

Research Article

Digital Exploitation in the Gig Economy: A Marxian Study on Platform and Online Ojek Driver Relations

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of the digital economy has given rise to a new work model known as the gig economy, where app-based jobs like online motorcycle taxis (ojol) are rapidly growing. Behind the narrative of flexibility and partnership offered, there lies a work relationship that creates structural inequalities between platform companies and workers. This research uses Karl Marx's social conflict theory approach to analyze the hidden forms of exploitation behind the digital work system. Through literature review and critical discourse analysis, it was found that digital communication run by platforms is one-way, relies on algorithms, and creates unequal power relations. Ojol workers do not have control over digital production tools (applications), which places them in a subordinate position. Moreover, the use of the term "partner" has proven to be an ideological instrument to cover up the inequalities in labor relations. This research concludes that the gig economy in the context of online motorcycle taxis reproduces a new form of class exploitation, with communication as a covert tool of domination. The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of fair regulation and the strengthening of worker collectives in facing platform-based work models.

Keywords: Gig Economy; Online Motorcycle Taxis; Digital Exploitation; Conflict Theory; Structural Communication; Karl Marx

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the digital economy in Indonesia has spurred the emergence of the gig economy. Gig economy is an economic system where the available jobs are short-term compared to permanent jobs, and each job has a different value, such as freelance work. (LHDN Malaysia in Hoesin, 2024). This gig worker job has become one of the most popular types of work in Indonesia, and we can easily find it around us due to its flexible hours, such as online motorcycle taxi drivers. (Oey, 2024). Although offering flexibility and economic opportunities, the reality faced by ojol drivers reveals a structural imbalance in the employment relationship between platform companies and workers. Drivers often work without guaranteed fixed income, adequate legal protection, and access to formal worker rights. This is certainly contrary to the regulations of the Minister of Transportation Regulation Number PM. 12 of 2019. (Minister of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

The term "partner" used by platform companies becomes a form of legal camouflage that obscures the exploitative relationship between the company and the drivers. The partnership relationship itself is not a concept recognized in Indonesian labor law. The term partnership can actually be found in Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, but in a different context. The partnership agreement is unilaterally made by the application company with a biased content, thus causing more harm to the online motorcycle taxi drivers. (Izzati, 2022).

If there continues to be legal uncertainty regulating the legal relationship for gig workers and it is continuously categorized as a partnership relationship, it is feared that this will threaten the welfare of gig workers because there is no guarantee that workers' rights will be fulfilled. This is because, fundamentally, a partnership relationship does not require companies to provide protection for their partners. (Hoesin, 2024). The welfare protection provided to Ojol drivers seems very disproportionate to the rapid growth of gig work in Indonesia in recent years. Based on research data conducted by

LPEM FEB UI, it was found that PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk ("GoTo") is the largest digital ecosystem in Indonesia, contributing up to Rp428 trillion, equivalent to 1.8-2.2% of Indonesia's GDP in 2022. (Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia, 2024). Efficacy in mathematics is described as an individual's mathematics self-efficacy is his or her confidence about Platform companies continue to grow and reap significant profits from this work system. This phenomenon reflects an imbalanced power relationship and covert exploitation within the digital economy ecosystem, where algorithms and digital platforms become new tools for exploiting labor in more hidden ways. Sectoral regulations based on labor and transportation are needed to uphold the principle of fair wages and prevent inhumane wage practices. (Novemyanto et al., 2025) The need for fair and worker-friendly regulations in the digital economy ecosystem has also been a concern in various previous studies that highlight the dynamics of employment in the digital platform sector. According to Marx, exploitation occurs when workers do not have control over the means of production, and the surplus value of their labor is taken by the capitalists. In the context of the gig economy, digital applications become modern means of production fully controlled by the Company. Several previous studies relevant to this research have been conducted by:

First, (Izzati, 2022) in the *Legal Journal* titled *The Imbalance of Obligations Between Parties in Online Motorcycle Taxi Regulations*. This research discusses the imbalance in the relationship between online motorcycle taxi drivers and the application companies regulated by Permenhub 12/2019. The author shows that this regulation has an unbalanced partnership logic, where drivers bear a heavy burden of obligations while the company's responsibilities are minimal. As a result, this regulation has the potential to worsen the conditions and position of drivers in their work relations, exacerbate inequalities, and raise concerns about legal bias against gig economy workers.

