# The voices of the unheard:
# The reality behind the working life of Indonesian gig workers in the transport industry

Bachelor Thesis
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## Abstract

*Objectives:* The way of work is changing, the numbers of individuals working in the gig economy are increasing each year. However, little research studies the experiences of the transport gig workers working with the app-based platforms, despite their rapid growth. This study aims to explore how gig workers in the transport industry assess their working life. Later, this study also tries to make sense the results on how the gigs' experiences can affect the companies and the workers individually.

*Method:* 18 semi-structured interviews with Indonesian transport gig workers (working in *Gojek* and *Grab)* were conducted as the data collection method. The topic of the interview tries to see and understand what are workers' background, motivation, needs, feeling, and experiences working in the gig economy.

*Results:* This study resulted two factors of motivation in joining the gig economy (pull and push factors), several experiences from enrichment and depletion lenses, coping strategies, and how all the ascpects relate to and affect each other.

*Conclusions:* In summary, gig workers (i.e. online drivers) assess their working life experience differently depending on their reason in joining this type of work. Moreover, the new nuances are also found based on the results. These nuances explains that the experiences of the gig workers are not always based on their reason in joining this industry, but it is affected on their job routines and working environment.

*Practical implications:* The findings of this study reveal that there are a lot more thoughts and experiences of transport gig workers that are not commonly known at the moment. Such findings could also contribute to future research on similar context as well as for digital companies to get insights about its workers' and improve their engagement and loyalty.

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# 1 Introduction

The nature of work is growing fundamentally in recent decades. Compared to a decade ago, the number of independent-workers are rapidly increasing with more than one million people working in the so-called gig economy (i.e. platforms economy) (Sargeant, 2017). This new style of work is different to the images of traditional work that involve the conventional employment contracts which consist of fixed work arrangements, working hours and wages (Nicklin, Cerasoli, & Dydyn, 2016; Rockmann & Pratt, 2015; Spreitzer et al., 2017). Instead, the gig economy allows workers to "sell" their services or work through the online platform under a zero to flexible employment contract or also known as "gigs" (Rockmann & Pratt, 2015). With this gig economy, how works are done are shifting with the changing and the spreading of digital connectivity (Graham et al., 2017). With this new connectivity, jobs, workers/employees, and employers are linked through the digital platforms that offer an opportunity to cooperate or work independently from different parts of the world (Caza et al., 2018).

Indonesia is one of many countries who has experienced the shifting of this new way of work. Indonesian app-based platforms in the transport industry have grown into a very popular new type of job, providing employment for more than a million drivers (Ford & Honan, 2019). In this country, two big app-based platforms in the transport industry dominated the high rise of the gig economy, namely Gojek and Grab. Both Gojek and Grab Are Southeast Asia's leading multi-services online platforms that provide several different transport and delivery services by connecting the customers with the drivers through the use of an app ("Gojek: About us," 2020; "Grab: Brand story," 2020). The rapid growth of Indonesian people working with these two platforms has drawn many impacts in several areas of work, and thus, raises challenges and questions regarding these workers' experiences in the gig economy.

Various researchers have explored the experiences of individuals working in the gig economy. It resulted in a number of different kinds of experiences and different ways of interpreting each experience. In a study of Campion, Caza and Moss (2019), it explores several types of experiences such as work-life balance and performance growth through the lens of enrichment and depletion. Further, several scholars in this same direction have also argued that the gig economy creates both good and bad gigs (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016; Wood et al., 2019). In good gigs, workers are considered to experience such enrichment in their work which leads to the increase of their personal life satisfaction (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2012). On the one hand, working in the gig economy may also be depleting for some workers, which can contribute in worsening their well-beings both physically and psychologically (Berger et al., 2018). Although these literatures already tried to discuss and understand the experiences of the gig workers in general, the experience of transport gig workers specifically, are still limited.

These several studies that focus on the transport sector have shown the impacts of being a transport gig worker, although it might be limited to one specific company/platform or region. It can be seen from these studies that the transport workers face different concerns and risks such as minimum labor protection, high working hours, stress, and their unpredictable income (Bajwa et al., 2018; Berger et al., 2018; de Stefano, 2015). From these research, it could also be understood what are their main reasons in joining such platforms, such as the flexibility and income necessities. However, again, different countries might have different cultures, and thus, different motivation and experience in working in such a type of work. There is a little attention on how the transport gig workers in Indonesia, as one of the countries who has the highest number of gig workers (i.e over one million online drivers), assess their work and life experience. Taken together from the previous studies, this study aims to answer the main research question of:

*"How Indonesian gig workers assess their experience of working with the multi-services digital platforms?."*

The main goal of this study is to examine different experiences of work and life from being the gigs in the Indoensian transport industry, apart from what have been found and discussed in previous studies. Also, this study aims to expand previous studies by exploring new and deeper nuances of the pattern between these experiences and their motivation in joing the gig economy. Further, this study will try to investigate and understand what are the work meanings of the gig workers. The framework of Campion, Caza, and Moss (2019) will be used throughout this study in a way that the term of enrichment and depletion will be used as the benchmark to assess the drivers' experiences. To achieve the aim of this study, first, their individual motivations in joining the gig economy are investigated. Here, the study reflects on the theory of pull and push factors by Bajwa et al. (2018) and Den Hartog and Belschak (2012). Second, their experience will be explored and hence analyzed to understand how they assess each experience to be enriching, depleting, in between, or both. Third, after seeing these depletion and enrichment experiences, this study examines various personal values and thus coping strategies for each driver in staying in these online platforms.

This study starts by providing the theoretical framework in order to make sense of the previous and current research regarding the gig workers' experience. From this framework below, it can be argued that there are mixed findings on whether working on the gig economy is enriching or depleting. Also, such enrichment and depletion may differ person to person, depending on the workers' background, needs, and preferences (de Stefano, 2016). Using a qualitative study, this study interviewed *18* Indonesian online drivers who work through the digital-based platforms: Gojek and Grab. Last, with the analyzed results from these interviews, results are discussed based on this study's research goals and it will then provide numbers of practical recommendations for individuals who are part of the gig economy, and particularly for the gig drivers.

# 2 Theoretical framework

## 2.1 The gig economy

In defining the gig economy, researchers came up with several approaches. In general, the gig economy can be understood by short-term arrangements between work platforms or companies, workers, and customers. In this new kind of work, workers do not have a fixed salary like the traditional jobs, instead they are paid per work, per 'portion rate, or also known as per 'gig' in order to create an income (Christie & Ward, 2019). The gig workers can be considered to be either self-employed working for one or several kinds of platforms or that they are engaged on a number of short-term or temporary contracts with the companies (Ashford et al., 2018). Furthermore, gig workers do not have the predictable hours of work and income, benefits, employee protection, or clear career development paths (Sargeant, 2017), thus leading some workers to perceive several concerns in working in this way of work.

In addition, gig economy can be seen through four main categories of platforms that are explained by Kalleberg and Dunn (2016, p. 11): "crowd work platforms (e.g. simple and/or repetitive tasks), transportation and delivery platforms, home task platforms, and online freelance platforms (e.g. creative and professional work)". These forms of platforms can be considered to be homogenous as they hold most similar characteristics and functions. However, Bajwa et al. (2018) added that that these digital labour platforms can be distinguished from the traditional work: (1) Classifying the gig workers as independent contractors while putting them to uncertain rules and criteria for career growth, (2) reducing the jobs into microtasks, and (3) classifying the workforce based on socially and geographically.

One of the major characteristics in the gig economy is the use of third-party online platforms (Ford & Honan, 2019). These platforms are provided by companies in a web-based or an app format which link the services provided by the workers with customers that need to use and buy these services (Christie & Ward, 2019). De Stefano (2016) discusses that this IT-enabled type of work mainly uses the internet to match the demand and supply of work and different kinds of specialized services in order to reduce the transaction costs and minimize the conflicts in the workplace and the

market. Also, this technology-enabled platform allows the workers to receive an instant feedback of their performance which supports both businesses' and workers' control and flexibility at the minimum amount of time (Petriglieri et al., 2018). Here, digitization can be seen also as sustaining the new peer-to-peer arrangement that will have crucial impacts on the essence of jobs and the quality of work (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016).

## 2.2 Motivations in joining the gig economy

There are several main reasons for workers in joining the gig economy. As discussed by Bajwa et al. (2018), motivations in joining the gig economy can be divided into "push" factors (i.e. unemployment, limited job possibilities) and "pull" factors (i.e. autonomy, earnings). In the "pull" factors, the most common motivation in choosing this new work style is the opportunities of flexibility and freedom (Ashford et al., 2007; Spreitzer et al., 2017). Most gig workers are interested in a way that the platforms offer the flexibility to arrange and manage their working hours from day to day (Berger et al., 2018). Also, it is found that some workers argue that the gig economy is a way to gain freedom in avoiding the traditional work environment in organizations (Caza et al., 2018). Such freedom and flexibility can be explained by self-regulation that is explained by Ashford et al. (2018): by having the feeling of self-control, workers in the gig economy do not have to attach their personal control system to the bigger control system of the companies they are working to, thus leading them in having higher autonomy.

