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The Role of Accounting Transparency and Audit Practices in Building Trust and Enhancing Organizational Performance in the Gig Economy

O Papel da Transparência Contábil e das Práticas de Auditoria na Construção de Confiança e no Aprimoramento do Desempenho Organizacional na Gig Economy

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(Abstract) The gig economy represents one of the most disruptive transformations in contemporary labor markets, characterized by short-term contracts, digital platform intermediation, and high workforce fragility. This theoretical study examines the role of accounting transparency and audit practices in building stakeholder trust and enhancing organizational performance within gig economy platforms. Drawing on a systematic literature review of works indexed in Web of Science and Scopus databases, the article integrates agency theory, stakeholder theory, and signaling theory to analyze the intersections between financial governance mechanisms and the specificities of platform-based organizational models. Results indicate that the absence of standardized financial reporting frameworks, combined with algorithmic opacity and the misclassification of workers as independent contractors, generates significant informational asymmetries that erode trust among workers, investors, and regulators. Independent audits and transparent disclosure practices emerge as critical instruments for legitimizing platform business models and strengthening accountability structures. The study concludes that robust accounting and audit governance not only mitigates financial and reputational risks for gig platforms but also provides the foundation for sustainable performance, regulatory compliance, and the construction of long-term relational capital with all stakeholders.

Keywords: Accounting transparency. Audit practices. Gig economy. Organizational performance. Stakeholder trust.

(Resumo) A gig economy representa uma das transformações mais disruptivas dos mercados de trabalho contemporâneos, caracterizada por contratos de curta duração, intermediação por plataformas digitais e elevada fragilidade da força de trabalho. Este estudo teórico examina o papel da transparência contábil e das práticas de auditoria na construção da confiança dos stakeholders e no aprimoramento do desempenho organizacional em plataformas da gig economy. Com base em revisão sistemática da literatura indexada nas bases Web of Science e Scopus, o artigo integra a teoria da agência, a teoria dos stakeholders e a teoria da sinalização para analisar as interseções

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Revista Eletrônica de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas

entre mecanismos de governança financeira e as especificidades dos modelos organizacionais baseados em plataformas. Os resultados indicam que a ausência de estruturas padronizadas de relatórios financeiros, aliada à opacidade algorítmica e à classificação equivocada dos trabalhadores como contratantes independentes, gera significativas assimetrias informacionais que corroem a confiança entre trabalhadores, investidores e reguladores. Auditorias independentes e práticas de divulgação transparente emergem como instrumentos críticos para legitimar os modelos de negócios das plataformas e fortalecer as estruturas de prestação de contas. O estudo conclui que uma governança contábil e de auditoria robusta não apenas mitiga riscos financeiros e reputacionais para as plataformas da gig economy, mas também fornece a base para o desempenho sustentável, a conformidade regulatória e a construção de capital relacional de longo prazo com todos os stakeholders.

Palavras-chave: Transparência contábil. Práticas de auditoria. Gig economy. Desempenho organizacional. Confiança dos stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of the gig economy has fundamentally redefined the structure of labor markets, corporate governance, and financial accountability across industries. Characterized by short-term, project-based work arrangements mediated by digital platforms such as Uber, Airbnb, Deliveroo, and Upwork, this economic model has attracted millions of workers and generated trillions of dollars in global revenue (World Economic Forum, 2024; Upwork, 2024). According to the World Economic Forum (2024), the gig economy reached a market size of US$556.7 billion in 2024 and is projected to surpass US$1.8 trillion by 2032, representing one of the most significant structural shifts in the global economy.

Concurrently, the rapid proliferation of digital platforms has severely tested the boundaries of traditional regulatory frameworks, turning the gig economy into a critical legal and social turning point globally (Castanho *et al.*, 2026). Consequently, this institutional friction underscores the urgent need for robust accounting mechanisms to reconcile market innovation with stakeholder protection.

Despite its remarkable growth, the gig economy has been marked by persistent concerns regarding financial accountability, taxation compliance, worker classification, and the lack of transparent governance mechanisms (Adelakun, 2023; Dedema et al., 2024). The misclassification of workers as independent contractors, rather than employees, creates systemic accountability gaps that undermine both the financial integrity of platforms and the social protection of workers. In this environment, accounting transparency and audit practices assume a strategic role that goes far beyond conventional compliance functions, they become essential instruments for building institutional trust, attracting investment, and ensuring sustainable organizational performance.

