




## Is an Affiliate Marketer a Decent Work for Generation Z in Indonesia?

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### Abstract

**Background:** Affiliate marketers have grown significantly as they serve as promoters, connecting e-commerce platforms with social media audiences and providing profitable income opportunities.

**Objective:** This study assesses the alignment between affiliate marketing practices in Indonesia and the decent work indicator as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Additionally, the study aims to compare respondents' income before and after engaging in affiliate marketing.

**Method:** This study employed random sampling to select a sample of 25 affiliate marketers from the Jabodetabek region in Indonesia. Participants responded to 23 questions developed based on the 11 Decent Work Indicators established by the ILO, utilizing a 1 to 4 ordinal scale. The research utilized k-nearest neighbors clustering analysis to categorize respondents into groups aligning with the ILO's decent work indicators. To assess changes in respondents' income, paired Wilcoxon tests were employed.

**Results:** Exploratory data analysis indicates that Indicators 1 (Employment opportunities) and 7 (Equal opportunity and treatment in employment) align well with ILO's indicators. Cluster analysis confirms that Indicators 1 and 7 share a high-performance group. In contrast, Indicators 6 (Stability and security of work) and 9 (Social security) exhibit the lowest alignment. There is no statistically significant income difference before and after becoming affiliate marketers.

**Conclusion:** Exploratory data analysis indicates that Indicators 1 (Employment opportunities) and 7 (Equal opportunity and treatment in employment) align well with ILO's indicators. Cluster analysis confirms that Indicators 1 and 7 share a high-performance group. In contrast, Indicators 6 (Stability and security of work) and 9 (Social security) exhibit the lowest alignment. There is no statistically significant income difference before and after becoming affiliate marketers.

**Keywords:** Affiliate marketing, Decent work indicators, International Labor Organization, Social security

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## 1. Introduction

Economic activity in the digital society continues to increase in Indonesia as the percentage of internet users increases from 32.34 percent in 2017 to 62.10 percent in 2021 (BPS Fungsi Statistik Ketenagakerjaan, 2021). This makes digital business actors discover new business models and increase interactions with and between consumers. One of these business models is known as electronic commerce (e-commerce) (Ahi et al., 2023). E-commerce is the selling or buying of goods or services over a computer network with specially designed methods for receiving or placing orders (OECD, 2019). The number of e-commerce businesses in Indonesia in 2021 was recorded at 2,362,423 businesses (BPS Direktorat Statistik Keuangan, 2021). With the rapid development and widespread penetration of digital marketing, we can see significant support from the many affiliates who collaborate with companies to promote their products (Suman & Khan, 2022). Affiliates come in a structure that allows companies to completely delegate marketing responsibilities to them through proper arrangements, which are measured through parameters such as sales, leads, and pay-per-click (Shopify Staff, 2023).

The performance level of affiliates, reflected in the commissions paid to them for services provided, is a key indicator of the work done. By entrusting marketing functions to affiliates, companies can achieve several benefits, including expanded reach, improved reputation, rapid increase in website traffic, as well as generating high-value leads (Mangiò & Di Domenico, 2022). It can also contribute to increasing sales, turnover, and overall profits of the company. Statistically, affiliate marketing created a \$13 billion industry, with forecast growth of \$21.8 billion by 2022. Data shows that 75% of merchants utilize affiliate marketing, and 95% of affiliate marketers see it as a profitable model (Christino et al., 2019). It is predicted that by 2022, affiliate marketing will account for around 10% of total e-commerce sales.

