

Gen Z's Work Paradigm Shift: Determinants of Gig Economy Choice in Surakarta

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ABSTRACT

Research Originality: The mixed-method approach combines quantitative and qualitative data, thereby providing a more comprehensive view of work preferences among the younger generation.

Research Objectives: This research examines Generation Z's work preferences about the gig economy in Surakarta.

Research Methods: A mixed method was used, employing Atlas.ti for qualitative analysis and logistic regression for quantitative analysis.

Empirical Results: Atlas.ti mapping identified five main categories in the gig economy: type of work, purpose of work, legal guarantees, barriers, and advantages and disadvantages. Logistic regression results revealed that income, reduced work stress, flexible arrangements, and work environment significantly influence Generation Z's decision to engage in gig work. In contrast, age, gender, and education level showed no significant influence on the choice to work in this sector.

Implications: These results highlight the need for legal frameworks that ensure fair protection and social benefits for gig workers, including health insurance, pension schemes, and fair wage standards.

Keywords:

generation Z; gig economy; job interest; logistic regression

How to Cite:

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the gig economy has become an increasingly prevalent labor model (Li et al., 2025). Characterized by temporary, flexible, and platform-based work, the gig economy provides an opportunity for workers, particularly young people, to generate income through various activities, free from traditional employment constraints (Woodcock & Graham, 2020; Tan et al., 2021). Currently, the gig economy in Indonesia includes 4 million workers and contributes US\$7 billion to GDP, demonstrating its direct impact on the national economy. The gig economy continues to grow annually, and Indonesia is considered one of the most favorable environments for recruiting gig workers.

The gig economy is a combination of economic progress and shifting socioeconomic preferences. Workers can adjust their working hours to suit personal needs. This flexibility allows income generation from various sources. Furthermore, workers can utilize their existing skills in ways that align with their preferences.

The accelerated growth of the gig economy can be attributed to the emergence of disruptive technologies, which have triggered a 76.54% decline in conventional employment and a shift of a large portion of the workforce to the informal sector. The number of informal workers has steadily increased, reaching 83.83 million in 2024, or approximately 57.95% of the total working population. The majority of these informal workers are engaged in trade and service sectors. The increasing number of informal workers reflects the ongoing expansion of the gig economy in Indonesia.

Several studies have examined the factors that attract Generation Z to gig work, with Kamarudin & Arif (2024) explaining that income is the primary motivator for Generation Z to enter the gig economy. However, income in the gig economy is relatively small compared to that in the conventional sector. Gig workers are commonly found in tourist-based cities. Research in Malang shows that their average monthly income is between IDR1-3 million (55.3%), with 18.8% earning below IDR1 million and 25.9% above IDR3 million (Darmawan & Muttaqin, 2023). However, income can fluctuate depending on the volume of work performed.

Generation Z is generally considered to be more tech-savvy than previous generations (Buzzetto-Hollywood & Quinn, 2024). The term 'digital native' refers to individuals who have grown up with digital technologies in their daily lives since the advent of the digital age (Mertala et al., 2024). The digital age has made technology ubiquitous, thus enabling Generation Z to enter the gig economy regardless of gender (Permana et al., 2022).

In the workforce, men constitute the majority, and women consistently earn less across various types of work. Research shows that the gender income gap in Indonesia is 42.82%, meaning that on average, men's income is significantly higher than women's (Hundley, 2001). This is closely related to traditional perceptions of women as not being the primary breadwinners in the family. In addition, rigid working hours in conventional employment often prevent married women from participating in the labor market due to household responsibilities that require flexible time. However, the gig economy has

gradually addressed these barriers by offering flexible job opportunities, enabling many women to work full-time or part-time.

The gig economy is divided into two sectors: location-based and online-based. The online-based gig economy requires higher educational levels due to the technical skills needed to perform the work (Herrmann et al., 2023). However, the location-based gig economy shows inclusivity across diverse educational backgrounds (Prakoso & Anggraeni, 2023). This research supports the rationale for including education level as a variable to explain Gen Z's interest in the gig economy.

