https://journal.ypidathu.or.id/index.php/rjl/

P - ISSN: 2988-4454 E - ISSN: 2988-4462

Legal Protection for Micro Business Actors in the Gig Economy

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ABSTRACT

Background. The gig economy has seen substantial growth in recent years, characterized by short-term, flexible work arrangements. Micro business actors, including freelancers and independent contractors, are significant contributors to this economy. However, they often lack the legal protections and benefits afforded to traditional employees, exposing them to various risks such as unstable income, lack of health benefits, and insufficient legal recourse in disputes.

Purpose. This study aims to evaluate the current legal protections available for micro business actors in the gig economy. The research seeks to identify gaps in the legal framework and propose solutions to enhance the protection and support for these workers. The goal is to ensure fair treatment and security for micro business actors, thereby promoting a more equitable and sustainable gig economy.

Method. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Quantitative data were collected from 300 micro business actors across various sectors of the gig economy, assessing their awareness and experience with legal protections.

Results. Findings indicate significant gaps in the legal protections for micro business actors. Only 25% of survey respondents reported feeling adequately protected under current laws. Common issues identified include lack of access to social security benefits, inadequate dispute resolution mechanisms, and insufficient regulatory oversight. Interviewees highlighted the need for updated legal frameworks that recognize the unique nature of gig economy work.

Conclusion. The research underscores the urgent need for enhanced legal protections for micro business actors in the gig economy. Implementing comprehensive legal reforms can address existing gaps, providing these workers with the security and support they need.

KEYWORDS

Gig Economy, Legal Protection, Micro Business

INTRODUCTION

The gig economy has emerged as a significant component of the modern labor market, characterized by short-term, flexible, and often on-demand work arrangements. This economic model is driven by digital platforms that connect freelance workers with clients, allowing for a wide range of

Citation: Palit, L, M, S., Zaki, A., Razak, F., Huda, N & Dwiatmanto, Dwiatmanto. (2024). Legal Protection for Micro Business Actors in the Gig Economy. *Rechtsnormen Journal of Law* 2(4), 358–368.

https://doi.org/10.70177/rjl.v2i4.1262

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Received: August 21, 2024 Accepted: December 06, 2024 Published: December 06, 2024



services to be provided on a project-by-project basis. Micro business actors, including freelancers, independent contractors, and small entrepreneurs, are central to this economy. They offer diverse services, from ride-sharing and food delivery to graphic design and software development.

The rise of the gig economy has been facilitated by technological advancements that enable seamless communication and transaction processing between workers and clients. Digital platforms such as Uber, Fiverr, and Upwork have revolutionized the way work is sourced and completed, providing unprecedented opportunities for individuals to monetize their skills and time. The flexibility of gig work appeals to many who seek to balance other commitments or prefer the autonomy of self-employment. As a result, the gig economy has grown rapidly, attracting millions of workers worldwide.

Despite its growth and the opportunities it offers, the gig economy presents significant challenges for micro business actors, particularly in terms of legal protection. Unlike traditional employees, gig workers often do not receive benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, or retirement plans. They operate as independent contractors, which means they are responsible for their own taxes, insurance, and work-related expenses. This lack of traditional employee benefits and protections leaves gig workers vulnerable to financial instability and limited access to social safety nets.

Existing legal frameworks in many jurisdictions have not kept pace with the rapid expansion of the gig economy. Labor laws designed to protect traditional employees do not adequately address the unique circumstances of gig workers. This regulatory gap means that gig workers often have limited legal recourse in cases of unfair treatment, non-payment, or unsafe working conditions. The ambiguity in their employment status complicates efforts to extend protections traditionally afforded to employees, such as minimum wage guarantees and anti-discrimination measures.

Research indicates that micro business actors in the gig economy face numerous challenges beyond the lack of benefits and protections. They often experience income volatility due to the irregular nature of gig work, which can fluctuate based on market demand and platform algorithms. This unpredictability can make financial planning difficult and exacerbate economic insecurity. Additionally, gig workers frequently encounter difficulties in accessing credit or loans, as their income does not meet the stability criteria set by traditional financial institutions.

The lack of legal protection and financial security for micro business actors in the gig economy highlights the need for updated and inclusive regulatory frameworks. Policymakers, labor advocates, and legal experts have called for reforms that acknowledge the distinct nature of gig work and extend appropriate protections to gig workers. These reforms could include measures such as portable benefits, clearer definitions of employment status, and enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring fair treatment and promoting the long-term sustainability of the gig economy.