Accounting practices serve as the foundational mechanism through which organizations record, analyze, and communicate financial information to stakeholders (Weygandt, Kimmel, & Kieso, 2018). In the context of the gig economy, where organizational structures are highly fragmented and workforce relationships are diffuse, the quality of financial reporting directly influences perceptions of reliability and governance integrity. Similarly, audit practices function as independent verification mechanisms that validate financial information, assess internal controls, and reinforce credibility before regulators, investors, and the broader public (Messier, Glover, & Prawitt, 2018).

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The intersection of accounting and auditing with the gig economy remains an underexplored area in the scientific literature. While a growing body of research has addressed labor relations, algorithmic management, and platform regulation within the gig economy (Kadolkar *et al.*, 2025; Rachoru *et al.*, 2025), the financial governance dimensions, particularly accounting transparency and audit quality, have received comparatively limited attention. This gap is significant, given that the financial conduct of platform companies has direct consequences for worker welfare, investor confidence, and market stability.

This article aims to address this gap by examining, from a theoretical perspective, the role of accounting transparency and audit practices in building stakeholder trust and enhancing organizational performance in gig economy organizations. The study integrates agency theory, stakeholder theory, and signaling theory as complementary lenses to analyze how financial governance mechanisms interact with the unique characteristics of platform-based business models. The findings offer both theoretical contributions and practical implications for platform managers, regulators, and policymakers.

THE GIG ECONOMY: CHARACTERISTICS, SCOPE, AND FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Defining the Gig Economy

The gig economy can be defined as a market-oriented economic system in which independent service providers, commonly referred to as gig Workers, engage in short-term, on-demand work arrangements intermediated by digital platforms (Kadolkar *et al.*, 2025). This model is distinguished by four primary characteristics: a high degree of worker autonomy, short-term relationships with clients, payment structured by task or service, and connection through digital platforms (Adelakun, 2023). It encompasses a wide range of activities, from ridesharing and food delivery to professional freelancing and knowledge services (Dedema *et al.*, 2024).

The growth trajectory of gig economy research reflects the increasing institutional importance of this phenomenon. A bibliometric analysis of the Scopus database conducted by Vadavi and Sharmiladevi (2024) identified 322 publications on the topic in 2023 alone, the highest productivity year on record, with research contributions from leading institutions including the University of Oxford, the Alan Turing Institute, and Cork University Business School. The dominant research themes span labor relations, platform governance, worker well-being, and algorithmic management.

From a business management and accounting perspective, the gig economy raises distinctive questions about how organizations manage and report on a workforce that falls outside traditional employment classifications, and how the financial implications of platform-based business models are captured and disclosed (Rachoru *et al.*, 2025). These questions become especially pressing as gig platforms scale to the size of major

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corporations, Uber, for instance, reported revenues of US$43.9 billion in 2024, with a net income of US$9.8 billion (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

Financial Governance Gaps in the Gig Economy

One of the most critical financial governance challenges in the gig economy concerns the classification of workers as independent contractors rather than employees. This classification has profound accounting implications: it allows platforms to exclude workforce costs from their balance sheets, avoid contributions to social security and benefits schemes, and limit their liability under labor regulations (Dedema *et al.*, 2024; Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2024). While this model generates significant cost advantages for platforms, it simultaneously creates accountability vacuums that distort the true financial picture of these organizations.

This governance deficit is further compounded by the rise of algorithmic management, where artificial intelligence functions as an organizational surrogate for traditional managerial hierarchies, intensifying workplace surveillance and control through opaque metrics (Frogeri *et al.*, 2026). Such algorithmic opacity operates within a complex triadic structure, encompassing the platform, consumers, and Workers, where unverified customer ratings feed hidden algorithms, thereby escalating psychosocial risks and eroding institutional trust (Rabban & Singh, 2026).