In the era of advancing digitalization, the transformative impact on employment is unmistakable (Braña, 2019). This paradigm shift not only signifies job displacement but concurrently gives rise to a formidable challenge—unemployment. Within the context of Indonesia, a nation grappling with economic dynamics, the statistics underscore the severity of the issue. According to the Central Statistics Agency, out of the 143.72 million individuals constituting the workforce, a staggering 8.42 million are currently unemployed (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). This figure is indicative of a burgeoning trend, exacerbated by the pervasive influence of digitalization, resulting in the obsolescence of traditional occupations. However, amidst this complex scenario, the advent of e-commerce emerges as a dual-edged phenomenon. While it contributes to the erosion of certain employment avenues, it concurrently unfolds new prospects, thereby serving as a potential remedy to the pressing predicament of unemployment.

Research on affiliate marketing has been ongoing since 1946, but as of 2022, there have been only 46 international publications with this keyword in the Scopus database. These studies mainly focused on business categories, empirical and case studies, and a variety of factors (Solichin et al., 2022). This study fills a gap by exploring affiliate marketing potential to combat unemployment and research the alignment of affiliate marketing with ILO Decent Work Indicator, which is still limited. Apart from the literature found, a considerable amount of research on affiliate marketing focuses on internal affiliate marketing, sports betting, the role of affiliate marketing in social media, and various operating systems. Research on affiliate marketing so far has been limited to, for example, trust, different product categories, affiliate fraud, and information disclosure, as well as directing traffic and customer activities through affiliate marketing. However, research on whether affiliate marketing can reduce economic unemployment through income improvement is still scarce in marketing literature and related studies. Therefore, affiliate marketing should be comprehensively examined to assess its impact on increasing the income of affiliate participants, potentially serving as a solution to address the issue of unemployment. This study provides new perspectives on leveraging affiliate marketing for socio-economic development.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. *Affiliate marketing*

Affiliate marketing is an online strategy for enhancing productivity, through performance-based commission rewards to affiliates for successful referrals (Beleraj Cand & Qemali, 2018). Affiliates can help promotions reach a wider audience than those focused solely on regional or major market advertising (Hill & Shao, 1994). There is a difference between traditional influencer marketing and affiliate marketing influencer. Traditional influencers collaborate with brands to promote products on their social media, whereas affiliate marketing influencers partner with e-commerce platforms to promote various products available within those platforms. In traditional influencer marketing, payment can be a flat fee or per-post basis, whereas in affiliate marketing, influencers are compensated through commissions on product sales (Syrdal et al., 2023).

The rapid growth of online marketing suggests increased potential and affiliate marketing chances to grow. Excellent quality service can help affiliate marketing grow as an income stream. To create outstanding affiliate content, content should endorse high-quality products and ensure their affiliations link directly to individual products rather than just the homepage (Beleraj & Qemali, 2018). The language used in content for brand promotion can influence the psychological impact on customers and their inclination to click or make a purchase (Syrdal et al., 2023).

Affiliate marketing involves the collaboration of three entities: the merchant, the marketer, and the consumer (Suresh, et al., 2018):

1. Merchant: Online retailers in e-commerce.
2. Marketer/affiliate network: Promoter affiliate links using social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and blogs to generate revenue, to link retailers and customers. The networks provide specialized tracking links to different affiliates.
3. Customer: Social media audiences who potentially make purchases from marketers in e-commerce.

### 2.2 *Decent Work Indicators*

Decent work remains one of the most important factors in an economy dominated by informal employment. Decent work is crucial for inclusive development and poverty alleviation (Banerjee & Kundu, 2020). Higher income is an important factor associated with a higher likelihood of being assigned to a very decent job rather than a vulnerability-dominated profile (Blustein et al., 2023). Decent work has a moderate correlation with well-being with a correlation value of 0.48 (Su & Chan, 2023).

The ILO Decent Work Indicators serve as a tool aligned with international standards to analyze various aspects of decent work. The concept of decent work is an essential part of sustainable poverty reduction and equitable development and is supported by the establishment of ILO comprehensive indicators to monitor its implementation. The Decent Work Indicators are (ILO, 2013):

1. Employment opportunities
2. Adequate earnings and productive work
3. Decent Working Time
4. Combining work, family, and personal life
5. Work that should be abolished
6. Stability and security of work
7. Equal opportunity and treatment in employment
8. Safe work environment
9. Social security
10. Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation
11. Economic and social context for decent work

### 3. **Method**

#### 3.1. *Sample / Participants*

The total sample of the research respondents in this study amounted to 25. The characteristics of these respondents are Indonesian citizens residing in Java island, aged between 18-45 years, having social media accounts, and having been affiliate marketers for the past two months.