Today's workforce presents challenges for Generation Z, who are more prone to anxiety and stress, especially under pressure. Their work-related concerns are driven by uncertain futures, educational and career pressures, and rising living costs. According to Hamdali & Liswandi (2023), Generation Z requires a leadership style that suits their characteristics. However, in formal workplaces, Generation Z often works alongside older generations with differing leadership styles. This generational gap may lead Generation Z to switch companies in search of a more comfortable work environment (Ehsan & Ali, 2019). Job stress significantly contributes to burnout among Generation Z (Hartono et al., 2024) and is a key factor influencing their decision to pursue gig work.

Generation Z prefers a flexible environment with a warm, familial atmosphere and low pressure, as they value tranquility. This flexibility includes location, atmosphere, and work hours (T. Putri et al., 2023). The benefits of flexible work include reduced stress, improved physical and mental health, and increased work motivation (Aura & Desiana, 2023). Research shows that gig workers prioritize value flexibility, as it allows them to complete tasks at any time and allocate more time for personal needs, supporting work-life balance (Hartono et al., 2024).

The work environment plays an important role in shaping employee performance in a company. A positive work environment can reduce fatigue and boredom while improving work quality (Meijerink et al., 2024). Unlike the rigid and fixed structure of formal work environments, the gig economy offers greater flexibility. Research shows that the work environment is the sole significant factor influencing Gen Z employee performance (Hendratmoko & Mutiarawati, 2024). Variations in the physical environment of the workplace can affect comfort and productivity, thereby positively impacting the company. Gig workers can work from home, cafes, or coworking spaces, depending on their needs and convenience.

The gig economy is also growing in Surakarta, where the Gen Z population totals 168,038 people, accounting for approximately 29.92% of the city's total population (BPS, 2024). Approximately 59.32% of the population is employed in the formal sector, a 1.70% decrease from August 2022 (61.02%) (BPS, 2024). This data shows a growing preference for the informal sector among workers in Surakarta. In addition, the growth of the informal sector in Surakarta creates promising opportunities for various jobs and activities in the gig economy.

Although research on Generation Z's participation in the gig economy has expanded, most studies have primarily focused on macro-level motivations or urban populations, leaving a gap in understanding the micro-level determinants that influence young people's job preferences in smaller cities like Surakarta. In particular, empirical studies that distinguish between Generation Z individuals interested in gig work and those interested in formal employment remain limited, despite potentially differing motivational factors.

This context raises ongoing debates about gig work: while it offers flexibility, critics argue that it often comes at the expense of income stability, health benefits, legal protections, and long-term career opportunities, making it a precarious form of employment (Alauddin et al., 2025; Lauren & Anandan, 2024). A noteworthy gap in the literature lies in inconsistent findings on the relationship between work stress and job preference. Several studies, such as Fatima and Srivastava (2024) and Hartono and Prapunoto (2024), argue that high levels of work stress in formal employment encourage individuals to seek more flexible alternatives, including gig work, indicating a positive relationship. However, Hendratmoko and Mutiarawati (2024) present a contradictory perspective, suggesting that work stress has a negative influence, meaning that individuals experiencing high stress may avoid uncertain environments like the gig economy.

This study addresses this gap by separately analyzing groups interested and not interested in gig work. It quantitatively evaluates how income, age, gender, education level, job stress, flexibility, and work environment influence interest in the gig economy using binary logistic regression. It also employs a mixed-methods approach to identify the determinants of gig economy interest among Generation Z in Surakarta. The novelty of this study lies in the mixed-method design, which offers a more comprehensive understanding of how economic, psychological, and demographic factors influence employment preferences. The results are expected to contribute not only to academic discourse but also to the formulation of labor market policies that match the aspirations of the evolving young workforce.

METHODS

This research uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the determinants that influence Generation Z's interest in the gig economy in Surakarta. This research uses both primary and secondary data. In this study, an α -value of 0.1 (10%) was applied, and a sample of 100 respondents was obtained. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the selected respondents aligned with the research objectives.