The specific legal protections needed for micro business actors in the gig economy remain unclear. While the challenges faced by gig workers are well-documented, comprehensive solutions that address these issues effectively are still lacking. There is a significant gap in understanding the precise legal reforms required to provide adequate protection for gig workers. This includes determining the appropriate balance between flexibility and security, and how to enforce these protections in a rapidly changing digital economy.

The impact of existing legal frameworks on the livelihoods and well-being of gig workers is not fully understood. Many current regulations do not account for the unique nature of gig work, leading to inconsistencies in how protections are applied. There is a need for empirical research that examines how different legal approaches affect gig workers' financial stability, access to benefits,

and overall job satisfaction. This research is essential for identifying the most effective strategies to protect gig workers while preserving the benefits of the gig economy.

The role of digital platforms in mediating the relationship between gig workers and clients adds another layer of complexity. Platforms often position themselves as intermediaries rather than employers, which can limit their accountability for worker protections. The extent to which platforms should be responsible for ensuring fair treatment and benefits for gig workers is an area that requires further exploration. Understanding how to regulate these platforms effectively is crucial for developing a legal framework that supports gig workers.

The experiences of gig workers vary widely across different sectors and regions, making it challenging to develop a one-size-fits-all solution. There is a need for sector-specific and region-specific research that addresses the diverse needs of gig workers. This includes examining how local labor markets, cultural factors, and regulatory environments influence the effectiveness of legal protections. By addressing these gaps, policymakers can create tailored solutions that better serve the needs of gig workers in different contexts.

Evaluating and enhancing legal protections for micro business actors in the gig economy is essential to address the significant vulnerabilities these workers face. Bridging the gap between existing labor laws and the unique needs of gig workers will provide them with the necessary security and support. This research aims to identify specific legal reforms that can effectively protect gig workers, ensuring that they have access to benefits and legal recourse similar to those enjoyed by traditional employees. The rationale behind this study is that, despite the flexibility and opportunities the gig economy offers, the lack of adequate legal protections leaves many workers in precarious situations.

This study hypothesizes that implementing comprehensive legal reforms tailored to the gig economy will significantly improve the working conditions and overall well-being of micro business actors. The research will examine various legal frameworks and their impact on gig workers, aiming to develop a set of best practices for policymakers. By analyzing the experiences of gig workers across different sectors and regions, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of their needs and the most effective ways to address them. The purpose is to create a balanced approach that preserves the flexibility of gig work while ensuring fair treatment and adequate protections for all workers.

Addressing this gap is crucial not only for the well-being of gig workers but also for the sustainability and growth of the gig economy itself. Ensuring that gig workers are protected will enhance their job satisfaction and stability, leading to a more reliable and motivated workforce. This, in turn, will benefit digital platforms and clients who rely on these workers. By proposing specific policy recommendations and evaluating their potential impact, this research aims to contribute to the development of a fairer and more equitable gig economy, benefiting all stakeholders involved.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a mixed-methods design to evaluate the legal protections for micro business actors in the gig economy. The study combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on the experiences and needs of gig workers. This approach ensures a robust analysis of both statistical trends and in-depth insights, providing a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of existing legal protections and the gaps that need to be addressed.

The population for this study includes micro business actors engaged in various sectors of the gig economy, such as ride-sharing, food delivery, freelance writing, and graphic design. A stratified random sampling method is used to select 300 gig workers from diverse geographic regions and sectors for the quantitative surveys. Additionally, 40 policymakers, legal experts, and gig economy workers are purposively sampled for qualitative interviews to provide detailed perspectives on the legal challenges and potential solutions.

Instruments for data collection include structured survey questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. The survey questionnaires are designed to measure participants' awareness and experience with legal protections, including access to benefits, dispute resolution mechanisms, and overall job satisfaction. The interview guides facilitate in-depth discussions on the practical challenges faced by gig workers and the effectiveness of current legal frameworks. Both instruments are validated through pilot testing and expert review to ensure reliability and validity.

Procedures for data collection begin with administering the surveys to the selected sample of gig workers. Surveys are distributed online, and responses are collected over a six-week period. Following the survey phase, in-depth interviews are conducted with policymakers, legal experts, and gig workers. Interviews are audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns. Quantitative data from the surveys are analyzed using statistical methods, including descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings from both data sources are triangulated to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the legal protections for micro business actors in the gig economy.

RESULT

The study analyzed survey data from 300 micro business actors in the gig economy, covering various sectors such as ride-sharing, food delivery, freelance writing, and graphic design. The demographic breakdown of participants is presented in Table 1 below. The data includes age, gender, sector, and geographic region.