#### 3.2. *Instrument(s)*

The research instrument consists of a set of questionnaire questions based on 11 decent work indicators published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) for affiliate marketer respondents. It has an ordinal scale of 1-4. Meanwhile, the analytical hierarchy process questionnaire is used for key informant respondents.

#### 3.3. *Data collection procedures*

In this study, the voluntary sampling method was used. A total of 25 affiliate marketer respondents who met the research criteria filled out the questionnaire and conducted direct interviews.

Voluntary sampling is sampling based on the willingness of respondents who meet the criteria to participate in the survey (Murairwa, 2015).

#### 3.4. *Data analysis*

The first objective of this study is addressed through descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is the process of describing or presenting collected data as is, without the intention of drawing broad conclusions or generalizations (Sugiyono, 2015). Then, the second objective of this research is addressed through the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The paired Wilcoxon signed-rank test is used to test differences between paired data, compare observations before and after treatment, and determine the effectiveness of a treatment (Astuti et al., 2021). Furthermore, the k-Nearest Neighbors (kNN) clustering is conducted to classify the indicator the alignment with ILO indicators. kNN clustering is a commonly used and straightforward method in data mining that is known for its effectiveness (Jaafar et al., 2018). The paired Wilcoxon signed-rank test and kNN clustering both are nonparametric statistical methods, that are typically chosen when dealing with datasets of limited sample sizes (Dwivedi et al., 2017).

### 4. **Results**

#### 4.1 *Respondents' Characteristics*

In the following section (4.1), the characteristics of the respondents will be examined, as they are presented in Table 1. This allows for an overview of the individuals involved in the study.

**Table 1.** Respondents' Characteristics

Category	Characteristics	Frequency (people)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	42.86
	Female	16	57.14
Age	18-19 years old	4	14.29
	20-21 years old	8	28.57
	22-23 years old	4	14.29
	24-30 years old	6	21.43
	31-40 years old	5	17.86
	40-45 years old	1	3.57
Status	Single	19	67.86
	Marriage	9	32.14
Last Education	High school	15	53.57
	Diploma	2	7.14
	Bachelor/Master	11	39.29
Domicile	Bogor	10	5.71
	West Java	8	28.57
	Tangerang	3	10.71
	Central Java	2	7.14
	East Java	2	7.14
	Depok	1	3.57
	Bekasi	1	3.57
	(Not available)	1	3.57
	(No other job)	17	60.71
Occupation	Private employee	3	10.71
	Entrepreneur	3	10.71
	Professional	3	10.71
	Digital industry	2	7.14