The model used in this research is as follows:

$$L_i = L_N = \frac{P_i}{(1-P_i)} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Inc}_1 + \beta_2 \text{Age}_1 + \beta_3 \text{Gender}_1 + \beta_4 \text{Edu}_1 + \beta_5 \text{WS}_1 + \beta_6 \text{FW}_1 + \beta_7 \text{WE}_1 + e_i$$

Logistic regression analysis was conducted using EViews 12 to determine the statistical significance of each variable and the overall model fit. Complementing the quantitative findings, qualitative data were analyzed using ATLAS.ti 25, a software tool

designed to identify patterns, codes, and thematic categories in interview transcripts. The qualitative component strengthens the interpretation of the statistical results by capturing respondents' motivations, perceptions, and experiences related to gig work. Five main themes emerged from the qualitative coding: types of jobs, purposes of work, legal guarantee, perceived barriers, and the pros and cons. The operational variables from this research are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Variables

Variable	Definitions	Measurement	References
Work in options	Someone interested in, has worked in, or is currently working in the gig economy	0 = no interest in working in the gig economy 1 = interested in working in the gig economy	Permana et al (2023)
Income	The amount of money or income that respondents get from various sources (salary for those who are already working and pocket money for those who are not working)	Indonesian rupiah	Anggraini (2023)
Age	The number of years counted from the respondent's birth year to the time of completing the interview survey.	Years old	Izza et al (2024).
Gender	The biological classification of respondents is divided into two, namely male and female.	0 = man 1 = woman	Lusiyanti (2020)' Fatmawati (2020)
Education	The highest formal level completed by the respondent.	Years of schooling Junior high school = 9 Senior high school = 12 Undergraduate = 16	Hermann et al (2023)
Work stress reduction	Work stress refers to the level of pressure or stress experienced by respondents in terms of job demands, work environment, and individual psychological condition.	This variable is measured using Likert scale perception: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree	Prapunoto (2024); Srivastava (2024)
Flexible working	Flexible working refers to the extent to which respondents have control over when, where, and how they work.		Anggraini (2023); Muttaqin (2023)
Work environment	Work environment refers to the physical, social, and psychological conditions in which work is done and how the environment affects individual performance, well-being, and interest in work		Srivastava (2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to identify the factors influencing Generation Z’s participation in the gig economy. The analysis combines descriptive statistics, qualitative mapping, and binary logistic regression. This section presents the main empirical findings and discusses them in relation to the existing literature. Qualitative mapping using ATLAS.ti found five main categories related to the gig economy: type of work, purpose of working, legal guarantees, barriers, and advantages and disadvantages of gig work. The main finding of this study is that income, work stress reduction, work flexibility, and work environment significantly affect Generation Z's interest in gig work.

In contrast, age, gender, and education level do not have a statistically significant influence. Before conducting the regression analysis, descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents’ characteristics and perceptions. The summary of all research variables is presented in Table 2.

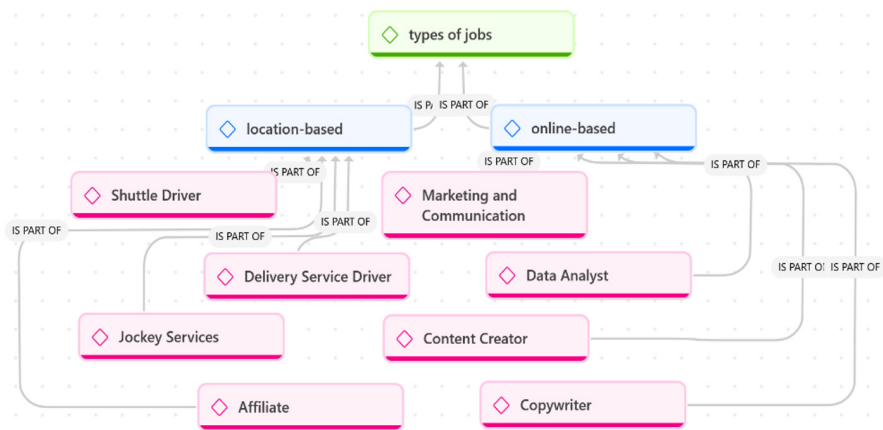
Table 2. Description of Research Variables

	Intention	Income	Age	Gender	Education	Work Stress	Flexibility	Work Environment
Mean	0.850000	1.61400	21.06000	0.550000	12.76000	4.030000	4.220000	4.240000
Std. Dev	0.358870	0.95843	2.210261	0.500000	1.875520	0.593823	0.628932	0.621500
Maximum	1.000000	6.00000	28.00000	1.000000	16.00000	5.000000	5.000000	5.000000
Minimum	0.000000	0.20000	13.00000	0.000000	6.000000	2.000000	2.000000	3.000000

Source: Data Processed (2024)

Table 1 shows Generation Z's average interest in the gig economy as 0.85, indicating that 85% of respondents are interested in this sector. Their average income ranges from IDR 1,614,000 to 6,000,000, with most respondents being students. The average age of respondents is 21 years, ranging from 13 to 28 years. The gender distribution shows that 55% of respondents are female and 45% are male. The average education level is 12 years, equivalent to senior high school.

