impact on the well-being of platform workers (Budiono, 2023; Bentley et al., 2021; Joseph & Joseph, 2025). However, most of these studies still focus on the direct relationship between job insecurity and various psychological outcomes, or examine only one specific antecedent factor in isolation.

Based on this literature review, there remains a research gap in understanding the mechanisms linking platform work characteristics to workers' psychological well-being. Studies that simultaneously integrate work flexibility, perceptions of platform fairness, job insecurity, and psychological distress into a single conceptual model are still relatively limited, particularly in the context of gig workers in Indonesia. Furthermore, there is still a lack of empirical research focusing on Go-Ride driver-partners, who constitute the largest group of platform workers in Indonesia. Yet, job characteristics such as reliance on algorithms, income fluctuations, and minimal labor protections make this group particularly vulnerable to psychological stress.

The choice of Java as the research location can be explained by a combination of historical, structural, and empirical factors in the development of the digital economy and platform-based transportation in Indonesia. Historically, Gojek was first developed in Jakarta in 2010 and grew out of the context of urban mobility challenges in a metropolitan area characterized by high levels of traffic congestion and intense economic activity (Malawani et al., 2020). Jakarta, as the initial operational hub, subsequently became the epicenter of Gojek's service expansion to various other cities on Java Island before spreading nationwide. This indicates that Java was not only the birthplace of ride-hailing innovation but also the primary space for the formation of its operational ecosystem.

Empirically, the distribution of gig economy workers and economic activities in Indonesia shows a dominant concentration on the island of Java. National labor market data indicate that the majority of the labor force and informal workers are concentrated in the Java region, particularly in densely populated provinces such as West Java, East Java, Central Java, and DKI Jakarta (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2026). This concentration correlates with high demand for

online transportation services, the intensity of urbanization, and the availability of digital and physical infrastructure that is more advanced than in other regions. The literature on the digital economy in Southeast Asia also confirms that the growth of the platform economy tends to be centered in densely populated urban areas with high internet penetration and intensive digital consumption (Google, Temasek, & Bain, 2023).

Provinsi Province	Distribusi Penduduk Population Distribution (%)			Kepadatan Penduduk (per km <sup>2</sup> ) Population Density (per sq.km)		
	2020 <sup>1</sup>	2025 <sup>2</sup>	2026 <sup>2</sup>	2020 <sup>1,8</sup>	2025 <sup>2,9</sup>	2026 <sup>2,10</sup>
(1)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Aceh	1,95	1,98	1,98	91	99	100
Sumatera Utara	5,48	5,55	5,56	203	218	221
Sumatera Barat	2,05	2,08	2,09	132	140	142
Riau	2,37	2,39	2,40	73	76	77
Jambi	1,31	1,32	1,33	71	77	78
Sumatera Selatan	3,13	3,14	3,14	92	103	104
Bengkulu	0,74	0,75	0,75	101	106	108
Lampung	3,33	3,35	3,35	260	284	287
Kepulauan Bangka Belitung	0,54	0,55	0,55	89	93	94
Kepulauan Riau	0,76	0,78	0,78	252	268	275
DKI Jakarta	3,91	3,75	3,72	15.907	16.155	16.129
Jawa Barat	17,87	17,85	17,81	1.365	1.370	1.381
Jawa Tengah	13,51	13,44	13,43	1.113	1.113	1.123
DI Yogyakarta	1,36	1,33	1,32	1.171	1.193	1.199
Jawa Timur	15,05	14,80	14,75	851	876	881
Banten	4,41	4,41	4,40	1.232	1.341	1.351
Bali	1,60	1,57	1,56	747	798	804
Nusa Tenggara Barat	1,97	2,01	2,02	286	291	296
Nusa Tenggara Timur	1,97	2,02	2,03	109	124	126
Kalimantan Barat	2,00	2,03	2,03	37	39	40
Kalimantan Tengah	0,99	1,00	1,00	17	19	19
Kalimantan Selatan	1,51	1,52	1,52	105	116	118
Kalimantan Timur	1,39	1,50	1,56	29	34	35
Kalimantan Utara	0,26	0,26	0,26	9	11	11
Sulawesi Utara	0,97	0,96	0,95	189	188	189
Sulawesi Tengah	1,10	1,11	1,11	48	51	52
Sulawesi Selatan	3,36	3,36	3,36	194	211	213
Sulawesi Tenggara	0,97	1,00	1,00	69	78	80
Gorontalo	0,43	0,44	0,44	104	103	104
Sulawesi Barat	0,53	0,54	0,54	85	92	93
Maluku	0,68	0,69	0,69	39	43	43
Maluku Utara	0,47	0,48	0,48	40	42	44
Papua Barat	0,42 <sup>6</sup>	0,21	0,21	11 <sup>6</sup>	10	10
Papua Barat Daya	–	0,22	0,22	–	16	17
Papua	1,59 <sup>7</sup>	0,38	0,38	13 <sup>7</sup>	13	13
Papua Selatan	–	0,19	0,19	–	5	5
Papua Tengah	–	0,52	0,53	–	24	25
Papua Pegunungan	–	0,52	0,52	–	29	29
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>152</b>

