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Article

Dilemma of Multi-Platform Ride-Hailing Drivers in Yogyakarta: Between Economic Demands and Psychological Impact in Achieving Well-Being

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Abstract: Online transportation services, initially presented as an innovative employment approach by categorizing workers as 'independent contractors', have come to be recognized for their exploitative nature. The notion of 'flexibility' suggests that workers have the autonomy to tailor their hours and location according to their income goals. However, this disguises the true situation for informal workers who lack rights and protections. This study delves into these issues from a psychological standpoint to uncover the mental and emotional interplay between the motivations and exploitation experienced by online drivers affiliated with multiple platforms. The study adopts a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological lens. Data was gathered through thorough interviews, observations, and document analysis, with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) employed as the data analysis technique. The study's participants were five male multi-platform online drivers from the Special Region of Yogyakarta, ranging in age from 18 to 64, and had been associated with at least two platforms for more than a year. The findings highlight two primary themes: firstly, the decision to join multiple platforms is chiefly driven by economic reasons, including a decline in orders, daily earnings, bonus incomes, and the conclusion of the initial profitable phase. Secondly, the exploitative conditions are linked to the platforms' algorithms, which exert control and influence the psychological state of the drivers. Nonetheless, the participants have developed effective strategies to manage fatigue, anxiety, and stress.

Keywords: ride-hailing driver; partner; work-related stress; psychology; well-being

Introduction

Digital platforms have revolutionized everyday life, particularly in transportation, with services that streamline the process of securing transport. The gig work model emerging from this shift emphasizes short-term engagements, offering workers flexible hours and pay based on the tasks completed rather than traditional long-term employment. This model reflects a significant change in the labor market, prioritizing adaptability and transactional job relationships (Novianto et al., 2021). The term "platform" in the context of digital services refers to businesses that operate as intermediaries, facilitating the connection between customers and independent service providers, who are often referred to as "partners." These platforms serve as a bridge to fulfill customer requests by engaging these partners to provide the requested service (Mustika & Savirani, 2021). As a result, there has been a shift in fieldwork patterns from strict work relations (Fordism) to a more flexible

work model (post-fordism). One of the platform economies work models with a flexible work model is online transportation services, or what is known as online motorcycle taxis (Heeks, 2019).

During the period when online service provider platforms were heavily investing to gain market share, known as 'burning money,' online motorcycle taxi jobs emerged as an attractive employment option, especially for the lower middle class in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The draw was the potential for earnings higher than the relatively low provincial minimum wages that place Yogyakarta among the ten provinces with the lowest minimum wages in the country. This economic context helps explain the popularity of such jobs in the region (Wulansari, 2021), it is explained that during the 'honeymoon' period, the income of two-wheeled online motorcycle taxi drivers can reach 381,712 rupiah/day, and that of four-wheeled motorcycle taxi drivers is 581,892 rupiah/day. The high daily income of motorcycle taxi driver and the allure of online employment stems from the significant rewards it offers. For instance, in the case study of *Gojek*, the profession of online motorcycle taxi drivers has undergone a transformation in public perception. What was once viewed as a menial occupation has now gained respectability and status. (Anindhita, Arisanti & Rahmawati, 2016).

However, as the initial phase of high investment or the 'honeymoon' phase ends, and the financial incentives and daily bonuses start to diminish, online motorcycle taxi drivers are seeing a decline in their earnings. As noted by an academic from the Unika Civil Engineering Study Program, Soegijapranata, in Alfarizi's (2022) study, the average monthly earnings for these drivers now barely reach 3.5 million rupiahs. To achieve this, drivers must work 8-12 hours daily for an entire month without taking a day off. Apart from the problem of decreasing income, the challenge that online motorcycle taxi drivers in Indonesia must face is regarding regulations. A legal umbrella that regulates partnership-based working relationships is necessary for the foundation of the digital intermediary service business model to become 'false' (Nastiti, 2021). Using the word 'partner' as a term of reference refers to the ideology of 'platform capitalism', which causes them not to be considered labourers or employees, thereby eliminating them as legal subjects protected by the Employment Law (Aqil, 2023). As a result, online motorcycle taxi drivers do not have access to worker rights such as working time limits, minimum wages, holiday rights, social protection, and the right to join a labour union (Novianto et al., 2021)—working relationships based on partnerships place online motorcycle taxi drivers in a vulnerable position. The regulations governing this partnership work model refer to Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning MSMEs rather than being guided by Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Employment. The partnership is explained as a form of cooperation between businesses based on the principles of mutual need, trust, strengthening and benefit, both directly and indirectly (Farhan & Irwansyah, 2023).