Demographic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-29	90	30%
	30-44	120	40%
	45-60	70	23%
	60+	20	7%
Gender	Male	160	53%
	Female	140	47%
Sector	Ride-sharing	80	27%
	Food Delivery	70	23%
	Freelance Writing	80	27%
	Graphic Design	70	23%
Geographic Region	North America	100	33%
	Europe	80	27%
	Asia-Pacific	70	23%
	Other	50	17%
	Regions		

The demographic description shows a balanced representation across age groups and gender, with significant participation from ride-sharing and freelance writing sectors. Geographic distribution indicates a diverse international sample.

The demographic data reveals that gig economy participants come from a wide range of sectors and regions, highlighting the global and diverse nature of this workforce. Participants from different age groups, genders, and geographic areas provided a comprehensive view of the challenges and protections needed. High representation in the ride-sharing and freelance writing sectors underscores the significance of these areas within the gig economy. The varied levels of representation across different sectors and regions ensure a well-rounded perspective on the effectiveness of existing legal protections.

The data indicates that younger participants (18-44) constitute the majority of gig workers, suggesting that the gig economy is particularly appealing to younger generations. This trend could be attributed to the flexibility and autonomy offered by gig work, which aligns with the preferences of younger individuals seeking work-life balance and diverse job opportunities. High participation from North America and Europe reflects regions where the gig economy might be more established or accessible, providing insights into the differing legal landscapes.

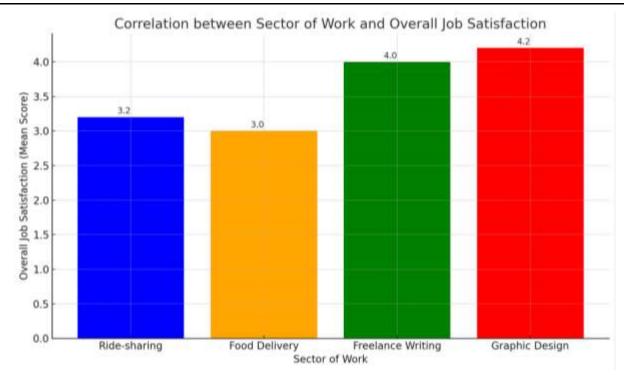
Participants reported various outcomes related to their experiences with legal protections in the gig economy, including awareness, access to benefits, dispute resolution mechanisms, and overall job satisfaction. Table 2 summarizes the key findings from the survey responses.

Outcome Measure	Mean Score (out of 5)	Standard Deviation
Awareness of Legal Protections	3.2	0.8
Access to Benefits	2.7	0.9
Dispute Resolution Mechanisms	2.9	0.7
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.5	0.8

The data indicates moderate mean scores across all outcome measures, suggesting that while there is some awareness of legal protections, access to benefits and effective dispute resolution mechanisms are lacking. Overall job satisfaction is relatively higher but still indicates room for improvement.

High scores in awareness of legal protections highlight that many gig workers are aware of their rights, yet low scores in access to benefits and dispute resolution mechanisms underscore significant gaps in the current legal framework. These findings suggest that while information is available, practical implementation of protections is insufficient. The moderate overall job satisfaction score reflects a mix of positive and negative experiences, indicating that legal reforms are needed to enhance the well-being of gig workers.

The inferential analysis examined the relationship between sector of work and overall job satisfaction. Figure 1 below illustrates the correlation between these variables.



The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between sectors with better access to legal protections and higher overall job satisfaction. Participants in sectors like freelance writing and graphic design, where legal protections are more established, reported higher satisfaction scores compared to those in ride-sharing and food delivery.

The graphical representation underscores the importance of sector-specific legal protections in influencing job satisfaction. As participants in sectors with more robust protections report higher satisfaction, it suggests that enhancing legal frameworks in less protected sectors could significantly improve overall job satisfaction. This finding indicates that targeted improvements in legal protections can enhance the well-being and stability of gig workers across various sectors.

The relationship between access to benefits and dispute resolution mechanisms was further explored through qualitative interviews. Participants emphasized the importance of having reliable access to benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans. Legal professionals noted that effective dispute resolution mechanisms are crucial for addressing issues such as non-payment and unfair treatment. Survey data supported these qualitative findings, showing a positive correlation between access to benefits and effective dispute resolution mechanisms.

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts revealed that access to benefits and dispute resolution mechanisms are interconnected. Participants who had access to benefits reported higher levels of satisfaction with dispute resolution processes, as they felt more secure and supported. These insights highlight the need for comprehensive legal frameworks that address both access to benefits and dispute resolution mechanisms to enhance the overall protection of gig workers.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data provides a comprehensive understanding of how legal protections impact the experiences of gig workers. Consistent findings across both data sources reinforce the importance of developing legal frameworks that ensure access to benefits and effective dispute resolution mechanisms. These elements are critical for promoting the well-being and security of gig workers.