The other major reasons for being a part of the gig economy are the economic necessity and limited work opportunities. Here, based on the "push" factors, most the workers participate in the gig economy as the reason for gaining extra income to their previous jobs (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2015). The gig economy to some degree may provide economic support for individuals who face regulatory constraints, personal circumstances such as single-parent or stay-at-home-parent and who have limited education background in securing themselves in the labour markets (Jiang et al., 2015). Digital labour platforms thus can offer the opportunity to improve individuals' economic needs by combining their paid services with their other life commitments such as family or personal inclusion (Graham et al., 2017).

## 2.3 The experiences of the workers: enriching vs depleting

What makes the quality of a job is good or bad may differ to every worker. Different workers have different needs, expectations, and choices when it comes to working. The experiences and the satisfaction of workers' jobs and personal life will also rely on individuals' characteristics as well as the types of job (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016). Therefore, this section will try to analyze different perspectives of gig workers from four major contexts found from previous literature, these are: financial, physical well-being, psychological well-being, and career development.

### 2.3.1 Financial

The experiences of the gig workers in the financial lens might differ person to person. For some people, working in the gig economy might be their primary source of income, while for other people it is just a work for filling their 'free time' between their permanent jobs or other side-jobs (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016). Also, the duration of work seems to influence the amount of salary that gig workers gain (Ashford et al., 2018). For instance, in transport digital platforms such as Uber, the drivers' wages really depend on how many rides they can have on a day, thus, there is no fixed amount of income. While for other gig workers such as those who provide creative or professional skills will also rely upon their online reputation amongst customers and their competitors (Kaine & Josserand, 2019).

In seeing the experiences of the workers from previous literatures, whether it is financially enriching or depleting, most of the findings show that workers experience depletion in their economic matters. Many who work for the gig economy demonstrate an increasing frustration due

to the economic depletion from low earnings (Butler & Russel, 2018; Petriglieri et al., 2018). Such depletion also comes from the unpredictable income, less secure jobs, cycles of scarcity, and concerns about essential life needs continuation (Ashford et al., 2018). With no guaranteed weekly or monthly wages, also, many of the gigs are struggling in other life expenses such as healthcare costs, insurances, and savings (Arenas et al., 2018). Moreover, the workers experience depletion in this manner to the extent that some of them often need to hold multiple jobs and to have to work outside working hours such as during holidays and weekends (Doucette & Brandford, 2019). Nevertheless, on the one hand, there is also a number of research that show the enrichment experience of the workers economically. From the research of Graham et al. (2017), it can be seen that for some individuals, these online platforms allow them to significantly enrich their earnings while balancing other personal matters such as skills development, leisure, family, and social interaction.

### 2.3.2  Physical well-being

The gig workers can be considered to have limited labour rights such as protection for discrimination, safety, and health purposes (Christie & Ward, 2019). Given that many of those independent workers in the gig economy have limited support of their physical well-being, it appears important to explore and discuss their health and safety experiences. A number of evidence from previous research has shown that there are many depleting experiences when it comes to workers' physical well-being in the transport industry. For instance, Clarke et al., (2009) argue that there is a high-level risk within transport workers in which they experienced the dangers of road traffic injuries that are caused by time- pressured services. Additionally, from the research of Graham et al. (2017), it is found that a lot of gig drivers and motorcyclists reported feeling physically drained and depleted by their on-going work demands and the poor conditions of the road and the weather. While these jobs offer freedom and flexibility over their work arrangements, they experience the lack of sleep and exhaustion that are caused by irregular working hours and overworking such as work at night (Wood et al., 2019). Further, many of the workers are easily distracted by the work interface such as seeing their phone while driving, causing them to encounter several collisions and near misses (Christie & Ward, 2019). All in all, it can be seen that workers who provide services through these digital platforms experience a depletion in their physical health.

### 2.3.3  Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being of the gig workers can be considered as one of the most crucial factors when it comes to assessing their work experiences. In this context, psychological well-being will be divided into two major sub-areas: control (e.g. autonomy, flexibility) and social interaction.

#### *Control*

In the gig economy, there are different types of control that every individual has. The types of control are explained by Kalleberg and Dunn (2016), which first, autonomy is a form of the workers' control over what they do on their job, second, scheduling in a way that the workers manage their priorities and timing to find a work-life balance, and how long the workers can keep their jobs. In this section, the framework will focus on the workers' capabilities in controlling their work in order to assess how they experience such control in the gig jobs.

According to numbers of previous studies, many gig workers including the transport workers seem to experience the enrichment of their control over their jobs by enjoying the flexibility, freedom, and autonomy, (Ford & Honan, 2019; Graham et al., 2017) A high level of autonomy can also be seen when they can manage their efforts, initiatives, and choices in order to gain their desired earnings (Sargeant, 2017). Additionally, a study from Ashford et al. (2018) suggests that independent workers appear to have a high degree of autonomy over the tasks that they performed such as when a worker does the job. Although some of the workers perceive the gigs as low-paid work, such autonomy is also increasing the meaningfulness of the job which then also leads to a

higher level of enrichment and satisfaction (Berger et al., 2018). Within these contexts, workers experience enriching flexibility in choosing the right way in accomplishing their work, what kind and how many workloads should they take (Petriglieri et al., 2018). Nonetheless, several researchers argue that autonomy is not absolute. It means that some workers are still obligated to the short-term or limited contracts that they have with the organizations as well as the demands from their surroundings and customers (Barley & Kunda, 2006).

While freedom may be alluring for many of the workers, a number of studies have presented the depleting experience from the control over their work. Autonomy can support the depletion expreciences in which the workers are positioned to enforce themselves in accomplishing their work routines and dealing with their work demands by themselves such as having required equipment (e.g. maintaining a good condition of their car/motorcycle for transport workers) (Ashford et al., 2007; Caza et al., 2018). Also, with the provided flexibility by the digital platforms, workers are faced with too many options and decisions that bring them a cognitive overload, discouragement, stress, and lower satisfaction (Ashford et al., 2018; Fernandex, 2017). Fleming (2017: p. 693) explains such depleting experiences by the term "radical responsibilization": a condition where an individual becomes completely responsible for their own economic survival. This kind of full responsibility often can be difficult for some of the gig workers, especially those who are the primary earner and take the gig jobs solely for their income (Den Hartog, & Belschak, 2015; Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007)

Another factor that supports the depletion experience is the feeling of lack of power and control when it comes to the rate systems (Graham et al., 2017). In several digital platforms such as an online freelancer website or a transport services app, platforms collect an amount of percentages as a commision that is applied for every task the workers take (Berger et al., 2018). The payment rate of each of the workers also seems differ person to person. For example, Gojek, a transport app-based company, one the market leaders in Indonesia, managed the workers' (i.e. drivers) wage rate based on several measurements which include tasks accepted, tasks completed, and customer ratings (Ford & Honan, 2017; Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016). Such set measurements that are created by the platforms leave some of the workers experienced depletion in their control over their jobs.

*Social interaction*

Social interaction can be another major factor in evaluating whether the workers perceive enrichment or depletion in their jobs. With the current evidence from past studies, it seems that many gig workers experience social interaction differently. Working in the gig economy is often done solely by the workers themselves, alone and lack of social interaction. The rise of such a working way shows that many gig workers perceive a depletion in their social interaction due to the limited physical contact with others (Garett, Spreitzer, & Bacevice, 2017). Additionally, a survey study demonstrates a finding that half of gig workers are feeling empty and detached from their fellow gig workers which heightened the negative experiences such as stress and anxiety (Berger et al., 2018; Deloitte, 2016). These independent workers may also feel alone and disengaged in the gig economy due to the high degree of autonomy, in which they are not dependent on other people for their work (Rowlands & Handy, 2012). Such loneliness then affects their personal and family connections that create a more daunting feeling of isolation.

However, aloneness does not always bring depleting experience amongst the gig workers. Wood et al. (2018), for example, argue that while physical communication is mostly limited, workers communities such as online or regionally, can promote the sense of enrichment to the gig workers. Due to the physically distant and the absence of social connections that portray traditional working environments (Rockmann & Pratt, 2015), many gig workers tend to create such a 'support environment'. This kind of community serves the purpose in overcoming the desolating feelings by building relationships among the community members (i.e. gig workers) (Petriglieri et al., 2019). Hence, constructing ties between the fellow gig workers can be considered as a source of encouragement that support the enriching experiences of social interaction.

*Coping strategies: personal and work values*

Those workers who experience the depletion of their psychological as a result of the pressure they feel from working in the gig economy, both personalize and apply several solutions to cope in such pressure. First, as discussed by Webster (2016), gig workers often justify their stress, work overload, and anxiety by considering the positive values from the work they do. For instance, the autonomy and high-control they have over their work schedule and tasks options. Moreover, some gig workers normalized their pressure and coped with their negative experiences from working in this gig industry by relying upon their individual self-support such as the thoughts and feelings of being optimistic over their circumstances (Webster, 2016). Second, the gig workers who experience the stigmatized identity such as physical gig workers and transport gig workers (e.g. online drivers) by their customers and work-colleagues, face such stigma by refocusing it into different positive values (van Vuuren et al., 2012), Third, several studies suggest that to ease gig workers' working conditions that sometimes and often are considered to be difficult, these workers create support networks between fellow gig workers (Holton, 2007; Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019). Gig workers could survive and also thrive by connecting the informal relationships and communication between their work-colleagues. This support network provides the possibility for the gig workers to exchange ideas, experiences, and perspective with each other thus enhancing their knowledge, skills, and creativity in their gig works (Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2018). With such support networks, it produces both enriching work experiences and a positive work environment for the workers within the gig industry.