**Figure 1.** Population Distribution in Indonesia

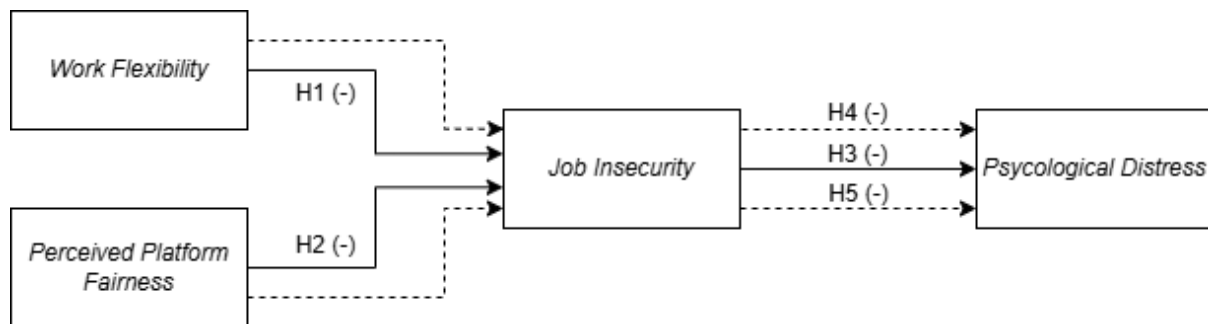
Source: BPS-Statistic Indonesia, 2026

Furthermore, Java is characterized as a hub for the integration of public transportation and ride-hailing services. A study on the Jakarta MRT shows that the presence of mass transit actually increases ride-hailing activity around stations as a form of first-mile and last-mile connectivity (Bosker et al., 2023; World Bank, 2023). These findings reinforce the argument that Java is a relevant empirical setting for examining the dynamics of interaction between digital platforms, urban infrastructure, and the work behavior of driver-partners. Thus, the selection of Java is not merely geographical but is also based on considerations of the intensity of the digital economy, the concentration of the gig workforce, and the complexity of the most developed urban transportation system in Indonesia.

To explain this relationship, this study developed a conceptual model that identifies work flexibility and perceived platform fairness as independent variables, psychological distress as

the dependent variable, and job insecurity as the mediating variable. This model is based on the argument that work flexibility and perceived platform fairness not only directly affect workers' psychological well-being but can also shape perceptions of job insecurity, which ultimately increases psychological distress. In the context of the gig economy, work flexibility that is not accompanied by income certainty has the potential to increase job insecurity (Budiono, 2023; Kamim & Khandiq, 2019). On the other hand, perceptions of unfairness regarding algorithmic mechanisms, incentive systems, or suspension policies can reinforce perceptions of job uncertainty and reduce workers' psychological well-being (Anwar & Graham, 2021; Veen et al., 2023).

Based on this conceptual model, this study proposes seven research hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) states that work flexibility influences job insecurity; (H2) states that perceived platform fairness influences job insecurity. The third hypothesis (H3) states that job insecurity influences psychological distress. The fourth hypothesis (H4) states that job insecurity mediates the effect of work flexibility on psychological distress. The fifth hypothesis (H5) states that job insecurity mediates the effect of perceived platform fairness on psychological distress.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual Model Framework

Figure 2 shows the research hypothesis model illustrating both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. Work flexibility and perceptions of platform fairness are assumed to directly influence psychological distress, while also influencing psychological distress through job insecurity as a psychological mechanism that explains this relationship. Thus, this research model allows for testing the mediating role of job insecurity in explaining how the characteristics of digital platform-based work can influence psychological distress among Go-Ride driver-partners on the island of Java.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effects of work flexibility and perceptions of platform fairness on psychological distress through job insecurity among Go-Ride driver-partners on the island of Java. This study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the literature on precarious work and the gig economy, while also providing empirical evidence that can serve as a basis for developing more sustainable digital labor policies oriented toward worker well-being.

Based on the above discussion, this study focuses on analyzing the relationship between work flexibility, perceptions of platform fairness, job insecurity, and psychological distress among gig workers, specifically Go-Ride drivers on the island of Java. The research objectives are operationally formulated as follows:

1. To analyze the effect of work flexibility on job insecurity among Go-Ride driver-partners on the island of Java.

2. To analyze the effect of perceived platform fairness on job insecurity among Go-Ride driver-partners on the island of Java.
3. To analyze the effect of job insecurity on psychological distress among Go-Ride driver-partners on the island of Java.
4. To test the mediating role of job insecurity in the relationship between work flexibility and psychological distress.
5. To test the mediating role of job insecurity in the relationship between perceived platform fairness and psychological distress.