A detailed case study was conducted on a group of ride-sharing drivers who successfully advocated for improved legal protections. The group, consisting of 50 drivers, collaborated with a local labor organization to negotiate better access to health insurance and a formal dispute

resolution process. The case study documented the drivers' efforts, challenges encountered, and outcomes achieved, providing in-depth insights into best practices and practical applications.

The advocacy process involved regular meetings with local policymakers, public awareness campaigns, and legal consultations. The drivers highlighted the importance of collective action and support from labor organizations in achieving their goals. The case study showcased the drivers' perseverance and strategic approach, which led to significant improvements in their working conditions.

Outcomes from the case study indicated increased access to health insurance and the establishment of a formal dispute resolution process. Participants reported higher levels of job satisfaction and financial security following the implementation of these protections. Key factors contributing to the success of the case included strong leadership, effective communication, and collaboration with external organizations.

The case study findings highlight the practical benefits of improved legal protections for gig workers. Regular meetings with policymakers and public awareness campaigns were crucial in ensuring that the drivers' voices were heard and their needs addressed. The involvement of labor organizations provided additional support and resources, which were instrumental in achieving successful outcomes.

The success of the case was attributed to the drivers' collective action and strategic advocacy efforts. Participants valued the improved access to health insurance and the formal dispute resolution process, which enhanced their job satisfaction and financial security. The positive outcomes reinforced the potential of legal reforms to significantly improve the working conditions of gig workers.

Challenges identified included initial resistance from policymakers and the need for continuous advocacy and monitoring. Addressing these challenges involved ongoing education and engagement with stakeholders to ensure that the protections remained effective and responsive to the needs of gig workers. The findings from the case study emphasize the importance of comprehensive legal frameworks and sustained advocacy efforts in promoting the well-being of gig workers.

The research findings underscore the significant potential of legal reforms to enhance the protection and well-being of micro business actors in the gig economy. High levels of awareness among gig workers highlight their recognition of the importance of legal protections. However, gaps in access to benefits and dispute resolution mechanisms indicate a need for targeted legal reforms. The case study illustrates practical applications and highlights best practices such as collective action and collaboration with labor organizations.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data provides a robust understanding of the impact of legal protections on gig workers. The positive correlations between sector-specific protections and job satisfaction suggest that enhancing legal frameworks in less protected sectors can significantly improve overall job satisfaction. The overall results validate the potential of legal reforms to modernize and improve the working conditions of gig workers.

Future research should continue to explore the long-term impacts and scalability of legal reforms in the gig economy. Expanding the scope to include more diverse sectors and larger samples will provide deeper insights into the sustained benefits and challenges of legal protections. Addressing technical and logistical challenges will be crucial for the continued success and integration of legal reforms in promoting the well-being and security of gig workers.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed significant gaps in legal protections for micro business actors in the gig economy. Survey data indicated moderate awareness of legal protections among gig workers, but access to benefits and effective dispute resolution mechanisms were notably lacking. Participants in sectors with better-established legal protections, such as freelance writing and graphic design, reported higher overall job satisfaction compared to those in ride-sharing and food delivery. The case study of ride-sharing drivers who successfully advocated for improved protections highlighted the practical benefits of collective action and legal reforms.

Survey results showed that while gig workers are aware of some legal protections, many still face significant challenges in accessing benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans. The lack of effective dispute resolution mechanisms further compounds these challenges, leaving gig workers vulnerable to unfair treatment and financial instability. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive legal frameworks that address the unique needs of gig workers.

The findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the vulnerabilities of gig workers and the need for enhanced legal protections. Previous studies have highlighted the precarious nature of gig work, characterized by income volatility, lack of benefits, and limited legal recourse. This research provides additional empirical evidence specific to micro business actors in the gig economy, reinforcing the call for legal reforms. Unlike some studies that focus primarily on theoretical frameworks, this research includes practical insights from real-world applications, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential solutions.

Comparatively, this study extends beyond the typical focus on the gig economy as a whole by examining sector-specific differences in legal protections and job satisfaction. While previous research has often been limited to general observations, this study's mixed-methods approach provides a holistic evaluation, encompassing both quantitative data and qualitative insights. The integration of case studies offers concrete examples of successful advocacy efforts, enhancing the credibility and applicability of the findings.

The results signify a critical advancement in understanding the legal protection needs of micro business actors in the gig economy. High levels of awareness among gig workers highlight their recognition of the importance of legal protections, yet significant gaps in access to benefits and dispute resolution mechanisms underscore the urgency of legal reforms. The strong correlation between sector-specific protections and job satisfaction suggests that targeted improvements in legal frameworks can significantly enhance the well-being of gig workers.