### 2.3.4 Career development

Being in the gig work means that the workers have their own responsibilities in developing their skills and development. The experiences of the workers, whether it is enriching or depleting, might be affected by the types of work they engaged into. As for some workers in the creative and professional industry, they often experience the enrichment through the opportunities to develop current and new skills and routines through their gig work (Kaine & Josserand, 2019). This enrichment experience is caused by the condition that the workers are positioned closer to the customers, hence, it is easier for the workers to develop their capabilities and performance by learning more about their customers needs and the market trends (Dicken, 2010). Also, Arenas et al. (2018) suggest that the gig workers who work in this industry, may acquire a rich and enriching experience by being engaged with different types of works, projects, and customers.

However, while being a gig may open the opportunities to enrich some of the workers' career growth, some workers who work in other specialized services such as transport might experience depletion in their skills and performance development. Gig works, as contrast to the traditional work, are often built upon the zero to temporary contracts that do not guarantee the workers' job for a longer period of time, leaving uncertainties and anxiety in their future career paths and development (Ashford et al., 2018). Furthermore, for some gigs that work by doing online-small tasks such as microworkers, it is often reported that there is only a small possibility that these workers could enhance their career and skills if they just work solely with this gig and micro jobs due to its repetitive and low-demand tasks (Webster, 2016). Thus, it also can be seen that how gig workers assess their career development differ per person, depending on their job's tasks, demands, and responsibilities.

## Current study

All in all, from all the previous studies, it can be concluded that workers in the gig economy assess their working experiences differently. In assesing their working experiences, there are several factors

that contribute to whether their experiences are enriching or depleting, these factors are: motivation in joining the gig economy, financial, physical and psychological well-being, work meanings, and career development. For this current study, it aims to expand these past frameworks and explore new nuances of the gig workers's working in the transport industry. Further in this study, it will explore transport gig workers' motivation, experiences, work meanings, and patterns between the findings and frameworks that are founs in this study.

# 3   Method

## 3.1   Data collection procedure

In this study, a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews is conducted with 18 Indonesian gig workers in the transport industry as the participants, or also can be called as online drivers. These semi-structured interviews are held in a private and quiet room preventing any disturbances through video calls such as via Skype and WhatsApp video-call. This qualitative method is chosen with the consideration that an interview type of research opens wider opportunities to gain deeper and richer information regarding participants' insights, opinions and stories (Polkinghorne, 2005). In addition to that, a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to respond and discuss unexpected answers and statements from the participants (Boeije, 2010).

When conducting the interview, first, it will be opened by the introduction by the researcher/interviewer. The introduction explains the background and the purposes of this study, privacy assurance, and the ethical agreement (by an oral informed consent form). Second, the interview will start on general or basic topics such as the discussion regarding their daily and normal days. Then, the interview will follow the natural flow by still keeping track of the questions list or the discussion guide that are explained below. Thus, the questions that are asked do not have to be in exact order, it will be performed as enjoyable as normal conversation. Third, after the interview is finished, the researcher will thank the participant and inform him/her that he/she will have the possibility to receive the end results and the summary of this study.

## 3.2   Interview topics

The questions that are asked to the participants are divided into three major topics or purposes. The first section of the interview starts on more basic questions such as general information about themselves in order to make sense of what their backgrounds are before being gigs and motivations in joining the gig economy. The second topic tries to find out what are the different experiences that the workers perceive while working in the gig economy. Here, participants are given the space and freedom to share and discuss their feelings, concerns, struggles, achievements, and other related work-life experiences from working with digital platforms. Last, the fourth set of questions explores whether these experiences lead to enriching or depleting outcomes.

## 3.3   Sampling background

These gig workers working in Gojek and Grab are called *driver-partners*, which also shows that they are not to be considered as employees. On the one hand, Gojek (i.e. *PT. Aplikasi Karya Anak Bangsa*) is the first Indonesia's *decacorn* company that was founded in 2010 which operates in the Southeast Asian region such as Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, and India ("Gojek: About us," 2020). Gojek started its business by first offering motorcycle ride-hailing services (i.e. GoRide) through the use of mobile-app. Gojek continued to broaden up its app-based platform by providing several different services that range from the services of sending goods (i.e. GoSend), food delivery (i.e. GoFood), shopping delivery (i.e. GoShop), grocery delivery (i.e. GoMart), medicine delivery (i.e. GoMed), cleaning service (i.e. GoClean), massage service (i.e. GoMassage), and

barber/beauty salon service (i.e. GoGlam), to the service of virtual wallet and payment (i.e. GoPay) ("Gojek: About us," 2020). Whereas on the other hand, Grab is a Malaysian company founded in 2012 that also operates in Southeast Asia which offers the similar ride-hailing services like Gojek and other delivery services such as foods and goods (i.e. GrabFood and GrabExpress) ("Grab: Brand story," 2020) Both Gojek and Grab apply the same system for its digital platforms in which it connects driver-partners and customers through its individual mobile-app. The app allows the customer to order any provided service/s that they need and also allows the driver-partners to accept or reject the received orders on the app. Additionally, these two digital platforms have the similar working systems on its apps in which it has the functionality of performance management of each driver-partner that includes ratings system from the customers (from the scale 1 to 5 stars) and points system (i.e. targeted point or targeted performance) ("Gojek: About us", 2020; "Grab: Brand story", 2020). This points system is applied in order to support the driver-partner in achieving bonuses outside their normal earnings.

## 3.4   Sampling strategy and participants

The participants or the subjects of this study consist of car drivers and motorcyclists who work through the app-based companies in Indonesia such as Uber, Gojek, and Grab. The sampling methods that are used in this study is through a snowball method and random sampling. With these strategies, besides choosing the participants from a large set of societies, it also allows the researcher to gain access to invite future participants in joining the study (Robinson, 2014). The amount of types of work (i.e. drivers or motorcyclists) depends on these two sampling strategies, in which it relies on the positive responses from the workers in participating in this study as well as the references from the previous participants. Finally, in this data collection method, it is decided to have at least 15 participants to reach enough data gathered in order to achieve the main objectives of this research.

## 3.5   Ethical concerns

The burdens or risks that might be perceived by the participants are privacy concerns and discomfort in sharing their personal experiences. Sharing personal life and working experiences might include many sensitive information that could lead to the feeling of discomfort in the middle of the interview/session (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Participants might also feel that the interviewer/researcher could not keep their anonymity thus leading them to perceive some privacy concerns. However, in order to minimize these risks and burdens, it is important that the interviewer/researcher explain to the participants prior the discussion about the assurance of their anonymity and privacy. Also, the flow of the interview will be made as comfortable as possible, thus it is hoped that it reduces such discomfort when sharing their experiences. Last, also prior to the discussion, participants are informed that they are allowed to not answer or respond to the interviewer's question/s if they are not comfortable with that specific topic/question. Before applying these steps in minimizing the ethical concerns, this study requested and received the approval of the ethical committee.

## 3.6   Data analysis

In analysing data, there are three basic components: description, analysis, and interpretation (Walcott, 1994). Marshall and Rossman (2006) states that reading the data will help the database to turn into some kind of interpretation and understanding of the concepts. In this research, the collected data will be reflected based on this study's framework and has the purpose to answer this study's main research question. The collected data will be analysed by making the transcript, followed by emerging the data into categories and finally the themes will be explored. At the end of this analysis process, all of the collected data will discover a meaningful interpretation.

The first step that is taken in this data analysis is listening and reading to all the interviews. All the recorded interviews were listened carefully and privately within the researchers of this study. After listening to all the recordings, the interviews were transcribed into a coherent, readable, and understandable transcript. Transcribing is a process to convert the spoken statements into the written ones to facilitate the qualitative research (Cresswell, 2008). The transcripts were read a couple of times in order to become familiar with the interviews' context. The aim of listening and reading the data was also to understand and thus be able to interpret the participants' perspectives through their own stories, experiences, and emotions.

The next step in this analysis process is the coding process. Coding has the aim to identify the issues, topics, diversity, and comparison through the participants' point of view and explained by the researchers. In this study, the first coding process that was chosen is through *in vivo* coding. By using *in vivo* coding, the transcripts are read again and the important parts or statements from the interviews will be coded. In this coding process also, the important quotations were also extracted. This type of coding allows the collected codes to be explored and compared to look for any differences and similarities about the topics and the meanings within the data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

After coding all the text from the transcripts with the use of *in vivo* method, the second process, the axial coding, is taken. In this coding process, the codes from the previous step were examined in order to look for the relationships between the codes. All the codes that were identified to be similar in *in vivo* coding, were compiled into categories and possibly sub-categories. Axial coding is chosen to investigate the major themes underneath the codes from the collected data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012). Finding themes for this qualitative research has also the aim to investigate the findings from the transcripts in a relevant and coherent way. For this data analysis, all of the coding steps that are taken, are done using computer software Atlas.ti. Furthermore, in this analysing process, the inter-rater reliability test is also performed as an important intermediate step of the research (Boeije, 2010). To measure the level of agreement of the coding process of this study, another coder outside this study is chosen to code a part of all 18 transcripts to finally gain such agreement between the researcher and the other coder.

