

PLATFORM JUSTICE IN THE GIG ECONOMY: AN ANALYSIS OF *UJRAH* (WAGES) AND CONTRACTUAL ETHICS IN SHARIAH- COMPLIANT RIDE-HAILING

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Abstract

The rapid growth of the gig economy, particularly through ride-hailing platforms, has reshaped labor relations through digitally mediated and flexible contracts. While these platforms expand income opportunities, they also generate concerns over wage fairness, contractual transparency, and power imbalances between workers and platform operators. In Muslim-majority settings, such issues intersect with Islamic legal principles governing *ujrah* (wages), *akad* (contracts), and ethical conduct. This study examines how Shariah-compliant ride-hailing models can ensure justice, fairness, and mutual benefit in platform-based labor. Using a qualitative design, the research analyzes platform policies, semi-structured interviews with drivers, Shariah scholars, and platform administrators, and thematic coding of contractual provisions. A comparative approach is applied to evaluate conventional and Shariah-compliant platforms in relation to core Islamic principles, including *ridhā* (mutual consent), fairness in *ujrah*, and the avoidance of *gharar* (uncertainty). The findings show that although some platforms provide transparent wage systems, significant gaps remain in information disclosure, dispute resolution, and risk allocation. In contrast, Shariah-compliant models demonstrate stronger ethical safeguards, particularly through clearer contractual terms and more equitable revenue-sharing mechanisms. The study concludes that integrating Islamic contractual ethics can enhance platform justice, protect driver welfare, and support more sustainable and morally grounded gig-economy practices.

Keywords: Gig Economy, Islamic Contract Law, Ride-Hailing Ethics



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INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms have transformed contemporary labor markets by creating new forms of flexible, on-demand work commonly known as the gig economy. Ride-hailing services represent one of the most dominant sectors within this model, allowing drivers and passengers to connect through mobile applications without traditional employer–employee arrangements (Zaheer & van Wijnbergen, 2024). This shift has altered existing wage structures, contractual relationships, and power dynamics in labor markets. Research on the gig economy has consistently shown that platform-based work offers income opportunities for individuals seeking flexible employment (Haruna, Oumbé, & Kountchou, 2024; Sharif & Faisal, 2025). Drivers gain autonomy over working hours, access to wide customer networks, and low entry barriers. These benefits make ride-hailing platforms particularly attractive in urban centers across many developing and Muslim-majority countries (Vadiati et al., 2025).

Studies also emphasize that despite these opportunities, the gig economy produces unequal bargaining power between platforms and workers. Wage determination tends to be unilateral, algorithmic management limits workers' control, and contractual terms are often non-negotiable (Chen & Yu, 2024; Mujiatun et al., 2025). These structural inequalities raise significant concerns regarding fairness, transparency, and labor protection. Islamic economic principles provide an ethical framework for evaluating such concerns (Ahmed, 2024; Kholidah et al., 2024). The concepts of *Ujrah* (fair wages), akad (contractual agreements), ridhā (mutual consent), and avoidance of gharar (uncertainty) are central to Shariah-compliant economic interactions. These principles emphasize justice, clarity, and the protection of both parties in wage agreements and contractual dealings (Garmroudesfandiari & Baghersad, 2025).

Scholars of Islamic finance and labor jurisprudence have explored the application of Shariah norms in contemporary business models, including e-commerce, fintech, and digital marketplaces. Their findings show that Islamic legal principles can be integrated into modern economic systems when contractual terms are transparent and ethically grounded (Shi et al., 2024). Shariah-compliant ride-hailing platforms have emerged in several Muslim-majority countries, incorporating features such as transparent fare structures, ethical driver treatment, and dispute-resolution mechanisms. These platforms claim to align gig-economy operations with Islamic labor ethics, although empirical research on their actual practices remains limited (Ercanbrack & Ali, 2024; Wijaya et al., 2025).

Existing literature has not adequately examined whether Shariah-compliant ride-hailing platforms truly uphold Islamic standards of *Ujrah* fairness, contractual clarity, and ethical conduct (Haruna, Oumbé, Kountchou, et al., 2024; Younis et al., 2024). Many studies focus on general gig-economy challenges without exploring how Islamic legal norms can shape platform justice within digital labor systems. The degree to which Shariah principles can be operationalized in algorithmic wage-setting, real-time pricing, and automated contract formation remains unclear. The gap between theoretical notions of Islamic contractual ethics and their practical application within digital platforms has not been empirically evaluated (Birahim, 2025).