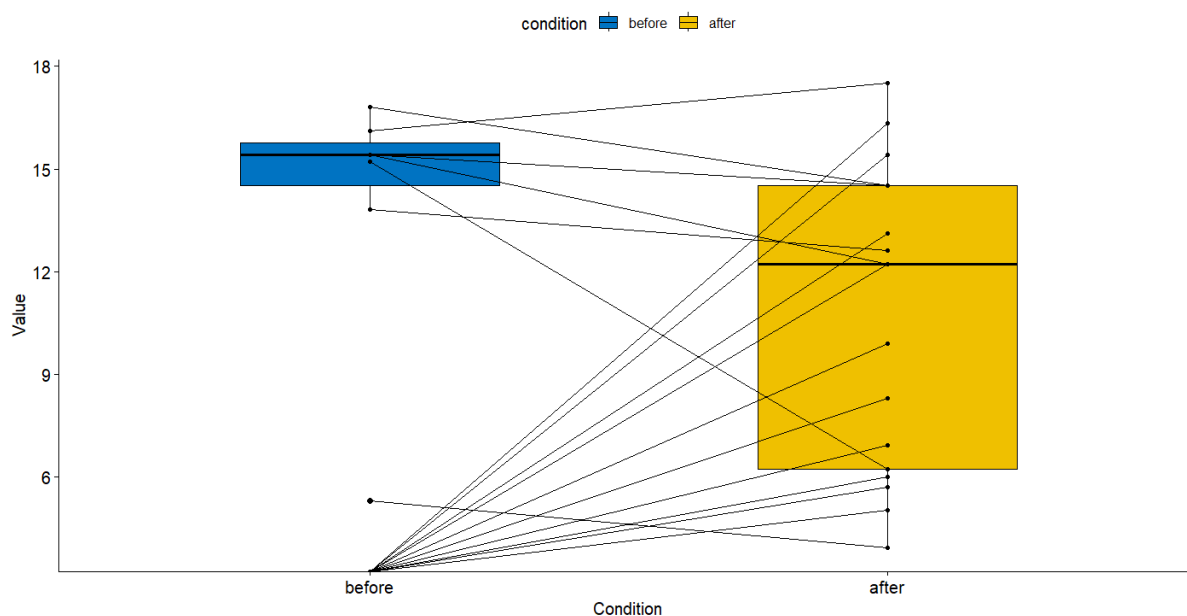
Table 2 presents a detailed examination of various affiliate marketing activities. The breakdown of tasks conducted by affiliate marketers in promoting products or services is provided, offering their roles and the scope of their activities. This information is vital for gaining an understanding of the dynamics of affiliate marketing practices within the study's scope.

**Table 2.** Affiliate Marketing Activities

Category	Characteristics	Frequency (people)	Percentage
Social Media for Promoting	T iktok	15	53.57
	Instagram	12	42.86
	WhatsApp	7	25.00
	Facebook	6	21.43
	Twitter	1	3.57
	Youtube	1	3.57
Duration of Being an Affiliate	<1 year	7	25.00
	1-2 years	12	42.86
	2-3 years	6	21.43
	3-4 years	1	3.57
	4-5 years	1	3.57
	>5 years	1	3.57
Type of Content	Video self-created	18	64.29
	Video original product	16	57.14
	Picture original product	10	35.71
	Text self-created	7	25.00
	Text original product	7	25.00
	Picture self-created	0	0.00
Frequency of content upload per week	0.5	4	14.29
	1	7	25.00
	2	3	10.71
	3-5	3	10.71
	6-7	6	21.43
	8-50	4	3.57
	>51	1	14.29

#### 4.2 Income Structure as Affiliate Marketings

This study compares the monthly income of respondents as affiliate marketers with their income in their previous jobs. For respondents who did not have a previous job, their income is considered as 0. Overall, the mean income after and before becoming affiliate marketers is denoted as I1 and I2, respectively. The standard deviation of income after and before becoming affiliate marketers is represented as S1 and S2, respectively. The visualization is shown in Figure 1.



