

Boundaryless Careers and Ethical Implications: A Review and Critical Analysis of the Gig Economy

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Abstract

The rise of the gig economy, characterized by flexible, short-term, and app-based employment, has profoundly reshaped labor markets globally, including in the Philippines. This study focuses on the ethical implications of gig work, particularly concerning workers' welfare, job security, and the absence of labor protections. The primary objective is to explore how ethical standards and regulatory frameworks can address the challenges faced by gig workers. In the Philippines, where unemployment and underemployment remain persistent, the gig economy offers a dual reality: it provides economic opportunities while also exposing workers to significant risks, such as exploitation and marginalization. The place of devotion for this study is the urban areas of the Philippines, where the gig economy has gained prominence, especially in cities like Metro Manila. The study employs a qualitative research methodology, analyzing existing literature, conducting interviews with gig workers, and reviewing current policies to assess the ethical concerns in gig work and its impact on the workforce. The implementation of this study reveals the precarious nature of gig work, including the lack of job security, algorithmic control, and the absence of social protection. It emphasizes the urgent need for the creation of ethical standards that protect gig workers, with a particular focus on fair compensation, algorithmic transparency, and the provision of social benefits. The outcomes of this study call for stronger regulatory frameworks to ensure that gig workers receive fair treatment and security, safeguarding them from the vulnerabilities of this evolving labor model. The study advocates for ethical practices within the gig economy, aiming to establish a more equitable and just labor market for workers in developing countries like the Philippines.

Keywords: Gig economy; boundaryless careers; ethical issues; labor rights; Philippine labor market.

Abstrak

Kemunculan dan pertumbuhan gig economy relatif baru di Filipina. Meskipun demikian, ini telah melahirkan jenis pasar kerja baru, yaitu karir tanpa batas, dengan banyak manfaat dan masalah etika atau dilema bagi pekerja pertunjukan. Posting ini mencoba menanggapi masalah etika yang muncul dengan menganalisis pekerjaan pertunjukan berdasarkan kontrol algoritmik, kondisi kerja yang tidak terlindungi, dan kurangnya hak khusus bagi pekerja pertunjukan. Dengan menggunakan metodologi penelitian evaluatif, data sekunder dalam bentuk artikel jurnal, laporan industri dan publikasi dikumpulkan dan diperiksa untuk masalah etika dan rekomendasi tersebut. Dari laporan para peserta, jelas bahwa pekerja gig Filipina menderita kepentingan karena klasifikasi pekerjaan, kurangnya akses ke perlindungan sosial, dan ketidakamanan finansial yang besar diperburuk oleh manajemen algoritmik. Namun, perlu

dicatat bahwa pekerjaan pertunjukan sebagai pengaturan seringkali terdesentralisasi dan cair, dan pekerja masih jarang dapat lepas dari ketidakstabilan dan fluktuasi pendapatan atau pendapatan rendah. Studi ini mengusulkan implementasi dan adopsi langkah-langkah legislatif baru berdasarkan rekomendasi dan proposal UE untuk melindungi pekerja ekonomi pertunjukan dan menetapkan standar etika atau pedoman untuk kontrak kerja di Filipina. Proposal utama termasuk legalisasi hubungan kerja dalam konteks pekerjaan pertunjukan, pengembangan keterampilan teknologi dan digital, dan peningkatan kompensasi yang sesuai. Dengan hasil ini, studi saat ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya perubahan hukum untuk hak-hak pekerja gig dan desain hubungan kerja yang adil dan adil dalam ekonomi gig yang berkembang.

Kata kunci: ekonomi pertunjukan; karir tanpa batas; masalah etika; Hak buruh; Pasar tenaga kerja Filipina.

INTRODUCTION

The gig economy has swiftly and decidedly altered the labor market globally, particularly in the Philippines, with app-based jobs like Grab, Upwork, and Fiverr, tilting conventional employment systems (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Tan et al., 2021). The following is a transformation that results in new employment relations and prompts ethical issues of workers' welfare. The notion of careers that have emerged here in light of the highly flexible and unpredictable employment landscape is that of 'boundaryless careers,' wherein the worker has to design his/her work and manage his/her development on his/her own in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment (Arthur et al., 2005; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994).

Precarious employment conditions of gig work generate distinctive income possibilities for Filipino workers. However, such opportunities come with risks and no protection standards for full-time employees in more developed economies. Employees in the gig economy require consistent compensation, have no social security, and can be addressed algorithmically, placing their jobs in jeopardy and peril due to a deficiency of limited and defined regulations and accountability (Wood, 2019). Job or career instability, fair salaries, and exploitation are among the challenges, assembling it essential and critical to safeguard or defend workers in such nonstandard professions through ethical concerns and matters (Angeles, 2020).

