

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE MOTIVATION OF FREELANCE WRITERS IN MALANG CITY AND THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCE IN SURVIVING AMIDST JOB AND CAREER UNCERTAINTY

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Abstract : *This phenomenological study explores the motivations of individuals in undergoing a career as a freelance worker in the midst of work and career uncertainty that often characterizes a work environment that has novelty both in technology and in flexibility. This phenomenological study highlights participants' experiences in pursuing a career as a freelancer amidst the uncertainty that often characterizes today's work environment. Through a qualitative approach that explores the direct experiences and thoughts of the research subjects related to what drives them to stay on a freelance path that tends to have no uncertainty. The results show that freelancers' motivations to persist in such uncertain conditions are complex and varied. Some freelancers may be driven by the freedom and flexibility that freelance work brings, while others may seek professional recognition or personal achievement. While others may also be looking to pursue new opportunities and income streams while freelancers are able to work multiple jobs. The research also identified challenges faced by freelancers, including financial uncertainty, pressure to retain clients, and the sense of social isolation that may be felt. In addition, research subjects often highlighted the importance of social support, knowledge of the freelance work method itself, and building a strong professional network.*

Keyword : *Freelance, Freelance Writer, Motivation, Gig Worker, Phenomonological Study, Job and Career Uncertainty*

1. INTRODUCTION

Freelance is increasingly widespread because some company employees do not have a significant impact on the company, so many companies recruit Freelance to work on company jobs or projects in certain fields of work. The search for workers outside the company is suspected because the manager of a business unit needs backup personnel (who are not part of the organization) to complete the job in a short time. This makes several lines of work, both businesses in the field of digital services and other businesses, require people outside the organization to complete some of these jobs. As a result, freelancers grow and are needed. On the other hand, since the advent of work from home (WFH), people are getting used to working anywhere.

This has caused the commodification of work to change a lot and is based on the potential of workers who do not meet the company's expectations in completing work. More than 600 US businesses with 50-500 employees, 63.3% of companies said that Management had difficulty retaining or hiring them and only 20% of employees were engaged with their work (zenefits.com: 8/7/2020). Meanwhile, online freelance websites that benefit from making extra money have become the largest crowdsourcing market with 32 million users, making this

job platform a provider of thousands of jobs that can be selected by job seekers (hostinger.co.id).

The World Bank report reported by Bisnis.com news (5/17/2020), shows that the growth of freelancers every year reaches 30 percent with a segment category aged 18 to 33 years. Meanwhile, according to the University of Brighton School of Business research report, 97 percent of freelancers are happier than office workers. In Indonesia itself, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) noted that in August 2020, there were 33.34 million freelancers and small businesses.

Freelancers can also be referred to as workers on demand or workers who want to work and can be needed at any time (Silitonga, 2018). The mushrooming phenomenon of freelancers in the current era has proven to be the desire of some people to get a main job.

Freelancers have risen to become the highest share of the workforce in eight years. The survey was proven in the international Gig Economy Media, namely Upwork's Freelance Forward 2021 Survey, confirming the findings, namely that overall, the percentage of freelancers in 2021 remained constant at 36% of the US workforce, but last year ushered in a change in the type of freelance work performed. That overall freelancing hasn't grown due to a decline among temporary workers and fewer freelancers among the less educated. In contrast, skilled freelancers continue to grow they are made up of people who resigned from their companies and are highly educated.

Malang City is also one of the 7 cities with the highest number of freelancers. Reporting from liputan6.com (29/30/2017) Director International Freelancer.com Sebastian Siseles said, Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest number of freelancers in the world. The number is even more than the number of freelancers in the UK. Sebastian Siseles also said, the number of freelancers in 2017 reached 1 million people.

In this phenomenon, researchers are trying to find further knowledge about freelancers in Malang City and how they think about the abundant workforce. The decision to become a freelancer is more or less due to the fundamental reason that flexible work arrangements have been identified as an important way to balance work, personal life and other commitments. On the other hand, the dual role factor of freelancers, job satisfaction also determines how work productivity reaches the target. The workload does not address the issue of wages paid, which each freelancer must also fulfill their own needs; namely the freelancer's physical and mental health and economic needs. Although most freelance work systems are through WFH, these workers often do not realize what they are suffering from; such as the physical burden of staring at a laptop all night, or paying attention to their health because freelancers are not regulated by conventional working hours.