Second, (Zaini et al., 2025) in the *Journal of Accounting and Management* with the title *Exploration of Factors Driving Students to Engage in Digital Platform-Based Economic Activities (Gig Economy)*. This study shows that the main motivation for students to join the gig economy is driven by economic factors such as the need for additional income, as well as non-economic factors like time flexibility and the development of digital skills. This research employs a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews of 15 active students on various digital platforms, and finds that access to technology, platform convenience, and social environment influence are important factors that also drive their participation. Furthermore, the results of this study highlight the need for educational institutions to support students in effectively balancing academic activities and digital work.

Third, (Novemyanto et al., 2025) in the journal *Jurnal Hukum Pelita* with the title *Recognition of Status and Legal Protection for Gig Economy Workers: A Review of Collective Demands of Online Ojek Drivers in Indonesia*. This study examines the lack of legal protection for online motorcycle taxi drivers in Indonesia, who have not yet been granted a definitive legal status. The research shows that the ambiguity of this status leads to the loss of labor protection, including the right to social security, holiday allowances, and tariff regulations. Platforms often establish pseudo-partnerships, contrary to the principles of worker protection. The state is deemed negligent in regulating the tariff system, commission oversight, and providing legal protection that is responsive to the dynamics of digital work. Therefore, there is a need for specific regulations (*lex specialis*), judicial review of exclusive norms, and the utilization of soft law in the digital transportation sector so that digital workers receive recognition as legal subjects and fair protection.

Of the three studies, they share a common focus on examining the phenomenon of the digital economy or gig economy in Indonesia, particularly in the context of inequality and injustice experienced by digital platform workers. All the studies highlight the weak legal protection for workers in this digital work system. Similar findings from the three studies indicate a significant power imbalance between workers and platforms or companies, where the partnership systems implemented tend to be superficial and disadvantageous to workers. All three studies also emphasize the need for more responsive regulations and adequate legal protections to address structural issues in the gig economy. The difference among the three studies is Izzati's research (2022) focuses on the analysis of regulations, specifically Permenhub 12/2019, and the resulting obligation disparities, while Zaini et al. (2025) examine the motivations and driving factors for students to join the gig economy. On the other hand, Novemyanto et al. (2025) discuss the legal status and collective demands of online motorcycle taxi drivers. There are also differences in the focus of the research subjects, where Izzati examines the relationship of online motorcycle taxi drivers.

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2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with literature study and critical discourse analysis methods to examine the phenomena occurring in digital-based transformation. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the complexities of the experiences and perspectives of online motorcycle taxi drivers in interacting with digital platforms. The critical discourse analysis method is used to uncover the hidden power structures and ideologies in the platform companies' practices towards the drivers. Data sources were obtained from news articles, research reports, and policy documents relevant to the topic (Moeloeng, 2014). To strengthen the data in this research, the researcher conducted purposive interviews with online motorcycle taxi drivers to gain direct insights into the dynamics of the application, including complaints and needs from the platform company. In this study, the researcher also selected 2 informant subjects. In qualitative research, the research subjects are the 'insiders' in the research setting who serve as sources of information. Research subjects are also understood as individuals who are utilized to provide information about the situation and conditions of the research setting. To determine who is chosen as the research subject, qualitative research uses the following criteria: (1) they have been sufficiently long and intensively integrated into the activities or field being studied; (2) they are fully involved in that field or activity; and (3) they have enough time to be asked for information (Rahmadi, S.Ag., 2011). The researcher selected 2 informants with a minimum of 2 years of experience and from different applications to obtain relevant experiences and data for this study. Secondary data or supporting data were obtained from various sources such as news articles on the internet discussing demonstrator actions, websites providing accurate data on the income contribution of online motorcycle taxis (ojol) in Indonesia, academic journals related to the discussion, and relevant policy documents. All the collected data were then analyzed using Karl Marx's social conflict theory to identify forms of exploitation and inequality in the working relationship between platform companies and ojol drivers.