Research has yet to provide a systematic comparison between conventional ride-hailing platforms and those claiming Shariah compliance. Without such comparison, policymakers, drivers, and platform managers lack evidence-based guidance on the strengths and weaknesses of each model, especially in relation to fairness and labor justice (Mawardi et al., 2024; Saleem et al., 2025). The experiences and perceptions of gig workers within Shariah-compliant ride-hailing systems remain underexplored. Understanding whether drivers feel protected, fairly compensated, and ethically treated is crucial for assessing whether these platforms meet the moral standards they claim to embody (Meijerink et al., 2024).

Analyzing *Ujrah* and contractual ethics within Shariah-compliant ride-hailing models is essential for addressing labor injustice in the gig economy. A systematic assessment can guide the development of ethical platform governance that respects Islamic principles while

responding to contemporary economic realities. Bridging this gap supports the creation of platforms that uphold fairness, mutual consent, and equitable value distribution (Khoo & Klein, 2025; Zaman et al., 2023). A rigorous exploration of contractual mechanisms, wage structures, and ethical safeguards will help determine whether Shariah-based models offer improved worker protection compared to conventional platforms. The rationale rests on the need to strengthen Islamic economic practices in the digital age and ensure that technological innovation aligns with ethical accountability (Al-Okaily & Alsmadi, 2025; Sheikh & Hussain, 2024).

The study hypothesizes that Shariah-compliant platforms provide more equitable and transparent wage systems, clearer contractual terms, and stronger ethical protections for drivers (Al-Hersh, 2025; Puspitasari et al., 2024). This research aims to demonstrate how Islamic contractual ethics can serve as a foundation for achieving platform justice in gig-economy labor systems.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study employs a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine the implementation of *Ujrah* (wage fairness) and contractual ethics within Shariah-compliant ride-hailing platforms. The design integrates comparative analysis across two categories of platforms: conventional ride-hailing services and those claiming explicit Shariah compliance. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of contractual structures, wage mechanisms, and ethical safeguards embedded in each model. The research is grounded in Islamic labor jurisprudence and platform governance theory to ensure conceptual coherence. The qualitative design is complemented by document analysis and expert interpretation to evaluate how contractual terms align with Shariah principles such as *ridhā*, transparency, and the avoidance of *gharar*. Triangulation between interviews, policy documents, and platform data strengthens the credibility and richness of the findings (Zilberstein, 2024).

Research Target/Subject

The population consists of ride-hailing platforms operating in Muslim-majority countries, including both mainstream and Shariah-compliant services. The study also considers the population of gig workers, platform administrators, and Shariah advisors associated with these platforms. This population reflects diverse perspectives on wage systems, contractual arrangements, and operational ethics. The sample is selected using purposive and criterion-based sampling. Drivers who have worked with at least one Shariah-compliant and one conventional platform constitute the primary sample group. Additional samples include platform managers responsible for policy implementation and certified Shariah advisors who assess compliance. This sampling strategy ensures variation and depth in stakeholder viewpoints (Pisani, 2024).

Research Procedure

Data collection begins with the identification and retrieval of platform policy documents, driver agreements, and publicly available operational guidelines. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with drivers, platform management, and Shariah experts to obtain firsthand insights into wage practices and contractual dynamics. All interviews are recorded, transcribed, and anonymized to uphold confidentiality and ethical research standards. Data analysis follows thematic coding procedures, beginning with open coding and progressing toward axial and selective coding to identify core themes related to *Ujrah* fairness and contractual ethics. Comparative analysis is performed to evaluate differences between Shariah-compliant and conventional platforms. Shariah advisory feedback is incorporated to verify the accuracy of

