

Managed by the algorithm: platform discourse, entrepreneurial subjectivity, and precarity among Indonesian gig workers

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ABSTRACT

Background: Algorithmic management has expanded across Indonesia's gig economy, where platform narratives of flexibility, partnership, and opportunity coexist with informal employment, unstable protection, and digitally mediated control. **Objective:** This study examines how official platform discourse constructs entrepreneurial subjectivity and organises precarity among Indonesian gig workers. **Method:** A qualitative critical discourse design was applied to twenty-one public documents comprising platform terms, recruitment pages, driver communications, corporate releases, verified reporting, scholarly materials, and policy documents, analysed through discourse framing, subject-positioning, and precarity-and-control matrices. **Results:** Findings show that welfare, flexibility, and recognition legitimise platform participation by presenting conditional benefits and operational choice as evidence of partnership. Workers are simultaneously positioned as autonomous, calculative, self-investing, resilient, and responsible for converting platform opportunities into sustainable livelihoods. **Implication:** However, tariff setting, performance metrics, benefit eligibility, account governance, risk transfer, information asymmetry, and protection gaps delimit this autonomy and distribute uncertainty disproportionately towards workers. **Novelty:** This study contributes a relational account of platform labour by conceptualising conditional entrepreneurial autonomy as a discursive and institutional arrangement through which limited operational discretion coexists with concentrated infrastructural authority, thereby integrating language, subject formation, and algorithmic governance within one analytical framework in a Global South setting often examined mainly through employment relations, technical systems, or workers' experiences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's platform economy has expanded within a labour market marked by informality and uneven protection. In February 2025, 59.40 per cent of employed Indonesians worked informally, up from 59.17 per cent one year earlier, while a World Bank survey estimated that full-time gig workers constituted about 8 per cent of Indonesia's informal workforce. Digital gig work may offer comparatively accessible earnings, yet Indonesian workers reportedly spend around ten more hours per week than other workers, and participation remains concentrated among urban men. These figures complicate corporate narratives that present platform labour as flexible partnership and entrepreneurial opportunity. Drivers and couriers may decide when to activate an application, but fares, incentives, customer ratings, payment flows, and account access remain mediated by platform infrastructures. The central social problem is therefore not technological

control alone, but how such control is discursively reconciled with worker independence amid informality, income uncertainty, and limited social protection.

Research on algorithmic management has established that platforms coordinate labour through data-driven allocation, metrics, ratings, incentives, and sanctions while distancing themselves from conventional employment obligations [1], [2], [3]. Subsequent studies demonstrate that this arrangement can produce metric power, constrained choice, affective insecurity, self-exploitation, and forms of algorithmic domination, although workers also develop tactical workarounds and collective resistance [4], [5], [6], [7]. Scholarship on entrepreneurial subjectivity further shows how autonomy becomes tied to self-discipline, investment, resilience, and individualised responsibility for market risk [8], [9]. Indonesian research has documented both the normalisation and contestation of platform precarity [10]. What remains insufficiently examined is how official platform discourse itself connects partnership, empowerment, benefits, performance, and control, thereby constructing entrepreneurial workers while making structurally produced insecurity appear individually manageable and politically routine within governance.

This study investigates how Indonesian platform institutions discursively organise the relationship between algorithmic management, entrepreneurial subjectivity, and precarious work. It asks three connected questions. First, how do official terms, recruitment pages, driver communications, and public statements frame flexibility, partnership, income opportunity, protection, and welfare? Second, through which discursive resources are gig workers positioned as autonomous, calculative, resilient, and responsible for sustaining their own productivity and security? Third, how do contractual provisions, performance metrics, incentives, app-mediated benefits, payment arrangements, and account governance qualify or contradict claims of independence? To answer these questions, this study combines critical platform discourse analysis, entrepreneurial subject-positioning analysis, and a precarity-and-control matrix across a verified corpus of institutional documents and contextual materials. Rather than treating platform language as promotional ornament, this design examines discourse as part of labour governance: a means of defining conduct, distributing responsibility, and delimiting what workers can claim as rights, risks, or support.

This study advances the provisional argument that Indonesian platform discourse does not merely conceal control behind flexibility; it produces a form of conditional entrepreneurial autonomy. Workers are invited to understand themselves as independent partners who choose schedules, optimise earnings, maintain assets, absorb costs, cultivate customer satisfaction, and pursue benefits through disciplined application use. Yet this entrepreneurial position remains bounded by infrastructures that platforms design, modify, and enforce. Following research on the duality of algorithmic management, such arrangements may simultaneously enable operational discretion and intensify dependence on opaque or asymmetrical systems [11], [12]. Accordingly, precarity is expected to emerge not merely as insufficient income or protection, but as a discursive and institutional condition in which opportunity is tied to continuous self-management under revocable access. This argument redirects analysis from whether gig work is flexible to how flexibility becomes governable, conditional, and unequally consequential across workers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Algorithmic management

Algorithmic management refers to the delegation of managerial functions to data-driven systems that allocate tasks, evaluate performance, shape incentives, and sanction workers. Some scholars define it functionally, emphasising automated coordination and decision support, whereas critical accounts foreground asymmetrical surveillance, opacity, and domination [1], [11], [2], [5]. This divergence matters because platforms often combine automation with human discretion, contractual rules, and customer ratings. Algorithmic management is therefore better understood not as fully autonomous control, but as a sociotechnical regime through which managerial authority becomes distributed, obscured, and institutionally deniable.