The last step that is taken in this data analysis is to draw a conclusion based on the collected data. Here, it is important to see this new information about the gig workers that include their experience, motivation, personal values, and coping strategies. Further, these themes are interpreted by looking at the link between each category and subcategory and by identifying which of these categories/subcategories are the most dominant ones in this study. To illustrate the summary of the results, the quotations from individuals' transcripts will be presented as the source and the valdition of the researchers' argument and understanding.

## 4   Results

On this chapter, the results will be explained specifically based on the categories and sub-categories. The main categories of this study's results are motivations in joining the gig economy, enriching experiences, depleting experiences, and coping strategies. To have a strong overview of each category and sub-category, examples from the extracted quotes in interviews will be presented.

### 4.1   Motivations

As previously explained by Bajwa et al. (2018) and Den Hartog and Belschak (2015), motivations in working in the gig economy can be seen through two factors: push and pull factors. On the results of *this study's* collected data as well (see Table 1), motivations for the workers to work in the online transport platform are divided into two factors: push and pull factors. On each push and pull factors, it is shown by several subcategories to explain the motivations of different individuals.

### 4.1.1 Push factors

*Economic necessities*

Many of the participants stated that joining this type of work is very important for their life's basic needs, which their economic necessity pushed them into the online-transport industry (Bogenhold, Klinglmair, & Kandutsch, 2017). Participants join the gig economy in the transport industry with their consideration of having adequate income from their work on an online transport platform to be able to supply themselves and their family members. To illustrate, one of the participants stated, *"When I work, I just pushed myself because of my economic necessity. The most important thing for me is that my family can eat"*.

**Table 1** *Motivation in joining online transport platforms*

| Category | Sub-category | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Push factors | Economic necessities | The needs of the workers to fulfil their life necessities by having enough earnings. | "I think my main reason for joining this platform is because I should make a living, for eating and paying bills" |
| | Limited alternatives | Workers have limited skills and educational degrees thus they have less job possibilities. | "Like me, for instance, I only finished my secondary school. So my options are really limited. With the rise of this online platform, it helps people like me." |
| Pull factors | Wages | Workers are influenced by the attractive salary that they could earn through the digital platforms. | "Well I wouldn't quit my previous job if working in this type of job won't give me higher salary" |
| | Flexibility | Working in this industry gives the workers the possibility to manage their own working schedule. | "With Gojek, I was interested in its flexibility. I do not have to work on a strict schedule like from 8 am to 5 pm everyday" |
| | Accessibility | Workers are interested in the small amount of work demands that they would have in their jobs. | "There are not a lot of requirements. We just have to have our own vehicle and maybe prepare for paying some service costs" |

*Limited alternatives*

Working in online transport platforms often means that workers do not have to have a higher education degree and diverse working experiences. The results showed that one of their reasons for joining the gig economy is because of their lack of options in choosing a job. It ranges from limited skills, education, to working experiences. For several participants, these limitations pushed them into working into this industry, which only requires their driver and transport license. To illustrate, one of the participants mentioned, *"My previous jobs were limited to cleaning service and public transport drivers. So with the rise of Gojek and Grab, I have a better option of work"*.

### 4.1.2 Pull factors

*Wages*

Besides having the adequate income for participants' economic necessities as their motivation, some of the participants are also interested in the higher salary that they could achieve through the online transport platforms. When participants argued that the platform could give them more

earning, they often compared it to their previous jobs such as conventional jobs in the office and industry workers. For example, one of the participants who previously worked as an industry worker argued that *"So at my previous jobs, I only earned like half of my current income that I can get from Gojek, especially if I received many orders on weekends"*. Although their income is very dependent on the numbers of the orders they receive on the app, some of the participants still see that working in the online transport industry is still better than conventional jobs, financially.

### Flexibility

Having the freedom and flexibility are one of the most mentioned motivations in joining the gig economy in the transport industry. With the zero-hour contract provided by the online transport platforms, participants are interested in how they could work whenever they want and how they could choose their day/s-off: *"By working like this (*working on the transport gig economy), *I have my own freedom to choose my working hours, so for example, I also have the possibility to chose my family time, which is Monday, since we (*drivers) *usually receive less orders on this day"*. Apart from having the possibility to manage their work schedule, they also could set their working pace that they did not have from the conventional jobs: *"So if I need more money, I could work from early in the morning until almost midnight non-stop. But if I need more relaxed time, I could also work for just two hours a day for instance"*. Another flexibility factor that is found in this result is the chance of joining both *Gojek* and *Grab* at the same time: *"I joined both Gojek and Grab in 2018, but mainly focus on Gojek"*. This possibility can be explained by the zero-contract and the worker status, which are partners, as opposed to normal employees.

### Accessibility

Participants joined the transport online platforms by the motivation that the accessibility of working in this industry is easy and simple, as opposed to the conventional jobs. Participants are motivated to work in Gojek or Grab because they see that working on these platforms do not need to prepare any complicated requirements and preparation. The things that need to be prepared are just their identity, driver license, and vehicle license: *"Well we do not really need to provide our resume or portfolio, something like that. When registering for the job also, we were only asked several questions for administration purposes, not further than that"*. During their work as well, their work demands are just limited to their job using their own vehicle such as riding passengers and delivering food. For example, one participant stated that *"I think when in conventional jobs, you have to join several training sessions for your work, but with Gojek, we only had one optional training at the beginning, and after that, you just have to depend on and work with your motorcycle.."*

## 4.2   Experiences

Current studies have studied several different working experiences of gig workers such as financial, physical well-being, psychological well-being, and career development, however, the results of this study found and explore further findings than previous research (see Table 2 and Table 3). In line with previous research by Campion, Caza, and Moss (2019), the experiences of the workers are seen through enrichment and depletion lenses. Within this study, the experiences focus mainly on the online drivers who work with *Gojek* and *Grab* platforms.

### 4.2.1   Enrichment

### Personal development

Several participants reported that working in the gig economy, particularly in the transport industry, allows them to develop their personal-selves. This could be seen through the flexibility of working hours, and lower work demands: *"Before I joined Gojek, I actually just played games or watched some movies haha, but I realized that I can earn more than this, I can use my free time to be more*

*productive"*. One factor that supports the enrichment of participants' personal development can also be explained by the work status of each worker. For workers/drivers who work on the online platforms as a side-job only, they experience the enrichment of their personal growth through the opportunity to develop many skills while they are still working with *Gojek* or *Grab*. One of the participants mentioned, "*So yeah, working that way, really shapes me to become more grateful, appreciate anything, even a small one. Being an online driver, I feel that I can get closer to God the almighty. So it really impacts me in a positive way actually.*"

**Table 2** *Experiences of online transport workers in Indonesia: enriching*

| Category | Sub-category | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal development | | Workers believe that working in this industry opens the way for them to be growing by developing themselves in other areas | "When I have reached my daily points in a day for example, I usually take that moment to explore myself such as studying since I'm also a student, or practicing some skills maybe" |
| Autonomy | | Workers feel that they have control over their overall work, thus having the condition of self-regulator. | "We can work whenever we want and meet our family or friend whenever we want as well, without asking for permission to our boss beforehand" |
| Work-life balance | | Having the flexibility over their work schedule, workers have the possibility to spend more time with their families outside their work routines. | "Because of the traditional job, it's hard for us to see our family except after we finish our work at 5 in the afternoon, so the flexibility offers us more time to spend with family and friends" |
| Work environment | Friendly network | Workers feel that everyone who is working on the online transport platforms could respect each other easily, whenever and wherever they work. | "Other than higher salary that I could get, what I love from working with Gojek is that I get a lot of new friends" |
| | Communities support | Workers receive the positive support and encouragement given by the fellow workers/drivers. | "I feel that by joining these online driver communities, we have each other as a support system" |
| | Shared lessons | Workers receive both mindfulness and practical lessons from the fellow drivers. | "There was one time they gave me an option to register myself for health insurance, but I did not understand how it worked. Luckily, other driver taught me all the processes and steps that should be taken" |

## *Autonomy*

Many participants reported that the most positive thing that they have experienced is the autonomy that they have. In line with flexibility and freedom, autonomy for these participants means that they have control over their job (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016), this ranges from what orders they want to accept on the app (*"On the app, we can turn-off the auto-bid function so we have the possibility to accept or reject the orders from the customers. For example, an order took 20km or more and it was raining, so I could choose to skip that order"*) to how many hours they want to work in a day (*"Since*

*I'm also still pursuing my bachelor degree, I also need time for studying or for some organizational things on campus. So, I think it's really nice I can just work whenever I have spare time but still earn some money"*).