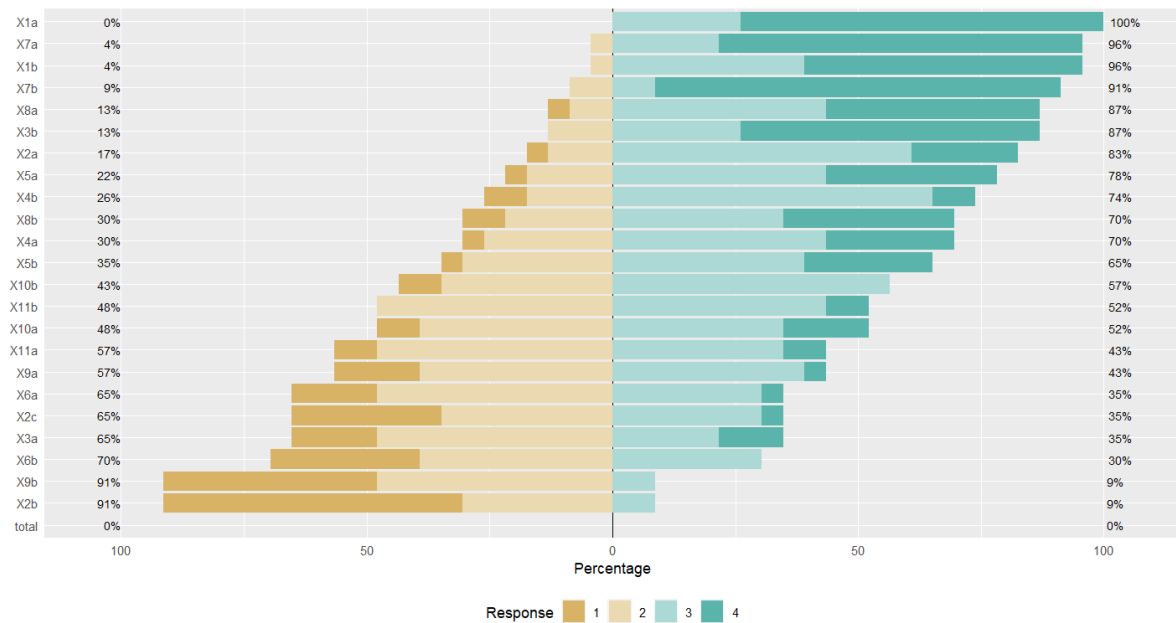
**Figure 1.** Change of income before and after being affiliate marketing

A paired Wilcoxon test was conducted to assess the statistical significance of the changes. The test statistic,  $V$ , gives the result of 2.13. This result is equivalent to a p-value of 0.4592 that indicates that there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis at a typical significance level (e.g., 0.05). In other words, the test did not find a statistically significant difference in income before and after individuals became affiliate marketers.

Although the test results did not show statistical significance, this can be attributed to the fact that the respondents who participated in the survey were relatively new affiliates, lacking established promotional habits for their affiliate products. In an in-depth interview with an affiliate who has been in the field for three years, it was revealed that to attain a stable income, an affiliate marketer should possess an adequate customer database.

#### 4.3 Affiliate Marketing' Perspective on Decent Work Indicators

To assess the alignment of affiliate marketers' job roles with the ILO Decent Work Indicator, a survey was conducted using 23 questions that encompass all 11 indicators. Figure 2 visually summarizes these perspectives, offering insights into their perceptions and alignment with ILO standards.