Its principal dimensions include task allocation, performance measurement, behavioural nudging, dynamic pricing, incentive design, account governance, and information asymmetry. Reviews identify ratings, rankings, customer feedback, surveillance, and automated sanctions as recurring mechanisms across platform work [3], [13], [14]. Yet control is not uniform: workers may exploit loopholes, coordinate outside applications, or develop tactical workarounds [12], [15]. Accordingly, analysis must distinguish direct algorithmic calculation from broader platform discretion, while examining how contractual, metric, and infrastructural mechanisms jointly organise conditional autonomy and unequal and institutionally structured dependence.

2.2. Entrepreneurial subjectivity

Entrepreneurial subjectivity describes a mode of selfhood in which individuals are encouraged to treat themselves as enterprises responsible for investment, competitiveness, adaptation, and risk. While some accounts associate this orientation with autonomy and career agency, critical scholarship interprets it as

neoliberal self-government that individualises structural insecurity [8], [9]. In gig work, entrepreneurship rarely implies ownership or strategic control over markets. Instead, workers manage schedules, assets, reputations, and costs within systems designed by platforms. Entrepreneurial subjectivity is thus neither simple empowerment nor false consciousness, but a contested subject position combining aspiration, self-discipline, dependence, and limited and conditional operational discretion.

Its observable dimensions include autonomy claims, self-responsibilisation, calculative conduct, self-investment, resilience, loyalty, and performance optimisation. Platform narratives encourage workers to choose hours, maximise orders, maintain equipment, cultivate ratings, and convert benefits into personal productivity. Research shows that self-leadership may support persistence while also intensifying pressure and exit intentions [16], whereas relational and affective studies reveal how independence is entangled with dependence, paranoia, and moral obligation [17], [18], [19]. These indicators permit analysis of how entrepreneurial agency is discursively enabled, bounded, and converted into heightened individual responsibility for insecurity.

2.3. Precarity

Precarity denotes employment conditions marked by uncertainty, limited protection, unstable income, weak bargaining power, and exposure to unilateral organisational change. Some research treats it primarily as material insecurity, whereas other work emphasises affective, embodied, gendered, and relational dimensions [20], [21], [4], [22]. Platform precarity is distinctive because flexibility and vulnerability may coexist: workers can select working times yet remain dependent on demand, ratings, commissions, and account access. It should therefore be conceptualised as a multidimensional condition produced through market volatility, institutional classification, technological mediation, and uneven capacities to absorb and redistribute economic, occupational, and social risk.

Key dimensions include income volatility, cost transfer, social-protection gaps, account insecurity, customer dependence, temporal uncertainty, and restricted collective voice. Studies document self-exploitation, sticky labour, dishonest platform practices, and differentiated vulnerabilities across contexts [23], [24], [25], [26]. Indonesian research additionally shows that precarity is both normalised and resisted through everyday tactics and worker mobilisation [10], [7], [27]. This study therefore positions precarity not as an outcome separate from discourse, but as a condition legitimised, managed, and contested through platform representations of flexibility, partnership, and individualised entrepreneurial responsibility narratives.

3. METHOD

This study examines twenty-one publicly accessible documents concerning Indonesian platform labour. The corpus comprises eleven primary documents issued by Gojek and Grab, four secondary items from ANTARA and Jurnal Ketenagakerjaan, and six contextual documents from the Ministry of Manpower and the International Labour Organization. Units of analysis are clauses, sentences, headlines, interface instructions, contractual provisions, promotional claims, and multimodal elements that construct workers, platforms, risks, and responsibilities. Documents cover 2019–2026, with 2020–2026 constituting the core period and one earlier inclusion retained for relevance. Each item was assigned a unique identifier linking metadata, text, visual fields, and coding records.

A qualitative critical discourse design was adopted to investigate how platform institutions legitimise managerial authority while presenting workers as independent entrepreneurial partners. This design treats discourse as constitutive of labour governance rather than as a neutral description of employment arrangements. It combines platform discourse analysis with subject-positioning analysis and a precarity-and-control framework. Such integration is appropriate because algorithmic management operates through technical systems, contractual classifications, evaluative metrics, and narratives of flexibility, opportunity, resilience, and personal responsibility. Comparison across source types enables this study to identify convergences, contradictions, and institutional differences without inferring causal effects on workers' behaviour or material outcomes.

Information was drawn from official platform websites, partner terms, recruitment pages, driver blogs, corporate press releases, government portals, labour-policy publications, institutional journal pages, ANTARA reports, and International Labour Organization materials. Primary sources documented how platforms defined partnership, benefits, responsibilities, performance, payment, and account access. Secondary sources supplied verified reporting and scholarly interpretation of platform work, while contextual sources situated such discourse within Indonesian debates on informality, social protection, regulation, and decent work. Only publicly available, attributable, and retrievable materials were included. Anonymous reposts, private groups, unverifiable screenshots, consumer promotions without labour relevance, and duplicated or inaccessible pages were systematically excluded.