### Work-life balance

Along with the experience of enriching autonomy, the results also show that having the control over the participants' work means that they also experience work-life balance while working with *Gojek* and *Grab*. This balance is characterized by the equal amount of needs, demands, and responsibilities of work, family, and personal matters. Here, participants think that they have more time for their family due the the autonomy that they have by working in this industry, thus, enriching their work-life interference: **"***So since I can choose at what time I start to work, I decided that I start after lunch, so I can have breakfast together with my kids before they go to school and have lunch together with my wife every day … it's just something that I'm really grateful for"*.

### Work environment

Previous research has discussed that working in the gig economy could cause isolation due to the condition that gig workers are working alone without any co-workers (Garett, Spreitzer, & Bacevice, 2017). However, current findings from this research show that almost all of the participants experience the enrichment of their positive work climate. Participants experience this good environment mostly influenced by their friends and communities from fellow online drivers from both *Gojek* and *Grab*.

### Friendly network

Participants often discussed that they feel less-lonely and feel a deeper connection to their co-workers since working with the online transport platforms. The participants shared that "*Compared to my previous job at a normal office, I befriend my co-workers, or fellow partners* (i.e. online drivers) *better, even someone* (fellow online driver) *that I just met that day. Maybe because most of us have similar life conditions, so we just attach better as friends, we understand each other somehow"*. Having the friendly network enriches their social life experiences , which can also be seen by the easier opportunity to expand the online drivers' social network anywhere they go. For example, one of the participants stated *"As long as we use our Gojek's jacket, we can sit anywhere and talk with anyone who wears the jacket as well"*. It can be seen that the online drivers treat each other equally, befriend each other in a really simple way, without any feeling that he/she is better than anyone else, thus expecting respect.

### Communities supports

The enriching experience that comes from the social support from communities of fellow drivers goes in line with previous study by Ford and Honan (2019) that discussed mutual-aid of Indonesian's online drivers. One factor that supports the enrichment of work conditions of these online drivers can be seen by the communities of fellow partners (i.e. online drivers), which can be explained by the high-degree of collectivism and participation of these online drivers (Ford & Honan, 2019). The communities can be seen through an online forum such as Facebook *("There are a lot of groups on Facebook, it's actually public so you can get in directly. There, people just post some jokes or news regarding online drivers, which is useful actually for me that was newbie at that time")* and groups on conversation platforms such as Whatsapp and Telegram ("*One day I met a driver from Grab as well, then we introduced ourselves, asked each other's phone number, and invited each other in joining the Whatsapp group as well, and that's it, we become friends. In this group we just share some info regarding traffic or weather in one area for example, or maybe some tips regarding getting more bonuses")*.

## Shared lessons

Several participants, particularly the online drivers who just started working in this industry for less than a year, stated that they receive many life and practical lessons from fellow drivers who have richer experience. The shared life lessons that participants perceived are mainly about being grateful and not giving up easily (*"I think what I like the most from working here* (Gojek) *is that I can learn so much from so many drivers. They taught me a lot, something that I couldn't learn from any other places. For example, it opens up my perspectives to see that there are still a lot of people who have worse conditions than me, so why do I still complain so much?".* Whereas the shared practical lessons are related to the vehicles, insurance, administration, and the app systems (*"When I started using the app, it was really confusing for me, there were a lot of functionalities. But luckily, other drivers taught me how to use the app such as picking up an order, getting the money, achieving targeted bonus, and so on".* For these online drivers, they experience the enrichment in the way they see and go through their life as a whole, thus, becoming a better person for their work and themselves personally.

### 4.2.2   Depletion

#### *Hierarchy*

Although some of the participants/online drivers experience the enrichment in their personal development, many participants who work full-time in *Gojek* and *Grab* argued that it is impossible or very difficult to get a higher career position. These online transport platforms do not offer the drivers/partners any possibility to get promoted as compared to conventional jobs at organizations. For several participants, they experience the depletion of their career growth, the feeling of not being able to develop themselves in this industry: *"I think there's not much you can do with this job* (online drivers). *Yes, you can get a higher income by working harder so you get better performance on the app. But no, you cannot get promoted higher than just getting a "priority driver" title on the app".*

#### *Loyalty*

As a result of this hierarchy factor, participants also experience the depletion in their loyalty towards the online platforms. Many of them do not feel that they must or can stay working on these platforms if they expect themselves to grow. Therefore, for the participants, working in this industry can be seen as a "stepping-stone" to a later career: "*Of course I won't work with Gojek for my long-term plan. At the moment, I'm still looking for another and better opportunity for my future career, but for now, I just stay with Gojek first".* Another experience that maintains the depletion of this experience is the feeling that working as an online driver is not the best job status that they could get, as one of the participants argued, *"I want to have a job better than a driver. I mean, we're just drivers, there's nothing special about it. So I want to get a job where people can appreciate me more, not as online drivers".*

#### *Working hours*

Another experience that supports the depletion is the long-working hours of these online drivers. Participants reported that on some days they have to work all day long because they have not received enough orders to get bonuses in one particular day: "*Some days are just so quiet I don't know why. So I just had to work longer that day, even until midnight, but I still couldn't reach the targeted bonus, so I got home exhausted with less money".*  Also, as of now,  the numbers of individuals working as online drivers in Indonesia are increasing rapidly, which leads to a higher level of competition between the fellow drivers (Ford & Honan, 2019). This competition also explains why participants experience the exhaustion from the long-working hours: "*When I joined Gojek in 2018, I could get around IDR 300.000 including the bonus* (~18 euro) *in about 8 hours working, but now,*

*since more and more people join Gojek as well, I could only get IDR 200.000* (~12 euro) *with about 14-15 hours working per day, how crazy is that?".*

**Table 3** *Experiences of online transport workers in Indonesia: depleting*

| Category | Sub-category | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hierarchy | | Workers acknowledge that working in this industry could not give them a promising personal financial and career development. | "I believe that you can't expect yourself to grow, like get promoted or earn more if you just work as online drivers" |
| Loyalty | | Workers do not see working on the online transport platforms as a long-term career. | "Maybe for the short-term, I still see myself working in this industry while looking for any other chances of a better job. But for the long-term, of course not" |
| Working hours | | Workers experience a long-hour of work in their regular working days (more than 12 hours/day), thus affecting their health and well-being. | "I knew many of the drivers work from early in the morning until midnight but still don't earn enough. The hard-work and the time you've sacrificed from not seeing your family are not paid" |
| Labor protection | | Workers receive zero and/or limited labor protections (e.g. health insurance, pension funds, vehicle insurance). | "I receive nothing from working in this industry. I have to pay all by myself if I'm sick. Luckily, I haven't got any serious illness" |
| Lack of security | (in terms of) Work system | Workers experience major changes of the app's system that affect their received orders, working hours, and salary. | "With the new system, I have to work really harder to get the similar amount of income like I usually had with the old system. Also, gradually, they reduce our bonus" |
| | (in terms of) Income | Working in this industry creates uncertainties on workers' earnings (i.e. different amount of income per week) | "Our income depends on the orders from the customer, really. For instance, with this pandemic, the app removes the ride-hailing services, orders decrease, and we can't earn that much compared to our normal days, and we can't predict when will this situation get better" |
| Stigma | | Workers suggest that both companies/platforms and customers are not preserving their dignity enough as a worker. | "I got the impression that they (the customers) treated me like I was a maid or something" |

### *Labor protection*

Another experience that participants perceive during their work in the gig economy is the lack of labor protection. This found experience is similar with the findings from the study of Christie et al. (2017), in which the authors discuss that transport gig workers often do not feel physically secure working in this type of work. The labor rights and protection protects the health, status, insurance, and pension funding of the workers, in which it is not provided by the online platforms such as *Gojek*

and *Grab*. Participants mentioned that they had several collisions due to their physical works that are mostly done on the road and due to their target to achieve their bonus and high performance ratings each day. For example, as discussed by one of the participants: *"Nope, we are not provided with any health insurance or labor protection, because we are just partners. Well, there is still an option to pay around IDR 15.000 (~90 cents) per month for our health and mobile phone insurance, but that's not the facility that Gojek gives, it's us the drivers who pays by ourselves to the third party* (insurance company)*, Gojek only acts as the mediator I would say".*

## Lack of security
### (In terms of) Work system

Within a couple of years from the starting point of the online transport industry's popularity, participants (i.e. the online drivers) experience several changes on the systems of the apps. The changes range from having the "priority drivers", equal number of orders for each driver, to reduced bonuses. These changes affect many participants crucially, as it makes the participants experience the depletion in their job security. Participants indicate that they could no longer feel financially secure for their families: *"I'm actually really hoping that these companies* (Gojek and Grab) *will look out for the drivers more, like be more attentive about our income for example, because I know that many of us still earn below the national standard wage, and it's sad, I mean, I feel* them (other workers) *now and it really scares me since I have a kid".* However, interestingly, regarding their lack of job security due to the system's changes, the other participants who just started working in this industry in less than a year argued the contrary opinion as opposed to the opinion of "priority drivers": *"I saw a news that Gojek is planning to bring their original system back, with the priority system. So, we as drivers who still have lower working hours will get less orders. The "old" drivers are prioritized to receive the orders first. I think it's no longer fair, especially since they're* (Gojek) *reducing our bonuses".*