With this objective in mind, this study is expected to expand the literature on precarious work and psychological well-being in the context of Indonesia's digital economy. In addition, the study's findings are expected to serve as a foundation for the development of more equitable and sustainable labor policies for digital platform workers.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to analyze the causal relationship among variables namely, job flexibility and perceptions of platform fairness and their impact on psychological distress, mediated by job uncertainty, among Go-Ride driver-partners on the island of Java. This method was chosen because it allows for the empirical testing of a theory-based conceptual model, examining both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The study employed a cross-sectional design, in which data were collected at a specific point in time using a questionnaire.

The population in this study includes all Go-Ride driver-partners operating on the island of Java, including DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta. However, the population size cannot be determined precisely due to the dynamic nature of the digital platform ecosystem, where partners can easily join and leave the system. Thus, this study employs an unknown-population approach. The sampling method used was purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria: (1) registered as an active Go-Ride driver-partner, (2) working as an app-based two-wheeled transportation driver, (3) operating in the Java region, (4) having at least six months of work experience as a partner, (5) at least 18 years of age, and (6) willing to participate as a respondent in the study. The six-month minimum work experience requirement was set to ensure that respondents had sufficient experience interacting with the platform's algorithmic system, including booking mechanisms, incentives, and operational policies.

The determination of the sample size in this study followed the recommendations for Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS). Based on the methodological literature, the recommended minimum sample size is 100 respondents, with an ideal range of 150 to 250 respondents to produce stable and robust model estimates. In addition, sample selection also took into account a general rule of thumb-namely, 5–10 times the number of indicators from all research variables to ensure sufficient data for testing structural models involving mediating effects.

Research data were obtained from primary data collected using an online survey distributed via Google Forms. The research instrument was designed based on indicators modified from previous studies and adapted to the context of workers on digital platforms. Each item in the statements was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was completed voluntarily by

participants who met the study’s eligibility criteria, and the data collected was used solely for academic purposes.

The variables in this study consist of four main constructs: work flexibility, perceived platform fairness, job insecurity, and psychological distress. Work flexibility refers to the degree of freedom partners have in determining their work schedule, location, workload, and order acceptance. Perceived platform fairness reflects subjective assessments of the fairness of algorithms, the distribution of incentives, platform policies, and information transparency. Job insecurity describes perceptions of uncertainty regarding the continuity of employment and future income. In this context, psychological distress is measured through symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression that reflect an individual’s mental strain.

**Table 1.** Operationalization of Research Variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Number of Indicators</b>
Work Flexibility (X1)	The degree of freedom partners have in managing aspects of platform-based work	Flexibility in terms of time, location, order acceptance, and work intensity	Kuhn & Maleki (2023); Budiono (2023)	4
Perceived Platform Fairness (X2)	Subjective assessments of the fairness of digital platform systems and policies	Procedural, distributive, and interactional, algorithmic fairness	Anwar & Graham (2021); Veen et al. (2023)	5
Job Insecurity (M)	Perceived uncertainty regarding job and income security	Quantitative insecurity, qualitative insecurity	Bernhard-Oettel et al. (2025)	6
Psychological Distress (Y)	Psychological stress in the form of stress, anxiety, and depression	Stress, anxiety, depression	Lovibond & Lovibond (1995) DASS-21	10

Data analysis was conducted using a Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) approach with the assistance of SmartPLS 4 software. This method was chosen because it is capable of analyzing complex structural models, including mediating relationships among variables, and does not require a normal data distribution. All constructs

in this study were treated as reflective constructs, in which indicators are considered manifestations of latent variables.

Model evaluation was conducted in two main stages. First, evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), which included testing convergent validity via outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Second, the structural model (inner model) was evaluated by testing the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ). Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 subsamples, with significance criteria based on the t-statistic value ( $>1.96$ ) and p-value ( $<0.05$ ).

Criteria	Reference Value
Outer Loading	$> 0,70$
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	$> 0,50$
Composite Reliability	$> 0,70$
Cronbach's Alpha	$> 0,70$
HTMT	$< 0,90$
$R^2$	0,25 (weak); 0,50 (moderate); 0,75 (strong)
$f^2$	0,02 (weak); 0,15 (moderate); 0,35 (strong)
$Q^2$	$> 0$
p-value	$< 0,05$

**Table 2.** Evaluation Criteria for the SEM-PLS Model

*Source: Compiled based on Hair et al. (2022)*

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Overview of Respondents

The characteristics of the respondents in this study reflect the demographic profile of Go-Ride drivers on the island of Java, who were the subject of analysis in this study on work flexibility, perceptions of platform fairness, job uncertainty, and psychological stress. A descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a comprehensive overview of the distribution of respondents based on age, length of time as a partner, income, operating area, employment status, education level, and average daily working hours. This data is crucial for understanding the socioeconomic context of the respondents, which, in theory, may influence their views on digital platform-based work conditions. (Purnomo & Hidayati, 2024; Sitorus & Kornitasari, 2024).