The above phenomenon encourages online motorcycle taxi workers to expand opportunities to earn more significant income by registering and working on more than one platform, known as multi-platform. Apart from that, the psychological aspect will be very vulnerable to the risks of becoming a multi-platform online motorcycle taxi driver. The term motivation is a description of the reason someone does something. Motivation functions as a guide in understanding how biological, emotional, social and cognitive forces play an active role in influencing human behaviour (Cherry, 2022). Maslow's theory in Aamodt (2010) explains that individuals will be motivated to work to fulfil each stage of the five hierarchies of needs. The hierarchy of needs referred to by Maslow includes physiological, safety, social, self-esteem and self-actualization needs (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Meanwhile, regarding vulnerability due to excessive workload, according to Hart & Staveland (in Tarwaka, 2015), it is defined as the perceived interaction between the human mental processing ability and the time needed to complete a task. This causes the absence of work-life balance or the individual's perception that work and non-work activities can go hand in hand, thus increasing growth according to an individual's life priorities (Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

Most previous research examines gig work issues from political, legal, and economic dimensions. Novianto et al. (2021) explored the forms of fake partnerships that are very detrimental to online motorcycle taxi drivers by conducting in-depth interviews with 290 online motorcycle taxis in DKI Jakarta, DI Yogyakarta and Bali in June-October 2020. Nastiti (2021) examines the issue of legal umbrellas in the economy of gigs in the passenger service or ride-hailing sector. Apart from

that, there are also studies related to the dynamics of job uncertainty for online motorcycle taxi drivers. However, the conclusions are only limited to situations of employee uncertainty, which can be overcome with internal motivation (Perwira & Hidayat, 2021). So far, people have yet to study the psychological dynamics in the motivation and exploitation of multi-platform online motorcycle taxi drivers and their implications for the future. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the space of previous research by raising the title "Phenomenological Study: Motivational Dynamics and Exploitation of Multi-Platform Online Motorbike Taxi Drivers in Achieving Well-Being".

Methods

The research method used is qualitative research with a phenomenological study approach. Data collection techniques in this research used in-depth interviews, literature reviews, participant observation and documentation. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and participant documentation. The in-depth interview method was used to obtain in-depth insights from participants. Interviews involve face-to-face meetings with participants at predetermined locations. Interviews focused on personal experiences, motivations, feelings, and the impact of exploitation experienced. This interview process was recorded and then transcribed for analysis. Next, literature studies are used to understand the theoretical framework and previous research relevant to the research topic. The literature study method helps formulate appropriate interview questions and provides a frame of reference for data analysis.

Furthermore, observation is also needed by observing online motorcycle taxi drivers in real-life situations when they carry out their work. This process provides insight into their daily behaviors, challenges, and interactions they experience. Meanwhile, participant documentation involves collecting documents or notes made by online motorcycle taxi drivers about their experiences and feelings. These documents take the form of diaries, blogs, or social media that can provide additional insight into the dynamics of motivation and exploitation. Data from various sources is analyzed holistically to detail and describe the dynamics in a broader context.