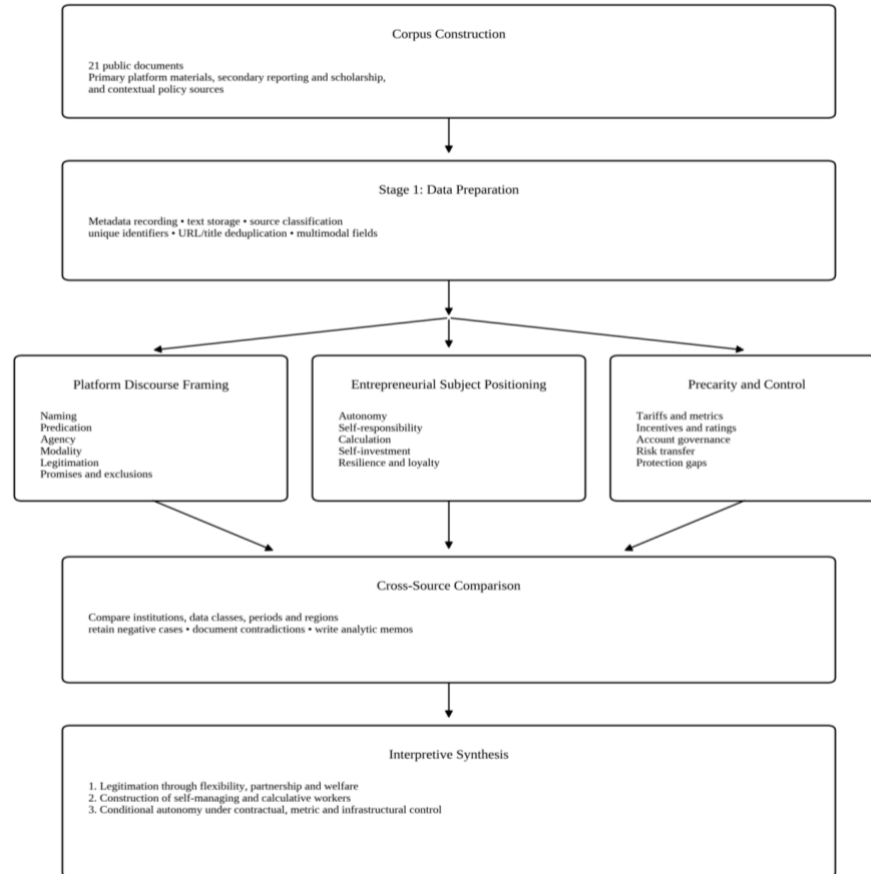


Figure 1. Operational analysis matrix

Table 1. Composition of the corpus dataset

Code range	Data class	Source or institution	Coverage	Period	Items	Principal characteristics
PRI-GOJ-001–003	Primary	Gojek official website	Indonesia	Living documents accessed in 2026	3	Partner terms, recruitment discourse, corporate ecosystem narrative
PRI-GRB-001–008	Primary	Grab Indonesia and Grab Holdings	Indonesia; Jabodetabek; Western Indonesia; selected metropolitan areas	2019–2025	8	Driver benefits, appreciation schemes, welfare programmes, inclusion, crisis communication
SEC-ANT-001–002	Secondary	ANTARA News and ANTARA News Bali	Indonesia; Bali; Jakarta; Bandung; Surabaya	2025	2	Verified reporting on fare negotiation, commissions, incentives, and holiday support
SEC-KMN-001–002	Secondary	Jurnal Ketenagakerjaan	Indonesia	Publication pages accessed in 2026	2	Scholarly discussion of decent work, vulnerable flexibility, and platform-worker sustainability
CTX-KMN-001–005	Context	Ministry of Manpower	Indonesia	2025–2026	5	Regulation, informality, labour transformation, protection, and employment policy
CTX-ILO-001	Context	International Labour Organization	Indonesia	2021	1	Income instability, employment risk, and social-protection participation

Data collection followed a structured search protocol using Indonesian and English keywords concerning mitra driver, pekerja gig, fleksibilitas, pendapatan, insentif, algoritma, performa, suspend, perlindungan sosial, independent contractor, and algorithmic management. Searches were restricted to identifiable institutional domains and geographically relevant Indonesian materials. For every item, researchers recorded title, date, institution, source type, platform, region, language, modality, URL, access date, contextual note, stored text, and a short verifiable excerpt. Visual and video fields captured actors, symbols, colour, layout, logo position, frame, timestamp, transcript, and screenshot reference when applicable. Exact URLs and title similarity supported deduplication across archived records and mirrored pages.

Analysis proceeded in five stages. First, documents were read closely to identify recurrent lexical choices, agency structures, modality, legitimation, and silences. Second, platform representations of partnership, flexibility, opportunity, and welfare were coded. Third, worker subject positions were mapped through autonomy, self-responsibilisation, calculation, self-investment, resilience, and loyalty. Fourth, contractual, metric, and infrastructural controls were examined through tariff setting, incentives, ratings, wallet management, information access, suspension, risk transfer, and protection gaps. Finally, codes were compared across institutions and data classes, negative cases were retained, and analytic memos documented interpretive decisions. Claims remained source-bounded and avoided attributing undocumented algorithmic mechanisms.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Discursive construction of flexibility, partnership, and platform-supported work

Official and contextual documents organise Indonesian gig work through six recurring framing clusters rather than through a single narrative of technological efficiency. Welfare and protection account for 15 of 56 coded references, followed by regulation and decent work with 11 references, flexibility and autonomy with nine, digital access and inclusion with eight, partnership and recognition with seven, and income and opportunity with six. This distribution reflects coded discursive occurrences rather than mutually exclusive documents because individual texts frequently connect several claims. Recruitment pages, contractual terms, driver communications, policy materials, and verified reporting therefore participate differently in constructing platform labour. Corporate sources foreground benefits, recognition, and flexibility, whereas secondary and contextual materials contribute most strongly to discussions of informality, regulation, and decent work. Such variation establishes an institutional division between discourses that legitimise participation and those that problematise its employment consequences.