Karl Marx's conflict theory, which developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, can be understood as a reaction to revolution, democratization, and industrialization. This theory emerged as an alternative to the dissatisfaction with structural functionalism proposed by Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton, who assessed society based on its consensus and integrality. The conflict perspective in viewing society can be seen in classical figures such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, and George Simmel (Raya et al., 2024). The early or classical theory, represented by Marx, has a simple assumption about society. According to him, conflict is determined by economic factors, particularly the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. History is a long story of class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (Zuldin, 2019). The conflicts that occur are not just about economics, social classes, or fanaticism, but more than that, they are about the determinism of conflicts from various social components that then become the paradox of social conflict. Fortunately, conflict theories from sociologists can still be implemented and applied to current social realities, which are certainly in line with the phenomenon of conflict occurring at various times. Although it may be true, as Chaiwat said, that the process of transforming a culture of conflict into a culture of peace takes a very long time, at least there are efforts and endeavors towards achieving peace (Fadilah, 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Power Relations in the Gig Economy Ecosystem

In the framework of Karl Marx's social conflict theory, the relationship between platform companies and ojol drivers can be understood as a relation between the bourgeois class (owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (workers). Partnership agreements are a form of legal relationship often used in the gig economy. In this context, platform companies (such as online transportation service providers or freelance marketplaces) treat their workers as independent partners rather than permanent employees. The existing partnership relationships do not adhere to the principles of equal and fair partnerships, resulting in drivers often being in an unfavorable position. (Hoesin, 2024).

Platform companies control the means of production in the form of digital applications and algorithms, while ojol drivers sell their labor without having control over the work system they operate in. Workers must follow the orders and instructions from the employer, and they work with predetermined working hours and receive fixed wages. (Hoesin, 2024). From the practices mentioned above, it can be seen that the platform organizers in this case have authority akin to that of an 'employer' or 'boss' due to the low level of independence or autonomy possessed by Ojol drivers and the high direct control held by the platform organizers. (Oey, 2024)

Karl Marx viewed capitalist society as a system divided into two main classes. Where in this study the Bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) In the context of the gig economy, these are digital platform companies (GoTo, Grab, Maxim) and as the Proletariat (workers) are online motorcycle taxi drivers and other digital workers who do not have control over the means of production (applications, algorithms). This creates a structural inequality where the company has full power to determine rates, work systems, and other policies without involving the drivers, while the drivers receive a cut from every result obtained and When committing a violation in the system such as rejecting a delivery and the like, sanctions will be imposed such as a decrease in the algorithm or passenger orders, which results in a decrease in income. This was conveyed by Joni, 34 years old, who has 5 years of experience in online motorcycle taxis, saying:

Every time there is an order cancellation, it's hard to receive the next order. They differentiate between those who are often online on the app and those who are not, even though our status is as partners, not workers. There are even priority and non-priority accounts. If you're a priority, you must buy a driver jacket, and if you're in a car, you must use a sticker. Why not make it equal and prioritize everyone equally? If you want to be a priority, you have to pay extra. Joni, 34 years old, online driver

The statement regarding the differential treatment between priority and non-priority accounts in online transportation applications, as well as the obligation to purchase attributes such as jackets or stickers to obtain special status, reflects a highly relevant practice of covert capitalist exploitation within the framework of Karl Marx's theory. In this system, the status of "partner" merely becomes a false symbol that obscures the work relationship, which is actually subordinate and unequal. Workers—in this case, drivers—are forced to follow unilateral rules set by the platform company (digital bourgeoisie), without room for negotiation and without guarantees of workers' rights.

The phenomenon of "priority" accounts that can only be obtained through the purchase of certain attributes indicates that the company is creating artificial stratification among the working class itself, which in Marxist theory is a form of internal division of the proletariat to prevent collective solidarity. In this case, platform capitalism creates the illusion of "opportunities that can be bought," while substantially still controlling the entire work mechanism through a digital system. Restrictions on order access for non-priority accounts, especially after order cancellations, are a form of structural sanctions used to discipline workers, similar to the supervisory function in the classic factory system—only now mediated by algorithms.

In Marx's view, such a production relationship shows that the means of production (applications, order systems, algorithms) are fully owned and controlled by digital capitalists, while workers merely sell their labor with complete dependence on a system they do not own. The lack of equality in decision-making, unilateral financial obligations to obtain job opportunities (such as purchasing attributes), and discrimination in job access reinforce the dominance of the platform owners over the digital proletariat. Thus, this work model is not an equal sharing economy, but rather a new form of class exploitation within the structure of the modern digital economy.

