



FREELANCING –a NOVEL OPPORTUNITY for YOUTH amid CORONA PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT- Freelance human capital is an emerging and novel innovation in the field of self-employment. Technological advancement and electronic business are fundamental in freelance initiation. The declared collapse of the traditional career model and outbreak of Covid-19 became the reason behind the growing phenomenon of freelancing in many countries. Hence, the study is designed to analyze the Pakistan's economy regarding the freelancer's contribution and their perception about the opportunity, amid Corona virus pandemic. Data was collected from a web survey with responses of 210 freelancers in Pakistan. The study was exploratory that augmented the understanding of the job in reference to freelancer's perception and its impact on their life and economy. The Study accomplished that the environment in which freelancers are working not only conducive & manageable, but also enjoyable. The freelancing was providing job opportunities for many young graduates and also a source to utilize their free time optimally. Young graduates gained the earning & experience on one side and a platform to apply and boost their skills on the other side. The study therefore suggested that more youth should be aware and train according to the work demand of freelancing career. The government should pay attention to this unique opportunity for youth employment and provide them free facilitation and guidance to join the workforce by means of opening several training institutes.

Keywords: Freelance Human Capital, perception of Freelancing, Income generation, Freelancing and growth, employment generation

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the financial crunch of 2008, the global world commercial enterprises productivity has been tapering. The world was endeavoring to normalize that suddenly the Corona-19 attacked on the economic system of the world in November 2019. Intrusive from china the pandemic penetrated the whole globe and sluggish the production activities. Millions of people become unemployed. Developing countries had been already suffering due to having fewer job opportunities that stab of Corona pandemic aggravated the issue. At this critical moment, e-commerce and freelancing proved a blessing that assisted the national economy in the employment sector in several ways. The first and very basic it brought job opportunities for the highly skilled individual and connect them to the customers and firms from where they can earn as aweigh to their abilities, render a link to the international market without any huge investment, and made easy to work without moving from their places. It also provided all their services to the firm and at the international level from their home or wherever they were easy to work at. Secondly, e-commerce and freelancing was not just providing job but also helping in sectoral development related to the ICT sector and stipulating more job to them such as, software engineering that developed software's and applications for freelancers, specialists in making of e-commerce sites and websites, technicians in shops and many other sectors which provide a helpful hand in e-commerce (Sundry et al. 2007).

Freelancing became fairly more popular amid the Pandemic of COVID-19. Small businesses and large companies alike are taking advantage of hiring experienced professionals online to handle much of their growing to-do lists. Freelancer are widely recognized to helping the modern business to be more resilient, brisk, entrepreneurial, and inventive, working as front line major forces for a broad range of industries (Rowland and Handy 2012). Freelancing has been playing an influential role in business mainly taking tasks from customers and fulfilling them by their creative minds, increasing the flexibility and swift mobility to modern business by many skillful minds (Menninger and Gottschalk 2007). There are many advantages to hiring freelancers; they work at different times of day and night. Moreover, hiring online can keep businesses operating smoothly around the clock. The small businesses noticed online more than

traditional ways; get more responses through strong social media campaigns and websites. Through internet product is visible to the billions of people surfing the web every day.

The outbreak of freelancing is considered a mythological being in recent years, with mostly development in self-account owners rather than employees of office (National Statistics 2014a). In the world where the internet has global coverage and the main power of communication, Freelancing has become a warm welcomed profession for trillions of people all around the globe specifically amid Corona Pandemic.

Freelancing provides supply of easily working hours and work locations, superiority over the standard of projects, and a wide variety of projects, experience, and income generation. Nonetheless, financial Insecurity, isolation, bound to home and not specified working hours; loss of salaried benefits, wearing all those different hats is among few challenges. Despite several challenges, freelancing is a type of employment that needs none of the physical capital. Therefore, Freelance services are acquiring value day by day due to Corona Pandemic by providing an itinerary to the young generation for earning. Moreover, it is getting attention in public policies of modern business. To cater the infant construct of freelancing and its role in economic development and youth employment, there is an immense need for research in this modern era for modern creativeness. This sector is fragmented, so an immense demand is germinating for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to explore this era. There are so many questions to explore the current subject matter.