A study by Adelakun (2023) on tax compliance in the gig economy found that a significant majority of gig Workers, approximately 80% of respondentes, expressed little concern about tax default, reflecting a systemic culture of non-compliance driven by the absence of standardized reporting obligations. This lack of accountability and transparency not only harms public revenue but also undermines the integrity of financial markets by enabling informational asymmetries between platforms, workers, investors, and regulators.

The OECD's Model Rules for Reporting by Platform Operators (2020) and subsequent national regulations, such as Canada's reporting rules for digital platform operators effective in 2024, represent early attempts to establish standardized financial disclosure frameworks for gig platforms. These regulatory developments underscore the urgency of integrating robust accounting practices into the governance structures of gig economy organizations.

Technological complexity compounds these governance challenges. The use of algorithmic management systems to control work allocation, pricing, and performance assessment introduces what researchers describe as ‘algorithmic opacity’, the deliberate or structural lack of transparency surrounding the automated systems that govern gig workers' conditions (Lata, 2022; Dedema *et al.*, 2024). This opacity represents a distinct form of information asymmetry that existing accounting frameworks are not adequately designed to address, pointing to the need for innovative disclosure approaches.

ACCOUNTING TRANSPARENCY AS A TRUST-BUILDING MECHANISM

Theoretical foundations

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Accounting transparency refers to the quality and completeness of financial disclosures that enable stakeholders to form accurate assessments of an organization's financial position, performance, and risks (Spiceland, Thomas, & Herrmann, 2020). In theoretical terms, accounting transparency is primarily justified through agency theory, which posits that the separation of ownership and management creates information asymmetries that must be mitigated through monitoring mechanisms such as financial reporting and auditing (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

In the gig economy context, the principal-agent framework takes on multiple dimensions. Platform companies (agents) are accountable not only to their investors (principals) but also to gig workers, consumers, and regulators, each of whom relies on different types of financial and operational information. Agency theory predicts that without robust accounting systems and independent auditing, platform managers will have incentives to present financial information in ways that serve their interests rather than those of the broader stakeholder community (Hendrastuti & Harahap, 2023).

Stakeholder theory complements this analysis by broadening the scope of accounting accountability beyond shareholders. Freeman's (1984) stakeholder framework argues that organizations must account for their impact on all parties with a legitimate interest in their operations, including employees, communities, suppliers, and regulators. For gig platforms, this implies that accounting transparency should encompass not only traditional financial metrics but also disclosures relating to worker income, algorithmic fairness, tax contributions, and labor classification practices.

Signaling theory provides a third lens for understanding the strategic value of accounting transparency in the gig economy. Under this framework, voluntary disclosure of high-quality financial information serves as a credible signal of organizational integrity and sound governance, differentiating trustworthy platforms from less reliable competitors in the marketplace (Kang & Kim, 2023). For gig platforms seeking to attract institutional investors, retain talent, and navigate regulatory scrutiny, the decision to invest in accounting transparency carries significant reputational and competitive implications.

Accounting Quality and Organizational Performance

Empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between accounting quality and organizational performance across various institutional contexts. A systematic review by Bhullar and Gupta (2024), drawing on 154 articles from the Scopus database, identified financial reporting quality and auditing and accounting quality as two of the four primary determinants of corporate governance effectiveness and investment efficiency. Organizations that maintain high standards of accounting transparency benefit from reduced cost of capital, enhanced access to financial markets, and stronger investor confidence.

In the specific context of platform-based organizations, accounting quality mediates the relationship between operational transparency and performance in important ways. The adoption of modern accounting Technologies, including cloud-based platforms, artificial intelligence, and blockchain, has significantly enhanced the accuracy, efficiency, and real-time reporting capabilities of financial systems (Summa Journal, 2025). These

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technological advances are particularly relevant for gig platforms, where transaction volumes are high, data is distributed across multiple geographies, and the need for real-time financial oversight is paramount.

Cost accounting practices also play a significant role in the gig economy context. Understanding the true cost structure of platform operations, including variable worker costs, platform maintenance, regulatory compliance, and customer acquisition, requires sophisticated accounting methodologies that go beyond simple revenue-and-cost reporting. Organizations that implement comprehensive cost accounting systems gain a competitive advantage by identifying inefficiencies, optimizing resource allocation, and making better-informed strategic decisions (Mikayilov, 2025).