Figure 1. Types of Jobs



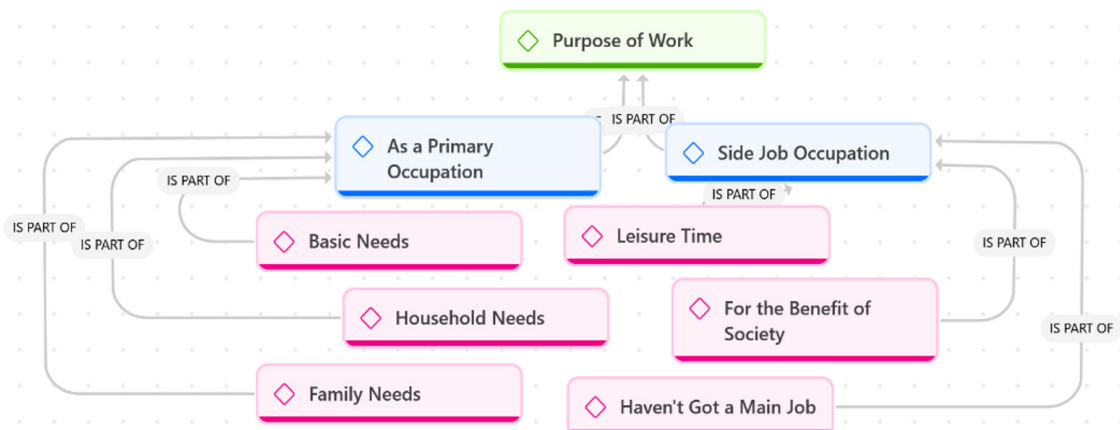
Sources: Data Processed (2024)

Other variables were measured on a Likert scale of 1-5. The average work stress score of 4.03 indicates that respondents perceive gig work as less stressful than formal jobs. The flexibility variable has an average of 4.22, indicating that respondents view the gig economy as highly flexible. The work environment variable has an average of 4.24, which means the majority of respondents find gig work environments comfortable.

Generation Z, defined here as those aged 15-28 years, represents a phase where individuals begin making career decisions following their studies. Generation Z, often perceived as less suited to high-stress environments, increasingly views the gig economy as an alternative career path. Based on the concept map generated, five thematic categories represent Generation Z's engagement with the gig economy.

The gig economy is divided into two types of work: location-based and online-based (see Figure 1). Location-based gigs typically involve tasks that do not require specific skills or educational qualifications, such as delivery drivers operating through Telegram bots, personal shopping, freelance errands, and affiliate marketing that earns commissions from product promotions. These jobs offer high flexibility and easy access for Gen Z who want to earn an income without special skills. Meanwhile, online freelance work requires specific skills or education, such as marketing, communication, digital marketing strategies, data analysis, content creation, and copywriting. These professions are increasingly in demand due to their flexibility and competitive earning potential in the digital age.

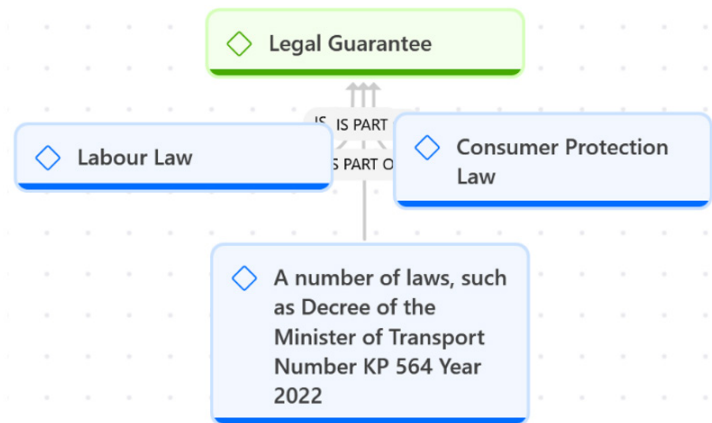
Figure 2. Purpose of Work



Sources: Data Processed (2024)

