

How Can Freelancing Help Unemployment in Belize?

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discuss how freelancing can be used to address the job gap in Belize. Due to the pandemic many organizations were downsized because employers did not have the funds to keep employees employed when they weren't profiting because operation hours were harmed because the world was forced to close to end the pandemic. As it stands, the pandemic has become an epidemic, and unemployment continues at an all-time high, particularly in Belize. Aside from the epidemic, there are other medical issues that cause people to be unemployed. Another significant difficulty is the scarcity of available jobs. This used a qualitative approach to allow the researchers to conduct one-on-one interviews with the 15 participants in the study. This method was chosen because it is useful for answering "how" and "why" questions, understanding a social phenomenon, and broadening knowledge. At the end of this research, it was revealed that freelancing can help Belize reduce unemployment, but it is not a permanent solution to unemployment. Another interesting finding revealed that people living without disabilities deemed freelancing as a more short-term solution to unemployment, while people living with disabilities view freelancing as a permanent solution to unemployment because it allows them to be employed, while traditional employment in Belize does not offer them a solution to unemployment.

Keywords: freelancer, freelancing, unemployment



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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an overview of the research and explain the significance of essential terminology required for comprehending the comprehensive study. This chapter will provide a clear understanding of freelancing and the research's objectives. It will also present the problem statement that the research aims to address.

Background of the Study

What is freelancing? Freelancing means to work as an independent contractor rather than be employed by someone else (Reynolds, 2023). Freelancers are commonly referred to as freelance workers, sole proprietors, independent contractors, or self-employed individuals. This chapter discusses how can freelancing can help unemployment in Belize. Belize has a population of just over 400,000 persons of those person only an estimated 190,037 is employed as of April 2023 (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023). This article goes on to mention; The labour force participation rate was 58.5 percent, a slight decline from 58.7 percent in October 2022, due to some persons exiting the labour force. When looking at gender as it relates to employment in Belize according to Statistical Institute of Belize (2023). Females continue to participate in the labour force at a much lower rate (45.8 percent) than males (71.6 percent). Furthermore, participation among married women was even lower at 41.6 percent, compared to 77.1 percent for married men. Among women, the main reason for not participating in the workforce was due to domestic duties or caring for a child or elderly person.

The current economy presents challenges in securing employment opportunities, primarily attributed to the recessionary effects stemming from the COVID-19 epidemic. This recession has been commonly labeled as "The Great Lockdown." This research aims to investigate the potential of freelancing as a means to alleviate unemployment in Belize. Becoming a freelancer is a rather straightforward process, since it just entails possessing a computer and a reliable internet connection, both of which are widely accessible in the current era. Freelancing is a relatively recent phenomenon in Belize, with the majority of Belizeans still engaged in traditional forms of employment. There are numerous advantages associated with freelancing that have the potential to mitigate the unemployment gap in Belize over time. In a scholarly essay authored by (Oquaye, 2023). a multitude of factors contributing to individuals' decision to engage in freelance work are explored. These factors encompass the need for flexibility in work arrangements, the pursuit of autonomy, and the potential to generate numerous sources of income. Working as a freelancer also provides

individuals with the autonomy to engage in projects that align with their personal interests and passions. In essence, freelancers possess the autonomy to exercise discretion in selecting the tasks they wish to undertake, so affording them the opportunity to concentrate on specific domains that resonate with their personal beliefs and interests. According to Akhmetshin et al. (2018), freelancing not only generates income for individual freelancers, but it also has a substantial impact on the global economy. In 2017, freelancers made a noteworthy contribution of over 1.5 trillion dollars worldwide, representing a significant increase from the previous year.