### (In terms of) Income

Similar to the previous research by Ashford et al. (2018), gig workers often experience depletion in their financial matters due their lack of security in terms of income. Conventional jobs offer the possibility for the workers to have the idea of their fixed wages per week or per month, which is not happening within the gig industry. Whilst many participants enjoy the autonomy that they experience during their work on the online transport platforms, a significant amount of findings however shows that they experience a lot of concerns regarding their low income. This low earning first can be explained by the uncertain pay they could receive in a week or month: *"I cannot really say how my financial condition is. Sometimes I can earn quite high with bonuses when many customers just decide to use the app for ordering a lot of food deliveries for example, maybe when they're too lazy to cook. But on the other hand, sometimes as well, I only receive like two orders on a day and I don't understand why. We as drivers sometimes just wish we can read the customers' mind so we can think about our financial plan too".* Moreover, the depletion of their earning security can also be seen through the experience of participants who work in the sub-urban as opposed to the cities: "*I know that some of my colleagues* (in cities) *could earn up to IDR 200.000 (~12 euro) per day, so they might have enough income per month. But for drivers like me, the maximum we could get is mostly around IDR 75.000 (~5 euro) per day. So if you multiply it for a month, our income is way below the National Minimum Wage. I'm just really scared if my family is dying out of hunger".*

## Stigma

Several occupations are stigmatized in regards to their work demands, activities, and responsibilities as opposed to the conventional, "normal", and "cleaner" jobs, as previously discussed by Ashfort and Kreiner (2014). Along with these current findings, the stigmas relate to the work of online drivers in Indonesia, which several of the participants are reported to be socially and physically

stigmatized. One the one hand, online drivers are socially stigmatized due to their work status which requires them to have good communication and services for their customers. With this social stigma, several participants stated that often since their work is just limited to serving the customers, companies like *Gojek* and *Grab* do not put enough attention on the welfare of its driver-partners: *"I think the companies are not fair to us* (driver-partners)*. They always prioritize the customers first, even though we as the drivers sometimes are faced with serious problems like fake orders. They should actually realize that their company won't work without its drivers".* On the other hand, online drivers are also reported to be physically stigmatized which can be seen through their work conditions that include a higher degree of danger and possible physical dirt (Ashfort & Kreiner, 2014). These factors that support the physical stigma are seen by the customers might be transmittable to them and thus seeing the drivers as people from lower class: *"I know that we work mainly on the road, but I think the customers could treat us a little bit better. Maybe not seeing us like trash. I mean, is it really necessary to throw the money to us instead of just using Go-pay* (virtual wallet/payment method)*, for instance?".*

## 4.3   Coping strategies

Participants are found to have different coping strategies in facing going through their working life in the online transport industry. Participants cope with their stressful, exhausting, and other negative experiences mentioned above by having several personal values. From these personal values as their coping strategy, participants decide to continue to work in the gig economy. The strategies that are found within the online drivers' experiences are the meaning of life outside of work, anger, and distraction.

### 4.3.1   Meanings of life

Many participants are reported to perceive the meaning of life outside of their work. These meanings show that the online drivers have the abilities to recover themselves from different conditions that might be a burden and affect the depletion of their overall life satisfaction. Based on the results, meanings of life could be seen through three different areas: gratitude, hopes, and belief system. First, participants shared their gratefulness over their life considering the less-fortunate work condition that they have. To be able to cope themselves from the financial problems and physical stress, it is important for them to be grateful for everything that they have, although their income is considered to be below the National Minimum Wage: *"I always try to be grateful. I think if we're talking about satisfaction, people will never be satisfied. So, just enjoying your work is really important".* In addition to that, participants also shared their personal hopes in facing depleting experiences of working in this industry, believing that one day the chances are going to be opened for them to develop themselves and sustain their families better. For instance, a participant mentioned *"If I just keep working and do not stop looking for chances, eventually I can start my own business, hopefully".* Last, participants often mentioned their belief to God is the foundation that they could be strong throughout this work and life. Participants stated that there is always a way and solution for them if they put their faith in God: *"I believe that the fate and fortune of each person have already been determined by God, so I'm not really afraid of not being able to eat".*

### 4.3.2   Distraction

Some of the participants also use some distraction to cope with their working conditions. Different from meanings of life that usually come from their personal selves and minds, this coping strategy is perceived through three different kinds of distractions. First, in line with the findings of the enriching work environment of the online drivers, participants also make use of social networks  of working with digital platforms. Participants use their spare time in waiting for an order to meet their friends and other fellow drivers in which they can release some stress of working on that day. As one participant stated *"In the afternoon we usually have less orders. So I just use that time to meet my friends, fellow partners. We usually just joke around or maybe discuss some serious things, I just*

*really enjoy that time"*. Second, spending time with family also plays a part as their distraction in coping from the work-strains: *"When you have a child, it's like you are relieved for a while, forgetting all the stress from the work"*. Third, distraction for the online drivers could also be seen through their willingness to increase their working hours: *"Even though working for a long hour in a day is physically draining, it's just better for me instead of staying alone at home and overthinking all the work stuff"*. This way, they feel that they can actually distract themselves by keeping busy most of the time.

**Table 4** *Coping strategies of online drivers in going through the (work) conditions*

| Category | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Meanings of life | Workers find the meanings of life by themselves, outside their working life. It is the mindfulness tool to help them cope with the hard situations of their work conditions. These meanings are: gratitude, hopes, and belief system. | "I would say I can be grateful for how much I get from this job. But I still have faith that I can get a better job and lift up my career perhaps in another field other than this."<br><br>"I just realize somehow that there will be something better coming to me, besides working as online driver"<br><br>"I still believe in God the almighty, because of him, I'm still alive now" |
| Distraction | Workers take some distraction from their longer working hours, family, and social network to be able to take their mind off the problems from their work, for a while. | "So for example, I took my time from work sometimes to pick my child from school, then it's just *poof*, all the tensions are gone" |
| Refocus (meanings of work) | Workers refocus their difficult/negative (i.e. depleting) working experiences by seeing the positive side of working as online drivers | "I think the main point I'm still staying in this job is that I have the chance to develop myself mentally. So it's not all about money that you can get from this job, but also about how can you get better and stronger as a person in some difficult situations, in work and life as a whole" |

### 4.3.3   Refocus

Another coping strategy that is found for workers to face several depleting experiences is by refocusing. It is the way of the workers to see their difficult working conditions in a different perspective, which often in a positive way. This way of thinking and refocusing comes within workers' everyday's working life that helps them to survive and/or stay motivated throughout their work. Reframing strategy from the findings of this result also shows that no matter what are the depleting experiences (e.g. stigma) they receive as being online drivers, they put that feeling aside, and instead, they see their work with positive meanings (van Vuuren et al., 2012). One of the examples is when the workers find the meaning of work from socializing with fellow online drivers: *"Well I realize that I can't earn that much* (income) *from working as online driver, and also I realize that I really cannot go further than this* (online driver) *if I stay on Gojek for a long time. But I think the most meaningful part of this job is that I can learn from other drivers, mostly the senior ones. They taught me a lot, indirectly, lessons about life, it's just so inspiring"*. Moreover, some of the

workers also refocus their depleting work experiences by finding the meaning of their work for them to stay motivated. Workers often mentioned that this gig job as online driver is important for his life and his family, thus making this refocused perspective to overcome their negative feelings: "*This job just means a lot to me. For my whole family too, actually. Despite the unpredictable income and sometimes disappointing company policies and app system, this job (*online driver) *helps me and my family to eat, to live*".

# 5   Discussion

## 5.1   Theoretical discussion

### 5.1.1   General findings

This study resulted in a number of differences and patterns between gig workers' (i.e. driver-partner) working motivation and experiences. Previous research has studied the motivation (i.e. the reasons) of the workers undertaking gig economy work with two different aspects, push and pull factors (Bajwa et al., 2018). In this study, it continues to explore these two factors for transport gig workers specifically, focusing on the individuals working on one of the most fast growing countries in terms of transport gig workers.

While past study has revealed several factors of workers joining the gig economy, this current study tries to expand the findings by showing that these motivations often connect and affect the way workers experience their gig jobs. In assessing gig workers' experiences, this study uses the similar lens as Campion, Caza, and Moss (2019), which is by seeing it through two different perspectives: enrichment and depletion. First, this study reveals that workers experience several depletions in their work life if they join the gig economy based on their pushed factors. It relies upon whether or not they are working in the needs to fulfil their financial needs and their family members and having limited alternatives in choosing other types of job. In contrast, It can be seen that workers who join the gig industry based on several pulled factors (see Table 5) are more likely to experience enrichment while working as online drivers. These workers tend to enjoy their job more than workers who are pushed into the economy. These findings are in line with the study of Bajwa et al. (2018) and Campion, Caza, and Moss (2019), thus, supporting the research that argue workers who hold higher pressures on their work (i.e. pushed to work as gig workers), face more and trickier challenges compared to those individuals who join the gig economy based on their pulled intentions such as the flexibility and easy access to work.