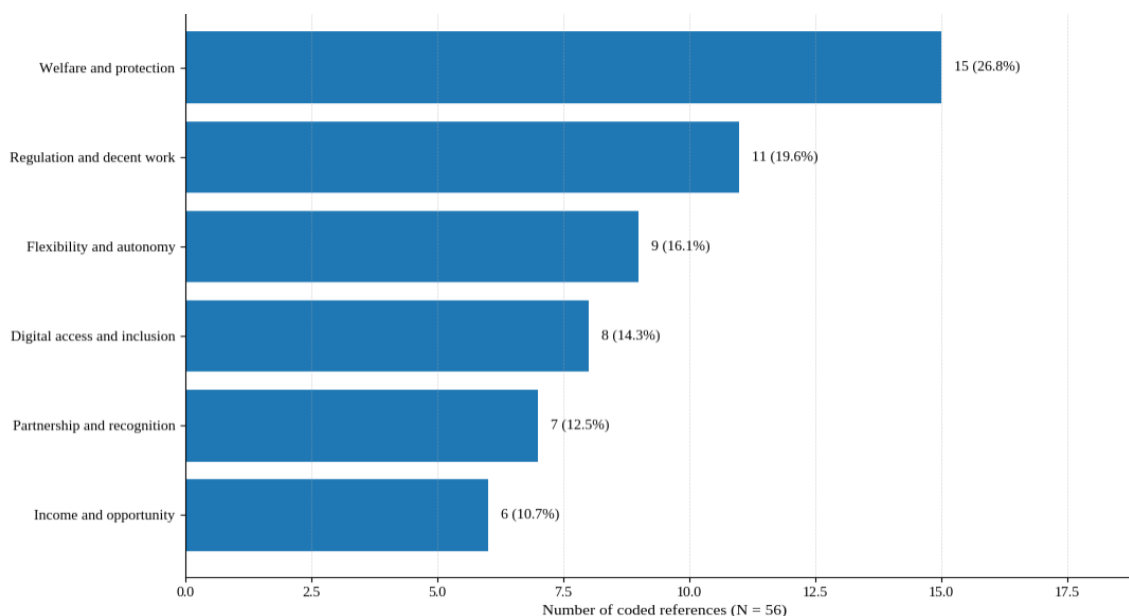


Figure 2. Distribution of platform-legitimation frames

Welfare and protection form the most frequent cluster, but their internal composition is dominated by discounts, insurance facilitation, benefit access, appreciation schemes, and temporary support programmes. These references occur primarily in platform documents, indicating that protection is usually communicated as an added advantage of partnership. Regulation and decent work display an opposite source pattern: all

eleven references originate from secondary or contextual materials rather than official platform communication. Flexibility appears across corporate, journalistic, and policy sources, although its meanings vary from schedule choice and independent contracting to negotiated tariffs and vulnerable informality. Partnership and recognition are confined to primary documents, where workers are described as loyal partners, beneficiaries, or heroes. Income opportunity is comparatively less frequent, while digital inclusion repeatedly depends on application-mediated access. Overall, opportunity-oriented frames coexist with explicit concerns that are institutionally voiced elsewhere.

Table 2. Discursive construction of flexibility, partnership, and platform-supported work

Subcategories and indicators	Codes	Percents	Source variation	Representative excerpt	Data codes
Benefits, insurance, discounts, support, empowerment, social impact, savings, benefit access, social protection	15	26.8%	10 documents: 8 primary, 0 secondary, 2 context	“Dapatkan berbagai keuntungan dengan bergabung jadi Mitra Driver Gojek.”	PRI-GOJ-002; PRI-GOJ-003; PRI-GRB-001–007; CTX-ILO-001; CTX-KMN-001
Regulatory dialogue, labour status, informality, policy alternatives, fairness, incentives, decent work	11	19.6%	8 documents: 0 primary, 4 secondary, 4 context	“Regulasi perlindungan pekerja gig sangat urgent.”	SEC-ANT-001–002; SEC-KMN-001–002; CTX-KMN-001–005
Schedule flexibility, independent contracting, tariff negotiation, freedom of activation, policy flexibility	9	16.1%	8 documents: 3 primary, 2 secondary, 3 context	“Hubungan Anda dengan Gojek adalah hubungan kontraktor independen secara kemitraan.”	PRI-GOJ-001–003; SEC-ANT-001; SEC-KMN-002; CTX-ILO-001; CTX-KMN-003–004
Application access, digitalisation, accessibility, app guidance, inclusion, ecosystem participation	8	14.3%	6 documents: 3 primary, 0 secondary, 3 context	“Cek keuntungan lainnya yang tersedia dan gunakan sekarang dengan buka aplikasi GrabDriver.”	PRI-GRB-002; PRI-GRB-007–008; CTX-KMN-002–004
Partnership, solidarity, loyalty, appreciation, heroism, partner recognition	7	12.5%	4 documents: 4 primary, 0 secondary, 0 context	“Mitra pengemudi, pengantaran dan merchant kami, telah menjadi pahlawan.”	PRI-GRB-001; PRI-GRB-003–004; PRI-GRB-006
Income opportunity, sustainable income, fair income, employment opportunity, digital opportunity	6	10.7%	6 documents: 3 primary, 1 secondary, 2 context	“Nikmati fleksibilitas, pendapatan berkelanjutan dan ragam program manfaat khusus.”	PRI-GOJ-002–003; PRI-GRB-008; SEC-ANT-002; CTX-KMN-004–005

