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# The Digital Social Capital and GIG Economy Participation on The Level of Online Consumption of Students in Surabaya

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## Abstract

The digital revolution has ushered in profound changes across social and economic landscapes worldwide, with especially significant impacts in the rapidly urbanizing contexts of the Global South. In these regions, digital platforms have become central to reshaping not only economic activities but also the fabric of social relationships and consumption patterns. In cities such as Surabaya, Indonesia, these changes are particularly salient among university students, a demographic that navigates the intersections of education, labor precarity, and digital connectivity. The study examines the interplay between digital social capital and gig economy participation to understand their combined influence on online consumption behaviors among students in Surabaya. Quantitative methods were used in this study, with 70 respondents, measured using a 5-point Likert scale through a questionnaire instrument that had been tested for validity and reliability. The results of this study indicate that both digital social capital and gig economy participation are important factors that influence online consumption behavior of students in Surabaya, both partially and simultaneously. It shows how digital transformation is not only changing consumption patterns, but also how social capital is built and utilized and how new forms of work are emerging in developing countries.

**Keywords** : digital social capital; GIG Economy; online consumption

## INTRODUCTION

The influence of globalization and the development of digital technology have significantly reshaped various aspects of human life, including consumption patterns. In today's digital era, people's consumption behavior has become increasingly diverse due to the widespread availability of online shopping platforms. These platforms allow users to purchase goods and services without physical interaction, resulting in a profound shift from traditional to digital consumption. This transformation has reached all layers of society, regardless of age, occupation, or socioeconomic background.

In the context of Indonesia, this shift is particularly visible in urban centers like Surabaya, one of the largest metropolitan cities in the country. The digital transformation experienced by Surabaya is part of a broader global trend in which technology is not only changing how people work and communicate but also how they consume. One of the most prominent examples of this change is the surge in online consumption among college students.

As digital natives, college students are especially responsive to technological advancements. They have embraced digital platforms as integral tools in their daily lives, including for making purchasing decisions. This generation's ability to navigate the digital space efficiently gives them easy access to a wide range of products, online reviews, and peer recommendations. This exposure significantly shapes their consumption behavior.

Central to this shift is the concept of digital social capital. This form of capital consists of networks and relationships built and maintained through digital platforms. It plays a key role in influencing how individuals interact in online environments, including in the domain of consumption. For college students, active participation in social media and other digital platforms not only provides entertainment and communication avenues but also gives them access to trusted information sources, promotional content, and product feedback from their peers. As noted by Ellison et al. (2007), such digital interactions can heavily influence consumer behavior, especially when decisions are shaped by community validation and social trust.

In addition, participation in the gig economy is also an important factor in increasing the level of online consumption of students. The gig economy, which is characterized by part-time and flexible work through digital platforms, provides students with the opportunity to earn additional income. This income can then be used to meet their consumption needs, including

online shopping. (Sundararajan, 2016). This phenomenon is increasingly visible with the number of students involved in the gig economy as online motorcycle taxi drivers, digital freelancers, or online micro-entrepreneurs in the city of Surabaya. This involvement not only provides additional income, but also increases their digital literacy and confidence in online transactions.

Developing countries such as Indonesia are experiencing a distinctive set of socio-economic dynamics amid rapid technological advancement. The proliferation of digital technology plays a dual role—on one hand, it drives social and economic transformation; on the other, it accentuates inequalities in terms of access and opportunity. While some segments of society can take advantage of digital tools to enhance their socio-economic mobility, others may remain marginalized due to limited digital literacy, poor infrastructure, or social exclusion. This dichotomy reflects broader challenges that developing nations face as they integrate into a global digital economy.

In this context, the concept of digital social capital has emerged as a pivotal lens through which to understand how individuals—particularly youth—navigate this transformation. Digital social capital is not merely a network of social relationships that exists in cyberspace; it also constitutes a valuable set of social resources. These resources are essential for empowering individuals and enhancing their capacity to participate meaningfully in a society increasingly shaped by digital technologies. The rise of digital platforms has expanded the scope of what is traditionally understood as social capital. In the digital age, social capital is no longer constrained by geographical proximity or face-to-face interaction. Rather, it encompasses virtual interactions that occur via social media, online forums, professional networking sites, and other digital environments.