3.2 Exploitation Through Structural Communication

Communication between the platform company and ojol drivers is one-way and structured through a digital system. The company uses automated notifications, rating systems, and algorithms to manage and monitor driver performance without any room for negotiation or active participation from the workers. The term "partner" used by platform companies serves as an ideology that obscures the actually exploitative labor relations. Drivers do not have basic rights such as social security, legal protection, and freedom of association, which should be afforded to formal workers. The ambiguity of this legal status

creates a legal vacuum that opens up gaps for exploitation practices by digital companies. If Indonesia recognizes that ojol drivers are workers from the perspective of labor law, there will be significant legal consequences. First, platform companies will be required to pay the Religious Holiday Allowance (THR) to drivers, as regulated in Permenaker 6/2016 concerning Religious Holiday Allowance for Workers/Laborers in Companies. Second, drivers will automatically become participants in the employment social security program (Jamsostek) and health insurance (BPJS), in accordance with Law 24/2011. Third, drivers are entitled to a minimum wage and protection against arbitrary termination of employment based on the principle of procedural justice. Fourth, drivers can access mechanisms for resolving industrial relations disputes as regulated in Law 2/2004. Fifth, drivers are entitled to occupational safety and health (OSH) protection in accordance with Government Regulation 50/2012. All these consequences will alter the configuration of the working relationship between drivers and platform companies (Novemyanto et al., 2025).

Ojol drivers not only lose basic labor rights but are also vulnerable to digital exploitation practices legitimized through unilateral standard contracts (adhesion contracts). This adhesion contract is a form of contract whose entire content has been unilaterally determined by the business actor, without giving the other party (adhered party) any room for negotiation, and is often accompanied by exoneration clauses that disadvantage the weaker party. In the theory of maladministration, the state is considered negligent if it allows exploitative practices to continue systemically without adequate legal protection (Novemyanto et al., 2025).

In the gig economy work system, communication between platform companies and workers does not occur on equal terms but is unilaterally controlled by algorithmic logic. Workers do not interact with humans or managers, but rather with automatic notifications, star rating systems, and digital instructions sent through applications. Communication like this is one-way and places workers as passive objects in the production process. In the perspective of Karl Marx's social conflict theory, this form of communication is a manifestation of the capitalist production relations where the company (bourgeoisie) controls the means of production, in this case, digital technology, and uses communication as a tool for controlling the workforce. The work relationship that occurs through an algorithmic communication system does not allow for dialogue, negotiation, or worker participation in determining their working conditions. This reflects Marx's concept of alienation, which is the estrangement of workers from the work process, the product of their labor, and even from their own humanity. In the context of the gig economy, workers do not have control over the work rhythm, incentive systems, or wage clarity, but are instead subject to the unilateral decisions of the applications. Furthermore, the use of the term "partner" by platform companies acts as an ideological instrument that creates false consciousness, making workers believe that they are working freely and equally, while structurally they are in a subordinate and exploited position.

This was also stated by Joni (34 years old), an online motorcycle taxi driver with 2 years of experience, who said that: *The cut from the app is too large, causing misunderstandings with passengers and even inappropriate routes to be taken. Moreover, passengers feel they are paying a lot, but what the driver actually receives is little. Then the routes on the app sometimes don't match and cover a distance that is longer than usual. Loss of vehicles while searching for orders is not the Company's responsibility, nor are accidents and other incidents. I also hope that when we become partners, there will be no penalties for order cancellations by passengers, also When we take a break and turn off the app for just one day, it will affect our ability to get orders, and we are partners, not workers.* (Joni: 34 years old)

Joni's statement shows that the work relationship within the digital platform ecosystem is built through a form of exploitative structural communication. Communication between drivers and the company does not occur in an equal or dialogic relationship, but rather is conducted unilaterally and instructively through the application. Notifications, assignment algorithms, and penalty systems are created without involving the workers' voices. Marx viewed this condition as a modern form of class domination, where the owners of the means of production (platform companies) completely control the work system through rigid and inhumane digital communication mechanisms. Instead of being equal partners, drivers are subjected to a command system that they cannot negotiate. Complaints about large income cuts, illogical application routes, and the lack of accountability for vehicle loss or accidents, highlight the structural imbalance between workers and platform owners. In the context of structural communication, companies use digital systems as an extension of power, where work control is carried out through technology instructions without face-to-face interaction—without giving workers space to effectively voice their complaints. Applications have become the main control tool, replacing the role of supervisors in the industrial era. This is a new form of surplus value exploitation, where the company absorbs the maximum profit from the drivers' work without providing rights to the work results or social protection.