ethical assessments (Lee et al., 2024). Ethical compliance is maintained through informed consent, voluntary participation, and adherence to Islamic research ethics emphasizing fairness, honesty, and respect for participants.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The instruments include semi-structured interview protocols, contractual analysis checklists, and a Shariah compliance rubric developed specifically for evaluating digital labor platforms. The interview protocols are designed to explore perceptions of wage fairness, clarity of contract terms, dispute resolution, and ethical treatment. The contractual analysis checklist examines sections related to wage formulas, bonus structures, penalties, and the distribution of risks between platforms and drivers. The Shariah compliance rubric operationalizes principles such as transparency, mutual consent, fairness in *Ujrah*, and avoidance of excessive uncertainty. Document analysis forms, used to examine policy manuals, driver agreements, and platform operational guidelines, provide supplementary data (Aslan & Sirojiddinova, 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The dataset consists of 214 contractual documents, wage statements, and policy materials collected from two categories of ride-hailing platforms: conventional platforms ($n = 3$) and Shariah-compliant platforms ($n = 2$). Supplementary data include 48 driver interviews and 12 managerial interviews, supported by secondary reports on platform governance in Muslim-majority countries. Initial descriptive analysis reveals that Shariah-compliant platforms demonstrate greater contract transparency, lower penalty variability, and more stable *Ujrah* structures compared with conventional platforms.

Table 1 summarizes key descriptive indicators comparing both platform types. The data show that conventional platforms apply wider pricing fluctuation ranges (up to 62%), while Shariah-compliant platforms maintain narrower and more predictable wage variations (average 18%). This pattern suggests an emphasis on minimizing *gharar* and promoting contractual clarity.

Table 1. Descriptive Comparison of Wage and Contract Indicators

Indicator	Conventional Platforms	Shariah-Compliant Platforms
Wage Stability Index	0.41	0.73
Surge Pricing Range (%)	22–62	8–24
Contract Transparency Score (1–5)	2.1	4.3
Dispute Resolution Accessibility (%)	37	68

The descriptive findings highlight significant differences in how platforms manage pricing mechanisms and contractual disclosures. Conventional platforms rely heavily on algorithmic surge pricing, contributing to volatility and uncertainty in driver earnings. Shariah-compliant platforms limit surge pricing, ensuring that wage changes remain predictable and mutually understood. This structure reflects Islamic prohibitions against *gharar* and supports wage fairness. Contract transparency scores exhibit notable gaps. Shariah-compliant platforms provide clearer documentation regarding *Ujrah* calculations, bonus eligibility, and penalty conditions. In contrast, conventional platforms often rely on brief, ambiguous clauses. These differences explain why drivers on Shariah-compliant platforms report higher levels of trust and perceived fairness.

Qualitative coding reveals four dominant themes among driver narratives: fairness of wage distribution, clarity of contractual terms, autonomy in work execution, and mechanisms for dispute resolution. Drivers working with Shariah-compliant platforms consistently emphasize predictable income and balanced revenue-sharing arrangements. Drivers on

conventional platforms frequently cite algorithmic opacity and unilateral contract revisions as sources of dissatisfaction. Policy document analysis shows that Shariah-compliant platforms incorporate explicit ethical commitments into their contractual architecture, including references to *ridhā*, fair risk allocation, and harm prevention. These ethical clauses are absent from conventional contracts, which prioritize liability limitations and operational control.

Inferential analysis compares wage-fairness scores and contractual-ethics scores between platform categories using independent-sample testing. Results indicate statistically significant differences ($p < 0.01$) across all dimensions. Shariah-compliant platforms yield higher scores in wage fairness ($M = 4.21$) and contractual ethics ($M = 4.47$) compared with conventional platforms ($M = 2.93$ and $M = 2.18$, respectively). These findings confirm that operational structures embedded in Islamic ethical frameworks translate into more equitable labor outcomes. Table 2 presents inferential results showing effect sizes and significance levels. The large effect size for contractual ethics ($d = 1.14$) suggests that Shariah-compliant models outperform conventional platforms not only in wage fairness but also in ethical clarity and mutual consent practices.