### 5.1.2   Theretical contribution

In addition, not only does this study present results that strengthen previous research, this study also produces new and unexpected findings. It extends past studies by showing that workers' background and motivation does not always influence the enrichment and depletion experiences in the gig economy. Instead, these rather new experiences are the results of workers' everyday working routines as being online drivers in the gig economy. On the one hand, it is interesting to see that most of the workers in this study reported enrichment in their working environment. Such a working environment is different and can be seen as the opposite of the conventional working climate. Here, with the gig economy environment within the transport industry, fellow online drivers connect with each other better, despite their depleting and negative working experiences. Indirectly, these workers create a friendly network together by exchanging experience and lessons in their spare time (while waiting for the orders on the app) and through supporting communities (e.g. online conversation groups or online communities). Not only the better working climate that the gig workers experience, working in this type job also makes a lot of workers achieve more wisdom

about life. Additionally, such a friendly working environment can be considered as a result of their same job position (i.e. online driver), and often, similar life conditions, as opposed to the conventional working environment, where there are hierarchy situations that can make a relationship between employees not as friendly as the connection between fellow online drivers. From the findings, it can also be argued that these workers use this positive experience as one of the most important values as well as the coping strategy within their work, thus, making the workers choose to stay and continue working in the gig industry. Such results could be beneficial for digital companies such as Gojek and Grab to open up bigger opportunities on increasing its driver-partners engagement and loyalty by understanding what makes this type of job meaningful for the driver-partners.

**Table 5** *Gig workers' motivation and experience framework*

|  | Experience: enrichment | Experience: depletion |
|---|---|---|
| **Motivation: push** | Alternative pattern - Driver-partners (i.e. gig workers) experiencing enrichment despite their "push" motivation in joining the gig economy (i.e. unexpected experience)<br><br>Regardless of what workers' motivations are (both push and pull) in working in the gig economy, most driver-partners expressed their positive experience in terms of their working environment which include:<br>• Friendly networks<br>• Community support between fellow online drivers<br>• Shared and exchanged knowledge and experiences | Dominance pattern - Driver-partners experiencing depletion on their working life as a result of their "push" motivation in joining the gig economy<br><br>Push motivation:<br>• The needs to fulfil financial needs for individually and family members<br>• Limited education background and skills<br><br>Depleting experience in terms of:<br>• Working hours<br>• Lack job security<br>• Unpredictable income<br>• Platform systems (e.g. bonus system)<br>• Career development<br><br>Coping strategy:<br>• Meanings of life (gratitude, hopes, belief system)<br>• Refocus (meanings of work) |
| **Motivation: pull** | Dominance pattern - Driver-partners experiencing enrichment on their working life based on their "pull" motivation in joining the gig economy<br><br>Pull motivation:<br>• Workers' interest on the higher salary (compared to their previous jobs)<br>• Flexibility<br>• Easy access<br><br>Enriching experience in terms of:<br>• Having higher freedom and autonomy in controlling their work schedule, pace, and amount | Alternative pattern - Driver-partners experiencing depletion despite their "pull" motivation in joining the gig economy (i.e. disappointing experience)<br><br>Regardless of what workers' motivations are (both push and pull) in working in the gig economy, a large proportion of the driver-partners expressed their negative working experience in terms of:<br>• Labor protection (e.g. health insurance)<br>• Driver-partners' loyalty to their job<br>• Perceived stigmas (social and physical) |

|  | |
|---|---|
| • Personal development (outside of online-driver work)<br>• Work-life balance (work, personal life, family, social life) | Coping strategy:<br>• Distraction<br>• Refocus (meanings of work) |

On the other hand, besides the most prominent enriching experience of the online drivers, a large proportion of the findings demonstrates how both workers with their pushed and pulled motivation face the same unfavorable situations in working as the transport gig workers. Workers experience this depletion as a result of perceived stigma that they receive from the companies and the customers. Such stigmas previously have been discussed by several researchers in making sense of several stigmatized occupations (Ashfort & Kreiner, 2014; van Vuuren et al., 2012), in which it relates to the stigmas that are happening within the transport gig workers context: social and physical stigmas. The stigmas that the workers receive is the feeling that both companies and customers do not put enough respect for their occupation, as these workers are in a "lower level" than the companies and the customers. Further, this finding also extends the past studies in regards to stigma that shows that workers with zero-hour contracts still do not have the privileges that the most employees have in their jobs, both from the companies and the government. Even though the companies already offered several functionalities on the platform that might support its driver-partners, workers still feel rather unheard and uncared for, which might be interesting for the companies to understand these difficulties that still remain. The study reveals that such stigma can affect the well-being of the gig workers, thus, making sense of what the workers actually feel and perceive on their work can be crucial for the companies, since these workers are also part of the companies. All in all, compared to earlier studies in the scope of transport gig workers, these findings can add an important implication in having the impression of one of the most prevailing challenges that these workers still face.

## 5.2   Limitations and future research

Aside from the findings and research implications that this study resulted, there are also several limitations. First, this study has the main objective in exploring all aspects of experience that the workers might perceive throughout their work in the gig economy. Considering that, this study sees the gig workers' from the surface level and thus, it mainly focuses on the patterns between gig workers' work motivation, experiences, and coping strategies. Future research could continue to focus on each workers' experience and expand it into a more detailed discussion. The specific research on each experience could study the work environment on the gig economy and perceived stigma as being gig workers since these two experiences are found to be the most crucial and frequent findings from this study. Also, in terms of specification, future research could also extend this study in researching the coping strategies that are possessed and applied by the gig workers. Such future research may study the detailed background of the coping strategies, how are the processes, and outcomes from having these coping strategies in working in the gig economy.

Second, this study used a qualitative method in which the data collection and the discussion of the results are based on the author/researcher, thus affecting subjectivity. The negative or depletion experiences that are reported by the participants might affect how the researcher asks and responds to the answers from the participants during the conducted interviews. By that, there is a possibility that the researcher shared empathy with the participants that resulted in higher findings on the depletion experiences as opposed to the enrichment experiences. However, with the use of semi-structured interviews that rely on the topic guidelines, it helped the researcher to be still objective as much as possible by keeping on track on the topics and research aims and gaining information on both negative and positive experiences equally. However, along with the right supervision and the data collection method, such a possibility in subjectivity is considered to be small and not affect the reliability of this research. Future studies that use qualitative methods,

especially that include participants' personal life, have to be careful in collecting the data. It is considered to be important to put researchers' sympathy aside and have the belief that by having reliable and good research, it will help those participants as well.

Third, the number of participants in this study is considered to be small to understand the general experiences of Indonesian gig workers in the transport industry (e.g. Gojek, Grab). As discussed earlier, more individuals in Indonesia are starting to join the gig economy in the transport industry, reaching it to approximately 2.5 million active online drivers in 2019 (Kompas, 2019). With only 18 participants in this study, there should be other studies to be conducted that explore and examine the workers' experience in a large-scale number, thus, the results of this study can be compared and generalized. Nevertheless, considering there has not been any research that studies the working life and the well-being of Indonesian gig workers, specifically in the transport industry, the findings of this study can be considered to be a starting point for other researchers to study this topic. It might be really useful and interesting to study this topic since being a transport gig worker (i.e. online drivers) is one of the most extensive and popular occupations in Indonesia.

## 5.3   Practical implications

The findings of this research that cover gig workers' motivation, experience, and coping strategies can be seen as a helpful source for the companies (i.e. online platforms) such as Gojek and Grab to gain a deeper understanding of the welfare of its drivers (i.e. partners). Several research have argued that workers' work experiences and well-being are the crucial factors that affect their work attitudes, performances, work relationships, workers' engagement, and thus workers' loyalty (O'Connor et al., 2017; Shuck 2011). Engaged and loyal workers have shown a high commitment and motivation in helping and contributing the companies to achieve its organizational goals as well as keeping workers' feeling of self-worth and work satisfaction in regard to their work environment and relationship with the companies (Angerer, 2003; Saks & Gruman 2014; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011).

To achieve such engagement, first, the results of this study can be used by the companies such as Gojek and Grab in developing its policy for its gig workers. Having the insights that many gig workers in this study experience depletion in their satisfaction of the platform system, working hours, income, and labor protections, the companies could use these findings as a guide to help them in being more supportive of its workers by having the fair platform system that could be beneficial for both the company and the workers. This could be in a form of fair and motivating performance management that includes an improved points system, rewards system, and bonus systems. Also, in prioritizing the workers' safety, companies might want to consider offering more secure health insurance since these online drivers are considered to be physical workers.

Second, companies can provide more possibilities for its driver-partners to get closer with fellow online drivers as well as with the employees working at these companies. Gojek and Grab could see that this study shows that one of the most important values in working with its companies are the community support, thus, these companies could make, for instance several official communities of driver-partners in every region or city. Such communities can support the possibility for the workers to share their feedback for the companies as well as improving the information transparency regarding the changes that sometimes happen on the app and affect a lot of its drivers.

Along with that, not only online-based companies that can benefit from this study, this study could be also useful for policymakers outside the companies for starting to take into consideration the regulations and rights for gig workers in its country. This can be a starting point for policymakers to be receptive to the actual working life and conditions in the gig economy that workers experience. By that, there could be a new arrangement for gig workers' minimum wages (e.g. in national or regional scale) and labor protection such as protection against discrimination, low wages, and safety, that could be applied to all workers including gig workers. Lastly, the results and discussion resulted in this study can play a crucial role for the researchers to be able to grasp the development and phenomenon of workers' experiences and welfare in the gig economy.