The aim of this study is to offer an alternative perspective on the concept of freelancing and assess its ability to alleviate the continuously declining employment rate in Belize. The unemployment rate in Belize had been high prior to the crisis and has persisted at a high level subsequent to the economic downturn. There exist numerous factors contributing to unemployment in Belize, including recessions, mental health issues, job outsourcing, disabilities, poor or inadequate education, and health crises. Freelancing presents a viable option for individuals who fall within certain categories, such as nursing mothers or those responsible for the care of old individuals. This form of employment gives flexibility and might be a suitable choice for those seeking employment opportunities. In a scholarly work authored by (Oquaye, 2023). it is mentioned that engaging in freelancing offers individuals the opportunity to exercise autonomy over their work schedules, a feature that holds special significance for individuals with additional obligations, such as the care of children or elderly relatives. Freelancing can also contribute to the enhancement of capabilities. It offers individuals the chance to cultivate novel abilities and get practical experience through engagement in diverse project undertakings. The significance of this is particularly pronounced in the African context, where there may be constraints on the availability of educational opportunities and vocational training (Oquaye, 2023). Crime rates in multiple Caribbean nations have experienced a significant surge since 2004, resulting in the current status of having some of the highest murder rates globally (IMF Blog, 2018). It is anticipated that an increase in the crime rate will coincide with high and consistent levels of unemployment. The challenging employment landscape has resulted in a rise in criminal activities throughout numerous islands.

Statement of the Problem

Unemployment is a widespread societal issue with far-reaching economic, social, and human consequences. Despite different efforts by governments, industry, and organizations to solve this issue, it continues to be a major challenge in many regions of the world. In Belize there is a high college graduation rate but no employment to offer graduates. Belize is a small English-speaking country in the Caribbean, with a population of 400,000 people. In the summer year 2022 approximately 1145 new college graduates emerged (Humes et al., 2022), but there were not enough jobs to accommodate all 1000 people, resulting in an unemployment problem. One of the most significant unspoken challenges in education is school teaches you to work for someone else rather than seeking opportunities to be self-employed. Earning a college degree is critical, but more entrepreneurial classes should be prioritized, especially during difficult economic times where job loss is high. Freelancing is one of the most cost-effective ways for someone to start their own business by branding themselves and marketing their services. Freelancers can begin with just a good internet connection and a computer, which most college students have after graduation because it is essential.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to look at how freelancing can help lessen unemployment in Belize. Since the COVID-19 recession, the unemployment rate in Belize has reached an all-time high, and this small country is battling to recover. This study will look into the freelancing choices available to unemployed people and examine if these techniques of self-employment will help to bridge the unemployment gap in Belize.

Questions of the Study

This research goal calls for it to answer the following questions based on the research purpose:

1. How can freelancing bridge the unemployment gap in Belize?
2. What are the challenges of being a freelancer in Belize?
3. What are the benefits of engaging in freelancing?

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to address the issue of unemployment in Belize. By investigating freelancing as a potential career path and determining whether it may be leveraged to close the present unemployment gap. This study seeks to give research on how to reduce unemployment in Belize. Data was collected from respondents as part of the process to add to the qualitative side of the research and lay the groundwork for future quantitative studies. The findings of this study can be used by the Belizean government to help reduce the country's current unemployment rate.

Furthermore, future scholars might utilize this work as a basis for conducting research on how the Belizean government can use these theories in practice. This research has the potential to affect policymaking and contribute to academia. According to the findings of this study, adding entrepreneurship into Belize's curriculum will be the first step toward freelancing as a viable career option. The government can use these findings to make future reforms in Belize. Overall, the research discusses not only what will be required to bridge the unemployment gap, but also the benefits of doing so.

Delimitations of the Study

This study examined the utilization of freelancing as a means of reducing the issue of unemployment in Belize. The study employed a qualitative methodology to obtain first-hand accounts from participants regarding their experiences as freelancers. Currently, unemployment is at its highest level. Belize has been grappling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak in its efforts to regain stability. This research included participants who possess expertise in the field of study to obtain their feedback on unemployment and freelancing in Belize. By understanding the significance of freelancing in the transition of individuals from unemployment to entrepreneurship, we aim to determine the possibility of implementing this approach nationwide in Belize as a means to reduce unemployment. The interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform, with each participant allowed 30 minutes to provide their opinion on the research in question.