**Table 3.** Characteristic of respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18 – 23 y.o	58	34,7
	24 – 29 y.o	71	42,5

	> 30 y.o	58	34,7
	< 18 y.o	0	-
<b>Length of Membership</b>	< 3 months	42	25,1
	3 – 6 months	89	53,3
	6 – 12 months	22	13,2
	> 1 year	34	20,4
<b>Monthly Income</b>	< 1 mil	52	31,1
	1 – 3 mil	110	65,9
	3 – 5 mil	20	12
	> 5 mil	5	3
<b>Operational Area</b>	East Java	82	49,1
	Central Java	49	29,3
	Special Capital Region of Jakarta	31	18,6
	West Java	13	7,8
	Special Region of Yogyakarta	9	5,4
	Banten	3	1,8
<b>Employment Status</b>	Part-time	102	61,1
	Full-time	85	50,9
<b>Education</b>	Highschool	114	68,3
	Diploma	20	12
	Bachelor's Degree	51	30,5
	Junior Highschool	1	0,6
	Other	1	0,6
<b>Working Hours per Day</b>	< 8 hours	43	25,7
	8 – 12 hours	122	73,1
	> 12 hours	22	13,2

Based on Table 3, the respondents' characteristics show that the majority of Go-Ride driver-partners are in the 24–29 age range, representing the early adult productive age group. The dominance of this age group indicates that digital platform-based jobs such as Go-Ride hold particular appeal for individuals with high mobility, strong technological adaptability, and a tendency to seek flexible sources of income. From a sociological perspective, this situation reflects the transformation of the modern labor market, which is increasingly shifting toward the gig economy (Vadavi & Sharmiladevi, 2024), where the working-age population is no longer bound by formal employment relationships but is instead increasingly engaged in app-based work that is flexible yet structurally unstable (Fadhulloh et al., 2025).

In terms of work experience, the majority of respondents have been working as partners for 3–6 months. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents are still in the early stages of adapting to the digital platform work system, particularly in understanding order distribution patterns, incentive mechanisms, and algorithm-based rating systems. In the context of occupational psychology, the early phase of engagement in platform-based work is a critical period because individuals are still forming work expectations while adapting to the operational uncertainty inherent in the gig economy (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2025). At this stage, perceptions of work flexibility, platform fairness, and job insecurity tend to be unstable and relatively more sensitive to daily work experiences (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2025).

In terms of income, respondents were predominantly from the group with monthly earnings in the range of 1–3 million rupiah. This indicates that the economic contribution of work as a driver-partner remains in the lower-middle category and is highly dependent on order volume and incentives provided by the platform (Budiono, 2023). High income variability indicates that this job lacks a fixed income structure, which conceptually reinforces the nature of precarious work characterized by economic uncertainty (Purnomo & Hidayati, 2024). Dependence on market demand dynamics and job-assignment algorithms has the potential to foster a sense of job insecurity (Kamim & Khandiq, 2019; Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2025), which in the long term may have implications for workers' psychological well-being (Jalil et al., 2023; Irvine & Rose, 2024).

The distribution of respondents' operational areas reinforces Java's position as the primary hub of the gig economy in Indonesia (Malawani et al., 2020). This concentration not only reflects high levels of urbanization and population density but also indicates that the region's digital infrastructure and mobility needs have created an ecosystem that supports the growth of app-based transportation services. In this context, Java serves as a representative empirical space for examining the dynamics of digital platform work, given that the intensity of interactions between users, algorithmic systems, and driver-partners is more complex there than in other regions (Sitorus & Kornitasari, 2024).

Furthermore, the predominance of respondents with part-time employment status indicates that working as a Go-Ride partner is not always a primary source of income but is often used as a side job or flexible work arrangement. This situation reflects a distinctive characteristic of the gig economy, which allows individuals to engage in multiple jobs (Fadhulloh et al., 2025). However, this flexibility also carries the consequence of greater income uncertainty, as work engagement is not full-time and is heavily influenced by external factors such as service demand and platform policies (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2025).