AUDIT PRACTICES AND STAKEHOLDER TRUST IN THE GIG ECONOMY

The Strategic Role of Auditing

Audit practices represent a critical mechanism for validating the accuracy, reliability, and compliance of financial information produced by organizations. In conventional corporate settings, auditing serves to reduce information asymmetries between managers and shareholders, detect fraud, assess internal controls, and provide independent assurance regarding the integrity of financial statements (Messier, Glover, & Prawitt, 2018). In the gig economy, these functions take on heightened importance given the structural accountability deficits described in the previous sections.

A systematic review of the relationship between corporate governance and audit quality, based on studies published between 2019 and 2024 and indexed in Scopus, found that high-quality audits are perceived by investors, regulators, and employees as indicators of organizational financial health and governance integrity, thereby fostering trust and accountability (Research Gate, 2025). Research by Maji and Tiwari (2024) and Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) confirms that organizations subject to rigorous audit scrutiny enjoy enhanced reputational capital and more robust relationships with key stakeholders.

The signaling function of audit quality is particularly salient for gig economy platforms. Kang and Kim (2023) found that companies audited by reputable firms, particularly the Big Four, tend to achieve higher stock market valuations and greater ease of accessing capital, especially during initial public offerings or major financing rounds. For gig platforms that have grown rapidly through venture capital funding and are increasingly subject to public market scrutiny, the quality of their audit relationships constitutes a strategic asset.

Auditor independence represents another cornerstone of effective audit practice in the gig economy context. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and equivalent international regulatory instruments mandate strict independence requirements for auditors of publicly traded companies, reflecting the principle that objective audit outcomes require freedom from conflicts of interest. As major gig platforms gain publicly traded status, compliance with these requirements becomes both a legal obligation and a reputational imperative.

Internal Controls and Risk Management in Platform Organizations

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Perspectivas Contemporâneas
Revista Eletrônica de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas

The effectiveness of audit practices in the gig economy depends significantly on the quality of internal control systems within platform organizations. Internal controls are the policies, procedures, and mechanisms designed to safeguard assets, ensure the accuracy of financial records, and prevent fraud or misreporting (Mikayilov, 2025). For gig platforms, the design of effective internal controls must account for the distributed nature of platform operations, the high volume of micro-transactions, and the complex contractual relationships with workers classified as independent contractors.

Risk assessment represents a particularly important component of audit practice in the gig economy context. The specific risks associated with platform-based business models, including worker misclassification, algorithmic pricing manipulation, data privacy breaches, and regulatory non-compliance, require audit approaches that go beyond traditional financial statement review. The integration of data analytics and artificial intelligence into audit procedures has significantly enhanced auditors' capacity to identify anomalies, detect patterns of misreporting, and provide real-time risk assessments in complex, high-volume data environments (Mikayilov, 2025).

Blockchain technology offers particular promise for enhancing the integrity of financial records in the gig economy. By ensuring the immutability and traceability of transactions, blockchain creates an audit trail that is resistant to manipulation and accessible to multiple stakeholders simultaneously. Organizations that leverage blockchain in their audit and accounting functions reduce the risk of data manipulation while enhancing the credibility of their financial disclosures, a consideration of special relevance for gig platforms where transaction records involve multiple parties across multiple jurisdictions.

ESG Auditing and Non-Financial Disclosure

The rise of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting has expanded the scope of audit practices to encompass non-financial dimensions of organizational performance. A study by García-Benau, Sierra-García, and García-Sánchez (2022) demonstrated that third-party assurance on non-financial disclosures significantly improves stakeholder trust and corporate reputation, reflecting a growing expectation that organizations will be held accountable for their social and environmental conduct, not just their financial results.