Generation Z engages in the gig economy primarily either as a primary source of income or as supplementary work. As a primary source of income, they rely on this work to meet basic needs like food and shelter, household necessities such as utilities and furnishings, and family expenses like education and healthcare costs. The economic flexibility of the gig economy allows them to adjust their work schedules with both daily expenses and long-term financial planning. Alternatively, many utilize the gig economy as a side income to productively fill free time, fund social activities, or serve as a temporary solution before securing full-time employment.

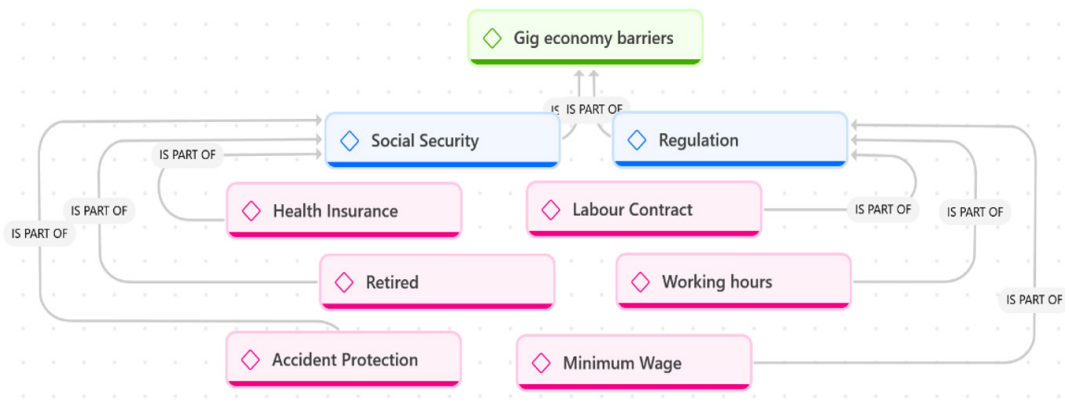
Figure 3. Legal Guarantee



Sources: Data Processed (2024)

Legal guarantee for gig economy workers in Indonesia still faces challenges due to the absence of specific regulations that provide full protection (see Figure 3). Protection for gig workers is partially provided under the Labor Law, which should guarantee the right to a living wage, social security, and a safe working environment. However, their classification status as partners often limits the scope of such protection. In addition, the Consumer Protection Law indirectly pressures platform providers to ensure safe and quality services for both workers and customers. The government has also issued special regulations, such as the Decree of the Minister of Transportation Number KP 564 of 2022, which regulates tariffs and operational costs for gig workers in the transportation sector. However, this protection is still limited and excludes other sectors. Therefore, more comprehensive regulations are needed to provide gig workers with legal certainty equivalent to that of formal employees.

Figure 4. Gig Economy Barriers

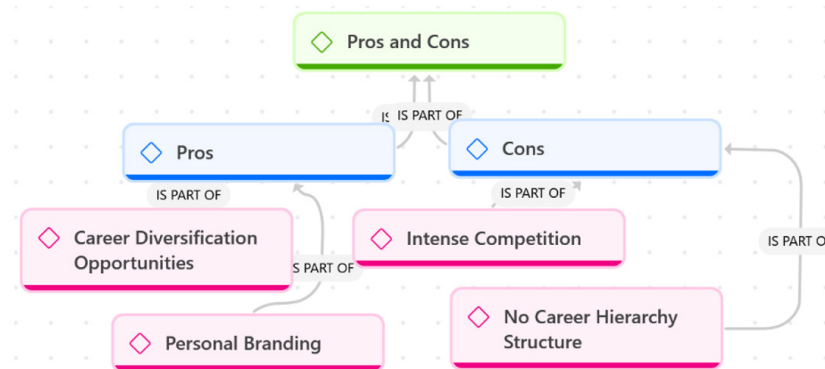


Sources: Data Processed (2024)

The gig economy faces various obstacles, particularly in terms of social security and regulation (see Figure 4). Unlike formal employees, freelance workers lack automatic access

to health insurance, pension funds, or accident insurance. They must pay their own health insurance premiums and save for retirement, which is difficult due to unstable income. In terms of regulation, freelancers generally lack formal employment contracts, which makes their relationship with platform providers flexible but uncertain regarding continued work. Additionally, the lack of working hour limitations makes them vulnerable to fatigue and health risks (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Strengths and weaknesses



Sources: Data Processed, 2024.