Definition of Key Terms

Freelancing

In an article published by Reynolds (2023) it states that essentially, a freelance job is one where a person works for themselves, rather than for a company. While freelancers do take on contract work for companies and organizations, they are ultimately self-employed.

Unemployment

This study uses the definition of self-employed based on Australia (2023) Unemployment occurs when someone is willing and able to work but does not have a paid job.





CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the pertinent research on variables to back up the research question. It also goes through crucial terms that are important to the research. This research also provides data from previous research that is required for the objective of the research.

Challenges of Employment in Belize

Belize has a high prevalence of informal employment, meaning a large portion of the workforce operates in the informal sector without access to formal labor protections, benefits, or social security. According to Statistical Institute Of Belize (2023) Persons in informal employment accounted for 35.3 percent or 64,268 of the employed population, down from 41.2 percent in September 2021. This has made the workforce particularly vulnerable during the pandemic, as many informal workers faced job losses or reduced income without adequate safety nets. An individual may choose freelancing as opposed to informal employment because freelancing allows individuals to have more autonomy and control; Freelancing offers individuals the freedom to choose their clients, projects, and work schedule (Pinegar, n.d.). They have more control over their work and can exercise their skills and expertise according to their own preferences. As well Higher Earning Potential; Freelancers often have the opportunity to set their rates and negotiate their compensation directly with clients (Pinegar, n.d.). In many cases, freelancing can provide higher earning potential compared to informal employment, especially if the freelancer has specialized skills or works on high-value projects. According to a research by Reckmann (2023) it was mentioned that according to Upwork's data on freelancers, 44% of freelancers made more money than they did when employed at a traditional job. Additionally, the 2022 Payoneer global freelancer income report revealed a significant increase in the global hourly freelancing rate from \$21 in 2020 to \$28 in 2022.

When examining Belize, a developing country in the Caribbean, it is evident that their employment rate experiences frequent fluctuations. According to Statistical Institute Of Belize (2023) Belize's most recent round of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed that, in October of 2022, the unemployment rate stood at 5 percent. This research goes on to mention that this is the lowest level of unemployment recorded in the country to date, and was the result of both more persons finding jobs as well as persons exiting the labour force. Gains in employment were seen primarily in call centers, tourism and manufacturing. According to the data, unemployment has decreased in comparison to former years, but the unemployment rate

remains quite high. Those who work in information industries, such as tourism, manufacturing, and farming, are nonetheless paid the minimum wage. According to Labour Act Chapter 297, minimum wage is \$5.00 Belize dollar which was recently raised effective January 1st 2023 (WageIndicator.org, n.d.). Belize's previous minimum was \$3.30 Belize dollars and an average person works 45 hours per week so an average salary is \$148.50 BZ (Stotz, 2022). When comparing one salary to the average rent on one of Belize's biggest rental pages, an average home cost \$1600 Belize on the north side of Belize (Popelo et al., 2021). On the south side from experience the cost is \$800 Belize dollars. Informal employees find it hard making both prices and freelancing can bridge both gaps because a freelancer can set his or her own price which will be suitable for one standard of life. In a research by Reckmann (2023) it was stated that, While a freelance arrangement might lack the financial security of full- or part-time employment, freelance workers don't have to earn less than their traditionally employed counterparts. Freelancing can provide sufficient income for both unemployed individuals and those engaged in informal jobs, enabling them to cover their living expenses during economic downturns.

Governments and international organizations have implemented various measures to support economic recovery and job creation in Belize. These measures include fiscal stimulus packages, investment in infrastructure projects, and targeted social protection programs to assist vulnerable populations (Mende, n.d.). Beyond the immediate impact of the pandemic, Belize face long-standing structural challenges in their labor markets, including income inequality, limited social mobility, and skill gaps. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms and investments in education, vocational training, and economic diversification.