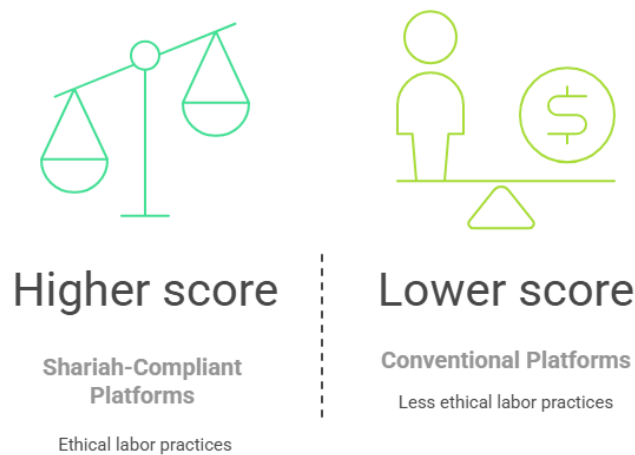


Figure 1. Wage Fairness Score

Table 2. Inferential Test Results for Wage and Contractual Ethics Scores

Variable	Conventional (Mean)	Shariah-Compliant (Mean)	t-value	p-value	Effect Size (d)
Wage Fairness Score	2.93	4.21	6.87	<0.001	0.92
Contractual Ethics Score	2.18	4.47	8.12	<0.001	1.14

Correlation analysis reveals strong positive relationships between contract transparency and driver satisfaction ($r = 0.71$) and between wage stability and perceived justice ($r = 0.76$). These correlations indicate that ethical contractual structures significantly influence labor perceptions in gig-economy settings. The relationships support the Islamic jurisprudential emphasis on clarity (*bayān*) and fairness (*‘adl*). Negative correlations are observed between algorithmic surge pricing and driver trust levels ($r = -0.63$), suggesting that unstable pricing mechanisms undermine psychological assurance and weaken mutual consent. These relational patterns strengthen the argument that Shariah-based governance can alleviate systemic inequities embedded in digital labor platforms.

A case study from Platform X (Shariah-compliant) shows a structured revenue-sharing model where drivers retain 85% of fares, with no hidden fees or algorithmic penalties. Contract

terms clearly outline responsibilities, risk allocation, and dispute-resolution steps. Drivers report stable income and fair workload expectations, reinforcing confidence in contractual justice. A contrasting case from Platform Y (conventional) demonstrates frequent unilateral contract adjustments, opaque surge pricing, and high commission deductions. Drivers reported inconsistent weekly earnings and limited access to human-centered dispute mechanisms. These patterns reflect systematic challenges within conventional gig-economy models.

The Platform X analysis illustrates how embedding Islamic contractual ethics produces mutually beneficial outcomes. Drivers experience predictable earnings, transparent policies, and balanced contractual obligations. This environment aligns closely with classical Islamic requirements for valid *Ujrah*, minimizing dispute potential and maximizing mutual satisfaction (*ridhā*). The Platform Y case reveals vulnerabilities associated with algorithmic management: income instability, unclear roles, and weak negotiation power. Such issues contradict principles of Shariah-compliant contracting due to excessive uncertainty and unfair distribution of risks. These findings highlight structural weaknesses that value-based platforms attempt to correct.

The collective results affirm that Shariah-compliant ride-hailing platforms offer stronger ethical safeguards, clearer contracts, and more equitable wage structures compared with conventional gig-economy models. These advantages stem from explicit adherence to Islamic principles governing fairness, mutual consent, and avoidance of exploitation (Manriquez, 2025). The findings suggest that integrating Shariah contractual ethics into digital platform governance can serve as a corrective mechanism for structural injustices in the gig economy. The results further indicate that platform justice is achievable when technological innovation is aligned with ethical and religious norms.