As noted by Lin (2008), digital social capital comprises online networks built upon trust, mutual norms, and shared values. These online networks become a foundation for cooperation, knowledge sharing, and access to new opportunities. Ellison et al. (2007) further define digital social capital as the collection of social ties maintained through digital platforms and information technology applications. These ties are often more flexible and far-reaching than those found in traditional social settings.

For college students, digital social capital can be a powerful enabler. It does not merely facilitate communication; it becomes an essential resource for expanding access to educational content, economic resources, and professional development. This is particularly significant in

the realm of the gig economy. The gig economy offers flexible, on-demand work that often requires proficiency in digital tools and access to online platforms. Students who are actively engaged in digital communities can leverage their networks to find freelance gigs, part-time jobs, and entrepreneurial ventures. These engagements can, in turn, enhance their digital literacy and confidence in using online tools for income generation.

According to Schor (2020), digital social capital improves individuals' access to job opportunities in the gig economy. Through sustained involvement in online interactions and digital communities, students not only develop critical skills but also gain visibility in marketplaces that value connectivity and adaptability. Trust in digital platforms, participation in virtual networks, and digital reputation become important currencies in today's labor environment. Hence, digital social capital serves not just as a communication tool, but as a strategic asset that fosters inclusion, economic mobility, and skill acquisition—especially for youth navigating the complexities of a digitally evolving society.

In addition, digital social capital can also influence students' consumption patterns. With increasing access to various digital products and services, students can more easily consume goods and services according to their needs. This consumption pattern is influenced by the convenience offered by digital platforms, which allow students to purchase or access products in a more efficient and more budget-friendly way (Hwang & Kim, 2020).

Surabaya City, as one of Indonesia's major metropolitan areas, is experiencing a notable transformation in its digital landscape. With high levels of internet access and smartphone penetration, the visibility of college students participating in the gig economy is increasingly prominent. A growing number of students are engaging with digital platforms such as Grab, Gojek, Fiverr, and Shopee to earn supplemental income while pursuing their studies. These platforms provide flexible opportunities that align with students' schedules and technological fluency, allowing them to participate actively in the digital labor market.

Alongside this shift in income generation, student consumption patterns have also changed significantly. The widespread use of e-commerce platforms and financial technology (fintech) services reflects a deeper integration of digital tools into daily life. Platforms like Tokopedia, ShopeePay, and OVO have become central to students' financial transactions, enabling them to shop, transfer money, and manage budgets with convenience and efficiency. As reported by Statista (2023), this trend signals that digital transformation is influencing not

only how students earn money but also how they spend it—fostering a new culture of online consumption.

Despite these developments, disparities remain in how digital social capital is accessed and utilized among students. While some are adept at leveraging digital networks for economic opportunities, others may face limitations due to lower levels of digital literacy, skepticism toward technology, or a lack of engagement in online communities. This digital divide highlights the importance of understanding how digital social capital—defined as the web of social relationships and trust established through digital interactions—shapes access to both gig economy participation and consumption behaviors.

Moreover, much of the existing literature on digital social capital and the gig economy has centered on working adults, often overlooking college students as a distinct demographic. Yet, students exhibit particular behaviors, needs, and challenges that differ from those of full-time workers. Their participation in the gig economy is often driven by a mix of necessity, aspiration, and experimentation, making it vital to explore how their digital engagement influences their consumption patterns.

Further research is essential to investigate these dynamics more comprehensively. By doing so, scholars and policymakers can better design interventions that support equitable access to digital opportunities and ensure that students from diverse backgrounds benefit from the growing digital economy.

