

The role of Online Freelancing: Increasing Women Empowerment in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study analyses the role of online freelancing in increasing economic women empowerment with mediating effect of transition in economy of Pakistan. It notably evaluates the impediments to work faced by women such as, household autonomy, online freelancing IT based, professional identity, and financial independence. It goes on develops the notion of freelancing and chances for Pakistani young people in general and especially for ladies. The investigation involves a primary survey and an online survey. Research findings demonstrate the ability to influence freelance. Women's empowerment and their involvement are inclined towards the growth of Pakistan's digital economy. There are also restrictions, such as the lack of knowledge about working remotely and the fear of failure. This project can help in the implementation of some of these measures, taking account of the limited research on transition in economy of Pakistan due to freelancing, its perspectives and gaps in activities.

Key words: Online freelancing, women empowerment, household autonomy, digital economy.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Pakistan has seen the highest rates of unemployment in the past five years ranging from the 0.16% in 2016, while decreasing a bit in 2017 by 0.14% and increasing 4.08% in 2018, 4.45% in 2019 was the peak of unemployment (Heeks, 2017). Most of the economic setback came last year when the COVID hit the economy and most people had to either work from home or quit their jobs due to corporate downsizing (Hassan, Iqbal & Shakir, 2020). Hence, the phenomenon of remote working got more popular with male and female employees and those who got unemployed. Moreover, women in Pakistan are also not a part of the major labor force due to the social and household pattern followed in the country (Kaabi, Elanain & Ajmal, 2018). The primary reason women really aren't jobless arise from the obligation of looking after kids and old, limited work prospects, lack of cheap daycare, and level of education (Kathuria et al., 2017).

1.2 Problem Statement

In light of the growth of the work and technology market, study aims at analysing the effects of freelancing as a means to boost women's market involvement and the country's capacity to encourage this platform. (Graham & Anwar, 2019). Various researchers are also primarily concerned about the link respectively productivity and innovative and effective together. Moreover, the phase of pandemic of COVID has also impacted the job market and hence there is strong need for a job source that provides individuals with a remote working access and as well as a source of income (Nawaz et al., 2020).

1.3 Research Objective

Freelancing is a key employment opportunity that is prevailing due to the current situation of unemployment and women autonomy in a household. We refer to instances where a person normally works for himself, works for multiple firms or people on tasks and is generally compensated for each job through on-line self-employment. Web design, logo design, creative writing and accounts are frequently part of the work. The freelance worker frequently works from home or somewhere else unrelated to the company/person that pays for the employment.

Hence, the research objective for the study is given as:

- To examine the effects of online freelancing on the women economic empowerment in terms of financial independency, professional identity and household autonomy with the mediation effects of economic transition in Pakistan.

1.4 Research Question

What will be the effects of online freelancing on the women economic empowerment in terms of financial independency, professional identity and household autonomy with the mediation effects of economic transition in Pakistan?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is based on the economic overview of the women empowerment statistics in Pakistan and the hence the research findings of the study will be useful for the economic development of the country. Moreover, the freelancing market also needs development and the statistics of women empowerment in the Asian market can help the freelance giants understand the opportunities and threats of the market. Moreover, it is also important for the corporate giants to keep a check on the employment market and for the purpose the findings of this research are important to understand the employability factors and the economy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Pakistani Outlook of Freelancing

Pakistan is a country with a middling income in South Asia which has suffered consistently high unemployment among women and young people (Malik, Heeks, Masiero & Nicholson, 2020). The bulk of the public are females and therefore can join conventional jobs due to the constraints on workplace freedom and home chores (Nawaz, Zhang, Mansoor Hafeez & Ilmudeen, 2020).

During the last years, the Government has made considerable investments in the online economy in order to increase the integration of women into employees, especially in the Ministry for Information and Communication Technology. Self-employment generally offers work in tech fields such as digital marketing and IT, financial services and accounting, client assistance, administration of projects and writings (Malik, Heeks, Masiero & Nicholson, 2020).