Implementing entrepreneurship into Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) education can bring several benefits for a country's workforce and overall economic development. Here are some reasons why a country should consider integrating entrepreneurship into TVET education; it drives Job Creation and Economic Growth; entrepreneurship is a key driver of job creation and economic growth. The successful implementation of TVET will empower youth and lifelong learners with the skills they need to transition to employment, enhancing their own, their employers' and their communities' sustainable prosperity (Mountford, n.d.). By equipping TVET students with entrepreneurship skills, countries can foster a culture of innovation, creativity, and business development. This, in turn, can lead to the establishment of new enterprises, the growth of existing businesses, and the generation of employment opportunities. Positive TVET sector outcomes will also be

driven through the embedding of strong leadership throughout the system, developed through the introduction of; leadership development programmes, training provider accreditation, and effective quality assurance models (Mountford, n.d.). It also encourages Self-Employment and Enterprise Development; TVET programs that incorporate entrepreneurship enable students to develop the mindset, knowledge, and skills required to start and manage their own businesses. By promoting self-employment, countries can empower individuals to create their own opportunities, contribute to the economy, and potentially become employers themselves.

When youths are unemployed, several negative consequences can occur, impacting not only the individuals themselves but also the society as a whole. Unemployment will eventually lead to poverty. Poverty and lack of financial resources escalate crime. When the rate of wages goes down, the rate of a crime automatically rises (IvyPanda, 2023). According to a research by Jaitman and Machin (n.d.). Homicide rates in the region are higher than they should be given countries' levels of income, poverty and inequality. The annual homicide rate of more than 20 per 100,000 people – more than three times the world average and 20 times the rate for the UK makes the region one of the most dangerous places on Earth. On average, six out of ten robberies in Latin America and the Caribbean are violent (Jaitman & Machin, n.d.).

These lead individuals to ask what is the cause for all these violence in such a small region according to research Some people steal as a means to survive due to economic hardship. In Belize crime rate & statistics for 2022 was 0.00, a 100% decline from 2021. Crime rate & statistics for 2021 was 31.25, a 20.98% increase from 2020 (Belize Crime Rate & Statistics 1960-2024, n.d.). Not being able to find a job or means to live will pressure individuals to violence (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Program, n.d.) . Freelancing can be a means to an end for youth unemployment because Freelancing allows young people to create their own jobs and become self-employed. By leveraging their skills, talents, and entrepreneurial spirit, young individuals can start their own freelance businesses and generate income without relying solely on traditional employment opportunities or falling to the norm of violence of those in the Caribbean and Latin America.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread job losses, especially in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, retail, and informal markets. Lockdown measures, travel restrictions, and reduced economic activity have directly impacted these sectors, leading to significant layoffs and business closures. Freelancing also nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset among young people. It encourages them to take initiative, develop business acumen, and think creatively about their career paths. This mindset can lead to the development of innovative

solutions, new ventures, and job creation opportunities beyond freelancing. Freelancing does so by Skill Development; Freelancing can serve as a platform for skill development and learning. Through freelance work, young individuals can gain practical experience, refine their skills, and explore different industries and projects. This can enhance their employability and future career prospects.

The unemployment rate in the Caribbean and Latin America is very evident. The youth cohort looms larger in terms of unemployment. An estimated 404,000 persons or 15% of the region's labor force are unemployed. Of this, 51% or 204,000 are between the ages of 15 -24. As a result, youth unemployment rates are substantially above the national averages across the region and average around 40% in the 15-19 age group and 30% in the 20-24 age group. Research reveals that the share of females in the total unemployment figure for youth is most consistently higher in the case of Jamaica across all three age groups between 16-29 (International Labour Organization, n.d.).

The reason for unemployment varies from person to person. Lack of Experience is a very evident disadvantage. Youth often lack work experience, which can make it difficult for them to compete with more experienced job seekers. Many employers prefer candidates with a proven track record or specific skills, which can put young people at a disadvantage. Another reason for youth unemployment is Discrimination and Bias: Discrimination based on age can impact youth in the labor market. Employers may have stereotypes or biases against young people, perceiving them as less reliable, lacking experience, or not committed to long-term employment.

