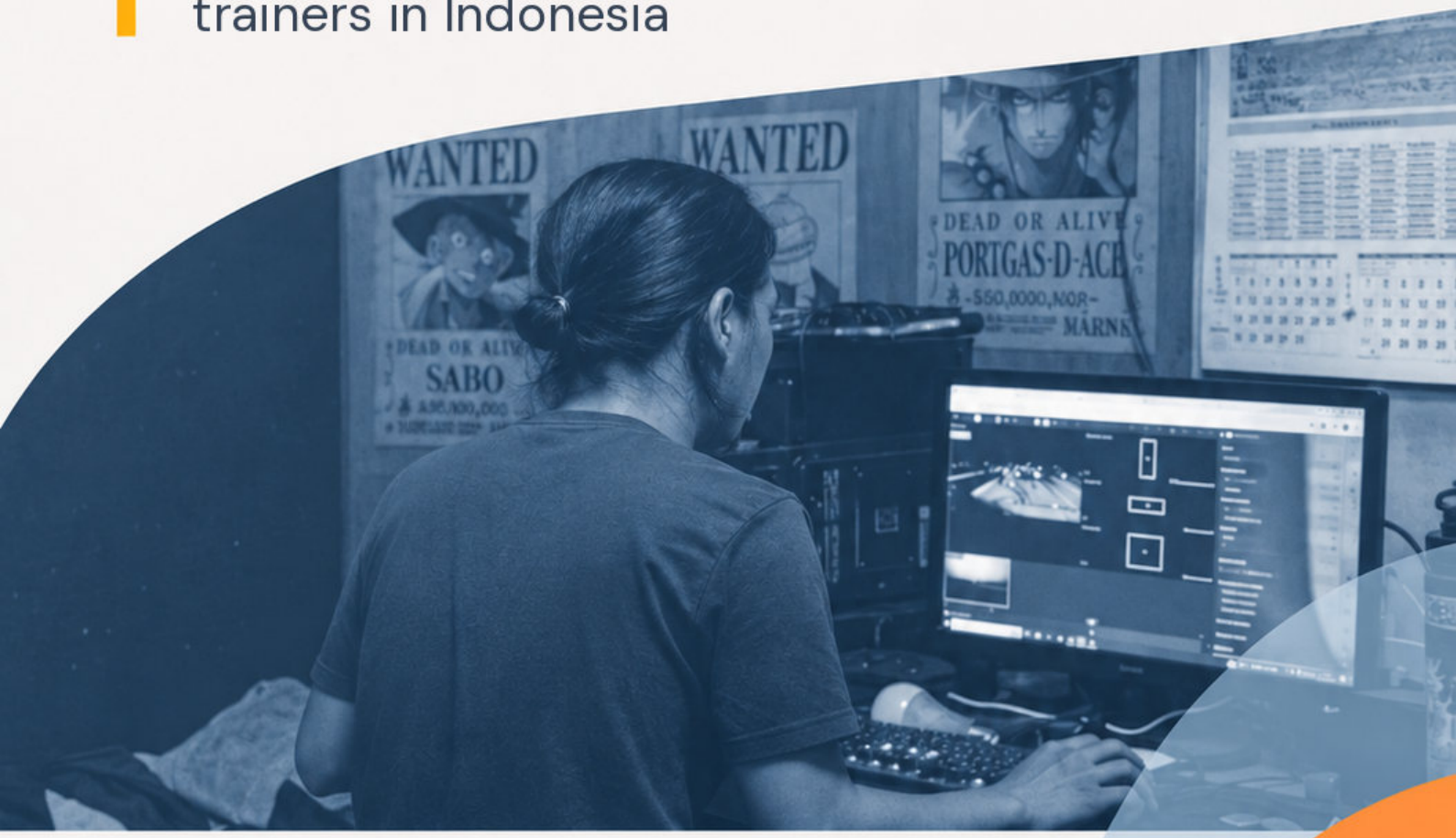
Policy Research Center

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Invisible Work Behind Artificial Intelligence

Working conditions of AI *(Artificial Intelligence)* trainers in Indonesia



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the findings of qualitative research on the working conditions of artificial intelligence (AI) trainers in Indonesia. Its main data come from in-depth interviews with six workers conducted in July–August 2026. Secondary sources are used only to provide context.

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The findings, interpretations and conclusions in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors. The names of platforms, vendors, clients and respondents have been anonymised. Copyright © 2026 the authors. Contact: arifnovianto@untidar.ac.id

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SUMMARY

Executive summary

Artificial intelligence systems do not learn on their own. Behind every answer that seems intelligent are people who write example answers, assess model outputs, transcribe speech and label data. Some of this work is done from home by workers in Indonesia for companies and clients abroad.

This report examines their working conditions through in-depth interviews with six AI trainers in July–August 2026. They are highly educated: former journalists, teachers, translators and librarians, and two civil servants. Three make AI training their main job; the other three do it on the side. The findings do not represent all AI trainers in Indonesia, but they show consistent patterns that call for a policy response.

Their work is varied: writing example answers, comparing and rating chatbot answers, conversing with voice assistants, transcribing audio, labelling images and supervising other workers. All of it is done from home through online dashboards, following long English-language guidelines that change often, under time limits and layered review (Section 3).