Many women do not have these capabilities, thus the government has devised a programme to teach women on such services (Nawaz, Zhang, Mansoor Hafeez & Ilmudeen, 2020). It is free and provides technical skills and productivity to be enhanced. This was effective when 15,000 individuals were recognized freelancers, while another 500,000 indicated a desire in taking part in the education (Nawaz, Zhang, Mansoor Hafeez & Ilmudeen, 2020).

As a result, the status of women in relation to their job chances has been significantly improved. A new survey shows that 25% of freelancers are females and do better than males in the country (Malik, Heeks, Masiero & Nicholson, 2020). Their achievement is \$2 greater than that of males. In addition, the government has been trying methods to encourage current IT businesses to train and gain evidence leading to increased payments for women in

such facilities.

Thus, Pakistan has opted to expand its commercial viability through the outsourced and freelancing with the increasing growth of digital technologies (Malik, Heeks, Masiero & Nicholson, 2020).

2.1.1 Challenges of Freelancing

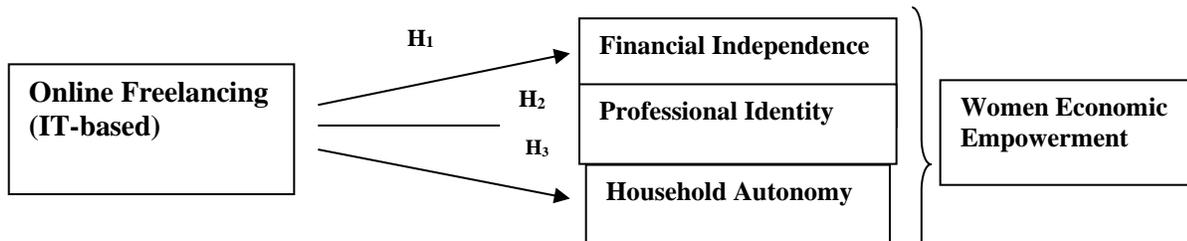
The work also has its drawbacks. Initially, while conducting freelance projects, there is a lack of security. Because continual work is not guaranteed (Nampewo, 2018). Once the job has been finished, the contractor is very likely not to restart the agreement. This gives the service provider an opportunity to become unemployed by having large revenues throughout a month. This is one of the greatest problems in freelancing. According to an UpWorks research, roughly 63% of free labourers see the absence of security as their main hurdle in financial processes (Malik, Heeks, Masiero & Nich).

Positive impacts and taxes are another element that corresponds without security. In conventional employment, the employer shall be liable for health insurance including employment tax, whereas the workers themselves are liable for these charges. There is therefore no system of social safety (Gandini, 2016). This constitutes another hardship for free employees since, in addition to their work, they must manage their funds, accounts and invoices. Furthermore, specific situations might be expensive for health insurance. For 44 percent of freelancers, no social benefits or employment tax enforcement would seem to be a major challenge (Nawaz et al., 2020). With worldwide promotion having its connection advantages and hence greater employment options, it also means that rivalry amongst employees will increase. Concurrence, and from the other hand, leads to a probable decline in income when each worker proposes on projects (Malik, Heeks, Masiero & Nicholson, 2020).

Finally, there is increasing concern to see a decrease in quality of life as a result of this emerging type of employment. Research involving 1,100 independent employees has revealed that some 52 percent of remote workers will likely be left alone and isolated (Graham & Anwar, 2019). This is because a virtual platform transmits the operational environment. Since individuals work virtually without exchanges, the concentration is not just on tasks and inputs. Workers with only 15 minutes' socialization are projected to be 20 percent more active (Foong, Vincent, Hecht & Gerber, 2018). This demonstrates the importance of a social workplace. Furthermore, the way corporations regard freelancers might be connected to the sentiments of being left out. Because these labor expenses are not set, contractors tend to be driven by the desire to complete the project and so disregard the importance of the people completing the job (Nampewo, 2018). These scenarios can lead to stress and worry in the job, which can affect the wellbeing of freelancers.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the proposed topic is given below as:



The hypotheses offered in the model posit a linkage between freelancing, an area centred on the new information technology (IT) dimension, and the economic empowerment of the women of financial independence, professional identity and domestic autonomy. The model also shows the mediation impact of the economic change on women's economic empowerment elements with a view to increasing GDP. The assumptions are: The following:

H₁: Online Freelancing plays a significant and positive role in providing financial independence to the women of Pakistan.