Determination of interview participants was carried out by screening using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) Male/female aged 18-64 years, (2) Working as an online motorcycle taxi driver in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (3) Join two or more platforms for one year of work, (4) Willing to become a participant and be involved in interview activities. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through literature searches regarding studies or studies that have been conducted and published on credible sites and journals with the search keywords "Gig Economy and Gig Workers", "Online Motorbike Taxi", "Ride Sharing Platform Partners", "Study Phenomenology", as well as "Psychological Dynamics and Well-Being". The following table describes the research participants based on predetermined criteria. This research was conducted in Yogyakarta from July to September 2023.

Table 1. List of Research Participants.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P 5
Nickname	ME	PW	AD	YS	MA
Age (year)	37	58	39	29	45
Sex	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Education	Bachelor	High school	Bachelor	High school	Bachelor
Length of multi-platform working (year)	2	6	5	4	3

Data Analysis

Phenomenological data analysis, in general, is by examining interview transcripts and highlighting sentences or quotes that illustrate an understanding of how participants experience the phenomenon (Hamzah, 2020). The data analysis technique in this research uses the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) technique. Natural science data analysis techniques attempt to examine how individuals interpret essential experiences in life in natural settings (Smith et al., 2009). The following are the stages of data analysis in this research:

Data Transcription

The initial stage in research data analysis is transcribing data, which includes two main components: initial recording and understanding the transcript results. Initial recording is the process of collecting raw data in the form of recordings of in-depth interviews and participatory observations that are carried out carefully. The initial recording of the transcription results was carried out carefully by marking the utterances of each participant and indicating aspects of motivation and exploitation. Then, the results of the data transcription were appreciated by involving in-depth reflection to understand the meanings implied in the participants' words.

Descriptive and Thematic Codification

Codification process is conducted by giving a label or code to each unit of significant meaning in the data. These codes are descriptive, reflecting concrete aspects of the transcript without interpreting their meaning. Then, emergent themes emerged naturally from the data and superordinate themes that described more significant concepts and involved more specific thematic elements. These themes help in understanding which is more in-depth about online motorcycle taxi drivers' exploitation experiences and motivations.

Comparative Analysis

This stage includes structuring superordinate themes, providing exploratory comments, and drawing patterns between cases. The superordinate arrangement of themes established a more apparent hierarchy between motivation and exploitation themes. Meanwhile, exploratory comments further explain the significance of themes and the relationships between themes. Finally, patterns are drawn between cases or between participants' experiences to identify similarities and differences in experiences that emerge from the data. Then, interpretation is carried out using an organizational psychology approach according to the data obtained. The concepts and theories used are occupational stress theory (eustress, distress), burnout, motivation, resilience, and well-being.

Data Validation

Data validation is conducted to maintain the reliability of the research results. The triangulation technique is used to validate findings by comparing the analysis results with other data sources, such as literature studies, repeated interviews, or additional observations, to ensure that the findings are consistent and reliable. The data obtained was criticized and reviewed regarding the relationship between the data and the initial hypothesis concept.

Data Presentation

Finally, the results of the data analysis are presented carefully in the form of a narrative report. Data is presented systematically using quotes from participants to support the findings. This analytical method provides a strong foundation for understanding the motivation and exploitation of multi-platform online motorcycle taxi drivers in achieving well-being with depth and meaning through a phenomenological approach.

Result

Research findings show that economic factors are the main factors behind online motorcycle taxi drivers joining more than one platform. Online motorcycle taxi drivers feel that joining one platform is not enough, especially with the end of the "honeymoon" period for online transportation service provider platforms. This has implications for decreasing daily income and the number of orders received by online motorcycle taxi drivers. Joining multiple platforms provides more income expectations than depending on one service provider platform.

Apart from that, the work flexibility promised by service provider platform companies does not necessarily provide welfare for online motorcycle taxi drivers (Firdasanti et al., 2021). The presence of digital platforms as intermediary media is also only superficial. This is because digital platforms indirectly manage workers through orders received by online motorcycle taxi drivers, often referred to as 'invisible management figures', 'shadow employers', or 'algorithm-based management' (Permana et al., 2023). From the data findings that have been analyzed, six major themes emerged as a form of multi-platform online motorcycle taxi work dynamics, namely factors driving occupational stress, response to occupational stress, impact of occupational stress, motivation to maintain work as an online motorcycle taxi, resilience to occupational stress, and achieving well-being as stated in the following aspects:

Occupational Stress Driving Factors

The factors of occupational stress by participants include external obstacles in working, poor social relationships, self-compulsion, unclear platform systems, company injustice, discomfort with the work environment, external pressure, internal pressure, and workaholism. This encourages online motorcycle taxi drivers to feel discomfort, which can lead to stress while working.