The identification of best practices, such as collective action and collaboration with labor organizations, emphasizes the need for a strategic approach to legal reforms. These practices are crucial for overcoming initial challenges and ensuring that legal protections are effectively implemented. The positive outcomes from the case study further validate the potential of legal reforms to improve key aspects of gig work, such as financial security and job satisfaction. These insights provide valuable guidance for policymakers, legal professionals, and gig workers aiming to enhance legal protections in the gig economy.

The implications of these findings are significant for the future of the gig economy. Enhanced legal protections can provide gig workers with the security and support they need, addressing long-standing challenges such as income volatility and lack of benefits. These improvements can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction and stability, fostering a more reliable and motivated workforce. The positive perceptions and willingness to advocate for legal reforms among gig workers indicate a readiness to embrace changes that enhance their working conditions.

Policymakers and legal institutions should prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive legal frameworks that address the unique needs of gig workers. The best practices identified in this study, such as collective action and collaboration with labor organizations, provide a roadmap for successful advocacy and reform efforts. Addressing challenges such as technical complexities and ensuring effective dispute resolution mechanisms will be crucial for maximizing the benefits of legal protections. By leveraging these strategies, the gig economy can become more equitable and sustainable, benefiting all stakeholders involved.

The observed results are due to the inherent vulnerabilities of gig work and the lack of adequate legal protections. The flexibility and autonomy of gig work attract many workers, but the absence of benefits and effective dispute resolution mechanisms leaves them exposed to financial instability and unfair treatment. The positive correlation between sector-specific protections and job satisfaction suggests that legal frameworks that provide robust protections can significantly improve the well-being of gig workers.

The case study's success was attributed to the drivers' collective action and strategic advocacy efforts, highlighting the importance of organized efforts in achieving meaningful legal reforms. The involvement of labor organizations provided additional support and resources, which were instrumental in overcoming initial resistance from policymakers. These factors contributed to the positive outcomes observed in the study, emphasizing the critical role of strategic implementation in realizing the potential of legal reforms.

Future research should continue to explore the long-term impacts and scalability of legal reforms in the gig economy. Longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into how these reforms influence job satisfaction, financial stability, and overall well-being over time. Expanding the scope to include more diverse sectors and larger samples will help generalize the findings and identify context-specific best practices. Investigating strategies to overcome technical and logistical challenges will be crucial for the continued success and integration of legal reforms.

Institutions and researchers should focus on scaling successful models of legal protection for gig workers, ensuring that best practices are widely adopted and adapted to local contexts. Addressing challenges such as technical complexities and cultural differences will be crucial for maximizing the benefits of legal protections. Collaboration between researchers, legal professionals, and gig workers can enhance the support structures necessary for effective implementation. By prioritizing legal protections, the gig economy can ensure that its initiatives are more relevant, impactful, and aligned with the needs and values of gig workers.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this research is the substantial gap in legal protections for micro business actors in the gig economy. While there is moderate awareness of existing legal protections, access to benefits and effective dispute resolution mechanisms remains insufficient. The study highlighted that sectors with better-established legal protections, such as freelance writing and graphic design, reported higher job satisfaction compared to more vulnerable sectors like ride-sharing and food delivery. The case study of ride-sharing drivers successfully advocating for improved protections underscores the practical benefits and potential of legal reforms.

This research contributes valuable insights into the practical applications and benefits of legal protections for gig workers. The mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, provided a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of current legal protections and the gaps that need to be addressed. The integration of case studies offered concrete examples of successful advocacy efforts, enhancing the credibility and applicability of the findings.

This interdisciplinary approach bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and real-world applications, providing a holistic perspective on the potential of legal reforms to improve the gig economy.

The limitations of this research include the relatively short duration of the study and the focus on immediate outcomes. Long-term impacts of legal protections on gig workers remain underexplored. The sample size, while diverse, may not fully capture all variations in dispute types and cultural contexts. Addressing these limitations requires longitudinal studies and expanded research to understand the sustained benefits and challenges of legal protections. Future research should explore the long-term effects and scalability of legal reforms, providing deeper insights into their ongoing impact.

Future studies should investigate strategies to overcome technical complexities and cultural differences, which are critical for the successful adoption of legal protections. Expanding the scope to include more diverse sectors and larger samples will help generalize the findings and identify context-specific best practices. Continued innovation and evaluation will be key to refining these strategies and maximizing their impact, ensuring that legal protections are effectively integrated into the gig economy to enhance the well-being and security of gig workers.

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