H₂: Online Freelancing plays a significant and positive role in providing professional identity to the women of Pakistan.

H₃: Online Freelancing plays a significant and positive role in providing household autonomy to the women of Pakistan.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

The design of the research is an element that acts adhesively between the aspects of the research to make it a smooth yet flawless process (Gandini, 2016). Moreover, the research design also can comprehensively tie together the ends of data, analysis, and literature to formulate an outline for the research study. Furthermore, the research design helps the researchers to structure the research techniques to be used to collect and analyze data, which consequently answers the research questions (Perampalam, 2020). The research design comprises three essential elements: data collection, data analysis, and concluding the attained findings. The research design will be focused on data collection and analysis using the questionnaire. The research design that is best suited for the study would be the causal-comparative research design. Since the research is based on the role of Online freelancing on Pakistani woman who are primarily dependent on their male counterparts for finances and household decision making.

3.2 Population and Sample Size

The sample of the current study is based on the women particularly, the ones who do not have any sort of empowerment as stated in Nawaz, Zhang, Mansoor Hafeez & Ilmudeen, (2020). Half of the economy of Pakistan is based on the females and many of which who do not work or aren't financially or socially empowered (Malik, Heeks, Masiero & Nicholson, 2020). Hence, the sample of the study would help the economist learn about the need female empowerment and how it can help the growth of national economy through the creation of online gig economy.

3.3 Data Collection Tools and Method

Data collection is a vital part of the research and helps in the analysis of research variables and creates relationships between the variables to answer the research questions. A strategy for essential information assortment is through the poll. It is an exact device of information assortment which has advantages of openness and measures the factors of enthusiasm with breadth. The structure of the survey is made out of inquiries that are either open-ended or close-ended (Heeks, 2017).

3.4 Data Analysis Method

The analysis draws its significance from data acquired by testing or interpretation of software (Gandini, 2016). In order to locate important data, develop conclusions and decision-making, the data analyses are a cycles of examination, purification, change and evidence. In addition (2017), according to Heeks, the purpose for Data Analysis is the collection of valuable details and the selecting of the data. The data analyses will be performed using SPSS regression analysis and the outcomes will be interpreted.

Results and Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.925 ^a	.856	.853	.24327

a. Predictors: (Constant), Household_Autonomy, Online_Freelancing_ITBased, Professional_Identity, Financial_Independence

Independent online (IT), financial independence, professional identity and a household autonomy model have an influence on women's economic empowerment and variation of 0.856%, i.e. 85.6% of dependent variable changes are caused by a separate variable.

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.370	4	15.842	267.695	.000 ^a
	Residual	10.653	180	.059		
	Total	74.022	184			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Household_Autonomy, Online_Freelancing_ITBased, Professional_Identity, Financial_Independence

b. Dependent Variable: Women_Economic_Empowerment

The statistically sig of ANOVA table that is below 0.05 and F shows that the model is significant. This illustrates the substantial influence of independent variables on the dependent variable and the model is fit.