This study uses Robert D. Putnam's social capital theory to answer the research hypothesis. By understanding the influence of digital social capital and gig economy participation on online consumption levels, this study is expected to provide new insights into the development of digital economy policies and entrepreneurship education in academic environments, especially in Surabaya City, Indonesia as part of an urban society in a developing country. In addition, this study can also provide valuable insights for digital platform managers, the government, and related parties in formulating policies and programs that support the development of inclusive and sustainable online consumption and gig economy.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, aiming to uncover and explain the causal relationship between digital social capital,

participation in the gig economy, and the level of online consumption among students in Surabaya City. The explanatory method is particularly suited for studies that seek to analyze the direction and strength of influence among variables that are already theoretically established. In this case, the research is grounded in prior conceptualizations of digital social capital and economic behavior within digital environments.

The target population for this research consists of active college students in Surabaya who have experience with online consumption and are involved in the gig economy, either as part-time workers or as freelance service providers through digital platforms. These individuals represent a specific segment of the urban youth population who are simultaneously engaged in both the consumption and production aspects of the digital economy. To ensure relevance and accuracy in the data collected, a purposive sampling technique was applied. Seventy respondents were selected based on specific inclusion criteria—namely, students who have participated in gig-based work and who regularly conduct financial transactions via online platforms.

Three main variables were operationalized for this research. Digital social capital and gig economy participation were treated as independent variables, while the dependent variable was the level of online consumption. These variables were measured using a structured questionnaire distributed in digital format. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” enabling a nuanced understanding of respondent behavior and perceptions. The questionnaire instrument underwent prior validity and reliability testing to ensure that it measured the constructs consistently and accurately.

For primary data collection, online questionnaires were distributed using various social media channels, messaging apps, and student group forums. This method ensured efficient and wide-reaching data collection during the data gathering period. Secondary data were sourced from relevant digital economy reports, governmental statistics, and previous academic studies that contextualized the research variables and supported the interpretation of the findings.

To analyze the data, the study applied multiple linear regression analysis. This statistical technique was chosen due to its ability to estimate the magnitude and direction of the influence of multiple independent variables on a single dependent variable. The analysis helped to determine whether digital social capital and gig economy participation had a significant effect on students' levels of online consumption. It also tested the goodness of fit of the overall model and identified which factors had the most explanatory power.

Table 1. Operational Definition

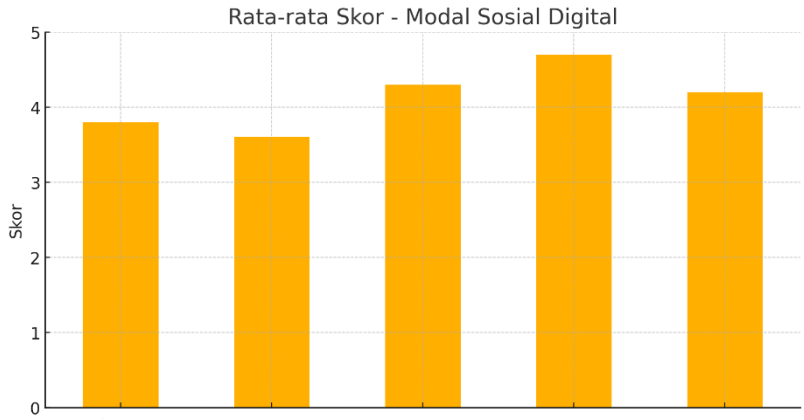
| Variable | Definition | Indicator | Measurement Scale |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Digital Social Capital (X1)** | The ability of individuals to utilize digital-based social networks to obtain information, support, or economic opportunities. | 1. Intensity of interaction in online communities<br>2. Trust in information obtained digitally<br>3. Participation in digital discussions or forums<br>4. Access to resources or economic opportunities through digital networks | Ordinal Scale on Likert (1-5) |
| **GIG Economy Participation (X2)** | The level of student involvement in flexible or short-term digital platform-based work. | 1. Type of gig economy work followed<br>2. Frequency of working in the gig economy<br>3. Income from gig economy work<br>4. Motivation to join the gig economy | Ordinal Scale on Likert (1-5) |
| **Level of Online Consumption (Y)** | How often and how much do students make consumption transactions via digital or e-commerce platforms. | 1. Frequency of online shopping in the last month<br>2. Types of products/services purchased online<br>3. Total spending on online shopping<br>4. Factors influencing online shopping decisions | Ordinal Scale on Likert (1-5) |