The distribution supports an interpretation of platform legitimation as a selective arrangement of visibility. Benefits, flexibility, and recognition are foregrounded because they translate an asymmetrical labour relationship into vocabularies of opportunity, mutuality, and individual choice. Algorithmic-management scholarship shows that operational discretion can coexist with metric, contractual, and infrastructural control rather than displacing it [11], [2], [6]. Likewise, entrepreneurial subjectivity is produced when workers are encouraged to manage costs, optimise access, and treat conditional support as a resource for personal advancement [8], [9]. The separation between corporate welfare discourse and externally articulated protection gaps is therefore analytically significant. It suggests that platform discourse does not erase precarity directly; instead, it reframes insecurity as a manageable condition of independent participation while leaving structural questions of employment status and enforceable rights comparatively peripheral.

4.2. Entrepreneurial subject positions constructed across platform-labour discourse

Entrepreneurial subjectivity emerges through six interconnected positions that define what a competent platform worker is expected to become. Calculative and performance-oriented conduct accounts for seven of 29 coded references, while autonomous self-direction and self-investing advancement each account for six. Responsibility and resilience appear in four references, whereas loyalty and rights-bearing recognition each contribute three. These categories derive from the same 21-document corpus and preserve the clause-level, sentence-level, contractual, promotional, and interface-oriented units used previously. Their distribution also reveals a source-based division. Official platform documents primarily construct workers through performance, advancement, resilience, and institutional belonging. By contrast, rights-bearing identities are articulated exclusively by secondary and contextual sources. Entrepreneurial subjectivity is consequently distributed across competing institutional vocabularies rather than expressed as a unified or uncontested model of worker identity.

Table 3. Entrepreneurial subject positions constructed across platform-labour discourse

Constituent indicators	Codes	Percent	Source distribution	Representative textual evidence	Data codes
Cost management, benefit optimisation, performance orientation, order completion, savings, adaptation to incentives	7	24.1%	6 documents: 5 primary, 1 secondary, 0 context	“Dana apresiasi ditentukan berdasarkan banyaknya perjalanan yang telah ditempuh selama masa aktif.”	PRI-GRB-001–004; PRI-GRB-007; SEC-ANT-002
Entrepreneurial autonomy, schedule choice, independent status, tariff negotiation, project-based work	6	20.7%	6 documents: 2 primary, 1 secondary, 3 context	“Hubungan Anda dengan Gojek adalah hubungan kontraktor independen secara kemitraan.”	PRI-GOJ-001–002; SEC-ANT-001; CTX-KMN-GRB-004; CTX-ILO-001
Entrepreneurial entry, self-investment, personal advancement, skill development, inclusion, occupational transition	6	20.7%	5 documents: 4 primary, 0 secondary, 1 context	“Memberikan lebih banyak peluang pendapatan.”	PRI-GOJ-002; PRI-GRB-003; PRI-GRB-005; PRI-GRB-008; CTX-KMN-005
Self-responsibilisation, asset responsibility, cost-bearing, adaptability, resilience, continued service	4	13.8%	4 documents: 3 primary, 0 secondary, 1 context	“Mitra pengemudi, pengantaran dan merchant kami, telah menjadi pahlawan yang membantu keseharian kita.”	PRI-GOJ-001; PRI-GRB-001; PRI-GRB-006; CTX-KMN-002
Entrepreneurial belonging, platform ecosystem, loyalty, dedication, partner identity	3	10.3%	2 documents: 2 primary, 0 secondary, 0 context	“Grab Indonesia bersama OVO apresiasi puluhan ribu mitra setia.”	PRI-GOJ-003; PRI-GRB-004
Labour rights, worker recognition, decent work, policy protection, discursive contestation	3	10.3%	3 documents: 0 primary, 2 secondary, 1 context	“Regulasi perlindungan pekerja gig sangat urgent.”	SEC-KMN-001–002; CTX-KMN-001