This research takes several citations from several previous studies, namely, Sopiah, Sangadji, & Islami (2024) that flexible human resource management can contribute to the explanation of business innovation. This research provides evidence for the relevance of innovative work behavior and organizational learning capacity. Not only that, the ability to think creatively is essential for the functioning of any business, and flexible human resource management flexible human resources is an innovative technique that can be used to deal with economic and technological changes.

Then according to Pratikto, Sunyoto, Sudarmiatin & Sopiah (2023) regarding the influence of organizational culture, knowledge management, and entrepreneurial orientation on MSME performance; good knowledge is indicated by the ability of MSME actors to utilize knowledge, it increases the ability to innovate, especially product innovation and has an impact on improving MSME performance through product performance.

Then in Sopiah, Sangadji, & Narmaditya, (2021) showed the impact of organizational justice and self-efficacy on teacher performance in Indonesia and the role of internal motivation. Motivation findings in this study are a reference regarding how organizational justice and self-efficacy can affect teacher performance and correlate with internal motivation. In addition, internal motivation acts as a partial mediation of the relationship between organizational justice and teacher performance, and mediates self-efficacy and teacher performance.

Finally, Sopiah, Kurniawan, Nora & Narmaditya, (2020) who examined a total of 376 respondents using Google Forms to understand the role of work engagement in moderating talent management and employee performance using quantitative methods using path analysis to investigate the relationship between variables and the main role of work engagement. The results of this study confirmed that nurses' performance, in both public and private hospitals, was categorized as good, while work engagement and talent management were also categorized as high. The findings confirm that talent management has a positive effect on work engagement and employee performance. In addition, this study shows that work engagement plays an important role in moderating between variables and provides confirmation of the important role of talent management and work engagement on nurse performance.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher feels interested in further examining the experience of each informant regarding the meaning to see, clarify, enlighten, and understand the phenomenon as a form of Freelance experience along with opinions related to their profession and what motivates them. Will the performance of a Freelancer Writer improve on some of these components? For Robbins (2016: 260) argues related to performance criteria which are indicators to measure the extent of worker achievement or motivation such as (1) Quality of work, (2) Quantity, (3) Timeliness, (4) Effectiveness and Efficiency, and (5) Independence. A freelancer, must work on jobs according to client requests, within a certain period of time, sometimes, this creates its own workload and also many aspects that have an impact on the health of freelancers that are less noticed by the freelancers themselves. Therefore, this research focuses on Freelance Motivation to explore broadly the causes or things that influence the occurrence of this phenomenon.

2. METHOD

This chapter describes the research design that serves to explore the experiences of Freelance Writers in Malang City and what motivates them in the midst of work and career uncertainty. Some of the things discussed include; research design, sample of partisans, time and place of research, research ethics, data collection procedures, data collection methods and tools, data analysis, and data validity.

Type Of Research

This research uses Phenomenology. Phenomenology according to Rorong (2020) is a science that sees and studies phenomena that have appeared and are present in the midst of human life with a view directed at humans as part of experience. The main purpose of phenomenology is to see, clarify, enlighten, and understand phenonemana as a form of human experience. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence or meaning of life experiences from the perspective of individuals who have experienced them. Researchers will explore Freelance Motivation to explore extensively about the causes or things that influence the occurrence of the phenomenon. Qualitative research seeks to observe people in the environment, interact with them and interpret their opinions about the world around them, then

Sukmadinata in Falasifa I, & Umdaturrosyidah (2021) states that qualitative research is a study intended to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts of people individually or in groups. In the case study of Freelance Writer Motivation to survive in uncertainty and career, researchers are looking for all sources through the 2018-2023 freelancer phenomenon journal and how this research can explain the managerial scope of the freelancer itself. However, researchers here want to discuss the mushrooming phenomenon of freelancers in an individual perspective. Since business competition is expanding into digital competition, is this new style of working and business methods the answer to the welfare of freelance writers.

Sample And Population Of Research

The interviewees in this study are one individual who works as a digital marketing content writer, one individual who is an SEO in one of the online platforms, and one who is a freelance writer as needed. The researcher focuses on freelancers living in Malang city who have at least 2-3 years of experience based on their capabilities so that this research can become knowledge that has benefits; especially improving the quality of work from employers, which aims to increase the company's economic base while boosting the national economy in the country.