Table 3. Binary Logistic Regression Test

Variable	Coefficient	z-Statistic	Probability	Odds Ratio
Constanta (C)	-42.22374	-2.957226	0.0031	0.000000
Income**	-1.350081	-2.134488	0.0328	0.258998
Age	0.231789	0.915615	0.3599	1.261038
Gender	0.914841	0.951245	0.3415	2.497822
Education Level	-0.108137	-0.297363	0.7662	0.897443
Work Stress**	2.120946	2.456640	0.0140	8.350206
Flexible Working**	5.444389	3.170964	0.0015	232.2534
Work Environment**	3.319098	2.504531	0.0123	27.69343
McFadden R-squared		0.584933		
LR Statistic		49.45127		
Prob(LR Statistic)		0.000000		

Sources: Data Processed (2024)

In addition to the phenomenon mapping, binary logistic regression test results were used to examine the effects of independent variables on Generation Z's interest in the gig economy. The results of the binary logistic regression are presented in Table 2. In the binary logistic regression test, the income variable significantly influenced Generation Z's choice to work in the gig economy, with a significance level of 0.0328 (less than 0.05) and an odds ratio of 0.2589. This result means that the higher a person's income,

the less likely they are to choose the gig economy. This result aligns with the findings of Prakoso et al. (2023), who state that the gig economy is more attractive to those with low incomes or those who need additional income due to its flexibility. The reason is that the gig economy often offers flexibility in earnings, allowing individuals to earn income based on the number of completed tasks.

Individuals with higher incomes tend to prefer jobs that offer more stability, clearer career paths, and social security, such as those in the formal sector. Higher income is often associated with shifts in job preferences. Generation Z, with their dynamic lifestyles and high aspirations, may be more drawn to jobs that not only provide income but also social status and more structured career development. Jobs in the formal sector often provide access to clear career paths, training programs, and recognition that can enhance professional reputation. This condition offers more appeal than the financial flexibility of the gig economy, which typically lacks hierarchical career structures (Novianti & Chandra, 2022).

Age showed no significant effect on Generation Z's choice to work in the gig economy. This condition is likely due to the relatively homogeneous characteristics of Generation Z in values, preferences, and mindsets, especially regarding flexibility, technology, and work freedom. As a generation raised in the digital age, age differences such as being under or over 21 years old did not result in significant variations in their interest in the gig economy.

Gender has also shown no significant effect on Generation Z's choice to work in the gig economy. This condition may be attributed to the skill-based nature of work in the gig economy and prevailing market needs, rather than individual characteristics such as gender (Rani et al., 2022). The flexibility of work in this sector allows individuals of any gender to customize their work to suit their needs. In addition, equal access to technology for all genders in Generation Z further reinforces that gender is not a determining factor in interest in the gig economy.

In addition, the gig economy offers flexibility that accommodates the needs of individuals of different genders (Sarker et al., 2024). For example, women who want to balance work and domestic responsibilities, or men who want to pursue freelance projects, can equally take advantage of the flexibility of the gig economy. As such, there is no specific pattern that suggests that one gender is more interested than the other in working in this sector. Furthermore, digital technology, as a key driver of the gig economy, is equally accessible to all genders. Generation Z, regardless of gender, shows high levels of digital literacy, resulting in no significant difference in their ability to access and capitalize on opportunities in the gig economy.

Education level showed no significant influence on Generation Z's choice to work in the gig economy. This result aligns with Herrmann et al. (2023), who found that education level does not play a significant role in determining freelance workers' choices. In the gig economy ecosystem, work is more dependent on technical skills and practical experience than on formal educational background (Herrmann et al., 2023). Many gig

economy platforms prioritize task efficiency and quality of output. This characteristic makes the gig economy accessible to individuals across educational backgrounds.