Joni also highlights that although his status is called "partner," he still faces penalties for order cancellations and fines when he is offline (offbid). In Marx's theory, this reflects labor alienation, where workers do not have true freedom over their own time and energy. The algorithmic system forces drivers to remain active to avoid losing access to work, even if they have needs for rest or emergencies. Thus, communication on digital platforms is not merely a means of technical coordination, but rather an ideological and structural instrument to maintain exploitative power relations. Communication that should be participatory has been replaced by a system that technocratically reinforces capitalist dominance over the digital workforce. Exploitation in this structural communication occurs covertly yet systemically. Through unilateral standard contracts and communication fully mediated by algorithms, companies regulate, supervise, and evaluate worker performance without having to be physically present. In Marxian analysis, this situation represents a form of increasingly

sophisticated and institutionalized capitalist control, where companies are able to accumulate surplus value from labor that lacks legal protection, wage negotiation, or social security. Thus, communication in the gig economy does not only function as a coordination tool but also as the main instrument of class exploitation, deepening the inequality between digital capital owners and app-based informal workers.

3.3 The Impact of Inequality and Regulatory Demands

The labor law Article 35 Paragraph (3) has regulated the protection of workers' rights, stating, "Employers as referred to in paragraph (1) in employing labor are required to provide protection that includes the welfare, safety, and health, both mental and physical, of the labor force." This means that employers are obligated to provide protection that encompasses the safety and mental as well as physical health of the workers. With the regulatory imbalance for gig workers, the consequence is the uncertainty of workers' rights. One of the basic rights related to worker health and safety is employment social security. The imbalance in this employment relationship affects the welfare of ojol drivers. They face uncertain income, high workloads, and the risk of job loss without adequate protection.

Various concerns arise from the lack of guarantees from platform owners to drivers, with threats such as accidents, robberies, and even vehicle thefts while working, which are currently becoming demands from the drivers. This situation has prompted demands from drivers for fair regulations and legal protections equivalent to those of formal workers. Online motorcycle taxi drivers (ojol) held demonstrations centered at the Merdeka Palace, the DPR Building, and the Ministry of Transportation (Kemenhub) on Tuesday, May 20, 2025. Besides Jakarta, protests also took place in various regions, such as Banten, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, Lampung, and South Sumatra. The Minister of Manpower (Menaker) Yassierli responded to the ojol demonstration. He said that the government is now focusing on employment social security (jamsostek) and work accident insurance (JKK) for online motorcycle taxi drivers. This action was triggered by dissatisfaction with the business practices of online transportation application companies (applicators) that are considered detrimental to driver partners. The main demands of the drivers include: first, a reduction in the app's fee cut to a maximum of 10%. Second, revise the passenger fare system and eliminate detrimental fare schemes. Fourth, the establishment of fair rates for food delivery and goods shipment services by involving all related parties. fifth, the imposition of strict sanctions on applicators who violate regulations, and finally, the immediate issuance of regulations governing the working relationship between drivers and applicators (Hayat, n.d.). Responding to the action, the Minister of Manpower, Yassierli, stated that the government is very concerned about the fate of ojol drivers. He emphasized the importance of social security, particularly work accident insurance and death insurance, for drivers who work on accident-prone roads. The government is drafting regulations related to social security for ojol drivers. However, regarding the demand to classify drivers as permanent employees, the Minister of Manpower stated that this matter is still under thorough review considering the complexity and dynamics of labor relations in this sector.

From the perspective of Karl Marx's social conflict theory, the regulatory imbalances faced by online motorcycle taxi drivers in the gig economy ecosystem reflect the structural tension between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Platform companies, as the owners of digital means of production (applications, algorithms, and rating systems), act as the bourgeois class that controls the work process and unilaterally determines the terms of production. Meanwhile, ojol drivers play the role of the proletariat class, possessing only their labor to exchange for uncertain wages and without adequate social security. This structural dominance reveals an exploitative relationship, where companies gain profits through income cuts and fare setting that do not involve workers as deliberative subjects. Regulatory imbalances in the gig economy ecosystem create unfair and exploitative working conditions for online motorcycle taxi drivers, as seen from the experiences of the informants in this study, Hadi and Joni. The absence of legal status certainty positions workers as "partners" without basic labor rights, even though they fulfill obligations like permanent employees, including being subject to unilateral sanctions and algorithmic control. The opaque assignment system and the differential treatment between priority and non-priority accounts exacerbate inequality, where drivers must "purchase" work opportunities through certain attributes, yet still do not receive social protections such as accident insurance or compensation for asset loss. This condition illustrates the imbalanced power relations between platform owners and digital workers, where the company unilaterally regulates the work process through structural communication technology without involving worker participation. The burden of risk and operational costs is entirely borne by the drivers, while the surplus value of their work is accumulated by the company. This injustice has sparked the emergence of collective unrest and digital class consciousness, as evidenced by national demonstration actions demanding regulatory reform and recognition of equal legal status. Thus, regulatory disparities not only harm drivers economically but also undermine the values of social justice in the modern digital workforce.