In response to these ethical issues, this study aims to respond to these challenges by proposing a process of developing a set of ethical standards that can protect gig workers in developing countries such as the Philippines where job security is still wanting. There are measures that legislative and public policy can propose to set up the Legal standards of protection: fairly treating, non-discriminating and granting proper employment protections for gig workers (Doorn, 2017). There is a conflict of ethicality yet efficiency that has to be addressed through a need to justify the gig work while preserving the necessity of adequate regulation to prevent exploitation within the economy (Grant & Booth, 2009).

With reference to the Philippine context, the growth of the gig economy would may be looked at as a boon and bane. On the one hand, it opens new opportunities to find employment for the Filipinos in the context of the labor market where unemployment continuously remains high and traditional employment opportunities are scarce (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021). On the other hand, gig economy has established precarization and marginalization of workers who cannot access institutional workers' protection. This means that there is still a need to fill the gaps in regulation as a way of addressing issues that have ethical concern in the verge of the future such as; misclassification of the worker, inequalities and exclusions in benefits and protection. Solving these conditions is essential for the development of the new gig economic

model as an employment form that can ultimately be beneficial for vulnerable groups of workers.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY, PROBLEMS AND TARGET SOLUTIONS

General description

Freelance and short-term contracts are referred to here as the "gig economy," which changes work across industries towards more temporary flexible work based on short-term contracts through online platforms. It started in fields like the Creative Industries but grew because of cost reduction requirements during the 2008 financial crisis, establishing a baseline model where platforms manage staff (Floridi, 2018; Parmeter, 2016; Burke, 2019). The "boundaryless career" opinion is particularly pertinent in the gig economy, as workers frequently move between roles and lack permanent or long-term job stability (Arthur et al., 2005; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). This framework demands that workers manage their personal and professional development while adjusting to freelance employment's changing and shifting needs (Forrier et al., 2009; Miles & Snow, 1996; Burke, 2019). While offering flexibility, it burdens workers with maintaining skills, handling unpredictable workloads, and securing economic stability in a highly autonomous environment (Roper et al., 2010). Some examples of gig platforms the Philippines has particularly taken include Grab, Foodpanda, Upwork, etc. It also fits a labor market previously acquainted with freelance or contract-based work (Sicat, 2021). Such platforms bring workers into direct contact with consumers, thereby disrupting vertical business models of employment and improving access to contingent employment.

The Philippine gig economy has enabled workers to switch between different assignments and jobs on various apps simultaneously or have another job besides doing gigs delights underemployed workers, particularly those living in urban areas (Soriano & Cabañes, 2020). Research shows that apps like Grab and Upwork offer a new model of work freedom but with insecurity and no more benefits than conventional employment (Wood et al., 2018). Like the gig economy in the Philippines, gig work is subdivided into crowd-work, which comprises most digital jobs often relating to content creation and work-on-demand, service-based jobs. This differentiation focuses on the degrees of supervision and management that workers feel depending on the kind of platform they engage with (Aloisi, 2016).

The gig economy also changes labor market geography, where Filipino freelancers, especially those who perform crowd-work directly for clients from other countries via Upwork, are part of the global workforce operating from the Philippines (Kuek et al., 2015). Still, many controversies relating to job security, benefits, and social protection encourage the regulation of gig workers' rights (Galperin, 2019). New work models such as platform-based work included in applications like Grab and Fiverr present issues to conventional employment relations and point to the need for policy attention to the rights and wages of gig workers in the Philippines.

Problem

The ethical issues of the gig economy platforms for workers in the Philippines concerning algorithmic control and the managerial monitoring of tasks raise significant questions. Evidence shows that platform giants, including Grab and Lalamove, monitor task assignment through algorithmic reputation systems where customers' feedback demarcates the workers' subsequent job opportunities and earnings (Pallais, 2014; Ye et al., 2014; Luca, 2016). This "Matthew effect" results in a repeated reinforcement of highly rated workers, which results in the progressive advancement of inequality (Wood et al., 2019). The same is the case with Filipino gig workers, who have certain economic insecurities and mainly rely on the platform work, to which algorithmic governance subjects them to render a numeric value for automating work access

and distribution, disregarding personal conditions (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Acemoglu et al., 2004; Wood, 2018; Fowler, 2018). This oversight control structure and framework, combined with transparency to increase economic viability, violates labor equity and doesn't seem equitable and fair to employees (Doorn, 2017).