In conclusion, this methodological approach offers a structured and data-driven way to examine how the digital social environment and flexible work models shape consumption behaviour in a digitally integrated urban setting. The findings generated through this design are expected to provide empirical insights that can inform educational institutions, policymakers, and digital platform developers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Digital Social Capital and Involvement among Student in the GIG Economy

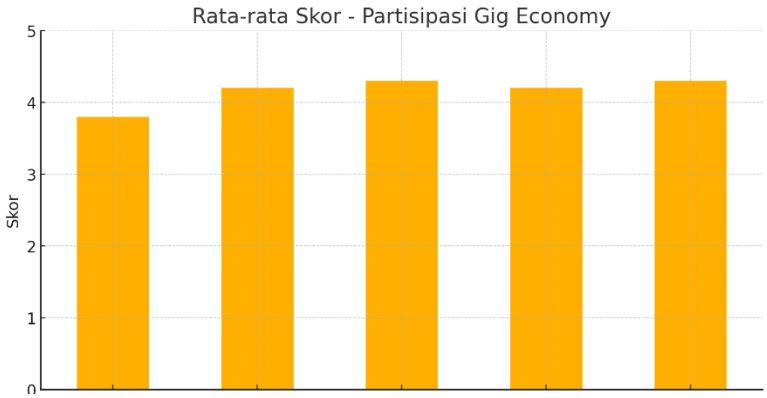
From the graphic image below, it can be seen that the average score of 70 respondents on each statement submitted on the digital social capital variable in the questionnaire has the average lowest score of 3.6, and the average highest score of 4.7. The digital social capital variable shows how strong the respondents' digital relationships and interactions are.




Picture 1. Average Score of Digital Social Capital

Based on questionnaire responses collected from 70 active college students in Surabaya City, the descriptive statistical analysis reveals that the level of digital social capital among respondents is relatively high. One of the most prominent indicators, namely “believe that interactions on digital platforms improve skills,” achieved the highest average score of 4.46 on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. This score reflects a strong sense of trust and comfort among students when engaging in digital interactions, suggesting that these online experiences are perceived as beneficial for their personal and professional development.

Other indicators used to measure digital social capital also showed encouraging results, with average scores ranging from 3.61 to 4.09. These figures indicate that students are not only using digital platforms passively but are also actively involved in building social networks, maintaining digital relationships, and participating in various online communities. Such engagement reinforces the importance of digital platforms as a space for establishing connections, exchanging knowledge, and accessing opportunities.




Picture 2. Average Score of GIG Economy Participation

Based on the graphic image below, it can be seen that in this study, there are 5 statements used in the questionnaire for 70 respondents. on a Likert scale of 1 - 5, the lowest average score obtained on this variable is 3.8, while the highest average score of this variable is 4.3. This gig economy variable describes students' experiences and perceptions of gig work.