Work situations filled with uncertainty, high workloads, and physical risks not balanced by social protection demonstrate a form of alienation in Marxist terminology. Drivers have no control over the tools of their work, the pace of

work, or the wage system, and often have to bear risks such as accidents, robberies, or vehicle loss on their own. In the framework of Marx's analysis, drivers experience alienation from the results of their work, from the work process, and from their fellow workers because the work relationship is mediated by an inhumane system—namely, algorithmic communication that leaves no room for negotiation. The removal of the worker subject from decision-making reinforces class subordination and allows exploitation to occur in a veiled yet systemic manner. The collective actions of ojol drivers in various regions of Indonesia reflect a class consciousness that is beginning to form amidst the oppressive digital work structure. This consciousness emerges as a form of resistance against a system that marginalizes workers' rights through unilateral contracts and the removal of legal status as laborers. According to Marx, social change can only occur when the working class becomes aware of its position in the relations of production and collectively demands structural change. Demands for regulations governing legal status, application fee reductions, and social security are forms of digital class struggle that indicate the need for state intervention in creating fair and constitutional labor relations amid the expansion of platform capitalism.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that the work relationship in the gig economy, particularly between platform companies and online motorcycle taxi drivers, reflects a new form of exploitation legitimized by the digital system and regulatory gaps. This structural inequality not only impacts the economic aspect but also the social, legal, and psychological dimensions of workers. In Marx's perspective, this dynamic shows how capitalism continues to reproduce inequality through the adaptation of the means of production—from factories to algorithms, from manual systems to digital—without changing its fundamental logic, which is the accumulation of surplus value by capital owners. Therefore, the struggle of ride-hailing workers to obtain equal legal protection and recognition as formal workers is not merely a normative demand, but part of a broader movement in the pursuit of structural justice amidst the currents of digital capitalism. This underscores the urgency of reforming labor regulations that are not only responsive to technological developments but also align with the values of social justice and the collective welfare of workers.

4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that behind the work flexibility offered by the gig economy, particularly in online motorcycle taxi services (ojol), there exists a complex and systemic form of digital exploitation. Using the perspective of Karl Marx's social conflict theory, this research successfully identifies the imbalanced power relations between digital platform companies as the modern bourgeoisie and ojol drivers as the digital proletariat. The platform controls the means of production in the form of applications and algorithms, while the drivers only sell their labor without control over the work system, rates, or legal protection. The relationship constructed through the term "partnership" has proven to be an ideological instrument that obscures the actual exploitative work relations. Communication between the company and drivers occurs in one direction through a digital system that does not allow for negotiation. The automatic rating system, unilateral standard contracts, and algorithmic sanctions make workers subject to algorithmic control logic without adequate legal or social protection. From the employment perspective, ojol drivers are in a state of legal status uncertainty. When their status is not recognized as formal workers, they cannot access all labor rights—from social security to minimum wage. This perpetuates structural inequalities rooted in capital dominance within the digital economy ecosystem. In this context, companies are able to accumulate surplus value from drivers' work through app cuts and high workloads without balanced protection contributions. However, amidst this oppressive system, signs of class consciousness are emerging among the drivers. Collective actions such as demonstrations, demands for a reduction in application fees, and calls for recognition of their status as workers, show the seeds of resistance against structural domination. This marks the early phase of the digital class struggle, where workers are beginning to realize their position in the modern production relations and are demanding fair changes. Thus, the gig economy in online motorcycle taxi services is not merely an economic innovation, but a new battleground for class struggle. Exploitation is no longer physical as in industrial capitalism, but rather hidden within algorithmic communication systems and opaque platform policies. Therefore, progressive and biased state intervention is needed, in the form of labor regulations based on social justice to end this hidden exploitation. This research emphasizes that the reform of the digital work system must start from the recognition of the reality of exploitation and the need to restructure work relations to be more just and humane.

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