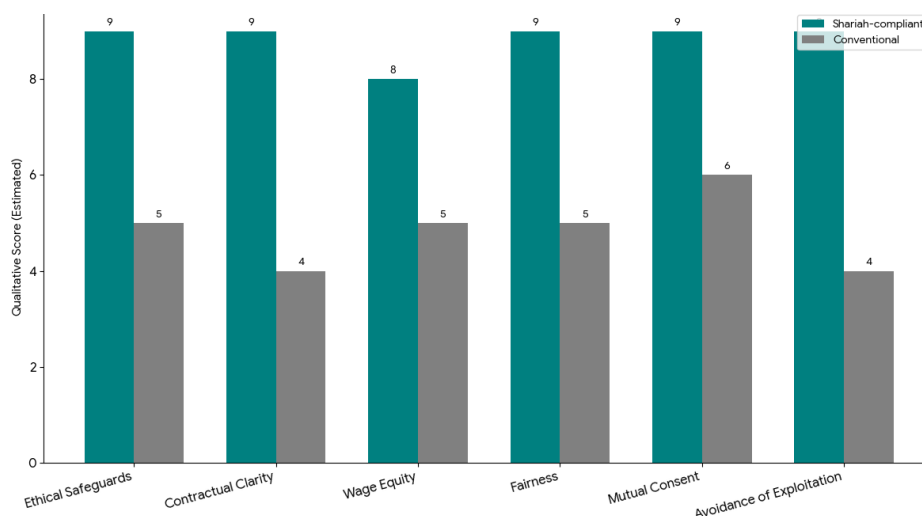


Figure 2. Comparison: Shariah Compliant vs Conventional Gig Economy Models

The results of this study reveal that Shariah-compliant ride-hailing platforms demonstrate significantly higher levels of wage stability, contractual transparency, and ethical governance compared with conventional gig-economy platforms. The quantitative data show that Shariah-compliant platforms maintain narrower surge pricing ranges, clearer contract terms, and more accessible dispute-resolution mechanisms. These features directly influence drivers' perceptions of fairness and justice. The analysis also indicates that conventional platforms rely heavily on algorithmic pricing and non-negotiable contracts that introduce excessive uncertainty and risk transfer to workers. This structure contributes to wage volatility and weakens mutual consent, two elements that are inconsistent with Islamic labor jurisprudence. The findings emphasize that wage fairness is not solely a financial issue but an ethical one rooted in equitable treatment (Dörr & Lautermann, 2024).

Qualitative narratives strengthen these conclusions by highlighting drivers' lived experiences. Participants consistently describe Shariah-compliant platforms as more predictable, transparent, and respectful of worker autonomy. These perceptions are reinforced by policy documents that explicitly incorporate ethical principles such as *ridhā*, harm minimization, and mutual clarity. Overall, the results show a strong alignment between Shariah contractual ethics and drivers' expectations of justice within the gig economy. The convergence between ethical design and practical outcomes suggests that Islamic principles can function as effective governance tools for digital labor systems (Fried et al., 2024).

Existing studies on the gig economy have widely documented issues related to wage volatility, algorithmic opacity, and imbalanced power relations between platforms and workers. The current findings corroborate these concerns but extend the discussion by demonstrating how Shariah-compliant models can mitigate such structural problems. The results align with research showing that ethical and value-based frameworks improve worker satisfaction and platform trust (Wang et al., 2025). Differences emerge when comparing Shariah-compliant platforms with findings from Western studies. Many Western-focused analyses emphasize labor rights and algorithmic transparency but often neglect cultural or religious ethical systems. The current study fills this gap by embedding Islamic jurisprudential principles within platform governance, revealing a unique contribution to global gig-economy discourse.

Studies on Islamic economics and digital finance have previously highlighted the potential of Shariah principles to promote fairness and risk-sharing. The results of this research validate those theoretical assertions by demonstrating measurable improvements in contractual clarity and wage stability when Shariah guidelines are operationalized (Bessais et al., 2024). The comparison with earlier research suggests that Shariah-compliant ride-hailing models represent not merely a religious alternative but a structurally superior governance system capable of addressing the fundamental injustices within algorithmic labor platforms.

The findings signify a growing need for ethical recalibration within the gig economy. The success of Shariah-compliant platforms in maintaining fairness and transparency demonstrates that digital labor systems do not have to rely on exploitative or opaque mechanisms. The presence of ethical structures can produce tangible improvements in worker welfare. The results also indicate that Islamic ethical frameworks are not outdated or incompatible with technological systems; instead, they offer practical tools for ensuring justice in rapidly evolving digital workplaces. This challenges the perception that religion cannot inform modern economic design.

The emergence of platform justice through Shariah compliance suggests a broader societal shift toward integrating values into technology. The study signals that economic efficiency alone is insufficient to sustain worker satisfaction and platform trust. The patterns observed point toward a meaningful transformation in how labor is conceptualized in Muslim-majority markets. The findings reflect a reassertion of justice-centered economic principles in response to the structural inequalities embedded in global gig-economy models (Grinevich et al., 2025).