Other variables can also be a reason for unemployment such as Education and skill mismatch and limited network and connection. Building professional networks and connections is crucial for finding job opportunities. However, young people may have limited access to such networks, making it harder for them to find employment through referrals or recommendations. Freelancing can be used to bridge all these disadvantages because freelancing offers opportunities for everyone and freelancers can choose which project they work on depending on their skills. Instead of trying to find a job in their oversaturated job market in their respective countries.

The Rise of Freelancing

A freelance worker often works as a sole proprietor of their business. A proprietorship is one of the most common business structures for small business owners. This business is owned by one person who controls the everyday operations and trade interactions. This

person is wholly responsible for the financial aspect of the business and is thus, fully liable, legally, for any and all obligations that involve litigation. This may seem like a dire disadvantage, but the advantages are numerous.

There is little to no oversight on financial records and no need for accountability to other bodies; the proprietor is fully in control. Financial data is kept private and there are fewer strict regulations than there are in limited liability partnerships and companies. The personal financial losses that they may incur may be impactful but so are the gains they could potentially have if they are not limited by the structure of a company. According to Akhmetshin et al. (2018), these sole proprietors who are working as freelance have been contributing significantly to the global economy with freelancers contributing more than 1.5 trillion, globally in 2017; which is a significant rise from 2016. Countries like India have been reporting more than 2.6 million unemployed persons in 2018, coming from the private sector alone. Sendilvelu and Shah (2021) cites that, although the private sector creates more jobs than the public sector, the employee intake is lower than usual because of the opportunity for investment in freelance work.

Freelance work in the present day has now become much more of a science than it has ever been. These entrepreneurs' strategies to navigate job searches, especially in turbulent times, are widely unknown. To address this gap, the author Ayoobzadeh (2021) hypothesized and examined a sequential mediation model, whereby freelancer career orientation (FCO) influences job search strategies through career competencies and job search self-efficacy (JSSE). What was found from the research involving these models is that the gaps that freelancers filled based on this FCO and JSSE lead to a significant decrease in unemployment over a decade-long span (Ayoobzadeh, 2021).

The long-term effects of freelance workers employing entrepreneurial roots, globally, will not be seen for many years to come. Nevertheless, the research has shown time and again that employing the strategy can significantly change the employment projections of a country and its workers (Beerepoot & Oprins, 2021). Salamon (2020) highlights that the entrepreneurs that are born from freelance work go on to develop larger firms and enterprises that can compete viably in the current economy. This competition is necessary for developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as it could stimulate economic growth and make countries a more product-diverse environment. With the use of new tools such as social media, the rise in entrepreneurs is sure to be seen.

The employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean has been significantly impacted by various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and pre-existing economic

challenges. Prior to the pandemic, Latin America and the Caribbean already had relatively high unemployment rates compared to other regions. However, the pandemic has further exacerbated the situation, leading to a significant increase in unemployment rates across the region. The estimated average regional unemployment rate of 7.2 per cent at the end of 2022 "is significantly lower" than that of 2019, before the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, when it registered a level of 8 per cent (International Labour Organization, 2023).

The emergence of the freelance option of internationalized work, enabled by information and communication technologies (ICT) in Latin America and the wider Caribbean, has been well-documented (Kleibert & Mann, 2020). Freelance work, according to Kleibert and Mann (2020), promotes the entrepreneurial drive in the workforce that has begun to be highly sought after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many employees have left the workforce in an attempt to establish their own businesses. This is also true for recent, younger graduates who have begun to enter an oversaturated workforce. Freelance work, as opined by Wright (2016), offers an alternative for income-earning that is viable, but is argued to be unsustainable. Online freelancing and impact sourcing have in recent times surfaced as new models for local and international freelance work (Gandini, 2016). Yet, the primary factor of freelance work lies in its intrinsic ability to impact the workforce and the current employment rates of the country. Local freelance work is not wholly popular in the Caribbean, but its inherent traits can develop entrepreneurial minds and boost the country's employment numbers if utilized effectively.