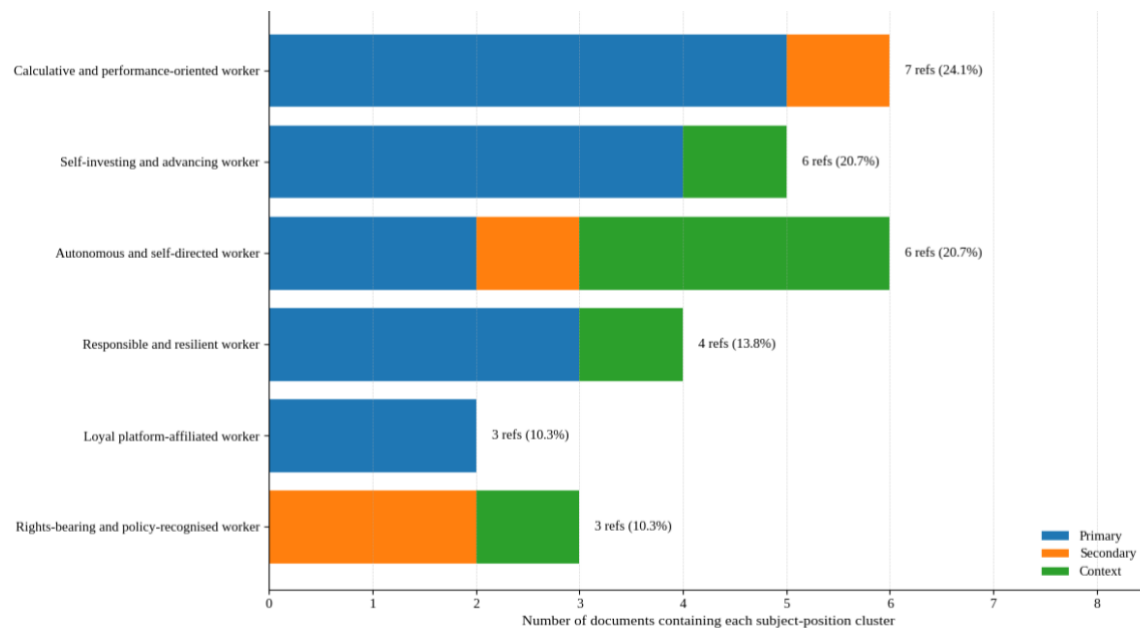


Figure 3. Distribution of entrepreneurial subject positions by source class

Calculative conduct constitutes the largest cluster and occurs primarily in benefit catalogues, appreciation programmes, contractual provisions, and performance-based incentive communications. Workers are repeatedly instructed or encouraged to manage expenditure, monitor eligibility, complete orders, redeem benefits, and adapt to changing offers. Autonomous self-direction appears across a wider range of sources, but its meanings differ substantially. Platform documents foreground independent contracting and schedule choice, whereas contextual sources associate independence with informal status, unstable income, and weak protection. Self-investment discourse similarly links platform entry with advancement, inclusion, and improved earning capacity. Responsibility and resilience are less frequent but remain concentrated in primary documents, particularly where workers are expected to maintain assets or continue providing socially valued services. Loyalty is entirely corporate, while rights-bearing recognition arises only where platform work is examined through labour-policy and decent-work frameworks.

These patterns indicate that entrepreneurial subjectivity operates as a technology of labour governance rather than simply as an expression of worker aspiration. Platforms grant workers limited discretion over participation while requiring them to calculate costs, optimise performance, maintain productive assets, and convert changing opportunities into personal advancement. Such arrangements correspond with Dorschel's (2022) [8] account of entrepreneurial selfhood and Maury's (2023) [9] emphasis on heterogeneous entrepreneurial tendencies, but the Indonesian corpus adds an institutional contrast between corporate and rights-oriented subject positions. Calculative agency can generate practical room for manoeuvre, yet it also transfers responsibility for uncertainty towards workers, consistent with findings on constrained autonomy and self-leadership in gig work [28], [16]. Entrepreneurial independence therefore appears conditional: it expands responsibility more consistently than it redistributes authority, protection, or control over platform infrastructures.

4.3. Precarity and control mechanisms across Indonesian platform-labour discourse

Precarity and control are distributed across seven mechanisms that connect institutional authority with workers' uncertain access to income, protection, and platform participation. Conditional welfare, regulatory gaps, and labour insecurity each account for eight of 42 coded references, making them the three most prominent clusters. Metric and performance control and risk transfer contribute five references each, while app dependence and unilateral change contribute four each. These categories were derived from the same corpus and analytical units used throughout preceding analyses. Their source distribution is sharply differentiated: primary platform documents contain most references to operational control, conditional benefits, risk allocation, account governance, and information access, whereas secondary and contextual sources articulate income instability, legal ambiguity, and social-protection deficits. Precarity therefore becomes visible through the juxtaposition of institutional documents rather than through any single source class.

Table 4. Precarity and control mechanisms across Indonesian platform-labour discourse

Main mechanism	Constituent indicators	Codes	Percents	Source distribution	Representative textual evidence	Data codes
Conditional welfare and eligibility	Time-limited benefits, performance-based rewards, app-mediated access, discretionary support, promotional protection	8	19.0%	7 documents: 6 primary, 1 secondary, 0 context	“Keuntungan dapat berubah sewaktu-waktu tanpa pemberitahuan.”	PRI-GOJ-003; PRI-GRB-001–005; PRI-GRB-007; SEC-ANT-002
Regulatory and protection gaps	Legal ambiguity, absent employment protection, limited social security, policy delay, institutional uncertainty	8	19.0%	6 documents: 0 primary, 2 secondary, 4 context	“Regulasi perlindungan pekerja gig sangat urgent.”	SEC-KMN-001–002; CTX-KMN-001–003; CTX-ILO-001
Income and labour insecurity	Unstable earnings, discontinuous income, job-loss risk, commission pressure, nonstandard contracts, market dependence	8	19.0%	5 documents: 0 primary, 2 secondary, 3 context	“Digital platform workers do not have stable incomes and are at high risk of losing job.”	SEC-ANT-001–002; SEC-KMN-002; CTX-KMN-003–005; CTX-ILO-001
Metric and performance control	Order targets, trip counts, incentive thresholds, tariff determination, performance-dependent rewards	5	11.9%	4 documents: 2 primary, 2 secondary, 0 context	“Dana apresiasi ditentukan berdasarkan banyaknya perjalanan yang telah ditempuh selama masa aktif.”	PRI-GOJ-001; PRI-GRB-004; SEC-ANT-001–002
Risk and cost transfer	Vehicle responsibility, maintenance, insurance, safety, equipment expenditure, occupational exposure	5	11.9%	5 documents: 5 primary, 0 secondary, 0 context	Platform terms assign partners responsibility for vehicles, insurance, safety, and service provision.	PRI-GOJ-001; PRI-GRB-001; PRI-GRB-003; PRI-GRB-005–006
Account, payment, and app dependence	Wallet deductions, account suspension, app-only information, platform-mediated access, digital dependency	4	9.5%	3 documents: 3 primary, 0 secondary, 0 context	The partner terms authorise fare calculation, wallet management, complaint processing, and suspension under specified conditions.	PRI-GOJ-001; PRI-GRB-002; PRI-GRB-007
Unilateral change and information asymmetry	Changing benefits, opaque criteria, asymmetric discretion, reclassification, restricted information access	4	9.5%	3 documents: 2 primary, 0 secondary, 1 context	“Keuntungan dapat berubah sewaktu-waktu tanpa pemberitahuan.”	PRI-GOJ-001; PRI-GRB-007; CTX-KMN-005