In the gig economy context, ESG auditing takes on special relevance given the well-documented social concerns associated with platform labor: income insecurity, lack of social protection, precarious working conditions, and algorithmic discrimination (Lata, 2022; Dedema *et al.*, 2024). The integration of social audits into the governance frameworks of gig platforms represents a significant opportunity to address the legitimacy deficit that characterizes many platform companies, demonstrating accountability to workers and communities that extends beyond shareholder interests.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

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Perspectivas Contemporâneas
Revista Eletrônica de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas

This study adopts a qualitative, theoretical approach based on a systematic literature review (SLR). The choice of a qualitative methodology is appropriate given the exploratory and integrative nature of the research objective, namely, to examine the theoretical intersections between accounting transparency, audit practices, and organizational performance in the gig economy, a topic that remains undertheorized in the existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The systematic literature review method was selected because it enables a rigorous, replicable, and transparent synthesis of existing knowledge, reducing the risk of selection bias and providing a comprehensive map of the available evidence base (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003).

The research design follows a three-phase structure: (1) definition of the search protocol and eligibility criteria; (2) systematic search, screening, and selection of sources; and (3) thematic analysis and theoretical synthesis. This structure aligns with established guidelines for systematic reviews in management and accounting research, including the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework adapted for theoretical reviews (Page *et al.*, 2021).

Data Sources and Search Protocol

The literature search was conducted in two primary academic databases: Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. These databases were selected because they represent the most comprehensive and rigorously curated repositories of peer-reviewed scientific production in the fields of business, management, accounting, economics, and social sciences, the core disciplinary areas relevant to this study. Both databases apply systematic indexing criteria and are widely recognized as international standards for scientific quality assessment in academic research.

The search was structured around three thematic clusters corresponding to the main constructs of the study: (1) accounting transparency and financial reporting quality; (2) audit practices, audit quality, and corporate governance; and (3) the gig economy, platform organizations, and digital labor markets. The following Boolean search strings were applied across title, abstract, and keywords fields:

Cluster 1: (“accounting transparency” OR “financial reporting quality” OR “financial disclosure” OR “accounting practices”) AND (“organizational performance” OR “stakeholder trust” OR “corporate Governance”)

Cluster 2: (“audit quality” OR “audit practices” OR “external audit” OR “internal audit” OR “auditor Independence”) AND (“trust” OR “organizational performance” OR “financial transparency”)

Cluster 3: (“gig economy” OR “platform economy” OR “digital labor platform” OR “freelance work” OR “on-demand work”) AND (“accounting” OR “financial Governance” OR “transparency” OR “organizational performance”)

The search was restricted to articles published between 2019 and 2025 to ensure contemporaneity of the evidence base, with the exception of foundational theoretical works, such as Jensen and Meckling (1976) on agency theory and Freeman (1984) on

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stakeholder theory, which were included regardless of publication date given their canonical status in the literature. The search was conducted in June 2025.

Eligibility Criteria and Selection Process

Inclusion criteria were defined as follows: (a) peer-reviewed articles published in journals indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus; (b) articles written in English or Portuguese; (c) articles addressing at least one of the three thematic clusters defined in the search protocol; (d) articles with full text available for analysis. Exclusion criteria comprised: (a) conference papers, book chapters, working papers, and grey literature; (b) articles that addressed the search terms only tangentially or in unrelated disciplinary contexts; (c) duplicates identified across the two databases.

The selection process proceeded in three stages. In the first stage, titles and abstracts of all retrieved records were screened for relevance by the researcher, applying the eligibility criteria. In the second stage, full texts of potentially eligible articles were reviewed in detail to confirm their relevance and quality. In the third stage, a final corpus of sources was assembled, supplemented by backward and forward citation searching to capture relevant articles not retrieved by the initial search strings. In total, the final reference corpus comprised 20 peer-reviewed scientific articles and 4 institutional reports, representing a purposive but systematic sample of the most relevant and current evidence available on the study's research questions.

Analytical Procedure

The selected articles were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was conducted in six phases: familiarization with the data; generation of initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report. The coding process was organized around the three main constructs of the study, accounting transparency, audit practices, and organizational performance in the gig economy, as well as the theoretical frameworks of agency theory, stakeholder theory, and signaling theory that provide the interpretive architecture for the synthesis.

The thematic analysis was complemented by theoretical synthesis, in which findings from the literature were interpreted through the lens of the three selected theories to generate an integrated explanatory framework. This approach, sometimes described as theory-building through literature review (Jaakkola, 2020), is particularly appropriate for studies that seek to extend existing theoretical frameworks to new empirical domains, as is the case here with the application of financial governance theories to the gig economy context.