Table. Participant Profile

No	Name	Partisipant Status	Status/Data Quality
1	Fajar Dwi Arifandi	Copy Writer, Content Wrtier SEO Spesialist, founder Sediksi.com	Main informant/ Primary Data
2	Pramana Jati P	Blog Writer, Article SEO, Content Writer, Copy Writer	Main informant/ Primary Data
3	Rizka Ayu Kartini	Content Writer, Social Media Creator, Founder of Freelance writer community called Kepikiran deh	Main informant/ Primary Data
4	Aprilia Tri	Content Writer, Blog Writer	Main informant/ Primary Data
5	Gusti Ayu Made Kayika	SEO Spesialist, Content Writer	Supporting Informant / Secondary Data

Time And Place Of Research

This research will be conducted in the range of February – May (2024) until the data is completely saturated (saturated data). Saturated data can be interpreted about questions asked to informants after going through data triangulation and source triangulation if they have the same response so that's where the researcher decides to end the search for the number of Participants. The research site itself is individuals who are freelance writers in Malang City. If the willingness and completeness of the participants and researchers go well, this research can be completed soon.

Research Techniques

First, the technique in this study using *thematic analysis* is one way to analyze with the aim of identifying patterns and finding themes through the data that has been collected by researchers. Information from participants will be used as a reflective researcher and will later become the theme of this study.

Then using *data analysis and interpretation* explains an important issue in data collection that must be considered is “how it can be ensured or believed that the sample set is representative”. Representative is intended to be an effort made to see the data work, organize data, sort data so that it becomes a manageable unit, synthesize, search for and find important patterns about what is learned, and make the researcher's own decisions about what is told to other people or informants. Here is a chart that will serve as a reference for technical triangulation:

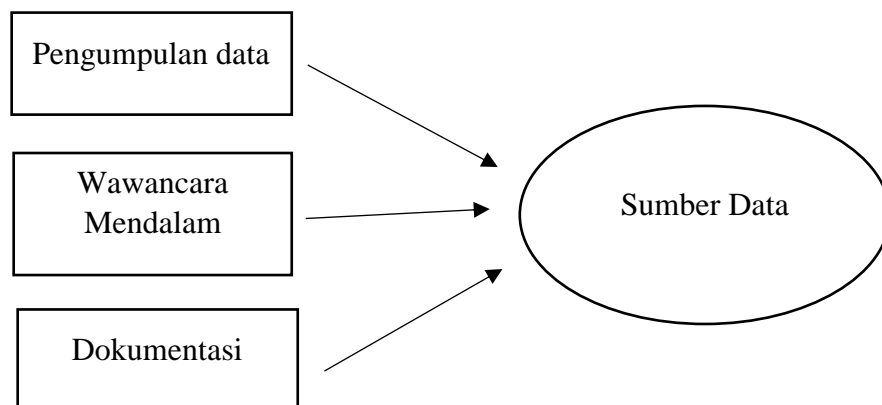


Image. Triangulation Technique (Sugiyono: 2017)

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Five of the participants interviewed by the researcher mostly had an interest in product, article, blog or SEO writing. In the beginning, some jumped in without considering this as their main job. Even during covid-19, some freelancers were needed by several companies and advertising agencies. On the other hand, the same desire for flexible working hours and economic factors are the basic reasons why some participants are in this job.

The results of this study also answer several research gaps such as in Sopiah, Sangadji, & Islami (2024), flexible human resources can contribute to business innovation. This is evident when the reasons for 5 participants who work as freelance writers have projections on future business innovation. In the freelancer culture itself, some organizations and work environments

are equivalent, trying to improve self performance or improve self performance according to the latest technology trends.

Second, in Pratikto, Sunyoto, Sudarmiatin & Sopiah (2023), the influence of organizational culture, knowledge management, and entrepreneurial orientation makes some freelancers have new opportunities outside their main job. Some freelancers have the motivation to achieve success and recognition in their own field. They want to show their abilities and expertise.

Third, in Sopiah, Sangadji, & Narmaditya, (2021) the impact of justice, organization, and self-efficacy on performance affects performance improvement even though some freelance writers have an interest in product writing, articles, blogs, SEO, and all kinds of aspects of knowledge about the value of equal autonomy such as economic value, work life balance and value proposition, and the absence of an increasing job hierarchy, making its own value for freelancers related to improving performance and an equal work culture.