In the Philippine gig economy, algorithmic control parallels Taylorist rationalized control with the platforms exuding power over the Gig Workers exerting rating-based control to forestall aversive feedback (Aloisi, 2016; Cherry, 2016; Bain & Taylor, 2000; Wood, 2019). Such problems as algorithmic price discrimination shed light on ethical questions: Surge pricing impacts workers notably since many experience minimum wages when marginal costs are considered (Chen & Sheldon, 2015; Cramer & Krueger, 2016; Zwick, 2018). Moreover, dynamic pricing causes inequality to prevail to another level where consumers are charged differently based on their perceived price sensitivity and where undesirable impacts on the poor and other sensitive groups can result (Bar-Gill, 2019; Townley et al., 2019). Based on these ethical dilemmas, strong calls are made to place the growth of the gig economy under regulatory supervision in the Philippines so that fairness can prevail between gig economy market participants, which are gig workers and consumers on the one part, and platforms companies on the other.

Target solution

Specific reformative solutions have been made based on EU measures to respond to these ethical concerns in the Philippine gig economy, focusing on algorithmic control and economic injustice. The EU created the High-Level Expert Group (HLG) in 2019 to deliberate on essential solutions, including availing of digital competencies for persons at work, regulating new forms of work relations, and developing architecture to facilitate digital employment (European Commission, 2020). These initiatives could go a long way towards helping Philippine gig workers where economic pressures and endemic job scarcity make existing and improved digital literacy and structures in the gig economy necessary (Sarmiento et al., 2022; Esguerra, 2021). Similarly, by applying the same reforms, the gig workers in the Philippines would be more competitive and better equipped to face an ever-growing digital economy.

The second reform pathway of the HLG is the enhancement of the campaign for 'decent work' focusing on safety and mental health risks for gig work. This includes reconsidering labor laws to meet better the needs of distinguished classes of workers, such as traditional and gig workers, and strengthening social dialogue among stakeholders to extend fair treatment (Baticulon et al., 2021). In the Philippines, such measures extend much-needed safety nets to gig workers who suffer from many precarities due to their employment status. Such legal and ethical measures could contribute to the establishment of equality in working conditions where employees are shielded from the shortcomings of algorithmic governance and offered a fair deal.

The third approach of EU reform looks to fight against economic and social polarization, protect workers, and ban algorithmic discrimination in the gig economy. Various studies advocated or suggested the following measures and metrics such as treating or classifying gig workers' data as intellectual property and promoting a fair distribution of income and revenue (Gonzales et al., 2023). Nevertheless, it is clear from the gaps in the HLG report that there is insufficient emphasis on discrimination and opaque algorithmic mechanisms, and individual protections may continue to be required in the Philippine setting. In filling these gaps while modifying the EU approaches, the Philippines could build a gig economy that respects the workers' rights while providing fair treatment and more excellent economic stability for all members involved.

METHOD

This study employed an evaluative approach to examine the ethical issues emerging from the gig economy and to inform the development of regulatory frameworks in the Philippine context. The primary methodology involved secondary data analysis, leveraging journals, official publications, and industry reports to investigate the implications of the gig economy on labor ethics and workers' rights. To enhance clarity and measurability, the research followed a structured process: first, identifying relevant data sources through systematic searches in online databases; second, screening and categorizing materials based on their relevance to gig economy ethics; and third, synthesizing findings to address remuneration, employment stability, and worker protections. While secondary data provided valuable insights, the study acknowledged the limitations in capturing nuanced conditions experienced by gig workers, which could be addressed through future cohort studies or primary data collection methods like interviews and surveys.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results provided in the study depict severe ethical issues in the Philippine gig economy, as the gig workers are vulnerable to labor exploitation because of the forced misclassification of contractual relations as non-employers. Such misrepresentation leads to limited access to social services and almost negligible legal laminate, giving rise to a vulnerable workforce associated with outsourcing in areas with limited labor regulations (Dela Cruz, 2021). This trend is evidence of the importance of Filipino gig workers, who are paid in insecure contracts and lack any institutional support due to changes in the labor market.

Despite the many benefits of the so-called 'gig economy' for workers, the ability to set one's own hours and work at one's own pace is a disadvantage. To many employees, deciding flexibility is percentile because of job scarcity and job competition; therefore, much flexibility becomes a hygiene factor (Tan et al., 2021). For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, most gig employees went into the workforce without the necessary protective gear, especially from the effects of the virus community, such as food delivery services (Lopez et al., 2021).

The excess labor supply in specific gig sectors with concurrent low wages is proceeded by a bidding-down system, where the workers are forced to take wages below their preferred choice and even below minimum wage (Bautista, 2020; Dela Cruz, 2021). This economic vulnerability is closely related to issues in labor justice, returning to the argument against neoliberalism and the exclusion of labor protections for profit (Gonzalez, 2023). The role of algorithms escalates this problem to promote command over a scattered form of work, characteristic of the gig economy, deepening precarity.