There is a diverse structure to be explored about freelancing. Notwithstanding, This study sheds light upon certain facts that stipulate review of freelancing, The context will better instruct the public policy, industry practice, and career choices. The study addressed the issues regarding the perception of freelancing concerning freelancers. How freelancer's cognizance their profession? What is the impact of freelancing on the life of freelancers? How the freelancing contributes towards the welfare of freelancers?

The Study is a pioneer in Pakistan regarding the freelancing sector specifically during Pandemic. Freelancing is an emerging concept and opportunity. To aware the youth regarding the options available to them in the endorsement of freelancing itself is a novel contribution in literature as well as in employment generation and economic development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Freelance human capital refers to highly skilled independent individuals who provide certain utilities either to firms or one to one customer .Freelancing (online self-employment) is the bud of technology. One of the most emphasizing and highly recognized emergences in today's modem business is the arrival and use of freelance human capital.

Freelance human capital has been providing many beneficial services to firms. Firms have also been progressively hiring and working with freelancers on contractual bases for a short period. A study by Bruke (2011) emphasized the freelancers as a labor market model. The study showed that potential savings for firms have been very high while working with freelancers rather than with hired employees for whom firms have to pay high as well as have to offer some sort of other services, like medical, apartments, etc.

Freelancers being new creative minds promote innovation in economies by entrepreneurship. In a corresponding study, Bruke (2012) accentuated that freelancers are not bound to a few tasks. Their services can be utilized for multiple purposes, on each stage of a new impetus development. From just start-up to boosting business growth by fulfilling all the tasks whether it's managerial, technical, or professional.

It has been genuinely risky for firms to hire employees to enhance their businesses, especially when terminus progress is not achieved and the total cost is high. The freelancers provide option to take up a variable cost (pay as you go) labor model which reduces the risk of unsustainable labor costs (Armstrong, 2013).In this way; freelancers are helpful for firms to boost their businesses and to develop a new venture. Moreover, Freelancers are providing and serving with their services from home or where they are easy at working, armed only with a portable computer and a broadband connection (Bögenhold et al. 2014).

Freelance human capital facilitates the whole process of Electronic Commerce (EC) (Joh Browning and Spencer Reisis, 2012). The study of Rana and Norouzi (2016), analyzed the effect of e-commerce, Research and Development (R&D) on economic progress in some selected 21 countries by Panel model technique and GLS method, focusing on purchasing power parity, health expenditure, government size, and

GDP growth by using primary data source from 2005-13. From the panel co-integration model, it was observed that all the services including e-commerce, research and development, government size, health expenditure were interconnected with the GDP per capita depending on the purchasing power parity. Further, it was concluded that e-business, Research & development had a clearly positive impact on GDP per capita. Nonetheless, it was e-commerce depicting outstanding share in the modern economy and GDP per capita. Other variables like government size, health and expenditure though had a positive impact on GDP per capita yet had a lesser share.

Increased e-business contributed to the high competition which put downward pressure on prices and finally resulted in a slower pace of the price rise and thereby a lower inflation, was investigated by Ohman(2018).The Study inferred that e-commerce has a negative impact on inflation , if e-commerce would increase with one percentage point; the inflation would decrease with 0.23% point. Similarly, Nuray (2011) studied the influence of e-commerce on international trade and employment mainly focusing on prices and productivity by using secondary data sources. The study analyzed that e-business lowers the price of products and increased the productivity as many markets developed; Further that e-commerce provided job opportunities and skills to employees.

Summarizing the debate, it can be said that EC has opened the new avenues for the economies, freelancing is one of them. Freelancers have the whole world in front of them to explore their potentials. Freelancing is the best innovation of the present time. This leaflet has huge potential to support the business economy. There are so many gaps available in this field to be filled up. However, this study cannot screen all of them. Visualizing the emerging situation of Freelancing specifically amid the Corona Virus, this study analyzed the competition, challenges, and opportunities for freelance human capital.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research pursued the exploratory and the analytical research design. The study of Yin (1994) stated that exploratory research design is a valuable means of getting an idea about what is happening around? Therefore, this research aims to provide new insight into the topic by collecting primary data directly from different FREELANCERS. In this way, the primary source of data collection was interview and questionnaire, while the secondary data source includes published research papers, books, and articles (where it was required for cross-check and validation).