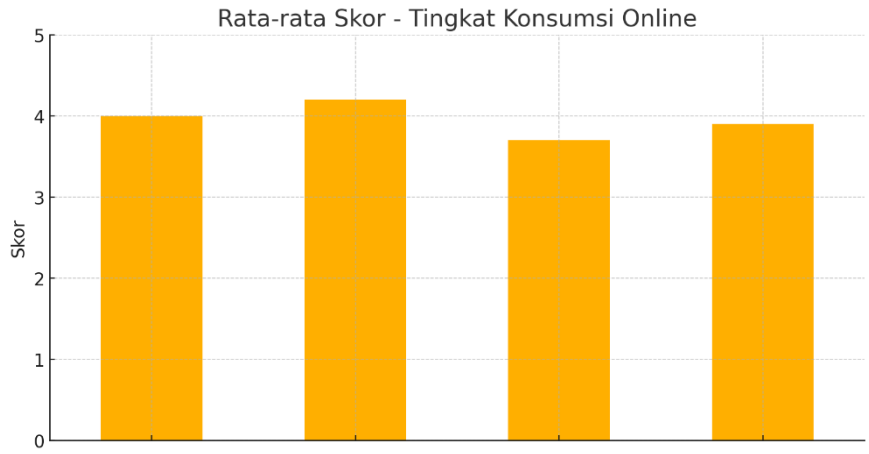
Student participation in jobs that fall under the category of the gig economy is likewise significant. The average scores for the primary indicators measuring this participation ranged from 3.80 to 4.17. A majority of the respondents reported that they had taken part in freelance or part-time work through digital platforms—such as online motorcycle taxi drivers, content creators, or freelance designers. These roles offer students the flexibility to work around their academic commitments while earning additional income.

Indicators related to time flexibility and financial benefit within the gig economy both received average scores above 4.0, indicating that students value these aspects highly. The ability to manage one's own schedule and gain financial autonomy through gig work resonates with the lifestyle and aspirations of today's youth.

These findings are consistent with those presented by Schawbel (2014), who highlighted the core traits of Generation Z—those who have grown up in a digital environment. According to Schawbel, this generation places a premium on flexibility, quick results, and a healthy work-life balance. The data gathered in this study support these characteristics, suggesting that both digital social capital and gig economy involvement play essential roles in shaping students' behaviour and attitudes in the current era of digital transformation.

**Online Consumption Behaviour of Students**

The online consumption level variable shows the online consumption habits of students, including shopping and digital payments. The level of online consumption among college students in Surabaya also demonstrates a relatively high pattern. Based on the data collected in Picture 3, the average lowest score obtained from the online consumption level variable is 3.7 and the average highest score obtained from a total of 70 respondents is 4.2 in Likert scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that students are actively engaged in online shopping and have integrated digital platforms into their daily consumption practices. Most respondents indicated that they prefer shopping online rather than offline, citing convenience, accessibility, and speed as primary motivators. They regularly utilize popular e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Lazada, and increasingly favour digital payment systems over cash transactions.




Picture 3. Average Score of The Level of Online Consumption

Another notable trend is the widespread use of promotional features such as discounts, vouchers, and cashback programs. These tools are commonly employed by students to maximize their purchasing power. The ability to compare prices, evaluate product reviews, and select the most cost-effective options further reflects a high degree of digital literacy among this group. Their capacity to navigate and optimize the digital marketplace signifies a broader familiarity with the online ecosystem.

These findings are aligned with the research conducted by Populix (2023), which emphasizes the strong relationship between digital literacy and consumer behaviour in the online domain. According to their report, individuals with higher digital competence are more adept at leveraging online tools, interpreting promotional offers, and making informed purchasing decisions. In this regard, students in Surabaya appear to be capitalizing on their digital fluency to access goods and services efficiently and economically.

**Theoretical Interpretation and Digital Trust**

Furthermore, the broader structural context of this consumption pattern can be understood through the lens of what Sundararajan (2016) describes as "crowd-based capitalism." In this new economic paradigm, traditional forms of employment are being replaced by digitally mediated, decentralized business models that emphasize flexibility and peer-to-peer interactions. Social capital, particularly in its digital form, emerges as a crucial enabler of this system. Trust among users—whether buyers, sellers, or service providers—becomes a foundational requirement for successful transactions.

Within the gig economy, digital trust not only supports service reliability but also reinforces consumer confidence. As students participate more deeply in this system, both as workers and consumers, their ability to build and maintain trust-based digital relationships enhances the overall functionality of the online economic environment. This underscores the interconnectedness between online consumption, digital literacy, and the evolving nature of work in the digital age.