Finally, in Sopiah, Kurniawan, Nora & Narmaditya, (2020) the role of work engagement in moderating talent management and employee performance, which in this study the subject is freelancers, has research results related to professionalism and how freelancers get used to new jobs. Freelancers often choose work that they like and enjoy, which in turn increases their motivation. The freedom to set work schedules and choose projects can be a source of internal motivation. It provides a sense of control and independence that may not be found in a conventional office job (Intrinsic motivation). Meanwhile, a strong external motivation for freelancers is income. They may have income targets to achieve and use this as a drive to accept and complete more projects. Freelancers' talents and engagement are driven by their freedom and flexibility, so some temporary freelancers who remain seek to motivate themselves in professional recognition or personal achievement. seeking new opportunities and also income that can be done while freelancers can do double work.

As the participants have experienced, in doing daily tasks and work, their perception to survive is to add to their experience as well as to learn to keep up with the times. In addition, some participants admitted that they needed digital sharing with other freelancers.

In terms of their internal motivation, some freelancers are motivated to achieve success and recognition in their own field. They want to show their abilities and expertise without depending on their boss or company. Then some freelancers like project work that matches their interests and passions can provide high personal satisfaction. Freelancers often choose work that they like and enjoy, which in turn increases their motivation. The freedom to set work schedules and choose projects can be a source of internal motivation. It provides a sense of control and independence that may not be found in conventional office jobs.

Meanwhile, a strong external motivation for freelancers is income. They may have income targets to achieve and use this as a drive to accept and complete more projects. Many freelancers are looking for a work-life balance. The ability to customize their own work schedule and spend more time with family or enjoy personal hobbies is a significant external motivation.

Independently produced performers have the flexibility to specialize in a particular industry or gain experience and skills in various fields of study. That allows for great bargaining power over future needs. In contrast to freelancers, permanent employees may not have the same level of flexibility to develop certain skills, as their job roles and responsibilities are largely defined by the employer. In that sense, freelance careers are not about the future and old-age security like pensions and whatnot - because that fact is indisputable; that freelancing is a unique type of work, forcing oneself to be creative because everything from administration, working hours, stability and responsibility is done by oneself.

No	Participant	External	Internal
1	Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Working on projects according to interests and passions to improve performance b) Independence and freedom c) Work life balance <i>Networking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Income financial b) Become reference material for one of the Sediksi.com Companies c) Time efficiency
2	Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) flexible b) No work pressure c) Other Freelancers and the Organization team have a good support system in the work environment. d) Wages and employability are provided through various facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Single (not Married_ b) Want to hone talent in the field of technology c) Gain experience
3	Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Many challenges <i>Work form home</i> dan more flexibility b) Work life balance c) Reputasi dan Review d) Nertworking and network growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Faktor Ekonomi b) Meningkatkan Kinerja dan profesionalitas c) Skill yang tidak dimiliki di tempat lain d) Bisa mencari peluang baru
4	Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Networking Sharing</i> b) Work form home and more flexibilty c) <i>Work life balance</i> d) Reputasi dan Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Economic Factors b) Critical Thinking c) Performance and Professionalism d) Can look for new

			opportunities
5	Participant 5	a) Network Sharing b) Seeking new experience in the field of SEO and also Technology c) Get a lot of modules and theories that become the basis of future work	a) Learning factors b) Independent Campus Program c) Implementing freelance professionalism into daily work

Even though most freelancers have short-term preferences, some of them still have new opportunities to try working elsewhere or create their own businesses.

4. CONCLUSION

From the conclusions in this study, the researcher obtained new perceptions from each participant there is a variety of unique answers. And another finding is that on average, almost all freelancers do not think with long-term goals. The application of flexible time at work makes them aware of the situation of work vulnerability, but from this situation some of the participants reflect between challenges and opportunities in surviving in this job.

The conclusion of the motivation is that some freelancers are motivated to achieve success and recognition in their own field. They want to show their abilities and skills without depending on the boss or company. Then some freelancers like project work that matches their interests and passions can provide high personal satisfaction. Freelancers often choose work that they like and enjoy, which in turn increases their motivation. The freedom to set work schedules and choose projects can be a source of internal motivation. It provides a sense of control and independence that may not be found in conventional office jobs (Intrinsic motivation). Meanwhile, a strong external motivation for freelancers is income. They may have income targets to reach and use this as a drive to accept and complete more projects. Many freelancers are looking for a work-life balance. The ability to customize their own work schedule and spend more time with family or enjoy personal hobbies is a significant external motivation (External Motivation).

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