In terms of education, the majority of respondents had a high school diploma as their highest level of education. This indicates that access to platform-based work is relatively open to workers with a secondary education, without requiring high academic qualifications (Sitorus & Kornitasari, 2024). Structurally, this phenomenon shows that the gig economy serves as a labor absorption channel for workers with diverse educational backgrounds, particularly in the digital-based informal sector (Vadavi & Sharmiladevi, 2024). However, these low barriers to entry also lead to intense job competition, which can ultimately exacerbate income uncertainty and psychological stress (Joseph & Joseph, 2025; Irvine & Rose, 2024).

Finally, the distribution of respondents' working hours shows that most partners work between 8 and 12 hours per day. This relatively high work intensity highlights a paradox in

the concept of work flexibility within the gig economy (Budiono, 2023; Kamim & Khandiq, 2019). Although workers theoretically have the freedom to determine their working hours, in practice they tend to work long hours to meet specific income targets. This situation indicates that flexibility does not always correlate directly with work-life balance (Jalil et al., 2023); rather, it can become a form of indirect pressure that drives workers to work longer hours to maintain income stability (Hadiyansyah & Nugroho, 2025).

### 3.2. Evaluation of the Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) in this study aims to ensure that each latent construct used-namely, work flexibility, perceived platform fairness, job insecurity, and psychological distress has been measured validly and reliably through the reflective indicators employed. The evaluation was conducted across three main aspects, which is convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. Each of which provides a comprehensive overview of the quality of the measurement instruments in the PLS-SEM model.

#### 3.2.1. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was evaluated based on outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). This step aims to ensure that each indicator is truly capable of representing the latent construct being measured.

**Table 4.** Table of Outer Loadings.

Indicator	Job Insecurity	Perceived Platform Fairness	Psychological Distress	Work Flexibility
FK1	-	-	-	760
FK2	-	-	-	710
FK4	-	-	-	685
FK5	-	-	-	695
J11	810	-	-	-
J12	781	-	-	-
J13	656	-	-	-
J14	738	-	-	-
J15	774	-	-	-
J16	731	-	-	-
KP1	-	809	-	-
KP4	-	880	-	-
KP6	-	851	-	-
KP8	-	847	-	-
KP9	-	853	-	-
PD1	-	-	821	-
PD2	-	-	814	-
PD3	-	-	810	-
PD4	-	-	838	-

PD5	-	-	766	-
PD6	-	-	777	-
PD7	-	-	816	-
PD8	-	-	849	-
PD9	-	-	818	-
PD10	-	-	841	-

The analysis results show that all indicators within each construct have outer loading values above the minimum threshold of 0.70, although there are several indicators with moderate values in the work flexibility construct (FK4 = 0.685; FK5 = 0.695) and the job insecurity construct (JI3 = 0.656). Nevertheless, these indicators can still be retained because their loading values are not too far from the threshold and are supported by construct AVE values that meet the minimum criteria.

Theoretically, this indicates that these indicators are still capable of adequately reflecting the latent construct being measured, thus not compromising the overall construct validity, provided that the construct-level validity criteria are fulfilled. This also indicates that work flexibility as a construct has relatively complex characteristics, as perceptions of flexibility in the context of the gig economy are not influenced by a single dimension but rather result from the aggregation of various aspects such as work time, location, and intensity (de Stefano, 2016; Kamim & Khandiq, 2019; Vadavi & Sharmiladevi, 2024).

**Table 5.** Table of AVE Test.

Construct	AVE
Job Insecurity	0.562
Perceived Platform Fairness	0.720
Psychological Distress	0.665
Work Flexibility	0.509

The AVE values for all constructs were above the threshold of 0.50, indicating that each construct was able to explain more than 50% of the variance in its respective indicators. Thus, it can generally be concluded that the measurement model meets the criteria for adequate convergent validity.

### 3.2.2. Construct Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). The results of the analysis show that all constructs have reliability values that meet the recommended standard, which is above 0.70.

**Table 6.** Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Job Insecurity	0.845	0.885

Perceived Platform Fairness	0.903	0.928
Psychological Distress	0.944	0.952
Work Flexibility	0.679	0.805

The construct of perceived fairness of the platform showed the highest reliability values (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.903; CR = 0.928), indicating very strong internal consistency among the indicators in representing workers’ perceptions of fairness in the digital platform system. This suggests that the dimensions of procedural, distributive, interactional, and algorithmic justice consistently form a stable construct.

Meanwhile, the psychological distress construct also exhibits very high reliability (CR = 0.952), reflecting that the indicators of stress, anxiety, and depression demonstrate very strong internal consistency in measuring respondents’ psychological distress (Arizal & Wisana, 2023).

However, the work flexibility construct has a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.679, which is slightly below the conservative threshold of 0.70, although the Composite Reliability value still meets the criteria (0.805). This suggests that work flexibility exhibits relatively higher indicator heterogeneity compared to other constructs, which can be conceptually explained by the multidimensional nature of work flexibility in the gig economy and the fact that it is not always perceived uniformly by workers.