**Correlational Analysis of Key Variables**

The correlation results of this study indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between the primary research variables. Digital social capital demonstrates a strong correlation with participation in the gig economy ($r = 0.642$). This suggests that students who actively build and maintain digital social networks are more likely to engage in flexible, digital platform-based employment. Such involvement is often facilitated through peer recommendations, community-based interactions, and trusted digital networks, indicating that social connectivity is a key asset in navigating gig-based work environments.

In addition, digital social capital also exhibits a moderate correlation with the level of online consumption ($r = 0.522$). This implies that students' engagement in digital interactions—such as following influencers, joining online communities, or participating in digital discussions—directly contributes to their consumption behaviour. The information and trust circulated within these networks can influence purchasing decisions, encourage experimentation with new platforms, and build confidence in digital transactions.

Participation in the gig economy is also positively correlated with online consumption behaviour, albeit to a lesser degree ($r = 0.314$). This finding highlights that students who earn income through the gig economy—such as being digital freelancers, online drivers, or social

media sellers—also tend to increase their online purchasing power. Though the correlation is not as strong as that of digital social capital, it still signifies that gig economy involvement contributes to shaping students' financial habits and digital lifestyles.

**Contextual Implications in Developing Countries**

In the context of a developing country like Indonesia, these results underline a broader socio-economic dynamic in which digital technology is increasingly intertwined with everyday economic activity. The data reflect that students in Surabaya are not only adapting to but actively participating in the digital economy, thereby contributing to a larger shift in informal economic patterns. As digital technologies become more accessible, they reshape labour practices and consumption behaviour, particularly among youth populations.

However, this transformation also presents challenges. According to the World Bank (2022), issues such as uneven access to technology, disparities in digital literacy, and limited regulatory frameworks continue to shape how the digital economy functions in developing countries. Despite these challenges, the evidence from this study supports the notion that the younger generation in Indonesia is utilizing digital social capital and gig economy opportunities to navigate and participate in an increasingly digitalized economic landscape.

**Regression Results and Hypothesis Testing**

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis, conducted to examine the influence of digital social capital and gig economy participation on students' levels of online consumption, yielded an $R^2$ value of 0.273 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. This indicates that approximately 27.3% of the variation in the dependent variable—students' online consumption behaviour—can be explained by the two independent variables. Although this $R^2$ does not represent a high proportion of explained variance, it is statistically significant and provides valuable insight into the predictors of digital consumption behaviour among students in an urban developing context.

The regression coefficient for digital social capital is $\beta = 0.441$, with a p-value of less than 0.001. This coefficient demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship, implying that the more digital social capital a student possesses—reflected in digital trust, social engagement on platforms, and interactive networks—the higher their tendency to engage in online consumption activities. In simple terms, students who are digitally connected and active in online social environments are more likely to shop online, use e-wallets, and

participate in digital market ecosystems. This confirms the first hypothesis (H1), which posited that digital social capital has a significant positive effect on students' online consumption levels.

In addition, gig economy participation also shows a significant positive effect on online consumption, albeit with a smaller influence compared to digital social capital. The regression coefficient is $\beta = 0.178$ with a p-value of 0.049, which is just below the standard threshold for statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that students who engage in gig-based work—such as digital freelancing, delivery services, or online selling—tend to spend more through online platforms. The second hypothesis (H2), which stated that gig economy participation significantly affects online consumption, is thus supported by the data.

To assess the combined influence of both independent variables, an F-test was conducted on the multiple regression model. The results produced an F value of 12.61 with a p-value < 0.001, indicating that the model is statistically significant as a whole. This confirms that both digital social capital and gig economy participation together have a meaningful and joint effect on the level of online consumption among students. Accordingly, the third hypothesis (H3), which posited that digital social capital and gig economy participation simultaneously influence online consumption levels, is also accepted.

In summary, the regression analysis supports all proposed hypotheses and highlights the interconnected roles of digital engagement and income-generating activities in shaping contemporary student consumption behaviour in Surabaya City. These findings underline the socio-economic transformations occurring within youth populations in urban Indonesia, driven by the intersection of digital culture and new forms of work.