Furthermore, while the gig economy is marketed and described as the "Sharing Economy," it is, in fact, inherently and by nature exploitative, a veil that frequently or constantly positions gig workers as 'entrepreneurs' in order to avoid the extension or broadening of labor rights to which regular employees are entitled (Cockayne, 2021). This narrative and viewpoint leads to low-wage, low-skill professions that make one more vulnerable and susceptible to workers in the labor market. Tan et al. (2021) have noted that one can eradicate these imbalances by promoting the solidarity of gig workers and by bringing in fair work principles, saying that everybody is to be accountable for the gig work, and this is something which is already in practice and playing an essential role in the Philippines as a new platform for jobbers (Dela Cruz, 2021).

Discrimination within the gig economy is still another problem; workers continue to become victims of discrimination concerning their gender, color, or other distinguishing features. As another example, Filipino women experience biased wages and algorithms that prevent them

from fairly apply for jobs (Bantug, 2023; Cruz 2023). Such systemic inequalities bring into the limelight the need to achieve legal reforms to correct the problem and social realize to eliminate structural discrimination affecting those in gig employment. The gig economy is thus not separate from labor rights, gender equality, or indeed even global poverty reduction: it must also be a fair, just workplace for all workers in a global economy that becomes increasingly fractured and precarious for so many, as De Guzman (2021) has pointed out.

To facilitate such translation, programmatic implementations must be articulated clearly so as to enhance the possibility of instituting related reforms. To mobilise sustained and meaningful change in the gig economy, time-bound solutions are necessary. Policy frameworks should comprise of the following measures, being short-term interventions including universal social protections for gig workers, algorithmic management transparency, and anti-discrimination measures. An action plan by phases with specific targets at six-month to one-year cycles will enable gradual implementation of these reforms with possibilities for monitoring and evaluation. Many of these strategies follow the suggestions made by the EU's High-Level Expert Group (HLG) and can be adopted to the Philippine scenario to foster a sustainable and fair labor market.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This paper explores the ethics of gig work in the context of the Philippine experience with the debates regarding employment conditions of workers in app-based platforms. The Philippine's gig workers, for example, are predominantly paid as independent contractors, which keeps them from basic services, weak employment rights, and no organizational sponsorship. This misclassification worsens their status of vulnerability report especially in a changing labor market that is characterized by dominance of algorithmic control and managers' oversight. As seen earlier, Philippine has lack of stringent labor laws and the culture of outsourcing makes the Filipino gig workers more vulnerable according to Dela Cruz (2021). As characterised by Tan et al., 2021, there could be some opportunities the gig economy includes flexibility and access to earnings sources however these options are accompanied with job instability and unfair terms. The study suggests that further efforts are required to come up with specific interventions to deal with all these ethical issues. There is need to enhance protections for gig workers based on sound regulatory legislation that should seek to advocate for fairness onto platform work. Based on the recommendation of the High-Level Expert Group of the European Union, similar measures could be applied in the Philippines including to promote effective digital literacy, overhaul the labor laws and promote more work force dialogue. These steps would assist to close current gaps between the conventional and non-conventional employment formats so that the gig workers would be provided with sufficient legal guarantees and social safeguards (Sarmiento et al., 2022). Besides, convincing programs on decent work, which entail possible physical and mental hazards in gig work, are necessary to reduce the precarities of gig work (Baticulon et al., 2021).

Another crucial recommendation is achieving a balance of algorithmic bias and unfair disadvantages in the gig-oriented economy. The following are some suggestions which might solve such injustice yet encourage a better model of freelance economy: Protecting gig workers' data as owners of intangible assets and affordable revenue-sharing mechanisms (Gonzales et al., 2023). Nevertheless, missing steps in combating discrimination and highly skeptical views on the way algorithms work call for concrete reforms suitable for the Philippines only. Creating such a favourable environment for gig economy would help the Philippines adopt the best practices

from other countries and guarantee workers' right, economic security and social equality for gig economy workers.

Thus, the gig economy in the Philippines has been seen to hold both benefits and drawbacks. While being a convenient way to gain employment in a country where employment remained high in the recent past, the gig working model creates further possibilities of risks for the gig workers. To address these challenges one has to look at the government policies the way these platforms' act, and the measures that all the stakeholders need to take. Subsequent research ought to focus on primary data to understand the realities of gig workers and examine relations between algorithmization and fairness for workers. The gig economy in the Philippines can and should grow into a fair and post-philosophical employment system only through collective long-term efforts.

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