Work stress had a strong positive effect (OR = 8.35) in this study and significantly influenced Generation Z's choice to work in the gig economy. This data illustrates that as work stress levels increase, the likelihood of choosing gig work increases by a factor of 8.35 compared to individuals with lower stress levels. This finding supports Hartono et al (2024), who identified work stress as a significant predictor of fatigue. Additionally, Generation Z, as the youngest cohort in today's workforce, tends to prefer a more positive, flexible work environment that supports physical and mental well-being.

The main factor contributing to reduced work stress is the flexibility and freedom offered by this sector, which is difficult to find in formal employment. Generation Z often feels pressured by strict work targets, restrictive rules, and rigid hierarchies in formal work environments. The gig economy offers a more appealing alternative because it allows individuals to set their own work hours, choose projects that align with their interests, and take breaks as needed without pressure from a direct supervisor. Additionally, gig jobs often involve lower emotional stress due to their independent and results-based nature, unlike the stress of absenteeism or adherence to rigid company rules. With greater flexibility, Gen Z feels more capable of managing their workloads, maintaining a balance between personal and professional life, and reducing the risk of work-related stress. This condition makes the gig economy a more appealing option than more stressful conventional employment. This result aligns with Hartono & Prapunoto (2024), who emphasized Generation Z's tendency to avoid high-pressure environments and prefer mentally sustainable work models.

Work flexibility showed a significant influence on Generation Z's choice to work in the gig economy, with an odds ratio of 232.2534. This result indicates that greater flexibility substantially increases the likelihood of respondents choosing gig work. This finding aligns with Prakoso & Anggraeni (2023) and Darmawan & Muttaqin (2023), who also found that work flexibility positively influences one's decision to pursue freelance work. The main factor for this positive influence is Generation Z's strong emphasis on work-life balance. Generation Z values the freedom to determine work hours, location, and type of work, allowing them to align their work with their personal preferences and needs. Such flexibility perfectly suits the dynamic lifestyle of Generation Z, who often prioritize time for family, hobbies, and self-development. Additionally, the gig economy allows them to avoid the monotonous routines typically found in formal employment. Flexibility allows Gen Z to achieve work-life balance, explore self-development, and maintain autonomy—values they deeply care about (Li et al., 2025).

This study found that the work environment significantly influences Generation Z's interest in the gig economy. It indicates that the better the work environment, the more likely Generation Z is to choose to work in the gig economy. These findings align with Fatima & Srivastava (2024) and Osorio & Madero (2025), who revealed that Generation Z highly values positive work environments that align with their preferences. In the gig

economy, Generation Z can choose jobs that encourage creativity and productivity, such as working from home or in co-working spaces. They also prefer environments free from hierarchical pressure, employee conflict, and toxic work cultures. With the freedom to choose clients and projects, Gen Z can work in a more relaxed atmosphere and feel more comfortable, making the gig economy a more appealing career choice. Gig workers often choose to work from home, cafés, or co-working spaces, reflecting their preference for comfort and psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

Based on the Atlas.ti mapping results, the gig economy emerged as a growing employment option in Indonesia. The purpose of gig work varies, serving either as a primary or supplementary income source. Gig workers still lack legal protections, which remains a critical issue, especially regarding social security and regulatory frameworks. The gig economy offers not only advantages like career diversification and increased personal branding but also disadvantages such as fierce competition and unclear career paths. The findings indicate that income, reduced work stress, flexible working arrangements, and a supportive work environment significantly influence Generation Z's decision to engage in gig work. In contrast, demographic variables such as age, gender, and education level did not show significant influence, as skillsets and digital literacy are more decisive than demographic background in the gig economy.

Based on these findings, policy recommendations emphasize the need for legal protections and social security reforms. Policymakers should prioritize developing a legal framework that provides casual workers with fair protection and social benefits, including health insurance, pension schemes, and fair wage standards. Inclusive skills development programs are also needed. Governments and educational institutions should collaborate to provide accessible training programs that equip young workers with the digital and entrepreneurial skills required for online and location-based jobs. Workplace innovation in the formal sector is necessary: employers should consider adopting more flexible working arrangements and fostering psychologically safe environments to retain and attract Generation Z talent.

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