This finding demonstrates that both digital social capital and participation in the gig economy are significant factors influencing the online consumption behaviour of students in Surabaya, both individually and collectively. The study confirms the strategic importance of digital social capital in shaping consumption patterns among college students. Through their engagement in digital communities and social networks, students gain easier access to information, job opportunities, and peer influence, all of which contribute to more active and informed online consumption behaviour.

Digital interactions not only facilitate communication but also serve as a form of social resource that enhances trust and shapes consumer decisions. The evidence supports the

theoretical framework proposed by Ellison et al. (2007) and Putnam (2000), both of whom emphasize the role of social capital—especially in its digital form—as a vital asset in the functioning of the digital economy. Digital social capital becomes a crucial enabler for students to navigate online environments, participate in economic activities, and make consumption choices that reflect both social connectivity and digital literacy. Thus, the integration of social and economic dimensions in digital spaces reinforces how the digital economy is transforming student behaviour in urban Indonesia.

In addition, gig economy participation has a positive impact on students' online consumption. The flexibility of time and additional income from gig economy work allows students to more freely allocate funds and time for online shopping activities. This finding is consistent with the research of Sundararajan (2016) and Berg (2016) which highlighted the contribution of the gig economy in changing the consumption patterns and economic behavior of the younger generation.

Students' preference for digital payments and the use of online promotions also indicates that digital transformation has changed the consumption paradigm to be more efficient and practical. Thus, the development of digital marketing strategies that adapt to the characteristics of digital social capital and the gig economy can increase the effectiveness of market penetration in the student segment.

In the context of developing countries, particularly Indonesia, the results of this study illustrate how the digital economy and the gig economy act as key catalysts in promoting economic inclusion and youth empowerment. The rapid penetration of internet infrastructure and the increasing affordability of digital devices have created new spaces for economic participation that are especially attractive to younger generations. Students—who mostly belong to the millennial and Generation Z cohorts—are among the most adaptive segments of the population in responding to these changes. They show a remarkable ability to navigate flexible work arrangements and consumption practices that are mediated by digital platforms.

The digital economy has enabled students to move beyond conventional employment pathways, embracing alternatives that offer greater control over time, income, and personal branding. Participation in the gig economy—such as working as a freelance designer, online motorcycle taxi driver, social media influencer, or content creator—has opened new channels for financial independence. These jobs are often accessed through platforms like Grab, Gojek, Shopee, Fiverr, and TikTok, which facilitate informal but income-generating engagements. For

many students, this flexibility is essential in balancing academic responsibilities with the need to support themselves financially.

However, these benefits do not reach all members of society equally. Digital inequalities persist across urban and rural divides, gender lines, and socioeconomic statuses. Not all students or young people have the same level of access to reliable internet, digital devices, or digital skills. Consequently, the advantages of participating in the digital economy and gig economy can exacerbate existing inequalities if left unregulated. As the Asian Development Bank (2021) has emphasized, policy interventions are urgently needed to bridge digital divides and ensure that gig economy workers are afforded labour protections, minimum wage standards, and access to health or social security benefits.

In light of these findings, digital literacy programs must be prioritized, especially in educational institutions. Increasing digital literacy will empower more students to navigate digital platforms safely, understand their rights as workers, and protect themselves from exploitative practices. Additionally, educational institutions must also help students critically engage with the risks and responsibilities associated with platform-based work, while supporting them in building skills that enhance their employability in digital environments.

The role of digital social capital is central in this transformation. According to Putnam (2000), social capital consists of the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. In the digital context, bridging social capital—connections that link people across diverse social cleavages—becomes increasingly important. Students today cultivate such capital through online communities, digital study groups, and social media networks that allow them to access job information, share experiences, and obtain peer support.