### 3.2.3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was tested using two approaches: the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

**Table 7.** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	Job Insecurity	Perceived Platform Fairness	Psychological Distress	Work Flexibility
Job Insecurity	<b>0.750</b>	-	-	-
Perceived Platform Fairness	-0.355	<b>0.848</b>	-	-
Psychological Distress	0.745	-0.428	<b>0.815</b>	-
Work Flexibility	0.264	-0.025	0.361	<b>0.713</b>

According to the Fornell-Larcker criteria, the root-mean-square error of estimation (AVE) for each construct is higher than the correlation between any two other constructs. This

indicates that each construct has unique characteristics and that there is no significant conceptual overlap among the research variables.

**Table 8.** HTMT Ratio

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Job Insecurity</b>	<b>Perceived Platform Fairness</b>	<b>Psychological Distress</b>	<b>Work Flexibility</b>
Job Insecurity	-	0.378	0.825	0.335
Perceived Platform Fairness	0.378	-	0.452	0.129
Psychological Distress	0.825	0.452	-	0.445
Work Flexibility	0.335	0.129	0.445	-

This finding is further supported by the HTMT results, which fall below the conservative threshold of 0.90, indicating that there are no serious statistical issues regarding discriminant validity in this research model. Thus, each construct in this research model can be said to possess good discriminant validity and to effectively represent distinct theoretical concepts.

### 3.2.4 Summary of Measurement Model Validity

Overall, the results of the measurement model (outer model) evaluation indicate that the research instruments used in this study met all the key criteria in the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Compliance with these criteria covers the aspects of convergent validity, construct reliability, and discriminant validity, all of which have undergone testing based on statistical standards recommended in the SEM methodological literature.

Regarding convergent validity, all latent constructs in this study were able to adequately explain the proportion of indicator variance, as indicated by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above the minimum threshold of 0.50. This indicates that each indicator has a strong substantive relationship with the construct it measures, thereby accurately representing the latent variable conceptually.

Furthermore, in terms of reliability, all constructs also demonstrated good internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values that exceeded the 0.70 threshold. These findings suggest that the indicators within each construct are not only statistically correlated with one another but also stable in repeatedly measuring the same concept. In other words, the research instrument possesses an adequate level of reliability for use in further structural analysis.

Meanwhile, the results of the discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) indicate that all constructs in the research model exhibit clear conceptual distinctions and do not overlap with one another. This indicates that each variable in the research model represents constructs that are theoretically and empirically distinct from one another.

Based on these overall results, it can be concluded that the measurement model in this study is of good quality, stable, and meets the methodological standards of PLS-SEM. Thus, the research instrument is deemed suitable for use in the structural model testing phase (inner model), as it has been proven capable of representing latent constructs in a valid, reliable, and consistently discriminant manner in the context of gig economy workers in Java.

### 3.3 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model evaluation (inner model) in this study was conducted to test the causal relationships among the latent constructs defined in the study's conceptual model. This testing includes analysis of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and hypothesis testing via bootstrapping. This stage aims to determine the extent to which the variables of work flexibility and perceived platform fairness can explain the variation in job insecurity and psychological distress, as well as how the mediation mechanism operates within the research model.

#### 3.3.1. Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is used to measure the ability of independent variables to explain the dependent variable in a research model. The higher the  $R^2$  value, the greater the model's predictive ability in explaining the phenomenon under study.

**Table 9.** Table of R-Square ( $R^2$ )

Endogenous Variable	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	Category
Job Insecurity	0.191	0.182	Weak
Psychological Distress	0.620	0.614	Moderate

The analysis results show that the  $R^2$  value for job insecurity falls into the weak category. This indicates that work flexibility and perceptions of platform fairness can only explain a small portion of the variation in job insecurity, suggesting that other factors outside the model also influence perceptions of job insecurity among Go-Ride driver-partners.

Meanwhile, the  $R^2$  value for psychological distress falls into the moderate category, indicating that the combination of work flexibility, perceptions of platform fairness, and job insecurity can explain the variation in psychological distress quite strongly.

Conceptually, this suggests that psychological factors in the gig economy are not influenced by a single variable but result from the interaction between job characteristics and individuals' perceptions of the platform's work system.

### 3.3.2. Effect size ( $f^2$ )

Effect size ( $f^2$ ) is used to determine the magnitude of each exogenous variable's contribution to the endogenous variable in a structural model. This analysis provides an indication of the strength of the influence of each relationship path in the research model.