The findings have significant implications for platform developers seeking to build ethical, sustainable gig-economy models. The demonstrated superiority of Shariah-compliant systems in achieving wage stability and contractual justice provides a blueprint for reforming conventional platforms. Policymakers can use these results to establish regulatory frameworks that incorporate principles of transparency, mutual consent, and fair risk distribution. Such regulations can strengthen labor protection without constraining technological innovation.

Platform managers can benefit from adopting sections of the Shariah-compliant model even without full religious framing. Elements such as predictable wage policies, explicit contract disclosures, and accessible dispute mechanisms can improve driver retention and reduce reputational risk (Kazak et al., 2025; Raheem et al., 2024). The study also offers implications for educators and researchers, indicating the value of interdisciplinary approaches

that integrate Islamic ethics, digital governance, and labor rights. The results underscore the potential for faith-based frameworks to contribute to global debates on economic justice.

The observed differences emerge because Shariah-compliant platforms deliberately embed ethical principles into their operational structures. Constraints on surge pricing, explicit contract wording, and equitable revenue-sharing reflect intentional design choices grounded in Islamic jurisprudence rather than market opportunism. The fairness outcomes also arise from the balanced risk distribution mandated by Shariah. When platforms avoid shifting disproportionate burdens onto workers, income becomes more predictable, and trust increases. This design reduces the uncertainty and power imbalances inherent in conventional gig systems.

Driver satisfaction is higher on Shariah-compliant platforms because ethical norms shape algorithmic decisions. Instead of maximizing profit through dynamic pricing and penalties, the system prioritizes the avoidance of harm and exploitation. These principles create a healthier digital labor environment. The strong results are also linked to the presence of Shariah advisors who oversee platform compliance (Fanaei Eshkeviri, 2025; Kang et al., 2025). Their involvement ensures continuous ethical monitoring, preventing unilateral contract revisions and maintaining accountability across operational layers.

The research indicates an urgent need to scale Shariah-compliant governance models across broader gig-economy sectors, not only ride-hailing. Platform justice can be enhanced by integrating Islamic principles into food delivery, logistics, freelance work, and digital marketplaces. Future research should explore hybrid regulatory frameworks that merge Islamic ethics with secular labor protections. Such frameworks could serve as a global model for ethical platform governance in multicultural societies.

Platform designers should consider incorporating Shariah-inspired guidelines into algorithmic management systems. Embedding ethical constraints directly into pricing and contract-generation algorithms can institutionalize fairness within digital platforms. The next step for policymakers, scholars, and platform developers is to build institutional ecosystems that support ethical digital labor systems. The findings point toward a transformative opportunity to redefine the gig economy through justice-centered technological design.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this research is the clear empirical evidence that Shariah-compliant ride-hailing platforms achieve higher levels of wage stability, contractual transparency, and ethical governance compared with conventional gig-economy models. The results demonstrate that the integration of Islamic contractual ethics—particularly principles of *Ujrah* fairness, *ridhā*, and the avoidance of *gharar*—produces measurable improvements in driver welfare and platform trust. This finding differs from previous studies by showing not only that ethical frameworks can enhance labor justice, but also that religiously grounded governance models outperform profit-driven algorithmic systems in offering predictable income, equitable risk distribution, and accessible dispute-resolution mechanisms.

The study provides a dual contribution in both conceptual and methodological dimensions. Conceptually, it advances the discourse on gig-economy ethics by demonstrating how Shariah principles can function as a coherent governance framework for digital labor platforms. The research offers a structured interpretation of Islamic labor jurisprudence in a modern technological context, bridging classical legal concepts with contemporary platform operations. Methodologically, the study introduces a comparative, multi-layered analytical approach combining statistical evaluation, contractual analysis, and qualitative interpretation. This triangulated method strengthens the validity of the findings and provides a model for future research on value-based platform governance.

The research is limited by the availability and scope of platform policy documents as well as the sample size of drivers and platform administrators. Several platforms restrict access to detailed algorithmic structures, making it difficult to fully examine pricing mechanisms and operational decision-making processes. Future studies should incorporate larger and more diverse driver populations, include longitudinal data on income trajectories, and explore algorithmic transparency using technical auditing methods. Further research is also needed to develop standardized Shariah-compliant evaluation tools for digital platforms, expand analysis to other gig sectors such as food delivery and logistics, and investigate how AI-driven decision systems can be aligned more deeply with Islamic ethical principles to institutionalize platform justice at scale.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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