Limitations of the Method

As with any methodology, the systematic literature review approach adopted in this study is subject to certain limitations. First, the restriction of the search to Web of Science and Scopus, while ensuring scientific quality, may have excluded relevant contributions

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Perspectivas Contemporâneas
Revista Eletrônica de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas

published in journals not yet indexed in these databases, a concern that is especially pertinent for emerging research areas such as the gig economy, where publication in newer or more specialized venues is common. Second, the restriction to English and Portuguese-language publications may have introduced a linguistic bias, potentially excluding relevant contributions in other languages. Third, the qualitative and theoretical nature of the study precludes the generation of causal or predictive claims; the relationships identified between accounting transparency, audit practices, and organizational performance in the gig economy remain theoretical propositions that require empirical validation through primary data collection. Despite these limitations, the systematic and transparent approach to source selection and analysis enhances the reliability and reproducibility of the study's findings, and the triangulation of multiple theoretical frameworks strengthens the validity of the theoretical synthesis produced.

Theoretical Integration: A Framework for Financial Governance in the Gig Economy

The foregoing analysis suggests that accounting transparency and audit practices operate as complementary and mutually reinforcing mechanisms within the governance architecture of gig economy organizations. Drawing on agency theory, stakeholder theory, and signaling theory, it is possible to articulate an integrated framework that illuminates the pathways through which financial governance contributes to trust-building and organizational performance in this distinctive context.

From an agency theory perspective, accounting transparency and independent auditing function as monitoring mechanisms that reduce information asymmetries between platform companies and their multiple principals, investors, workers, consumers, and regulators. In the gig economy, where the conventional employer-employee relationship is replaced by contractual arrangements that obscure organizational accountability, the monitoring function of accounting and auditing becomes especially critical. Robust financial disclosure enables principals to assess whether platform agents are managing resources in accordance with legitimate objectives and legal obligations (Hendrastuti & Harahap, 2023).

Stakeholder theory extends this analysis by highlighting that the principals to whom gig platforms are accountable extend far beyond shareholders. Workers who depend on platform income for their livelihoods, communities that bear the social costs of precarious employment, and regulators tasked with enforcing labor and tax laws all have legitimate interests in the financial conduct of platform companies. Accounting frameworks that capture the full range of stakeholder impacts, including labor costs, tax contributions, and social protection expenditures, enable more comprehensive assessments of platform governance and performance.

Signaling theory completes the framework by emphasizing the strategic dimension of accounting and audit quality. In markets characterized by information asymmetries, as the gig economy invariably is, high-quality financial disclosure and credible independent auditing serve as signals that distinguish trustworthy platforms from opportunistic or unreliable competitors. The willingness to invest in accounting transparency and rigorous auditing communicates organizational integrity to the market, reducing perceptions of risk and lowering the cost of capital for platform companies committed to long-term sustainability.

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Perspectivas Contemporâneas
Revista Eletrônica de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas

The integration of these three theoretical perspectives generates a framework in which financial governance mechanisms operate simultaneously at three levels: monitoring (reducing information asymmetries), accountability (addressing multi-stakeholder obligations), and signaling (communicating organizational integrity to the market). This three-dimensional framework positions accounting transparency and audit practices not as mere compliance functions but as strategic instruments for value creation and sustainable performance in the gig economy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theoretical analysis developed in this article yields several important insights that both contribute to the academic literature and carry practical implications for platform governance. First, the study identifies a fundamental tension at the heart of gig economy financial governance: the business model incentives of platform companies, particularly the classification of workers as independent contractors to minimize costs, are structurally misaligned with the requirements of transparent, comprehensive financial reporting. This tension is not merely technical but reflects deeper questions about the purpose and scope of accounting in the context of new organizational forms.

Second, the analysis reveals that the accountability gaps characteristic of the gig economy generate systemic risks for multiple stakeholder groups. For investors, the absence of standardized financial reporting frameworks for platform labor costs creates material uncertainties that complicate valuation and increase investment risk. For workers, the lack of transparent income reporting and tax compliance support leaves them financially exposed and socially unprotected. For regulators, the informational asymmetries generated by algorithmic opacity and worker misclassification undermine the effective enforcement of labor, tax, and financial regulations.