These digital networks enable students not only to secure gig work but also to adopt certain consumption habits shaped by their online interactions. For instance, it is common for students to purchase products based on reviews or recommendations shared within WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, Instagram reels, or TikTok content. Trust generated through peer discussions and digital social bonding becomes a critical factor in the consumption decision-making process. These networks function as informal but powerful systems of economic exchange and recommendation, influencing both product choices and consumption frequency.

Moreover, digital social capital increases students' exposure to e-commerce platforms, not only as consumers but sometimes as sellers or brand affiliates. The ease of digital interaction lowers the barriers to market entry, and peer influence—manifested through likes, shares, and digital endorsements—creates a cycle of trust and validation. This encourages further online spending behaviour among students who feel embedded in a community of shared consumption practices.

In this sense, digital social capital has a dual effect: it facilitates gig economy participation by connecting individuals to economic opportunities, and it simultaneously influences online consumption by reinforcing behavioural norms within digital communities. This dynamic reflects the increasingly integrated nature of work and consumption in digital life, especially for young people who are deeply embedded in online ecosystems.

Furthermore, the use of digital platforms for work and consumption also changes the way students perceive value and success. In many cases, digital labour and consumption are linked to identity formation. For example, being an active content creator or successful online seller is not only a means of income but also a symbol of entrepreneurial success and digital savvy. Similarly, buying popular products or accessing exclusive deals online can be a form of social capital within peer groups. Thus, digital engagement in both economic and social spheres becomes a marker of status, creativity, and modernity.

Nevertheless, the growing reliance on digital platforms must be accompanied by critical awareness and structural safeguards. As much as digital technologies offer empowerment, they can also lead to precarious working conditions, over-consumption, or digital fatigue. Students may be exposed to algorithm-driven pressure to constantly engage, compete, and spend. Therefore, a balanced approach is necessary—one that maximizes the benefits of digital inclusion while addressing its potential harms.

In conclusion, this study underscores the vital interplay between digital social capital, gig economy participation, and online consumption in shaping the behaviour of students in Surabaya. It highlights the transformative role of digital connectivity in providing access to economic opportunities and consumption choices. At the same time, it calls for inclusive policies, institutional support, and critical digital education to ensure that these transformations contribute to equitable and sustainable development in the context of Indonesia’s evolving digital society.

## CONCLUSION

This study successfully uncovers the important role of digital social capital and participation in the gig economy as key factors influencing the level of online consumption of students in Surabaya City. The results of the study show that students with strong digital social networks and active in online communities tend to have greater access to information, job opportunities, and economic resources that drive digital consumption behavior. This emphasizes how digital social capital is a new form of social capital that is very relevant in the context of the digital economy, especially in Indonesia, as a developing country.

Participation in the gig economy has a significant positive effect on online consumption, although its effect is smaller than digital social capital. The flexibility and additional income obtained through digital platform-based work allow students to shop more freely online, thus reflecting a structural change in the relationship between work and consumption in the digital era. This phenomenon illustrates the economic and social reality in increasingly digitalized developing countries, where formal employment is limited and the gig economy has emerged as a strategic alternative for the younger generation. Overall, this study shows how digital transformation is changing not only consumption patterns, but also how social capital is built and utilized and how new forms of work are emerging in developing countries. These findings have important implications for understanding inequalities of access and opportunity in an increasingly complex digital society, and underscore the need for inclusive and adaptive policies to support digital economic empowerment and social well-being among urban youth.

Based on the research findings on the influence of digital social capital and gig economy participation on students' online consumption in Surabaya City, several key recommendations are proposed. First, digital literacy programs should be expanded by governments, universities, and student organizations to not only improve technical skills but also enhance students' ability to build productive digital social networks. Second, inclusive and equitable gig economy policies are needed to ensure social protection and fair access for young gig workers in Indonesia. Third, digital platforms should be optimized to empower students economically by offering flexible, transparent work opportunities along with education and support. Fourth, businesses and e-commerce platforms must develop digital marketing strategies that align with student consumption behaviors and payment preferences. Lastly, further research is necessary to explore digital and social inequalities among students, which can guide more targeted and effective interventions

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