KEY POINTS

1

Educated workers with unreliable pay

Forms of payment vary widely: per unit, per point, per hour, per task or a fixed monthly fee. When tasks are available, hourly pay can exceed the minimum wage. But tasks can disappear for weeks, and when calculated over standby hours, one respondent's pay falls to about Rp 15,800 an hour, less than half the hourly equivalent of the Jakarta minimum wage.

2

Much working time is neither counted nor paid

Respondents wait up to 19 hours a day for tasks, take unpaid courses and qualification tests, and do research that activity-tracking systems do not record. Two respondents work late into the night after their main jobs.

3	**Important decisions are made without explanation** Respondents have been removed from projects, placed "under review" for more than a month, or wrongly assessed with no way to contest it. Questions are answered by a chatbot or not at all. Where a human supervisor gives feedback, workers' experience is far better.
4	**Confidentiality closes off the work chain** Five of the six respondents are bound by full confidentiality. Some are forbidden to name the client, the company or the work process, or even to list this work in their portfolio. Two respondents do not know which AI product they are training.
5	**No social protection and no one to talk to** None of the respondents receives health or social insurance from this work. Families carry the household burden. Attempts to demand higher pay "just evaporated", and there is no union or formal forum for negotiation.

Key recommendations

- Government should ensure that the draft regulation on the protection of digital platform workers also covers online platform workers such as AI trainers, and should consider ratifying the ILO Convention on decent work in the platform economy adopted in June 2026.
- Platforms and vendors should give written explanations of decisions that harm workers, open appeal channels handled by humans, and pay for qualification time, mandatory training and research.
- AI developers, as end clients, should carry out due diligence on working conditions in their data supply chains.
- Unions and civil society organisations should reach out to online workers who are dispersed and work alone, through channels that are safe for workers bound by confidentiality.

SECTION 1

Introduction

1.1 Human labour behind artificial intelligence

The generative AI models now used every day are trained and improved through human labour. Workers write examples of good answers, compare and rank model outputs, check facts, flag unsafe content, transcribe audio and label images. Research on "ghost work" and microwork shows that this labour is deliberately made invisible so that machines appear autonomous (Gray & Suri, 2019; Tubaro et al., 2020). The work is organised through long chains: from AI developers, to vendors and platforms, down to workers spread across many countries (Miceli & Posada, 2022; Muldoon et al., 2024).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) notes that demand for online platform work comes largely from developed countries, while many of the workers are in developing countries (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). An ILO survey of about 3,500 microworkers in 75 countries found that, on average, workers spent 20 minutes on unpaid activities for every hour of paid work. Almost nine in ten respondents had had work rejected or gone unpaid (Berg et al., 2018). Fairwork's 2025 assessment of online work platforms found that 40% of surveyed workers were unaware of any appeal process, and that none of the platforms assessed showed evidence of bargaining with a collective body of workers (Fairwork, 2025).

1.2 The Indonesian context

Indonesia has a large pool of educated workers looking for jobs. The National Labour Force Survey of May 2026 recorded 7.22 million unemployed people, about 1.03 million of them holding a four-year diploma up to a doctorate (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS], 2026; detikFinance, 2026). For some of them, AI training work paid in dollars is an attractive option.

Yet Indonesian labour law does not yet recognise platform work in its main labour statute (Anindya, 2026). The policy debate on platform workers has also centred mostly on ride-hailing drivers and couriers, who work on the streets and are relatively visible to the public (Novianto, 2025). AI trainers, who work alone from home, for

foreign companies and often under confidentiality agreements, barely appear in that debate.

1.3 Purpose of the report

This report answers three questions:

- How is AI trainers' work organised, supervised and assessed?
- How are their pay and working time shaped, including unpaid time?
- What protection do they have, and what channels are available to voice grievances?

Section 2 explains the research method. Section 3 describes what AI trainers do and how they do it. Section 4 presents the findings on working conditions, and Section 5 sets out conclusions and recommendations.

SECTION 2

Methods

This study used semi-structured in-depth interviews with six AI trainers working in Indonesia, conducted in July–August 2026. Five interviews were held by video call and lasted about 60–90 minutes; one respondent answered the interview guide in writing. Respondents were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling to capture variation in roles, platforms and employment arrangements (Table 1).

The interview guide covered respondents' profiles, the work process, their relationship to the product, personal development, relations with other workers, household work, their position in the global chain and labour protection. Transcripts were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial codes were developed inductively and then grouped into the five themes that structure Section 4.

All respondents gave informed consent and are identified only by the codes R1–R6. The names of platforms, vendors, clients and government agencies have been anonymised, because some respondents are bound by confidentiality agreements. Quotations were translated from Indonesian by the authors.

