

GENERATION Z'S RESILIENCE AMIDST THE PRESSURES OF THE GIG ECONOMY AND THE PHENOMENON OF "JUST RUN AWAY" (ANALYSIS OF LAW, POWER RELATIONSHIPS, AND GENDER RESPONSIVENESS)

Nurika Falah Ilmania^{1*}

Fitriana Nur Annisa²

M. Pasca Zakky Muhajir Ridwan³

Ahmad Bastomi⁴

M. Alwi Al Maliki⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding E-mail: nurikafalah03@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of Generation Z increasing participation in the gig economy illustrates a significant shift in the structure of employment in Indonesia. On the other hand, there is a social phenomenon known as "kabur aja dulu" (spontaneous resignation without careful planning), which indicates a crisis of psychosocial resilience and instability in working relationships. This study aims to analyze how Indonesian labor law responds to these new dynamics, highlighting the aspects of power relations between workers and platforms as well as gender responsiveness to inequalities in access and protection. The study uses a sociological-juridical method with a qualitative approach and literature analysis. The results show that the gig economy expands flexibility but weakens the bargaining position of workers, especially young women, who face digital inequality and gendered expectations. The phenomenon of "just run away" reflects a form of silent resistance to an exploitative work system. Therefore, labor law needs to move towards responsive and gender-equitable law, balancing power relations and strengthening the protection of digital workers.

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Introduction

The digital economic transformation has created new work patterns based on flexibility and short-term projects (gig work). Workers are no longer bound by formal long-term employment contracts, but instead depend on algorithmic mechanisms and consumer ratings that determine their access to work. In this system, income sustainability is determined more by digital

* Corresponding author: Nurika Falah Ilmania, nurikafalah03@gmail.com

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performance than by job security, making workers increasingly vulnerable and lacking the protections afforded by conventional employment relationships. This phenomenon is increasingly popular among Generation Z, who are known for being adaptive and creative, but also vulnerable to uncertainty. (Kurniawaty & Widayatmo, 2024, hlm. 48)

On the other hand, a new social phenomenon has emerged in Indonesia, namely the phenomenon of “just run away,” which can be interpreted as a coping mechanism for young workers who choose to resign spontaneously without a long-term strategy. This phenomenon is not merely a personal issue, but a reflection of an unhealthy work system with minimal legal protection. This action also highlights the fragility of the relationship between workers and companies, where loyalty is no longer a core value when the work environment fails to provide security, recognition, and room for growth. In such situations, young workers tend to choose quick solutions to escape pressure, even if it means losing career stability. This phenomenon should serve as a warning for institutions to reevaluate the work practices they implement.

Furthermore, the tendency to “just leave” shows that many young workers feel they do not have effective formal channels to voice their complaints or seek solutions. When internal mechanisms are unresponsive, extreme decisions such as sudden resignation become the safest option. This reinforces the need for companies to build a more humane, dialogical, and long-term oriented work ecosystem.

Ultimately, without structural changes that ensure protection and space for worker participation, this phenomenon has the potential to become a new pattern that is detrimental to both parties. Companies will find it increasingly difficult to retain young talent, while workers will remain in a cycle of uncertainty and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, a collective commitment between the government, the business world, and other stakeholders is needed to formulate adaptive labor policies, ensure psychosocial security, and promote a more sustainable and inclusive work culture.

From a labor law perspective, the phenomenon of “just run away” reflects regulatory loopholes that have not been able to provide a sense of security or effective dispute resolution mechanisms for young workers. (Tia & Sufiarina, 2023, hlm. 300) Although the law regulates the rights and obligations of both parties, implementation at the company level is often not in line with the principles of labor protection mandated by the state. The absence of transparent internal complaint channels, weak labor supervision, and a culture of fear of retaliation make workers reluctant to pursue formal procedures. As a result, sudden resignation becomes a quicker option than going through the available dispute resolution mechanisms. This situation highlights the need to strengthen regulations, improve oversight capacity, and provide more responsive and worker friendly legal instruments so that industrial relations can proceed fairly, equitably, and based on legal certainty.

The phenomenon of “just running away” that is prevalent among young workers shows an imbalance in employment relationships that should be guaranteed by Indonesia's labor law system. (Batjo, 2022, hlm. 22) Normatively, Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, which was later amended by Law No. 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation, stipulates the basic rights and obligations of both workers and employers. (Solihin & Markoni, 2022, hlm. 718) Workers' rights to fair wages, social security, a safe working environment, and internal complaint mechanisms are part of the principles of labor protection that companies must comply with. Conversely, workers are obliged to perform their duties in accordance with their employment agreements and to comply with company rules and regulations. However, in practice, the implementation of these norms often falls short of optimal standards. (Manalu, 2022, hlm. 35)

The ineffectiveness of labor supervision mechanisms and the lack of transparent communication channels at the company level often leave young workers feeling that they have no formal means of voicing their complaints. In fact, the Indonesian legal system has provided a

dispute resolution mechanism through Law No. 2 of 2004 on Industrial Relations Dispute Resolution, which includes bipartite negotiations, mediation, conciliation, and resolution in the Industrial Relations Court. (Alfarizsy dkk., 2025, hlm. 1) However, this procedure is often perceived as complicated, time-consuming, and potentially harmful to workers. This situation encourages extreme choices such as sudden resignation as a quick means of self-protection, even though such actions may result in the loss of certain rights, such as compensation or administrative settlement of employment matters.