**Figure 2.** Questionnaire responses from affiliate marketer's perspective on decent work indicator

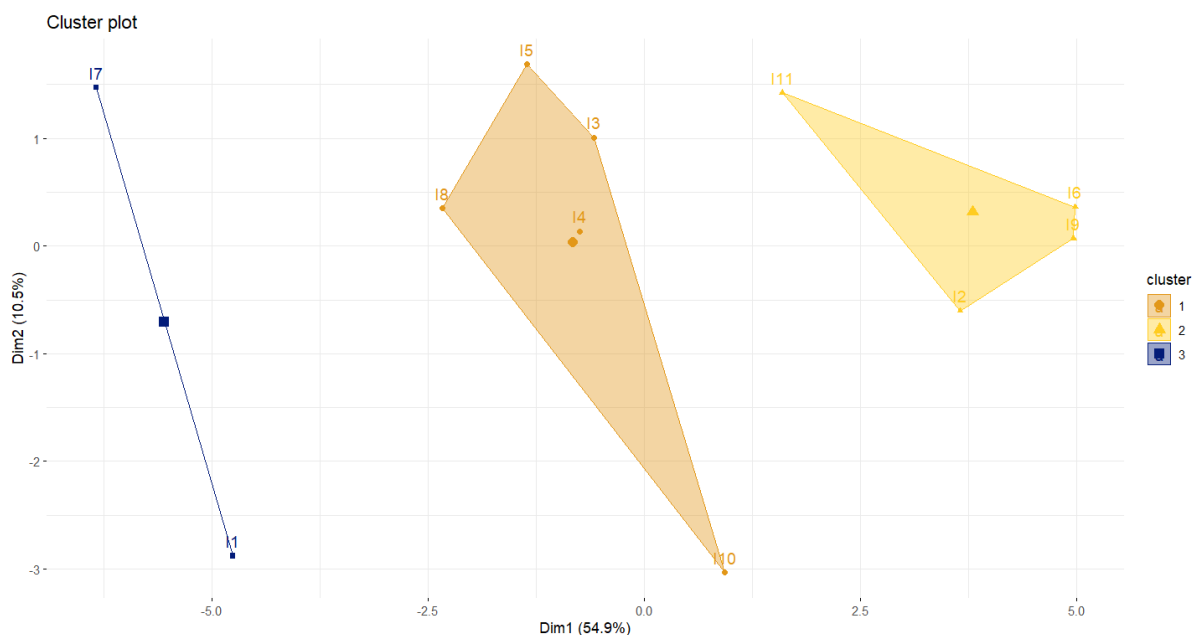
Figure 2 illustrates the viewpoints of affiliate marketers regarding the alignment of their jobs with the 11 Decent Work Indicators established by the International Labor Organization (ILO). These indicators were assessed using a total of 23 questions.

Within this diagram, it is evident that specific indicators stood out prominently. For instance, Indicator 1 (Employment opportunities) and Indicator 7 (Equal opportunity and treatment in employment) are notably positioned in the top 5 bars. This positioning signifies that affiliate marketers perceive these two indicators, related to employment opportunities and equal treatment in employment, as being already well-aligned with their activities as affiliate marketers.

However, it's important to note that even though a threshold of 80% has been set for responses falling within the scale of 3 or 4 (representing "good" or "very good"), there are still 17 questions that fall below the ILO standards. This observation highlights that the alignment between affiliate marketing activities and the criteria for decent work defined by the ILO still requires further enhancement. In other words, there is room for improvement in ensuring that affiliate marketing practices align more comprehensively with the ILO's standards for decent work.

#### 4.4 Decent Work Indicators Clustering

To further delve into the intricate patterns and groupings within the affiliate marketing landscape, K-nearest neighbors (KNN) clustering, depicted in Figure 3, reveals distinct clusters among the indicators.



**Figure 3.** Clustering map of affiliate marketing's decent work indicator

Figure 3 presents the results of the K-nearest neighbors (KNN) clustering analysis applied to the 11 Decent Work Indicators. This analysis has unveiled three distinct clusters within the affiliate marketing landscape. The first cluster, positioned on the left-hand side, exhibits indicators that strongly align with the principles of decent work. In the middle, the second cluster represents medium alignment, indicating areas where improvement may be needed. On the right-hand side, the third cluster highlights indicators with the least alignment with affiliate marketing activities. For a detailed breakdown of which specific indicators are grouped within each cluster, please refer to Table 3.

**Table 3.** Alignment affiliate marketing's decent work indicator cluster members

Cluster Name	Characteristics	Decent Work Indicator
1	Well aligned	(1) Employment opportunities (7) Equal opportunity and treatment in employment
2	Moderate aligned	(3) Decent Working Time (4) Combining work, family, and personal life (5) Work that should be abolished (8) Safe work environment (10) Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation
3	Bad aligned	(2) Adequate earnings and productive work (6) Stability and security of work (9) Social security (11) Economic and social context for decent work

Furthermore, Cluster 1 has a within-cluster sum of squares of 44.74, Cluster 2 has a higher within-cluster sum of squares of 26.38, and Cluster 3 has a within-cluster sum of squares of 5.25. The ratio between sum square and total sum square is 57.6% indicating the proportion of the total variation in the data that is accounted for by the differences between these three clusters. The clustering algorithm has successfully identified significant differences between the three clusters, explaining a substantial portion (57.6%) of the total variation in the dataset.



## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 *Affiliate Marketing Alignment with Decent Work Indicator*

The clustering result reveals three groups. Cluster 1 (well-aligned) consists of indicators that naturally align with affiliate marketer roles. Equal opportunities are characteristics highly in line with affiliate marketers. Affiliate marketing gives equal opportunity to everyone to be it. While online earning opportunities are boundless, affiliate marketing stands out as an exceptionally dynamic avenue. It provides an equal chance for individuals to monetize their interests and passions (Brown, 2009). When considering the adaptability of platform work, one can observe a higher likelihood of women's participation. Additionally, this form of work has the potential to contribute to gender equality, as there are no evident gender-based differences (Bayudan-Dacuycuy & Baje, 2021). Through ANOVA hypothesis testing, it is found that there is no statistically significant difference in earning opportunities between men and women (Kannan et al., 2019).

Cluster 2 (moderate-aligned) contains indicators that are more personal to individual affiliate marketers and may vary among individuals. Working hours, the type of content produced, and their relevance to personal life cannot be generalized across all affiliate marketers. This diversity is also reflected in their income, as indicated by the considerably high standard deviation of Rp 7,505,046.00, while the mean income for this research is only Rp 2,201,552.00.

Nonetheless, despite certain linguistic styles having the potential to negatively impact these behaviors, there are techniques available to transform affiliate marketing into a legitimate and high-earning profession. The analysis reveals that particular linguistic approaches can enhance engagement, making these strategies invaluable for affiliate marketers seeking to excel in their field (Syrdal et al., 2023). The profit of affiliate marketing relies on how frequently customers click on the affiliate network's registered link. The link serves as a commission monitoring and distribution system for affiliates (Chattopadhyay, 2020).

External factors like values, experiences, technology, and needs also play a fundamental role in affiliate marketing (Patrick & Hee, 2019). Moreover, the predominant influencer is the social media algorithm, serving as the catalyst in determining how affiliate content is disseminated to potential consumers. The dynamic algorithm nature of social media platforms makes each user's feed is unique, based on individual demographics and personal information (Eg et al., 2023). These factors contribute to the distinct characteristics of each affiliate marketer concerning their work schedules, work-life balance, and job security.

Cluster 3 (not aligned) comprises indicators that require external intervention, particularly from the government, as they relate to socioeconomic stability and security. Affiliate marketers' views on this matter are as follows.

### 5.2 *Managerial Implication*

Government support is essential for providing stability and security in affiliate marketing, along with social security benefits tailored to each individual in the field. Occupational safety and health are paramount priorities within the implementation of decent work indicators by the ILO, aligning with the concept of Universal Occupational Health Coverage (UOHC) and ILO Convention No. 161 (Rantanen et al., 2020). Policymakers should prioritize and give special attention to the most vulnerable workers in the labor market (Elmetwally, 2022).

This means that government intervention and support are essential to ensure that affiliate marketers can benefit from the stability and security of their work, as well as social security. In doing so, affiliate marketing can be a reliable source of decent work, which contributes to overall socio-economic development.

## 6. Conclusions

Affiliate marketing is a feasible work that provides companies with various advantages, including expanded reach, enhanced reputation, and increased profits. It is widely adopted and considered

profitable by many marketers. Exploratory analysis found a strong alignment of Indicators 1 and 7 with ILO standards, while Indicators 6 and 9 lag behind. No significant income change was observed. This study suggest extending social security for better alignment. Recommending the extension of social security benefits to affiliate marketers can enhance Decent Work Indicators, thereby fostering greater alignment with international labor standards.

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