Table 1. Respondent profiles

Code	Role	Status	Other work	Pay and working hours (as reported)
R1	Transcription specialist on a global microwork platform; former journalist of 13 years	Main job; January–February 2026	*Career break*	Per unit; "not even 5 dollars an hour"; once went two weeks without tasks
R2	AI chief trainer (supervisor) at a vendor company	Side job; ±15 months	Civil servant, central ministry	Fixed USD 600 a month (equivalent to Rp 9–10 million); two-year contract with a commitment of 40 hours a week

Code	Role	Status	Other work	Pay and working hours (as reported)
R3	AI editor at a vendor company with an editor, critic and chief structure	Side job; ±1 year	Non-governmental organisation	Points per task converted into money (4,000 points = Rp 960,000); minimum 20 hours a week; two-year "partner" contract
R4	Data annotator and model tester on two global platforms	Main job; since February 2026	None (master's graduate, former teacher)	±USD 20 an hour when projects are available; about Rp 5 million and Rp 1 million a month from two platforms
R5	AI trainer at a European company; previously a data annotator	Main job; since 2024	IT consultant (inactive)	Per task; USD 600–700 a week for ±55 hours; two-year contract
R6	Tasker on several global platforms	Side job; since late 2023	Civil servant, local government	Highly variable, depending on project availability

Source: Authors' interviews, July–August 2026.

SECTION 3

What AI trainers do

The term "AI trainer" (*pelatih AI*) covers a wide range of work, from labelling images to assessing chatbot answers. This section explains what respondents do, how they do it and what skills are needed. This matters because the working conditions discussed in Section 4 grow out of the way this work is organised.

3.1 Why AI models need humans

Large language models (LLMs), such as those that power *chatbots*, are first trained on very large amounts of text. To make their answers relevant, accurate and safe, the models are then refined with human feedback. In a technique known as *reinforcement learning from human feedback* (RLHF), people write examples of desired answers and rank several model answers from best to worst. These data are used to steer the model towards answers that better match what people expect (Ouyang et al., 2022). Other systems, such as speech recognition or autonomous vehicles, need labelled data: transcribed audio or images with marked objects.

Tubaro et al. (2020) distinguish, among other roles, between platform workers who prepare data to train AI and those who verify AI outputs. Respondents' work covers both. R1, R3 and R5 mainly prepare data: writing answers, transcribing and labelling. R2, R4 and R6 mostly assess and test model outputs.

> *"AI keeps developing and trainers' tasks are getting more complicated, because AI demands perfection like humans themselves. So an AI trainer is like a teacher who trains AI to become a complete human being."*
>
> — R4, data annotator and model tester

3.2 Types of tasks

Table 2 summarises the tasks respondents reported. One person may do several types of task, and task types can change from one project to the next. R3, for example, first wrote responses and then moved to a team that selects among the model's answer options. R6 has compared two chatbots' answers to education-related questions,

assessed the factuality and safety of a model's answers and, most recently, compared two voice assistants.

Table 2. Types of tasks performed by respondents

Types of tasks	What it involves	How it is done	Code
Writing ideal responses	Writing high-quality answers to users' questions (*prompts*) to train the model. At another stage, choosing the most suitable of the model's answer options, including recommendations of images, videos or places such as restaurants and tourist sites.	Following guidelines and weekly meetings that explain sources and scoring; a three-hour limit per task; sensitive topics such as sexuality and politics may be skipped.	R3
Assessing and comparing model answers	Reading the user's question, comparing the model's answer with an ideal answer or with another model, marking where it goes wrong, then giving a score.	Assessing factuality, accuracy, safety and interactivity; checking facts against one's own knowledge, search engines and other chatbots (see Box 1).	R2, R4, R6
Conversing with voice models	Talking to an AI voice assistant about an assigned topic, then comparing two voice assistant models.	Conversations must be casual, creative and flowing, "as if communicating with a real human", while staying on theme and within the rules.	R6
Testing models and audio	Testing a new model against an older one, and listening to and testing audio.	English-language guidelines for each project, five to seven pages long; one project takes 1.5 to 8 hours.	R4
Audio transcription	Writing down recorded speech verbatim, including overlapping conversations that must be untangled one by one.	Done in units of about four hours with a running clock; the tool marks errors with a red line and a task cannot be submitted until they are fixed.	R1
Image annotation	Marking objects in traffic images with *bounding boxes*: people, plants, animals, signs and symbols.	Short projects; one project involved about 25,000 data items in three weeks, worked 3–4 hours a day.	R5
Supervising other workers	Assessing editors' work, monitoring the client's target of 20 hours a week, giving feedback, training new editors and reporting suspected cheating.	Doing new projects first, in the first week, before they are rolled out; still doing about ten tasks; sometimes required to do tasks in other languages for the same pay.	R2

Source: Authors' interviews, July–August 2026.

Beyond these task types, R4 also works on a platform that connects researchers with participants, where she is paid per task to fill in surveys, make decisions in experiments or train AI. R5, who now works full time, completes about 110 tasks a week; coding-related tasks can be finished in 45 minutes, while the longest take about 1.5 hours.

3.3 The workflow: from sign-up to payment

Although the tasks differ, respondents' workflows follow a similar pattern (Figure 1).