**Table 10.** Table of Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

Effect	$f^2$
Job Insecurity → Psychological Distress	0.827
Perceived Platform Fairness → Job Insecurity	0.150
Perceived Platform Fairness → Psychological Distress	0.093
Work Flexibility → Job Insecurity	0.080
Work Flexibility → Psychological Distress	0.089

The test results show that job insecurity has a large effect size on psychological distress. This indicates that job insecurity is a dominant factor explaining the variation in psychological distress among Go-Ride driver-partners.

In contrast, the effects of work flexibility and perceptions of platform fairness on job insecurity fall into the small-to-moderate category. These findings indicate that although both variables play a role in shaping perceptions of job insecurity, their effects are not as strong as the direct impact of job insecurity on psychological distress.

### 3.3.3. Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ )

Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) is used to assess a model's ability to predict observed data for endogenous variables through a blindfolding procedure. A  $Q^2$  value greater than zero indicates that the model has good predictive relevance.

**Table 11.** Table of Q-Square (Predictive Relevance)

Endogenous Variable	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1 - SSE/SSO)$	Description
Job Insecurity	1116.000	1012.488	0.093	Weak to moderate
Psychological Distress	1860.000	1109.096	0.404	Moderate to strong

The results of the analysis show that all endogenous variables have Q<sup>2</sup> values greater than zero. This indicates that the structural model developed in this study has good predictive power; thus, it is not merely descriptive but is also capable of empirically representing the predictive relationships among the variables.

### 3.3.4. Results of Hypothesis Testing (SmartPLS Bootstrapping)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 subsamples to obtain estimates of the significance of the relationships between variables. Significance criteria were determined based on the t-statistic value (>1.96) and the p-value (<0.05).

**Table 12.** Path Coefficient & Hypothesis

Variable Relationship	Koefisien (β)	T-Statistic	P-Values	Description
Job Insecurity → Psychological Distress	0.623	8.603	0.000	Significant (+)
Perceived Platform Fairness → Job Insecurity	-0.349	5.218	0.000	Significant (-)
Perceived Platform Fairness → Psychological Distress	-0.202	3.669	0.000	Significant (-)
Work Flexibility → Job Insecurity	0.255	2.535	0.011	Significant (+)
Work Flexibility → Psychological Distress	0.192	1.961	0.050	Significant (+)
Perceived Platform Fairness → Job Insecurity → Psychological Distress	-0.217	4.165	0.000	Significant Mediation
Work Flexibility → Job Insecurity → Psychological Distress	0.159	2.157	0.031	Significant Mediation

Based on the results in Table 12, all relationships between variables in the research model are statistically significant. This is indicated by p-values that are all below 0.05 and t-statistics that are above the critical threshold of 1.96.

The analysis results show that job insecurity has a positive and significant effect on psychological distress (β = 0.623), indicating that increased job insecurity directly increases psychological distress among Go-Ride driver-partners. This finding confirms that job insecurity is a key mechanism explaining psychological distress in the context of platform-based work.

Furthermore, perceptions of platform fairness have a negative effect on job insecurity (β = -0.349) and psychological distress (β = -0.202). This suggests that the higher the perceived

fairness of the platform system, the lower the levels of job insecurity and psychological distress experienced by workers.

Meanwhile, work flexibility has a positive effect on job insecurity ( $\beta = 0.255$ ) and psychological distress ( $\beta = 0.192$ ). These findings indicate that flexibility in the context of the gig economy is not always protective; rather, it can actually increase job insecurity if not balanced by income stability and order certainty.

In the analysis of indirect effects, job insecurity was found to mediate the relationship between work flexibility and psychological distress, as well as between perceptions of platform fairness and psychological distress. This suggests that job insecurity serves as a key psychological mechanism that bridges the influence of platform-based work characteristics on workers' psychological well-being.

### **3.4. Discussion of the Results**

The results of this study provide an empirical overview of how work flexibility and platform justice perceptions influence psychological distress through the mediating role of job insecurity among Go-Ride partners in Java. Overall, the research findings show that job insecurity plays a central role in explaining the psychological state of workers in the gig economy, and is the main mechanism through which work characteristics based on platform employment affect workers' mental health.

#### **3.4.1. The effect of job insecurity on psychological distress**

The results of the study show that job insecurity has a positive and significant effect on psychological distress. This finding indicates that the higher the level of job insecurity experienced by the driver partners, the higher the level of psychological distress, which is characterised by stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms.

Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, which explains that job insecurity is a chronic and exhausting form of job demands that depletes an individual's psychological resources. In the context of the gig economy, this uncertainty does not only stem from the risk of losing one's job, but also from income volatility, dependence on algorithms, and the lack of clarity in platform policies. These factors create a continuous psychological burden, thereby increasing the risk of psychological distress.

This finding also reinforces previous literature which states that job insecurity is a key predictor of mental health issues in the context of non-standard and platform-based digital work (Bentley et al., 2021; Koutsimani et al., 2021). Therefore, job insecurity can be viewed as a key variable in explaining the psychological vulnerability of gig workers.