## 5.4 Conclusion

Building upon the past studies with its research aims and findings in the gig economy context, this study aimed at exploring different experiences of transport workers in the gig economy. To conclude, the results, the analysis, and the discussion of this study resulted in more extensive findings than just the workers' experiences. This study reveals several patterns and interplay between transport gig workers' motivation in joining the gig economy, their enriching and depleting experiences, and the strategies to cope with their work conditions. Having insights about these findings and patterns regarding transport gig workers, this study can act as a starting point and a guide for researchers, online-based companies, and policymakers in understanding the phenomenon and workers' conditions in the gig economy. Last and most importantly, there is a need for the gig workers to be also heard and looked out for by the companies gig workers work for.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A
**Research question**

RQ: how Indonesian gig workers assess their experience of working with the multi-services digital platforms?
- Sub-q 1: what is their motivation for joining the gig economy? (push vs pull factors)
- Sub-q 2: what are their reasons for staying in this industry? (push vs pull factors)
- Sub-q 3: how do they assess the experience of enrichment and depletion?
- Sub-q 4: how these experiences bring enrichment and depletion?
- Sub-q 5: what are their personal values in working as online drivers?
- Sub-q 6: what are the patterns and/or connection between these motivation, experiences, and work values?

## Appendix B
**Study log**

Table B1: *Relevant terms*

| Concepts | Related terms | Smaller terms | Broader terms |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gig workers | Independet workers, on-demand workers | Working experiences, work background | Gig economy, gig industry, gig work, digital platforms |
| Working experience | Well-being, motivation, values | Psychological, financial matters, satisfaction, safety, burnout, working hours, hierarchy | Workers, gig workers |
| Transport industry | Multi-services platforms, delivery services | Online drivers, Uber | Delivery service |

Table B2: *Search log*

| Date | Database | Search terms | Search hits | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 04.03.2020 | Google.com | Gig workers | 17.300.000 | Too broad, but useful to get a grasp of this term |
| 04.03.2020 | Google Scholar | Gig economy | 56.800 | Too broad, not focusing on one particular type of industry, but still useful for the general idea |
| 11.03.2020 | Google Scholar | Gig economy well being | 36.800 | Good search, resulted into many useful sources |
| 11.03.2020 | Google Scholar | Gig economy transport | 15.400 | Good search, focuses on the transport industry |
| 11.03.2020 | Scopus | Transport gig workers | 16.400 | Focused results but are not too related |

| | | | | to the work experiences |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11.03.2020 | Scopus | Gig workers experience | 35.500 | Resulted into rich results, many useful articles |
| 02.04.2020 | Google Scholar | Gig workers motivation | 13.100 | Not really resulting into related articles |
| 02.04.2020 | Google Scholar | Push pull factor gig economy | 14.200 | Found some good articles |
| 30.05.2020 | Google Scholar | Coping strategies gig workers | 11.200 | Pretty good search, found many useful and related articles |
| 30.05.2020 | Google Scholar | Gig workers work meaning | 29.900 | Results from the search hits are not really useful for this particular study |

**Reflection**
- Too broad search terms do not mean that the results are not useful. Often it is useful to understand the whole idea or the helicopter view of the topic or particular terms.
- Always tries to search from the broader terms, thus, later on, it is easier to search and understand the more specific search terms.
- Searching from broader terms also helps to have a grasp on the research gaps that act as a base for the background of the study.
- Trying and searching different search terms resulted into more rich findings.
- The more recent studies or articles are better, because it shows the very recent nuances of this topic/study.
- If general ideas, information, and discussion are already gathered, start to search every possible small/specific search terms that might be related to this topic/study.
- For this study specifically, the more variances of the results, the better, since it helps understanding the nuances and framework of previous studies.
- Also, the more variances of the results, the better, since from that, it is easier to determine what are the limititation of this study and what are the recommendations for future studies.


## Appendix C
**Research instruments (interview guide)**

1. **Background and motivation**
1.1. **Personal background**
   - What app-based company do you work for?
   - How many platforms do you use for your work?
   - What do you call yourself in working on this platform? (such as self-employed, individual contractors, workers, employees, etc)
   - What task/work do you do for your job through this app-platform?

- Pay rate, working hours
- Work location, distance to home

## 1.2. Motivations
- What are your reasons or motivation for working through this app platform in the first place?
- Is this your only choice of working as opposed to a traditional/conventional job?
- Why are you still holding this type of work at the moment?
- Is this career considered to be your main income or is it just a side job?
- Do you see this job as a long-term career or only a temporary work?

## 1.3. Work demands
- What are the demands/requirements for working this type of job? (equipment, skills, experiences, languages, etc.)
- Did you have any interview or other type of selection before joining this job?
- Did you receive any training to support your performance through these app-platforms?
- Do you receive any protection such as labor protection, health insurance, pensions, maternity, sick pays?

## 2. Experiences working in the gig economy
- Do you have a fixed working hour per week/month?

  > On average, how many hours do you work per week? Is there any variation on the working hours? (e.g. nighttime, weekend, weekday, holiday)
- Can you arrange your own amount of work?
- Can you arrange the type of tasks for your work?
- How satisfied are you with this app platform you work for?

  > The systems, regulation, rights, and opportunities that the company provides
  > Do you think that the company should improve or change something?
- In general, how is your experience working in this type of job?

  > How is the pace of your work? Too fast? Too slow? Just enough?
  > How do you find a balance between work and personal matters (e.g. family, social interactions, leisure, etc.)
- Can you describe your working conditions?

  > Road safety, well-being, stress, health, tiredness, enjoyment, etc.
  > How do you manage your work if you unable to work (such as due to illness or other circumstances)
- How do you feel about the wages you receive from working with this platform?

  > Do you feel that this work can fulfill your economic needs?
  > Are you the primary earner of the family? Are there other family members who support the financial matters?
  > Can you save from your earnings? Do you save regularly?
  > Do you pay another cost for things such as insurance, health costs, etc, that are not provided by the platforms?
- Can this platform you work for supports your career growth?

  > Why/why not?
  > To what extent?

## 3. Outcomes working in the gig economy
- From your experiences, what are the positive outcomes/impacts that you receive from working in this online platform?

- From your experiences, what are the negative outcomes/impacts that you receive from working in this online platform?
- Do you consider yourself to be satisfied with your overall life quality at the moment? Why/why not?
- How do you feel about your future career?
- What are your career goals or dreams for the future?
  > Short term (over the next several months), and long term (over the next several years)
- Is there anything you would like to add?

## Appendix D

**Codebook**

Main code/theme: Motivation

| Main code | Sub-code | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Push factors | (1.1) Economic necessities | The needs of the workers to fulfill their life necessities by having enough earnings *(for paying their (and their family) basic and daily needs.)* | |
| | (1.2) Education background | Workers have limited skills and educational degrees thus they have less job possibilities. | |
| | | | |
| (2) Pull factors | (2.1) Wages | Workers are influenced by the attractive salary that they could earn through the digital platforms. | |
| | (2.2) Flexibility | Working in this industry gives the workers the possibility to manage their own working schedule. | |
| | (2.3) Easy access | Workers are interested in the small amount of work demands that they would have in their jobs. | |
| | | | |

**Main code/theme: experience (the assessor)**

| Main code | Sub-code | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| (3) Enrichment | (3.1) Personal development | *(Since working in this transport online-platform allows the workers to manage their own workloads),* Workers believe that working in this industry opens the way for them to be growing by having the possibility to explore different types of jobs (i.e. driving not as the primary job). | |
| | (3.2) Autonomy (3.2.1. Work life balance) | Workers feel that they have control over their overall work, thus having the condition of self-regulator. | |

| | (3.3) Working environment | Workers receive the positive support and encouragement given by the fellow workers/drivers. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | (3.3.1. Friendly network, 3.3.2. Communities support, 3.3.3. Shared lessons) | |
| (4) Depletion | (4.1) Career growth/hierarchy | Workers acknowledge that working in this industry could not give them a promising personal financial and career development. | |
| | (4.2) Working hours | Workers experience a long-hour of work in their regular working days (more than 12 hours/day), thus affecting their health and well-being. | |
| | (4.3) Labor protection | Workers receive zero and/or limited labor protections (e.g. health insurance, pension funds, vehicle insurance). | |
| | (4.4) Platform's system | Workers experience major changes of the app's system that affect their received orders, working hours, and salary. | |
| | (4.5) Unpredictable income | Working in this industry creates uncertainties on workers' earnings (i.e. different amount of income per week) *because it really depends on the orders from customers* | |
| | (4.6) Stigma | Workers suggest that both companies and customers are not preserving their dignity enough as a worker. | " |
| | (4.7) Loyalty | (4.8 Safetyness) | |

**Main code/theme: coping strategy**

| Main code | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|
| (5.1) Gratitude | Being grateful | |
| (5.2) Hopes | Having hopes, dreams | |
| (5.3) Distraction | (5.3.1) Family<br>(5.3.2) Social/network<br>(5.3.3) Work | |
| (5.4) Refocus/motivation/ meanings of work | Positive sides of the working life as online drivers | |
| (5.5) Belief system | Religion, God, the higher realms | |