In the human rights approach, employment relationships are not viewed solely as economic contracts that exchange labor for wages, but rather as social relationships that are inherent to the dignity, freedom, and security of individuals as workers. The HR perspective places workers not only as objects of company rules, but as subjects who have fundamental rights that must be respected, protected, and fulfilled by the state and employers. Within this framework, employment relationships must be based on the principles of non-discrimination, equality, and protection against vulnerabilities that workers may experience, including psychological pressure, exploitation, or structural insecurity in the workplace.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) developed the concept of Decent Work as a global standard to ensure that jobs are not only available, but also dignified. This concept is based on four main pillars: employment opportunities, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue. Each of these pillars is interrelated and inseparable from one another. The pillar of employment opportunities requires productive and decent work for all individuals; social protection aims to guarantee social security and safety from risks; rights at work include freedom of association, protection against discrimination, and guarantees of safe and healthy working conditions; while social dialogue emphasizes the importance of communication and negotiation between workers, employers, and the state as a means of resolving labor issues fairly.

The phenomenon of sudden resignations or “just running away” reflects that various elements of the Decent Work concept have not been optimally fulfilled. Many young workers feel they do not have the right to security, both in terms of physical and psychological security. A stressful work environment, excessive working hours, disproportionate workloads, and a lack of appreciation for mental well-being are violations of the principle of decent working conditions. In addition, the right to express opinions without fear of retaliation is often not guaranteed. Fear of repressive actions such as poor performance evaluations, ostracism, or threats of termination makes workers reluctant to use formal channels to raise issues or objections. When participation and social dialogue mechanisms do not work, workers lose a safe space to negotiate and resolve conflicts constructively.

From a human rights perspective, the act of “just running away” can be understood as a manifestation of the failure of the labor system to fulfill the basic rights of workers. Sudden resignation is not merely a form of individual escape, but rather a structural indicator that the workplace does not provide working conditions that are in line with the principles of human dignity. With the Decent Work standards not being met, workers take actions that they consider to be the best way to protect themselves from vulnerabilities that are not addressed by the formal system. Thus, this behavior is a logical reaction to the absence of human rights guarantees in the workplace, while also demonstrating the need for labor policy reforms that are more oriented towards the holistic protection of workers' rights, both in economic, social, and psychological aspects.

On the other hand, from an industrial relations perspective, this phenomenon reflects the weakness of industrial peace, which should be maintained through active and equal engagement between workers and employers. The absence of adaptive company regulations, as well as the lack of labor unions or collective bargaining agreements in a number of sectors, exacerbates this situation because workers lose the collective representation instruments that can protect their interests. When formal and informal channels for voicing aspirations do not function, workers tend

to take shortcuts that obscure the root of structural problems in labor relations. Overall, the phenomenon of “just leaving” emphasizes the need for labor reforms that not only focus on strengthening regulations but also on revitalizing supervision, empowering labor unions, and developing credible, safe, and responsive internal complaint mechanisms. Only through a holistic and equitable legal approach can labor relations be more humane and sustainable, so that workers no longer see sudden resignation as the only way to maintain their welfare and dignity in the workplace.

Method

The methodology employed a sociological-legal approach utilizing a sociological approach, (Irwansyah, 2022) as used to understand the phenomenon of “just run away” as a social phenomenon in the world of work, as well as to see how the law works in practice. The analysis technique used is qualitative analysis, interpreting normative and empirical data to find the relationship between the phenomenon of “just run away” and the effectiveness of labor law. The research is limited to the phenomenon of sudden resignation in the context of young workers in the formal and semi-formal sectors, without examining criminal aspects or criminal acts in the workplace.

Results and Discussion

Power Relation in The Gig Economy

Power relations refer to the dynamics of imbalance between two parties, where one party has greater ability to influence, direct, or determine the actions of the other party. In the context of employment relationships, power relations are formed through organizational structures, control over resources, and the formal legitimacy of employers. Employers or management have control over fundamental aspects such as recruitment, performance appraisal, promotion, workload, and the continuity of the employment relationship itself. Meanwhile, workers are in a more vulnerable position due to their dependence on employment to meet their economic needs. Digital workers are subordinate to algorithmic systems. They do not have access to wage negotiations, working hours, or equivalent dispute mechanisms. Power is no longer centralized in the “employer” but is hidden in the logic of the platform.

In the context of the gig economy, power relations in the workplace are becoming increasingly asymmetrical and digital. (Noak dkk., 2024, hlm. 75) Workers are no longer bound by formal long-term contracts, but rather depend on algorithms and consumer ratings to obtain work and determine their income. In this scheme, workers act as “data subjects,” whose performance, behavior, and reputation are collected and analyzed by digital systems owned by employers or platforms. These algorithms have become a new instrument of power: a subtle yet decisive power that influences workers' access to jobs, income levels, and contract renewal opportunities, without any formal channels for filing objections.