The questionnaire was developed on Google form and the link to the form was shared with the population. The questionnaire used for the current study was based on respective items. Moreover, the questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Division of questions	
Section 1	Demographic information
Section 2	Perception about Freelancing
Section 3	Impact of Freelancing

IV. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Total of 210 respondents answered the survey questions among population of all freelancers working in Punjab generally and from Dera Ghazi Khan mostly. Among the different categories, we focused on the highest percentages to deduce the general results for the question designed for the study.

Demographic analysis of respondents indicated that this job is most popular among unemployed young graduates of middle-income group having the responsibility to feed other. As among the total respondents 56% were male and 44% female. Most of the participants were young of the age group 21-30(83%).The family income of the participants was mostly between “25k-100k”, a total 83% were belonging to this average income level group. Most of the respondents had bachelor’s degree (14 years of qualifications, 68.1%). Whereas, 48% of the participants were married and 47% were unmarried. Most of the participants

53.8% were unemployed and having no official job therefore working as freelancers. There were 47% of respondents that have the responsibility of 2-4 other persons to feed and look after.

Respondents' answers regarding freelancing perception demonstrated distinctiveness. There were 71.42% of the participants that strongly agreed with the statement that the English language, learning, and understanding of English in freelancing is important, similarly, (69.52 = 70%) were also strongly in favor of computer training and computer knowledge to take start in freelancing. According to them, English and computer training should be compulsory. There is a need to learn English as well as computer education, because freelancing has no boundaries for customers. Customers are belonging to the entire globe. The medium of international communication is most often English and computer skills are inevitable to take the projects. Hence, both are prerequisites of this job. Among all 60% participants were strongly agreed that there should be prior training compulsory courses or diplomas before starting freelancing as Job alternative. Interestingly, respondents recognized the reality and strongly agree that there is no survival in freelancing without both of these subjects learning. Freelancing is a much more widespread and diverse form of work organization for both freelance workers themselves and for the businesses that engage them. Though the expertise yield on with practice and step by step improvement, yet basic learning is essential to outset any task. Therefore, preliminary courses related to the freelancing job requirements are considered to be crucial. Only 40 percent of the respondents were agreeing with the statement that freelancing can be done by hit and trial efforts. Regarding training, 30% said no need for training; whereas 70 % was in favor of training either it should be 3months, 6 months, or more than that. Trainings are required to endow the workers with skill demanded. Likewise, there is a large prevalence of high and low skilled freelance workers. Entrepreneurs often use a mix of independent types to complement their existing workforce.

On the whole, the perception regarding the demand of the job, most of the respondents were agreeing that job is easy, manageable, having the flexibility of time, no restriction of time. Though hard work is always a key to success yet here most of the respondents have thought that it is a comfortable job option therefore they acquired it. Regarding the threats prevailing in freelancing, of no job security and others, respondents seemed to have no fear as it is believed that excellence make it path itself and no one can fire you. Tasks are attained at own capabilities and background. According to 52.52% of participants freelancing job is very easy to manage and no need to follow the strict dead line working requirements. It is manageable. Similarly, 48% were disagreeing that there is a need for hard-working in freelancing. Hence, it is clear that working as a freelancer is easy to manage. Regarding Job security, 78% were not agreeing with the statements that there is no job security. According to them the job is secure as far as someone is honest with their work.

Among several interesting facts, one regarding the freelancing popularity is availability of greater number of varieties in Job. Regarding the option available in freelancing, there were 42% that said there are varieties in Job "to greater extent" and 31% said "to more extent. Hence most of the participants consider freelancing as a versatile job option. Similarly, almost 81% of the participants responded that there are opportunities available to pertain and utilize the acquired knowledge and skills in freelancing. Furthermore, almost more than 81 % of participant said there are so many opportunities available in this job therefore everyone can get the option to utilize his past knowledge and learning. Everyone has the opportunity to avail the options of his choice, therefore optimization of acquired skills formally without any hurdle and negativity around. Hence, freelancing is the best option of earning in all aspects.

It was usually considered that such online jobs demand time velocity. Customer's demands to complete the task in given time frame generate stress. However, in our study, it is found that some times and occasionally there is a need for high speed work response, otherwise normally there is always plenty of time flexibility. There were only 33% who said high-speed output is the requirement of this job always, whereas 31 % said frequently. Similarly, the remaining 44% were not in favor of this outlook. According to them sometimes or occasionally high-speed results are demanded. Otherwise, there is plenty of flexibility in time to complete the task assigned.