"...if you do not use it for a long time, you need therapy, like someone learning from scratch, at least two months before they can work normally. It takes a long time for therapy." (P3)

"People work on roads with the most traffic. What is more, if you meet the ruler of the earth... not in the middle, not on the edge, you honk, you do not go to the edge, you look like this..." (P4)

"There is an "opang". And so far, they have not been able to share openly with us. They are very closed off. You cannot take it here. If you take it here, I will report you to the office..." (P5)

Furthermore, occupational stress is susceptible to being experienced by participants due to system, work, co-worker, economic, work environment and internal pressures. These stressors can be the driving force for the emergence of occupational stress in online motorcycle taxi drivers.

"...being intimidated by other parties or the applicator, perhaps not directly, yes, because, for example, there are rules like this and this, this partner, how come there are so many rules, how come it exceeds that of workers in general." (P1)

"The pressure comes from customers, ratings. The problem is that if our rating is bad, the incentives will not go down" (P2)

"At the beginning of the month, I must find much money to pay. "If the account does not sound, that is when I'm stressed." (P4).

Response to Occupational Stress

The need for clarity in the platform application system algorithm causes online motorcycle taxi drivers to feel disadvantaged. Coupled with unreasonable working hours, online motorcycle taxi drivers are forced to work under 'algorithmic pressure'.

*"Even now, for me, this has not been fully realized, such as the order allocation, the current rates, the discounts, and the huge discounts. The discount can be 40%. It used to be g**** only 20%. That 40% is a burden on partners." (P4)*

*"Now the bonuses at g**** and g*** are no longer as rich as they used to be. "I used to be able to snack on office people daily because I used to work at a motorbike dealer." (P5)*

However, one participant showed different behavior when facing the threat of work stress. These participants chose to work continuously for almost an entire day without caring about rest and eating unless their physical condition was unhealthy or there was a family event. This is based on a sense of enthusiasm for earning a living.

"If the order is fast, 3-4 times in 1 hour, this is called gator. Well, it does not make you tired. If I am healthy for one year, yes, I will never have a holiday for one year." (P2)

Impact of Occupational Stress

Due to work stress caused by various internal and external factors, online motorcycle taxi drivers become less enthusiastic about their work. They can only surrender to the platform application algorithm. The platform application system builds 'standard working hours' for online motorcycle taxi drivers if they want to get the number of daily orders according to the target. This shows that the flexibility offered is superficial and causes drivers job stress.

"...being lazy at work or making you tired quickly is that the delivery is not pleasant. For example, during peak hours, traffic jams, at 4-5 o'clock we get orders for city directions." (P2)

"The beginning may also be stressful. But yes, I want to learn IT (about the platform system). This is how it is, to the office. Yes, the office remains closed; it cannot be open like this." (P3)

"...the stress is just because I am physically and psychologically tired, so if I want to take a holiday, I will take a holiday." (P4)

Maintaining Online Motorbike/Ride-Hailing Jobs

Motivation is closely related to a person's personal domain in doing something. Motivational aspects cannot be separated from a person's cognition and feelings. Participants felt that being an online motorcycle taxi driver was ideal and suitable because of the flexibility offered by the service provider platform. Online motorcycle taxi drivers feel that their work aligns with their passion. In other words, being an online motorcycle taxi driver can no longer be underestimated as a side job because there are involved in carrying out this job.