In this scheme, workers act as “data subjects,” whose activities, performance, and behavior are collected, analyzed, and evaluated through algorithms. These algorithms then become a new control tool that determines workers' access to jobs, income levels, reputation ratings, and opportunities for promotion or contract renewal.

This digital power is subtle but decisive. Unlike direct supervision by managers, algorithms work automatically and appear objective, so workers tend to accept the rules without much room for negotiation. (Syam, 2025, hlm. 3426) Consumer ratings, performance scores, or rating systems become evaluation instruments that change workers' behavior. They are driven to adapt to digital

parameters in order to keep their jobs, even though this may sacrifice their physical or mental well-being.

This imbalance is often reinforced by corporate hierarchical structures, organizational cultures that emphasize compliance, and weak protection mechanisms that allow workers to voice their opinions without risk of retaliation. In such conditions, employers wield not only formal power, but also symbolic and psychological power. Symbolic power arises through the legitimacy of managerial positions, which are seen as determining the direction of the organization, while psychological power is evident when workers feel afraid, anxious, or reluctant to raise objections for fear of negative implications for their careers.

The Phenomenon of “Just Run Away First” as Social Resistance

The phenomenon of spontaneous resignations among young workers can be interpreted as a form of micro-resistance against a work system that is considered oppressive. Sudden resignations are not merely due to an inability to cope with hard work, but rather a personal strategy to escape inhumane working conditions, such as excessive working hours, irrational targets, toxic work culture, and a lack of mental health support. Resignation becomes a “silent protest” that shows workers refuse to participate further in a system that is psychologically exhausting.

From a labor law perspective, the phenomenon of spontaneous resignation shows that the system that is supposed to protect workers has not been able to guarantee mental well-being as an integral part of decent working conditions. Labor regulations in Indonesia are generally still focused on physical and administrative aspects, such as maximum working hours, minimum wages, leave entitlements, and occupational safety and health (OSH) standards that tend to be oriented towards physical risks. Meanwhile, mental health has not been positioned as an equally important element of protection, even though psychological pressure, emotional workload, and toxic work culture are just as dangerous as the risk of workplace accidents.

The weaknesses of this legal system do not stand alone; they are closely related to the power imbalance between workers and employers. In many cases, workers, especially young and contract workers, are in a weak bargaining position. Companies have greater control over performance appraisals, contract renewals, and organizational culture, so workers often feel they do not have a safe space to voice complaints about mental pressure. As a result, although there are normative mechanisms for complaints or labor supervision, in practice these mechanisms are difficult to use without risking job security.

When labor oversight is weak and complaint channels are ineffective, this power imbalance becomes even more acute. Young workers see that fighting for healthier working conditions may lead to stigmatization, negative assessments, or even termination. In such situations, spontaneous resignation becomes the only form of self-protection they can directly control. This is not merely an impulsive decision, but a response to a system that fails to provide the legal, institutional, and workplace culture that would allow workers to maintain their mental health without sacrificing their job security.

The imbalance of power reinforced by corporate hierarchical structures, organizational cultures that emphasize compliance, and weak worker protection mechanisms have direct implications for the fulfillment of human rights in the workplace. In such conditions, sudden resignations or the phenomenon of “just running away” emerge as a rational self-protection strategy for workers. When formal channels for voicing complaints or improving working conditions are considered ineffective or risky, workers see sudden resignation as the only way to protect their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. This phenomenon is not merely impulsive behavior, but a reaction to the systematic failure to fulfill workers' basic rights.

From a human rights perspective, sudden resignations signal that workers' rights to security, fair treatment, and participation in decision-making have been compromised, prompting workers

to take extreme measures to regain control over their lives. (Zulfah dkk., 2024, hlm. 125) Every worker has the right to dignity, security, and freedom to express their opinions without fear of retaliation. However, when employers wield formal power, symbolic power, and psychological power simultaneously, these rights are often neglected.

Symbolic power, which arises through managerial legitimacy, and psychological power, which is reflected in workers' fear or anxiety, make workers reluctant to exercise their rights effectively. As a result, the right to participate in decision-making, raise objections, or report injustices becomes limited. This contradicts the principle of human rights, which emphasizes that every individual has the right to a safe working environment and fair treatment.

In addition, this imbalance of power also affects workers' rights to decent physical and mental working conditions, which is part of the ILO's concept of decent work. When organizational culture and hierarchical structures prevent workers from voicing their objections, their rights to mental well-being, freedom from pressure or intimidation, and effective legal protection are threatened. Thus, unequal power relations are not only a social or psychological issue, but also an indicator of violations of workers' basic rights that should be guaranteed within the framework of human rights-based labor law

Conclusion

The resilience of Generation Z in the gig economy is determined not only by individual adaptive abilities, but also by the legal and social structures that frame labor relations. The phenomenon of “just run away” is a reflection of a systemic crisis: the legal uncertainty of digital workers, psychological pressure due to algorithmic power relations, and weak gender responsiveness in labor policies. There is a need for responsive and gender-sensitive digital labor law designs that recognize the rights of platform workers, balance power relations, and protect the emotional well-being of young workers

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