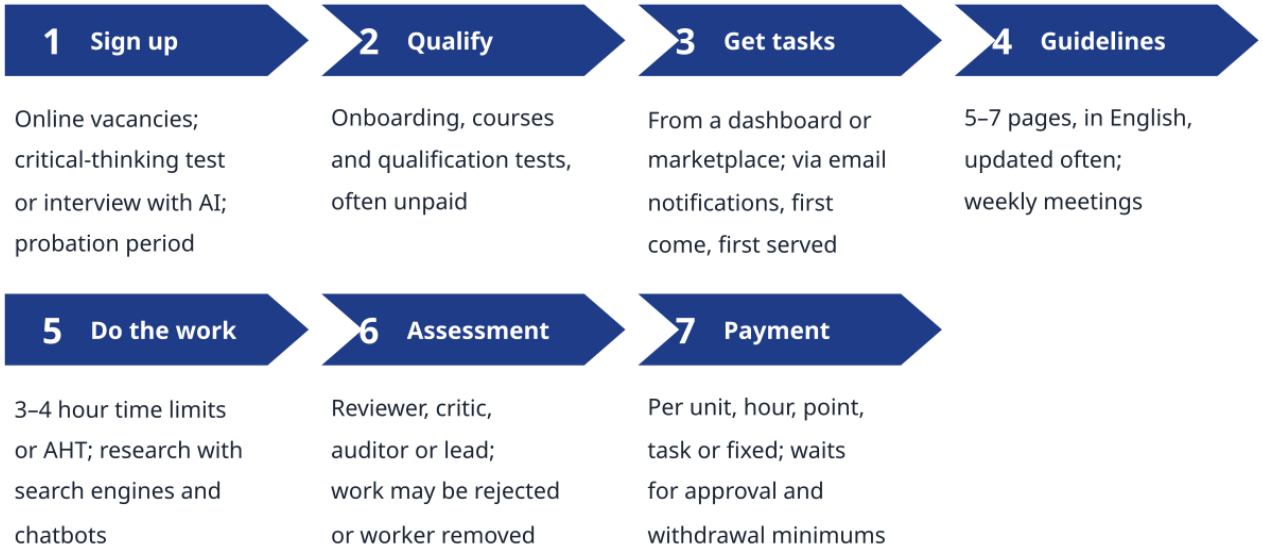
- ### Signing up and qualifying

Respondents found vacancies on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook or Reddit, then went through a selection process that was almost entirely online. R4 took a critical-thinking test, then was asked to complete qualifications on the dashboard and learn on her own. R1 said even her interview was conducted with AI. On a previous platform, R4 had to take hours of courses before getting a project. At R3's company, the first six months were a probation period. R2, as chief, was responsible for onboarding new editors.

- ### Getting tasks

How tasks are distributed depends on the work model. On R6's platform, tasks appear in a *marketplace* menu matched to workers' skills and certifications, and for urgent projects a *queue manager* sometimes contacts workers directly. At R3's company, all editors take tasks from a single *pool* ranked by priority points. On R1's and R4's platforms, notifications arrive by email and workers race for tasks: whoever is late loses the task. R5 cannot choose tasks; he does what the company assigns according to client demand.

Figure 1. The AI trainer workflow



Note: Not every respondent goes through every stage. Workers on fixed contracts, such as R2 and R5, do not compete for tasks.

Source: Compiled by the authors from interviews with R1–R6

- Studying guidelines and doing the work

Every project has guidelines. R4 described hers as "extraordinarily long", five to seven pages, and still in English even when the task is in Indonesian. Guidelines are also updated often, so workers must keep track of changes (R2, R6).

In some workplaces, weekly meetings explain which sources may be used and how each task is scored (R3). Work is done against time limits: three hours per task for R3, four-hour units with a running clock for R1, and *average handling time* (AHT) on R6's platform.

Box 1. Step by step: assessing a model's answer

Assessing model answers is the task respondents mentioned most often. The sequence is roughly as follows:

1. Open the task on the dashboard. A user's question (*query*) appears with one or two model answers.
2. Read the project guidelines: criteria for a good answer, examples and what is not allowed.
3. Check the answer: is it factual, accurate, safe and in line with the instructions? Mark the parts that are wrong.
4. Do research when information is doubtful, using one's own knowledge, search engines or other chatbots.
5. Give a score or ranking, and write the reasoning or a corrected answer.
6. Submit before the deadline. The result is checked by a reviewer, critic or auditor.

"Click the task, then the user's query appears. Then we just compare it with our answer and mark where the flaws are. And if it gives incorrect information, we have to do research first."

— R2, AI chief trainer. Steps compiled from accounts by R2, R3 and R6; details vary between projects.

- Assessment and payment

Work is checked in layers: by the system, by fellow workers acting as reviewers, by supervisors and finally by the client. Payment forms also differ (Table 1). For R4, pay can only be transferred once a project is approved, about a week later; on her other platform, the balance can only be withdrawn once it reaches at least 6 pounds sterling. Section 4.3 discusses what happens when work is judged poor.

3.4 Skills and tools

The work requires English proficiency, precision and broad general knowledge. R2 calls herself a "generalist" because the questions she assesses may be about calculus, art, politics, engineering or physics, at random. For R1, verbatim transcription demands full attention to small details, "super heavy focus", which is why this work "is not for everyone".

Box 2. Workers on how they work

R1, transcription. "In the tool, if you don't follow the instructions a red line appears, which means an error has been detected in the transcript. In the end you can't submit the task."