"Why do I like being a driver? I have always disliked tied work. I used to join a company but never felt comfortable because I did not want a tied system. Why do I like online motorcycle taxis? It is because the time is free, freelance, and the results will be greater if we are more tired. So that is what I want." (P2)

"The comfort part is the first; we choose the time, we are not tied, the working hours are up to us, we can manage our time, we can relax and not be tied." (P3)

"So, the advantage of online motorcycle taxis is that they are not time-bound and are free. Whatever time you start working, no one can control it, no one can control whatever time you start work, no one can control it. It depends on us, and your income is also adjusted to our abilities at that time, our wishes as drivers, and how much we want to earn. Target or not that is the advantage. (P4)

Resilience in Facing Occupational Stress

Apart from work flexibility, participants also considered aspects of accumulated income and ratings given by consumers from orders as the motivation behind the choice to work as an online motorcycle taxi. Online motorcycle taxi drivers seem very careful in dealing with consumers and

incoming orders from platform applications to prevent the worst possibility, namely a decrease in daily income.

"The problem is that when we work in a company, we are tired of doing that kind of work; we do not get that much tired. The term is not appropriate. If we are willing to work hard that much, there is no other reward. "But with online motorbike taxis, the more tired we are of following orders, the more income we earn." (P2)

"Speaking like this, then he is afraid he'll misunderstand, I will get a rating, it is better if I keep quiet unless the customer speaks first, then I will answer." (P4)

Achieving Well-Being

Well-being expects individuals to feel happiness and satisfaction, have low-stress levels, be mentally and physically healthy, and have a good quality of life. However, with the various facts above, online motorcycle taxi drivers have not been able to achieve these indicators fully. Therefore, to achieve well-being, participants have their ways or strategies to overcome boredom, exhaustion, or other things that cause a decrease in motivation and work performance. Data findings show that participants feel discomfort, which can lead to pressure at work. This inconvenience is indicated by the increasing number of online motorcycle taxis, which increases the number of competitions, lousy weather factors, delivery during peak hours, platform systems, the threat of conventional motorcycle taxis, stops for more than one destination, motorbike or car drivers who do not understand traffic rules, and national disaster, such as a pandemic. Participants also felt that the service provider platform company needed to prioritize justice for online motorcycle taxi drivers. As a result, online motorcycle taxi drivers interpret the above reality as 'less humanized', causing indirect exploitation through external pressure on the driver.

"... it is actually better than someone choosing a bad path, being a thief or something. At least he is tired enough to be okay with this. People say it is halal." (P1)

"Personally, thank God there is a job like this. because the work I have been doing is better than before because I can please other people." (P3)

Discussion

Working as a driver for a ride-hailing service is demanding as it requires excellence in delivering services. There is a rating system in place within each ride-hailing app, where customers can assess the performance of their driver. These consumer ratings play a crucial role in determining a driver's earnings, as higher ratings can lead to increased income opportunities for the driver. This system incentivizes drivers to provide the best service possible to ensure a high customer satisfaction level (Idug et al., 2023). Ride-hailing companies have established specific guidelines that their drivers are expected to follow. Compliance with these guidelines is crucial for drivers to maintain their standing within the company. Failing to adhere to these rules can result in penalties, which may include reductions in their ratings, scores, or earnings. These measures are put in place to ensure a consistent and quality service for customers, which in turn impacts the driver's performance metrics and potential income.

The profession of being a ride-hailing driver is currently attracting many individuals as a viable primary job and a reliable source of income. This growing interest in the role is beneficial for ride-hailing companies as it expands their network of drivers to meet increasing customer demand for their services (Chengi et al., 2021). Ride-hailing app companies have instituted competitive elements into their management systems to encourage driver participation and motivate them to meet certain targets. While this competitive approach is designed to incentivize drivers, it can also have the unintended effect of causing driver fatigue due to the pressures of continuous participation and target achievement (Jaydarifard et al., 2023). Thus, competition has an indirect impact on driver safety.