Hypotheses Testing

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.155	.128		1.211	.228
	Online_Freelancing_ITBased	.278	.041	.282	6.736	.000
	Financial_Independence	-.021	.056	-.020	-.367	.714
	Professional_Identity	.609	.046	.640	13.135	.000
	Household_Autonomy	.094	.044	.105	2.146	.033

a. Dependent Variable: Women_Economic_Empowerment

Hypotheses Assessment Summary:

Hypotheses Assessment Table

Hypotheses	Sig	Results
There is an insignificant impact or relationship between Online Freelancing (IT-based) over Women Economic Empowerment.	0.000	Accept H1
There is an insignificant impact or relationship between Financial Independence over Women Economic Empowerment.	0.714	Reject H2
There is an insignificant impact or relationship between Professional Identity over Women Economic Empowerment.	0.000	Accept H3
There is an insignificant impact or relationship between Household Autonomy over Women Economic Empowerment.	0.033	Accept H4

Null Hypothesis:

There is an insignificant impact or relationship of Online freelancing (IT based), Financial Independence, Professional Identity and Household autonomy over on Economic Empowerment.

H1; According to the sig value of 0.000, less than 0.05, inline freelancing, which is based on IT, this suggests that there is an important economic empowerment effect, or relation, of online freelancing, which is not supposed to be a hypothesis.

H2; the sig-value of financial independence, 0.714 and above 0.05, imply kind of impacts or connection on the financial independence of economic empowerment that makes negligible hypotheses.

H4; As per the sig value of Household Autonomy, 0.033, that is below 0.05, there is a substantial economic empowerment influence or association of Household Autonomy which validates null hypotheses.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	185	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	185	100.0

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.932	5

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of inside consistency, that is, the way strongly related a structure of factors is as a gathering. It is thought to be a measure of scale unwavering quality.

It is used to examine the dependability of the data that how much variance of reliability is there in the data. As per the reliability statistics table that Cronbach's Alpha table reveals that there is 0.932, which is 93.2 percent that signifies data is 93.2 percent dependable.

Conclusion and recommendation

The objective of this study was to examine numerous facets of women freelancers' service offering. The initial stage in a long-term link between marketplaces is to executive compensation features. This study contains a variety of critical facts which might help platforms build better relations with self-employed individuals and improve the service quality of the platforms. The 0.856% effect of women on the empowerment of women online, financial independence, professional identity and the model for home autonomy suggests that 85.6% of variations in dependent variables account for an independent variable. This study is based on the core aim of identifying value characteristics and of individually presenting a value proposition. The preceding could have been the likely reason why the financial independence of women above economic empowerment might even be rejected.

Women freelancer cannot manage the beauty of freedom of movement: flexibility in work and no formal restrictions, but also the capacity of freelancers to labor for financial advantages that lead to stress. Women

freelancers must build a balance of their own, as time limitations are not present. The administration of freelancers planning is quite difficult in the early stage and will thus soon get tired. Time limitations might also be a concern, since freelancers require tight time limitations to spend little time with their family. The theoretical contribution of this work is to identify the aspects of value and to provide a proposal of value independently.

Numerous marketplaces allow for freelancing to provide consumers to spend quality life. Platforms can assist promote this value by promoting women's self-confidence. Freelancers may not be able to do a work because of a number of circumstances, such as lack of skills. On request, the platform may help freelancers to complete jobs by attaching them to other freelancers. Freelancing helps a wide range of applications in particular; freelancer has the choice and even the able to function autonomously. Freelancing gives people the feeling that they are their own boss. Women's empowerment also has economic relevance. Therefore there is substantial benefits to lease and share underutilized resources.

Freelancing offers a significant financial incentive to share information, skills, capabilities and time. The large percentage of entrepreneurs are part-time employees under the e-Lancing paradigm. Improved management of available provides higher economic benefits. This is a major cause for e-lancing by companies. Bargaining helps customers to get the best deal, whereas freelancers get good monetary benefits from increased revenue (i.e, time, skills and knowledge). Autonomy relates to the ability of someone to accomplish a job, how far and how far. In the psychology of companies, a high standard of independence mostly in job is found to contribute to better enjoyment and dedication. Freelancers experience a more dynamic and autonomous workplace culture in compared to corporate employers. Autonomy motivates and contributes to issues. The traditional marketplaces like Up work, Freelancer.com Fiverr, People per hour etc. allow women to gain their own employment independently.

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