R6, conversing with a voice model. "I was asked to talk to an AI model about a set topic. I had to interact casually, as if I were communicating with a real human."

R2, assessing answers across fields. "I've become a generalist, really general. The tasks are mixed; you click a task and the question could be calculus, art, politics, engineering, physics, random."

The tools are simple but scattered: company or platform dashboards, email, discussion channels such as Slack or internal chat, and workers' own devices; R2, for example, uses her own laptop and mobile data. For research, respondents use search engines and chatbots such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude (R2, R5). In other words, the workers who train AI also use AI to do their tasks.

Respondents disagree on how much room there is for creativity. R6 considers his tasks to require creativity in turning guidelines into natural conversation. R1, R3, R4 and R5 feel bound by the guidelines. "There's no creativity, time is limited, there's no time to improve, you have to follow the guideline," said R1.

SECTION 4

Findings

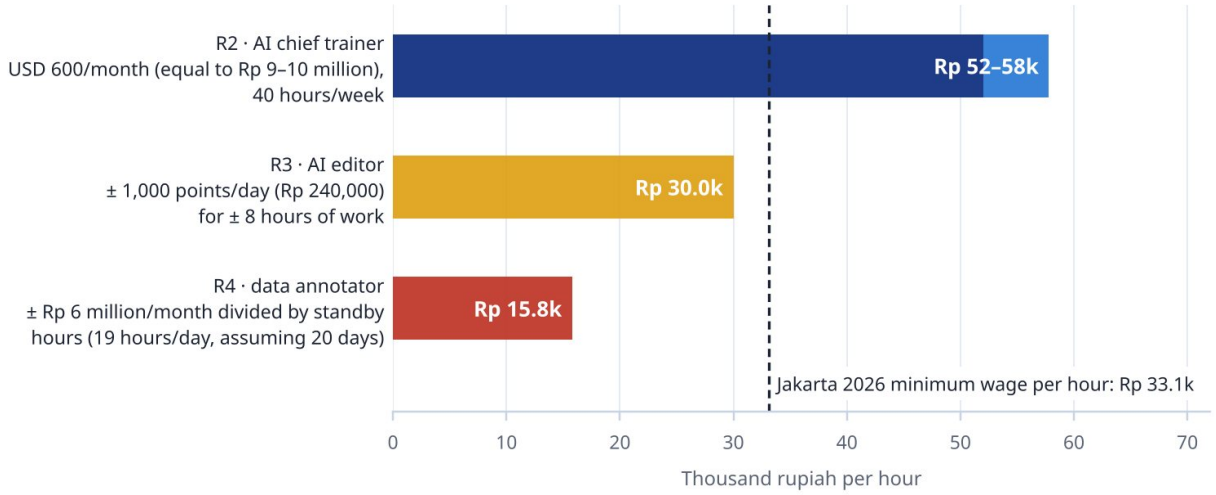
This section presents five main findings. Each opens with a summary, followed by respondents' testimony and, where relevant, context from other research.

4.1 Educated workers with unreliable pay

All six respondents are highly educated, from diploma to master's level. Before becoming AI trainers, they worked as journalists, teachers, translators, librarians or NGO staff. They found this work through LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook or Reddit. Their main reasons were similar: extra income amid rising living costs. R4 tried this work after her job applications in Indonesia had been unsuccessful following her master's degree.

Forms of payment vary widely (Table 1). R2 receives a fixed monthly salary. R3 is paid in points converted into money. R1 and R4 are paid per unit or per hour, but only when tasks are available. R5 is paid per task, with a relatively stable volume of tasks. R6 says his income fluctuates too much to average.

Figure 2. Hourly pay from respondents' statements compared with the 2026 Jakarta minimum wage



Note: R2: monthly salary divided by 173 hours. R3: 1,000 points a day, at a rate of 4,000 points = Rp 960,000, for about 8 hours of work. R4: estimated monthly income from two platforms divided by standby hours (19 hours a day, assuming only 20 days a month). A rough illustration, not a representative estimate.

Figure 2 converts respondents' statements into hourly pay and compares them with the 2026 Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP) for DKI Jakarta, the highest in Indonesia, at Rp 5,729,876 a month (Saputra, 2025). Divided by 173 hours, in line with the hourly wage formula in Government Regulation (PP) No. 35/2021, Article 32(2), this equals about Rp 33,100 an hour.

The figure shows two sides of dollar pay. For R2, hourly pay is far above the minimum wage, but it is earned on top of a full-time job as a civil servant. For R3, hourly pay is slightly below the Jakarta minimum-wage equivalent. For R4, hourly pay while working is high, about USD 20, but tasks arrive unpredictably. When her monthly income is divided by the time she spends on standby at her laptop, it falls below half the Jakarta hourly minimum-wage equivalent.

Almost all respondents experienced this uncertainty. R1 once went two weeks without a single work unit. R4 saw only two to five projects available for Indonesia at any one time, far fewer than in the United States. Respondents are also aware that rates differ by region. R6 only later learned that rates for Southeast Asia are lower than for Europe and North America. R2 explained that chiefs from the company's home country are permanent employees with higher pay, while chiefs from other countries are freelancers.