Most imperative about this job is the satisfaction gained, there were altogether 75% participants, who said they gain maximum satisfaction from work. Political/regulatory market and technological developments as well as the time period of COVID-19 have contributed to the growth of freelancing in recent times that has also enhanced the satisfaction level of freelancers. They are earning at their ease.

Regarding the impact of freelancing on life, work and choices, 15% of participants said that they started freelancing due to good source of income, 12% said that this is a job where less efforts are required as compared to other jobs of same earnings; similarly, 22% said that there is less time restriction to follow in this job and freelancer can do their task at any time of their choice. 23% said that less stress and pressure of work is the sole attraction in this job. There is no pressure of the boss and no stress given by boss. Everyone is his own boss. 29% were of the view that Job is flexible in all reverence. Women should also take part in freelancing because it is easy to manage at home (70% responses). Similarly, almost 72% of total respondents said that they will continue this job in the future. Most of the participants said that they are enjoying and satisfied therefore plan to continue it. Hence on the whole maximum respondents were giving preference to this job due to its nature of flexibility. Whereas, 53% of participants joined freelancing because they were unemployed and got no alternative jobs, specifically during the period of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, remaining 47 percent joined due to other reasons and was not unemployed in fact. Hence, job flexibility and graceful alternative to generate income at home is the grounds of actual fame of freelancing in the young generation. It provides a respectful opportunity to earn and enhance the welfare of the family.

V. CONCLUSION

This research derives a hypothetical model that is based on empirical observation of conduct in which the value of freelancing is recognized. Freelance workers present a special challenge in terms of collective labor organization. The freelance workforce is not a paradigm shift in the creative industries nor does it appear to be based on the new cognitive content. It is simply a modification in the working environment that is manageable without any specified boundaries of wall. Freelancers are adding value to the businesses. The evidence comprises that freelancing is relatively high value-added segment of the labor force which is particularly useful in dynamic and innovative business environments. In essence, freelancers are a cheap shadow workforce with the skilled specialized that enable businesses to reduce: barriers to entry, risk, and financial requirements while enhancing: business agility, flexibility, and efficiency.

Freelancers are viewed as important inputs that enable an innovation-driven and entrepreneurial economy to perform at a lower cost. During COVID-19, the model of freelancing proved itself as the best mode of employment generation and business option.

Contrary to past practice where an individualistic and highly dispersed workforce was recruited that was not only difficult and time taking but also costly, the freelance workforce resolved the difficulty. The evidence indicated recruiting and organizing a more mobile and individualistic workforce is win-win proposition. Freelancers are giving more consideration to this opportunity due to its flexibility and easiness, whereas, gains to be made both in terms of providing services to a potentially vulnerable group of workers and in building new constituencies for a modern workforce.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

It is suggested that Governments should be more concerned about this novel opportunity of employment generation for the young and should design programs to create awareness among the young generation.

Recent cuts in public expenditure to reduce the national burden have also coincided with the significant expansion of self own working. Such a compositional shift in the aggregate workforce would tend to increase the proportion of freelancers independently, individual preferences to work on a freelance basis. Hence, Freelancing courses should be designed formally and training should be provided to young graduates.

Using freelancers is one means of achieving flexibility, alongside a range of flexible working practices, including part-time, temporary, fixed-term, agency, annual hours, zero hours, shift, and home-based working. Such flexible job options enhance the welfare level of individuals, so freelancing should be provided with the special endorsement from society and should be part of effective policy formulations.

VII. LIMITATIONS

Collectively, different forces give rise to an overall trend in freelance working. At present, we can only draft out the basic outlines. Further research is required to explore the role and significance of this important, expanding business and labor market group.

Further investigation is needed, inter alia, on the scope of information on freelancing collected by national and international statistical authorities. There is also a need to analyze in greater depth the comparability of data provided by individual countries in order to assess the need for necessary adjustments and harmonization.

There has been a longstanding debate about whether freelancer represents 'good work', but little direct evidence on intrinsic job quality in any detail. All the limitations can be addressed in future research.

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