#### **3.4.2. The Influence of Platform Perceived Justice on Job Insecurity and Psychological Distress**

The results of the study show that platform perceived justice has a significant negative influence on job insecurity. In other words, the higher the workers' perception of the fairness of the platform system - in terms of order distribution, incentives, and algorithm transparency - the lower the level of job insecurity they experience.

This finding can be explained through the organizational justice perspective, in which perceptions of justice act as a psychological mechanism that shapes a sense of control and predictability in the work environment. In the context of digital platforms, algorithmic systems are often considered to be "black boxes" that are difficult for workers to understand. Therefore, when the platform is perceived as being non-transparent, job insecurity will increase.

Furthermore, the results of the study also show that platform justice perceptions have a negative direct effect on psychological distress. This indicates that platform justice not only works through job insecurity, but also has a direct impact on workers' psychological state. In other words, when workers feel that they are being treated fairly by the platform system, their level of psychological distress tends to be lower.

Empirically, this finding aligns with the studies of [Anwar and Graham \(2021\)](#) and [Veen et al. \(2023\)](#), which demonstrate that algorithmic opacity and unfair distribution of work in digital platforms can increase stress and reduce psychological well-being.

### **3.4.3. The Influence of Working Flexibility on Job Insecurity and Psychological Distress**

The results of the study show that working flexibility has a positive influence on job insecurity. This finding is interesting because, conceptually, flexibility is often considered a job resource, but in the context of the gig economy, it can actually increase job insecurity.

This phenomenon can be explained by the concept of the 'flexibility paradox' in the gig economy. Meskipun pekerja memiliki kebebasan untuk menentukan jam dan intensitas kerja, fleksibilitas ini tidak disertai kepastian penghasilan dan stabilitas pesanan. Consequently, flexibility becomes a source of stress in itself because income is highly dependent on algorithmic dynamics and market demand.

Fleksibilitas kerja juga terbukti berpengaruh positif terhadap psychological distress, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung. This shows that flexibility in the context of platform work does not always have a positive impact on psychological well-being, especially when it is not supported by adequate employment protection systems.

This finding is consistent with the studies of [Budiono \(2023\)](#) and [Kamim & Khandiq \(2019\)](#), which explain that flexibility in the gig economy is often illusory (illusion of autonomy), where workers have formal freedom but are structurally subject to algorithmic control by the platform.

### **3.4.4. Mediating Role of Job Insecurity**

The results of the analysis show that job insecurity acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between work flexibility and psychological distress, as well as between platform fairness perception and psychological distress. These findings suggest that the impact of platform-based job characteristics on the psychological state of workers does not occur directly, but also through the psychological mechanism of job insecurity.

Therefore, job insecurity can be understood as a cognitive-emotional mechanism that bridges the gap between work experience and an individual's psychological state. When workers face high but unstable job flexibility and a platform system that is perceived as unfair, this increases their perception of job insecurity, which ultimately triggers psychological distress.

Theoretically, this finding strengthens the integration between the JD-R Theory and the precarious work theory, which considers job insecurity to be the result of the interaction between job demands and job resources.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study examines how working flexibility and perceptions of platform justice influence psychological distress among Go-Ride partners in Java, with job insecurity serving as a mediating variable. The analysis revealed that job insecurity significantly contributes to psychological distress among gig economy workers. However, flexible work does not always have a positive impact. Under certain conditions, it can exacerbate the perception of job insecurity and negatively impact psychological well-being unless balanced with income certainty and job stability. Conversely, platform fairness was found to reduce job insecurity and alleviate psychological distress.

These findings suggest that flexibility in platform-based work systems should not be viewed solely as an improvement in working conditions because it also carries risks of uncertainty that impact workers' psychological state. Therefore, job insecurity is the main mechanism linking platform-based work characteristics to psychological distress.

Overall, this study contributes to the body of empirical research on precarious work and the gig economy, particularly in the context of Indonesian app-based transportation workers.

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## 6. AUTHORS' NOTE

This study is based on observations of work dynamics within Indonesia's rapidly growing gig economy, particularly in the app-based transportation sector. The primary focus of this research is to understand how the characteristics of digital platform-based work can affect workers' psychological well-being through the mechanism of job insecurity.

The author acknowledges that this research model has limitations, particularly regarding the scope of variables and the geographical context, which is limited to the island of Java. Therefore, the results of this study are not intended to be generalized absolutely but rather serve as an empirical contribution that can form the basis for further research in the fields of the gig economy and workers' psychological well-being.

The author hopes that this study can provide broader insights into the importance of psychological well-being in the dynamically evolving digital platform-based work system.

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