> *"The answer is obvious: because it's cheap. At first I didn't know that taskers had different rates depending on the work region."*
>
> — R6, tasker on several global platforms, on why AI companies recruit Indonesian workers

Not all respondents consider their pay unfair. R4 feels her pay is "more than the Indonesian minimum wage" and R5 says he is "satisfied so far". But the other four respondents consider their pay out of proportion to the value of the products they help build, or to the rates paid to workers in other countries.

4.2 Working time that goes uncounted

Flexibility is the main attraction of this work. In practice, flexibility means workers must always be ready. Tasks on R1's and R4's platforms are released to many workers at

once and go to whoever is fastest. "If you're a bit late, it's gone," said R4. R1 has to set aside blocks of about four hours because each unit runs on a clock.

Box 3. A day with R4: 19 hours on standby

R4 holds a master's degree and makes AI training her main job. She opens her laptop at 5 a.m. and waits for project notifications until midnight.

"If you measure it, I usually have my laptop open from 5 in the morning until 12 at night. About 19 hours a day."

Her parents do much of the housework. One project can take three to eight hours because the guidelines are in English and five to seven pages long, even though the task is in Indonesian. She has no leave and no health insurance. "Being an AI trainer is like being a factory worker," she said, "you really have to work, work, work, but this is in the digital world."

Much working time is also unpaid. On a previous platform, R4 had to take hours of courses before getting a project, and even then the project was not guaranteed to be approved. Qualification tests are generally unpaid. R6 described a new system that calculates pay from mouse and keyboard activity. As a result, time spent consulting references and analysing model answers, the very core of evaluation work, appears not to be counted as working time. This pattern is consistent with the ILO survey's findings on the large amount of unpaid time in microwork (Berg et al., 2018).

For the three respondents who do this work on the side, AI training fills their evenings and days off. R2 works as a civil servant from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., then works as a chief trainer late into the night: "This means I don't get enough sleep." R3 works about 6–8 hours a day around his main job, often into the night. R6 snatches free time at the office when project supply is limited, which leaves him feeling guilty, and has worked more than 12 hours straight on a day off.

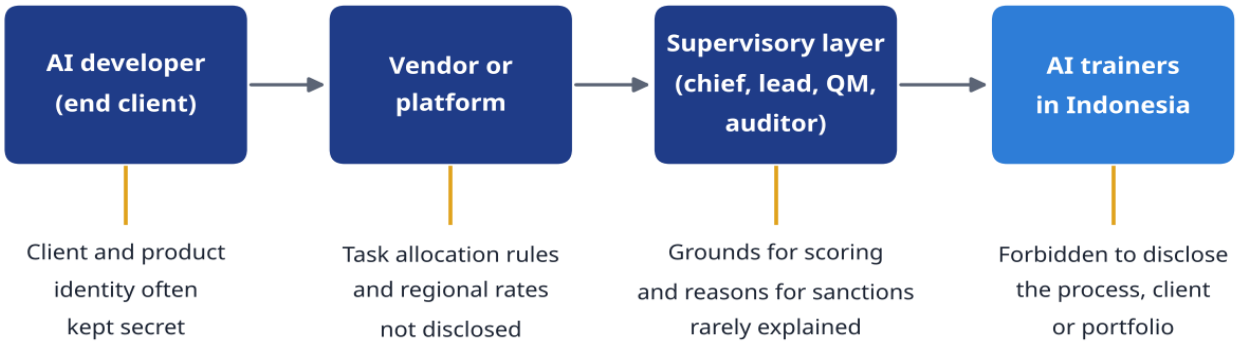
> *"Health and protection matter too. My body has probably turned into a robot by now."*
>
> — R3, AI editor

4.3 Judged by the system, penalised without explanation

AI trainers' work is supervised in layers. R2 assesses the editors' work, her work is checked by the company, and the company is checked by the client. R3 works in a structure of editors, critics who act as assessors, and chiefs who act as project managers, with a three-hour limit per task; exceeding it lowers the performance score. On R6's platform, work is assessed by auditors, and a *queue manager* manages the project queue. Figure 3 summarises this chain and the information withheld at each link.

Figure 3. The AI trainer work chain and where information is withheld

Tasks and instructions flow to the right; information is withheld at every link.



Source: Compiled by the authors from interviews with R1–R6.

The heaviest decisions, removing workers from a project or platform, often come without explanation. R1 completed a four-week transcription project, received an email suggesting that the client was not satisfied, and a few days later was removed from the project and barred from reapplying. "I felt like I'd been ghosted," she said. Task notifications kept arriving, but there were no units when she logged in to the dashboard. R6 was placed "under review" for more than a month because his performance was deemed below expectations, without being told which indicators were used, and could not work during that time.

> *"So after you submit, you just pray it gets approved. If it isn't approved, you're removed from the project or straight from the [platform]."*
>
> — R4, data annotator and model tester

Channels for questioning decisions are also narrow. R6 wrote that auditors' assessments are sometimes wrong because they do not read the guidelines carefully: "unfortunately, auditors' mistaken assessments cannot be changed", and "taskers cannot even protest a mistaken assessment of their work." Workers' questions on his platform are more often answered by a chatbot, with answers that are "very templated". When R1 asked about task uncertainty by email, she was "told to just wait for now." The help button on R4's platform sometimes gets a reply and sometimes does not. In the official discussion space she may ask technical questions, but not about job availability: "You'll get told off. You can't complain."