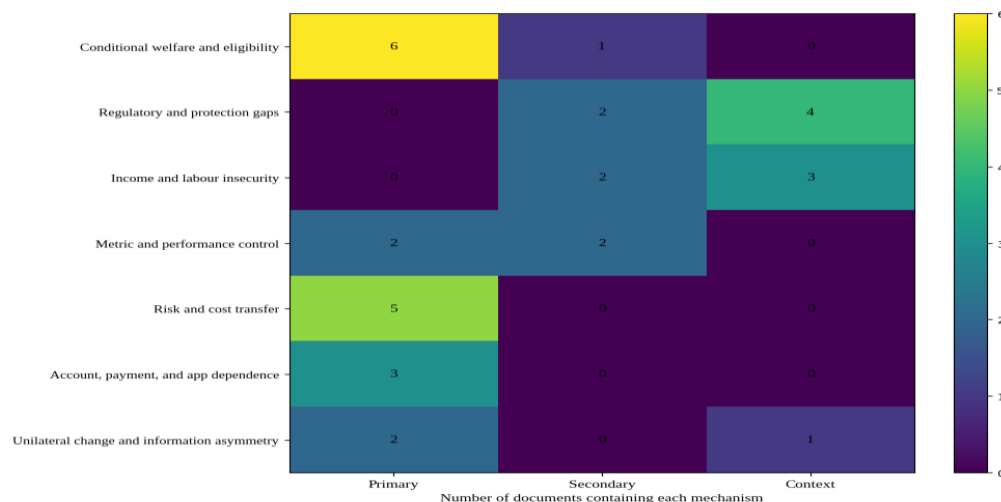


Figure 4. Source-class distribution of precarity and control mechanisms

Conditional welfare is concentrated in platform communications that offer discounts, insurance facilitation, appreciation funds, and other benefits subject to eligibility, location, expiry, performance, or application access. Metric control similarly appears through trip counts, order completion, tariff determination, and incentive thresholds, linking recognition and remuneration to quantified conduct. Risk transfer is confined to primary sources, particularly contractual provisions assigning workers responsibility for vehicles, maintenance, insurance, safety, and service delivery. Account, payment, and application dependence also arise only in platform materials, where access may be mediated through wallet systems, digital interfaces, complaint procedures, and suspension provisions. By contrast, unstable earnings, employment discontinuity, and regulatory deficiencies are primarily named by government, international, journalistic, and scholarly sources. The dominant empirical pattern is thus a separation between documents that operationalise control and those that explicitly diagnose its precarious consequences.

This separation clarifies how algorithmic management can structure precarity without requiring every managerial decision to be fully automated. Contractual discretion, performance metrics, app-mediated benefits, wallet systems, and account restrictions collectively form a sociotechnical architecture of control, consistent with Jarrahi et al. (2021) [1], Benlian et al. (2022) [2], and Duggan et al. (2023) [3]. Its power lies not only in surveillance or automated allocation, but in determining the conditions under which workers can access income, information, rewards, and continued participation. Chan (2022) [4] and Muldoon and Raekstad (2022) [5] similarly show that metric power and algorithmic domination operate through dependency as much as direct coercion. Within this corpus, autonomy remains operationally present but institutionally subordinate: workers may choose when to participate, yet platforms retain greater authority over valuation, eligibility, rule modification, and access, while workers absorb substantial economic and occupational uncertainty.

5. DISCUSSION

The prominence of welfare, flexibility, and recognition frames indicates that platform discourse performs a legitimating function by converting asymmetric labour relations into narratives of opportunity, support, and mutuality. This matters because benefits communicated as discounts, insurance facilitation, or appreciation programmes may appear equivalent to protection while remaining discretionary, conditional, and revocable. Such framing supports participation by making platform work intelligible as a viable pathway rather than as insecure labour. It also obscures the distinction between corporate assistance and enforceable employment rights. This interpretation aligns with Cameron's (2024) [6] account of consent manufactured through constrained choices and with Meijerink and Bondarouk's (2021) [11] argument that algorithmic management can simultaneously create value and restrict autonomy. Yet it complicates accounts that treat flexibility as straightforward empowerment. In this corpus, flexibility functions institutionally when it attracts and retains workers, but becomes dysfunctional when it displaces attention from income stability, bargaining power, and durable protection in practice.

This framing pattern is best explained by the structural separation between platforms' market-making role and workers' legal classification as independent partners. Because platforms must recruit labour while limiting conventional employment obligations, discourse becomes a governance resource that reconciles control with contractual distance. Partnership language personalises institutional asymmetry, while welfare narratives translate selective support into evidence of corporate responsibility. Benlian et al. (2022) [2] and

Jarrahi et al. (2021) [1] show that algorithmic management distributes managerial functions across software, customers, contracts, and organisational rules; this diffusion makes authority less visible without making it weaker. Indonesian platform discourse reflects that structure by foregrounding participation benefits while external sources articulate informality and protection gaps. This does not establish a direct causal effect on worker beliefs, but it reveals a correspondence between institutional incentives and representational choices. Discursive legitimisation therefore emerges from a business model that requires operational control, reputational consent, and legal distance to coexist.