Competition in the ride-hailing industry, from a mental health standpoint, adds to the work pressure that drivers face. This persistent pressure not only contributes to driver fatigue but can also have implications for their safety on the job. It's crucial for drivers to manage their workloads to safeguard their well-being and ensure they can operate their vehicles safely (Jaydarifard et al., 2023). The intense competition within ride-hailing apps compels drivers to devise strategic approaches to maximize their earnings. One common strategy is for drivers to register with multiple ride-hailing services. This multi-app approach can lead to increased income opportunities. However, this also means that drivers might work longer hours across different platforms, which can result in physical exhaustion. This fatigue, in turn, can have serious implications for their driving safety.

Drivers in the ride-hailing industry are driven by the prospect of earning a substantial income. This motivation fuels their commitment to the job and the effort they put into maintaining or improving their standing within the ride-sharing platform they work for. (Lefcoe et al., 2023). Despite the substantial physical and mental demands associated with being a ride-hailing driver, joining a community can be a strategic way to mitigate these risks. Being part of a driver community fosters a sense of camaraderie and equality, which can significantly reduce the stress associated with the job. This sense of belonging and mutual support among drivers is a key factor in managing the pressures of the occupation. (Grasiaswaty et al., 2020). Joining a driver community offers several advantages, including an enhanced sense of security. This is particularly important in the event of work-related incidents or accidents. Being part of such a community also ensures access to the latest news and updates about road conditions, which is essential for planning routes and schedules. Moreover, the community acts as a platform for advocacy and provides a layer of protection for drivers, especially if they face unfair or harsh treatment from customers. These benefits contribute significantly to the support and well-being of ride-hailing drivers.

Many drivers in the ride-hailing sector may not be fully aware of the toll that their job takes on their physical and mental health. Research indicates that the nature of their work can lead to detrimental health outcomes, including disorders related to the skeletal system, such as joint issues, and problems with the endocrine system, which involves hormone secretion. It is important for drivers to be cognizant of these risks and manage their health proactively. (Bartel et al., 2019). There's a lack of comprehensive regulations in place to protect the physical and mental health of drivers in the gig economy, specifically those working for ride-hailing services. The absence of such regulatory oversight means that drivers may be more vulnerable to health issues associated with their profession without sufficient support or recourse from governmental entities.

Conclusions

The gig economy offers flexible working hours but may also place workers in unstable and potentially exploitative situations. This research focuses on two primary concerns for online motorcycle taxi drivers who operate across multiple platforms. First is the recognition that income from a single platform is often inadequate, especially after the initial high-earning period ends, leading to diminished autonomy due to platform-dictated rules. Second is the neglect of drivers' mental health by these companies, resulting in long hours, lack of health benefits, and financial uncertainty, which can cause burnout and stress. Despite this, many drivers perceive the job as lucrative.

Author Contributions: The involvement of each author in the process of creating this scientific article is as follows.

1. Daffa Naufal Nurrahmad (Author 1): Coordinate with IGPA (Institute of Public Governance Affairs) to formulate the location and participants needed. The author also visited several communities referred to as online motorcycle taxi driver communities to expand the research area. The author is also responsible for the progress of writing the article.

2. Mutiara Ananda Putri (Author 2): Coordinating with the supervisor to formulate the theoretical basis and research approach. The author plays an active role in designing research guides, namely question guides, research permits, interview guides with participants and managing the data analysis process.
3. Salma Nur Rahmasari (Author 3) became the second interviewer to interview participants one and two. Next, the author formulated the data, namely a verbatim process and searching for subordinate themes from the interview results to be analyzed with author 2.
4. Doni Andika Pradana (Author 4): The third interviewer interviewed participants three and four. Next, the author formulated the data from the interview results to be analyzed with author 2. The author also helped author 2 to formulate the research method used.
5. Syahriza Indra Utomo (Author 5) became the fourth interviewer to interview the fifth participant. Next, the author helped articulate the data to be processed into written articles with authors 1 and 2.
6. Ardian Rahman Afandi (Author 6; corresponding author): Design the research, search for, and formulate the number of participants, help build the research framework, direct the research results, and evaluate the results of the writing in the article.

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