Things are different when a human supervisor is close to the workers. R5, who is supervised by a *lead* from Indonesia, was once rated poorly but given the chance to redo the work because the guidelines were genuinely unclear. R2 likewise received an explanation of what she should have done when her work was once rejected. This comparison suggests that the problem lies not in supervision as such, but in automated or distant decisions made without reasons or a route of appeal. Research on algorithmic management records similar patterns across platforms (Kellogg et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019).

4.4 Forbidden to tell: confidentiality and unrecognised work

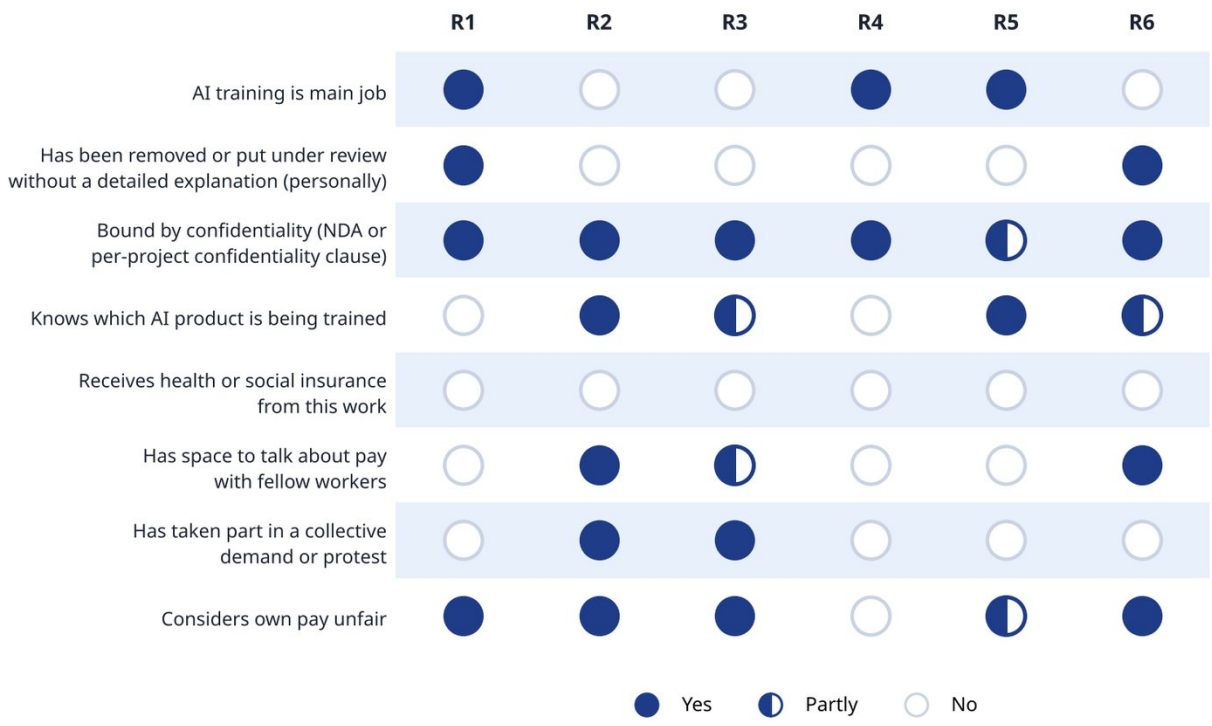
Confidentiality was the most consistent feature of the interviews. Five respondents are bound by full confidentiality agreements, and one more (R5) is barred from discussing the work on social media. R2's agreement forbids her from disclosing the work process, the client's identity or the company's name, or even from building a portfolio from the work, under threat of penalty. R3's list is similar: the company's name, the client's name, the system structure, what is done and the content produced. R6's project guidelines carry a "confidential" watermark with the worker's email address so that leaks can be traced easily.

> *"A product once launched in Indonesia, and we wanted to share it on social media because we were proud, like, hey, we worked on this, but that's not allowed."*
>
> — R2, AI chief trainer

As a result, some workers do not know what their work is used for. R1 can only guess that her transcriptions are used to develop speech technology. R4 started out knowing "absolutely nothing" about the purpose of her work and taught herself from project guidelines. R6 is given a general picture of each project's purpose, but the model being trained is sometimes kept secret, although the information often leaks in Facebook groups or on Reddit. R2 only learned midway that one of her project's clients was a government agency in Indonesia.

Confidentiality goes hand in hand with ambiguous employment status. Respondents are called freelancers, contributors, consultants or partners. R2 is a freelancer but is committed to 40 hours a week, attends weekly meetings and feels like a full-time employee. "There are no statutory rights; I'm not a worker," said R3. All respondents regard the results of their work as belonging entirely to the company or client because they have been paid. R3 put the imbalance this way: the company pays once, but the product can be used and generate profit many times over.