Third, the study demonstrates that accounting transparency and audit practices offer a viable pathway for addressing these accountability gaps, provided that they are designed and implemented in ways that account for the distinctive characteristics of platform-based business models. This requires not only the application of existing accounting and auditing standards, such as IFRS and ISA, but also the development of new disclosure frameworks that capture platform-specific variables, including algorithmic management practices, worker income distributions, and the full scope of contingent labor costs.

A significant milestone in addressing these structural asymmetries is the European Union’s Platform Work Directive (PWD), which introduces a legal presumption of employment, effectively shifting the burden of proof to digital platforms (Katterbauer *et al.*, 2026). From an accounting and auditing perspective, this regulatory shift forces platforms to internalize labor costs into their balance sheets, demanding unprecedented corporate disclosure. Moreover, comparative regional analyses demonstrate that absent unified transnational standards, digital corporations exploit geographic regulatory disparities, performing regulatory arbitrage between heavily audited Western European markets and more vulnerable regions (Demirtaş & Şahin, 2026).

Fourth, the theoretical integration of agency theory, stakeholder theory, and signaling theory provides a comprehensive explanatory framework for understanding why financial

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governance matters in the gig economy. The findings suggest that the benefits of accounting transparency and audit quality accrue not only to investors, as agency theory would predict, but also to a broader range of stakeholders whose trust and cooperation are essential for the long-term sustainability of platform businesses. This stakeholder-inclusive perspective aligns with emerging trends in ESG reporting and integrated reporting frameworks, which are increasingly being adopted by major platform companies under regulatory and investor pressure.

Fifth, the study highlights the enabling role of technological innovation in strengthening financial governance in the gig economy. The adoption of AI-driven audit tools, blockchain-based transaction records, and cloud-based accounting platforms creates new opportunities for real-time financial oversight, anomaly detection, and transparent reporting that conventional audit approaches cannot easily replicate in the high-volume, distributed environment of digital platforms.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article has examined the role of accounting transparency and audit practices in building stakeholder trust and enhancing organizational performance in the gig economy. Through a theoretical framework integrating agency theory, stakeholder theory, and signaling theory, and informed by a systematic review of current literature indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, the study has demonstrated that financial governance mechanisms are not peripheral but central to the sustainability and legitimacy of gig economy organizations.

The gig economy presents distinctive governance challenges that render existing accounting and auditing frameworks partially inadequate: worker misclassification, algorithmic opacity, dispersed transaction records, and multi-stakeholder accountability obligations all require innovative approaches to financial disclosure and audit practice. The analysis suggests that platforms that invest in robust accounting transparency and high-quality independent auditing are better positioned to attract investment capital, achieve regulatory compliance, retain worker loyalty, and build the long-term relational capital that underpins sustainable organizational performance.

The theoretical contributions of this study are threefold. First, it extends the application of agency theory to the multi-principal, multi-agent dynamics of gig platform governance, demonstrating that the monitoring function of accounting and auditing must account for a broader and more diverse set of principal-agent relationships than traditional corporate governance frameworks recognize. Second, it integrates stakeholder theory to argue for expanded accounting disclosure requirements that capture the full social and economic impact of platform operations on workers, communities, and regulators. Third, it applies signaling theory to explain the strategic value of voluntary investments in accounting transparency and audit quality for gig platforms competing in information-asymmetric markets.

The practical implications of the study are equally significant. For platform managers, the findings highlight the strategic importance of investing in accounting transparency and audit quality as instruments of competitive differentiation and risk management, rather than

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treating them as compliance burdens. For regulators and policymakers, the analysis underscores the urgency of developing standardized financial disclosure frameworks that capture the distinctive characteristics of gig economy business models. For investors, the study provides a framework for assessing the governance quality of gig platforms as a key indicator of long-term performance risk.

Future research should explore these themes through empirical investigation, examining the relationship between accounting quality, audit practices, and organizational performance in gig economy platforms using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches. Additional research is also needed on the development and validation of specialized accounting disclosure frameworks for platform-based business models, as well as on the impact of ESG auditing on stakeholder trust and legitimacy in the gig economy context.

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