The construction of workers as calculative, self-investing, resilient, and loyal has significant implications for how responsibility is allocated within platform labour. Entrepreneurial subjectivity can provide practical agency by encouraging workers to manage schedules, compare incentives, maintain assets, and pursue income opportunities. However, its dysfunction lies in converting structural uncertainty into a test of individual competence. When success is framed as optimisation, adaptation, and discipline, income instability may be interpreted as insufficient effort rather than as a consequence of demand volatility, platform rules, or asymmetric market power. Dorschel (2022) [8] and Maury (2023) [9] similarly argue that entrepreneurial selfhood combines aspiration with self-discipline and fragmented dependence. Crayne and Newlin (2023) [16] further show that self-leadership can support persistence while also intensifying strain. This study therefore suggests that entrepreneurial agency is neither wholly emancipatory nor merely ideological: it is a productive capacity whose value is constrained by infrastructures workers cannot redesign or govern in practice.

The underlying structure of this subject position lies in the organisation of platform work as formally independent but infrastructurally dependent labour. Workers control limited operational decisions, yet platforms establish the architecture within which calculation occurs: prices, incentives, ratings, access conditions, and benefit eligibility. This asymmetry explains why autonomy and self-responsibilisation appear together rather than as opposites. Duggan et al. (2021) [28] describe boundaryless careers constrained by algorithms, while Anwar et al. (2024) [19] conceptualise gig independence as entangled with algorithmic visibility. The Indonesian corpus reflects this entanglement because worker autonomy is repeatedly linked to duties of maintenance, cost-bearing, performance, and adaptability. The correlation should not be read as evidence that platform discourse determines worker identity. Instead, it indicates that platform institutions make identities more available and rewarding than others. Entrepreneurial subjectivity thus arises from a governance arrangement in which freedom is granted at the level of execution while strategic authority remains concentrated.

The concentration of conditional welfare, risk transfer, account dependence, and protection gaps reveals that precarity is not an accidental residue of platform work but an organised condition of participation. Its immediate implication is that workers' access to income, support, and continued platform membership remains contingent upon rules they do not equally control. Metric systems may coordinate service efficiently, and app-based infrastructures may reduce transaction costs, but these functions coexist with exposure to suspension, changing eligibility, unstable rewards, and transferred operating expenses. Chan (2022) [4] identifies this dynamic as metric power, while Walker et al. (2021) [29] describe algorithms as biopolitical mechanisms that regulate conduct through inaccessible decision systems. Novianto (2024) [7] and Yasih (2022) [10] show that Indonesian workers nevertheless resist and reinterpret such arrangements. This study extends those insights by demonstrating that precarity is also discursively segmented: platforms operationalise conditionality, whereas policy and research sources name its broader social consequences over time institutionally.

This pattern is rooted in the unequal distribution of risk, information, and decision-making capacity across platform ecosystems. Platforms retain authority over pricing rules, account access, performance criteria, and benefit design, while workers bear vehicle costs, maintenance, insurance responsibilities, demand fluctuations, and income discontinuity. Such an arrangement resembles Muldoon and Raekstad's (2022) [5] concept of algorithmic domination because workers depend upon systems they cannot meaningfully contest, even when they possess limited choice within them. It also supports Qadri and D'Ignazio's (2022) [12] observation that workers continually repair and negotiate platform visions rather than simply obeying them. Countervailing practices therefore matter, but they do not dissolve structural asymmetry. The causal language must remain cautious because this corpus analyses institutional discourse rather than worker outcomes. Nevertheless, the alignment between contractual discretion, metric control, and externally documented protection gaps indicates an underlying model of conditional autonomy in which flexibility is sustained through workers' absorption of uncertainty.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesian platform discourse legitimises algorithmic management by combining narratives of flexibility, partnership, welfare, and entrepreneurial opportunity with infrastructures

that preserve platform authority over performance, access, and risk allocation. Its central lesson is that autonomy in gig work is neither absent nor complete; it is conditional, operational, and institutionally bounded. By integrating discourse framing, entrepreneurial subject-positioning, and precarity-and-control analysis within a single corpus, this study contributes a more relational account of platform labour. It also advances scholarship by treating discourse not as promotional residue, but as a constitutive mechanism through which labour relations, responsibilities, and insecurities become normalised.

Several limitations qualify these conclusions. The corpus is restricted to publicly accessible institutional, journalistic, scholarly, and policy documents, and therefore cannot establish how workers interpret, negotiate, or resist these representations in everyday practice. It also does not permit causal claims about the behavioural effects of platform discourse or reveal proprietary algorithmic operations. Future research should combine longitudinal document analysis with interviews, digital ethnography, app walkthroughs, worker-generated materials, and comparative analysis across platforms, regions, genders, and occupational groups.

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Abdul Wahid: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible platform, corporate, and policy documents.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible platform, corporate, and policy documents, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

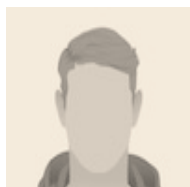
The corpus of documents analyzed in this study are publicly accessible and available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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