Figure 4. Working conditions of the six respondents



Note: "Partly" means the condition applies in a limited way, for example only a ban on discussing work on social media (R5, confidentiality) or pay being considered taboo to discuss despite an internal group (R3, space to talk about pay).

Source: Authors' interviews, July–August 2026; coding by the authors.

4.5 No protection, no one to talk to

None of the respondents receives health insurance, social security or severance pay from this work (Figure 4). R2 uses her own laptop and mobile data. R6's platform once offered counselling sessions with a psychologist, but these have since been discontinued. Leave and sick days are usually self-managed or arranged through unwritten understandings. R2 describes it all as "freely flexible", yet workers whose performance drops because of illness are still noted down.

The burdens platforms do not carry shift to the household. R4's parents do most of the housework so that she can stay on standby. R2 shares domestic work with her husband, and her parents help look after her child; there is no longer time to cook, so the family more often buys food. R5 shares housework with his wife. In the terms of social reproduction theory, the cost of keeping workers able to work is borne by families, not employers (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Channels for voicing grievances barely exist. Information about pay is kept scarce. "Pay is taboo, even within the same division," said R3. R5 and his colleagues share only the number of tasks they complete and "never talk about how much we earn." R6's platform bans discussion of pay in internal forums, so the discussion moves to Facebook groups. The Indonesian workers' group R4 belongs to is anonymous and project names are disguised, because "if you're found out, it's not allowed; you can get banned." R1 does not know a single other AI trainer.

Collective efforts have been made, but they ended without lasting results. Through an internal work group not set up by the company, R2 and her colleagues once pushed a demand for higher pay. The answer: the budget was fixed.

> *"Our voice didn't change anything, though the client was actually very open to this dialogue. But there was no feedback, the pay stayed the same, no change; it just evaporated."*
>
> — R2, on the demand for higher pay

Box 4. Chronicle of a protest, August 2025

In August 2025, wages at the company where R3 works were almost a month late.

- Workers complained to the AI chiefs, who had access to higher management and were also affected. According to R3, the chief was "not an ambassador but a mediator" for the editors.
- Workers from three divisions, in a team of almost 30 people, protested through the internal chat channel.
- The company responded to the demands by email, and wages were paid about a week later.
- The protest stopped once wages were paid. "It was just turmoil from the inside; it hadn't blown up outside." There is no union, only official groups set up by the company.

For R6, these limits are understood by fellow workers in his group: "we realise together that the protest is one-way." The platform is seen as unwilling to listen, complaint channels are complicated, and questions are answered by an AI assistant. R2 chose to "wait and see": "it's unfair, but we can't rebel." She also sees the state as absent: "as if we're not valued by foreign companies, and the government just stays silent."

Respondents' views on the role of the state differ. R5, by contrast, thinks the government need not guarantee protection, fearing that administration would become complicated, and says workers are "self-aware as gig workers". This difference matters: protection policies should be designed so as not to burden workers with procedures, while still closing the gaps other respondents experience.

SECTION 5

Conclusions and recommendations

AI trainers in Indonesia are educated workers doing high-value tasks for a global industry. Dollar pay makes the work look attractive compared with local wages. But behind it lie unpaid working time, unexplained decisions, confidentiality that closes off the work chain and the absence of social protection. When workers try to speak up, they find almost no one who is obliged to answer.

The international framework has begun to move. In June 2026, the International Labour Conference adopted the first Convention on decent work in the platform economy. The Convention extends protection to all platform workers regardless of their employment status, including freedom of association and collective bargaining (ILO, 2026). It also requires transparency in the use of automated systems, written explanations of adverse automated decisions, review mechanisms for non-payment, suspension, deactivation or termination, and appropriate human involvement (Masuku & Naidoo, 2026).

For government

- Ensure that the draft regulation on the protection of digital platform workers also covers online platform workers such as AI trainers, not only drivers and couriers.
- Consider ratifying the ILO Convention on decent work in the platform economy (2026), particularly its provisions on explaining automated decisions and on review mechanisms.
- Develop social security schemes for non-wage workers that online workers can easily access, and explore contributions from platforms or vendors that employ Indonesians.
- Include online platform workers in labour data collection, so that their numbers and conditions can be known.

For platforms and vendors

- Give written explanations for rejected work, suspensions and deactivations, and open appeal channels handled by humans with clear deadlines.

- Pay for the time spent on qualifications, mandatory training and the research that tasks require, and count working time not only from mouse and keyboard activity.
- Disclose the rules for task allocation and rates, including rate differences between regions.
- Limit confidentiality agreements to genuinely confidential material, and allow workers to list the type of work they do in their portfolios.

For AI developers

- Carry out due diligence on data supply chains: know who trains their models, where, and with what pay and protection, and require minimum decent-work standards in contracts with vendors and platforms.

For unions, civil society organisations and researchers

- Reach online workers through safe and anonymous channels, since many workers are bound by confidentiality and fear being blocked.
- Provide support when workers are blocked or unpaid, along with contract and rights literacy; researchers should broaden the study with more respondents and cross-country comparison.

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Policy Research Center (POREC)

Artificial intelligence is built on human labour. That labour deserves to be seen, paid and protected.

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