Freelance working has become highly popular in the current age. According to Larimer (2019), freelance work is an independent laborer who earns wages on a per-job or per-task basis, typically for short-term work. This form of work has long been minuscule in scope and magnitude in the wider Caribbean, yet globally many researchers are citing a significant increase in freelance workers. Larimer (2019), states that freelancers are indicating significantly more competition, resulting in a decrease in the number of work proposals available in their region. In a country like Belize, the likelihood that this increase in competition may stimulate entrepreneurship ventures within the smaller markets and micro-enterprises.

The initial description of the current state of entrepreneurs in Belize, first related by Statistical Institute Of Belize (2023) in relation to development and fiscal fidelity, was not only accurate, but realistic. "It is tempting to believe that small size lends itself to a kind of intimacy that facilitates good government. According to this perspective, small villages with small populations have small problems" Statistical Institute of Belize (2023). The current

economic state in Belize is one that is volatile at best. The dependence on trade in Belize is quite obvious and is a model that has been shared among other countries in the Caribbean. This economic structure that Belize has adopted that sees it depending on massive influxes of imports, does not lend itself to financial sustainability. There must be a shift in that structure so that the country can build itself to be more resilient. Many authors and proponents of freelance work believe that there is where the resilience in small markets like Belize, lies (Spilsbury, 2016). Creating an environment where freelance-entrepreneurial work has as few barriers to entry as possible will not only alleviate the significant levels of unemployment but will promote new, innovative products (Spilsbury, 2016).

According to the Belize National Entrepreneurship Strategy 2014 (Beltraide, 2016), the five stages of the entrepreneurship value chain are; increased awareness, identification, formulation, start-up, and acceleration. In the start-up phase, the business exits its planning stage and begins to market and engage in exchange. This is where the idea of the business is put to the test and validated, and organization structure begins to take form. It is advised that “balance scorecards” (Beltraide, 2016) be used in the stage as a form of evaluation. In the acceleration stage, the foothold of the business has taken, and plans to grow are implemented. Internationalization and other growth-focused plans are needed in order for this to be realized, with acceleration supported by the success of all of the company's various financial and human resource departments. The success of the business will improve the chances of investors coming into the business to boost growth in the step.

According to the Lashley (2016), Belize strategic objectives are: to strengthen the entrepreneurship support ecosystem, to promote the entrepreneurial financial chain development through diverse nonrefundable, promotion, warrantee, fiscal, and credit instruments, to promote collective action spaces between public and private actors in the national entrepreneurship ecosystem, drive the entrepreneurship mindset in the citizenship in order to encourage business creation and to strengthen entrepreneurship as a cross-axis of the education system.

Authors like Faieta (2016) have studied closely the Human Development Index and posited that the Caribbean has consistently been dropping on the list. She noted the stagnant economy and unemployment among the working class “[shows] the deep interconnectedness between human progress and the challenges of the state to cope” (Faieta, 2016). The first challenge Faieta addressed was that of the utilization of policies and government-led interventions that focuses on developing the resilience of the vulnerable groups in the society and providing a consistent means of growth (Faieta, 2016). These underrepresented groups,

Shevchuk et al. (2018), Makes up a large majority of freelance workers in the homecare, landscaping, and maintenance fields. She included one of the most prevalent barriers to its country-wide success, and one that is ever-present in Belize and the greater Caribbean region; indebtedness. The slow-growing GDP of countries like Belize does not provide the financial means to implement wide-scale projects for development; nor does it afford the country any means of consistency or longevity in the funding of these development endeavors.

In Belize, this is of major concern. Introducing lending facilities that would benefit freelance entrepreneurs has long been a technique used in developed countries, but policy actors and local stakeholders lack the mechanisms for this to be successful. These mechanisms must be geared toward reducing poverty and vulnerability of underrepresented social groups; especially in a country with a significantly high poverty rate. Additionally, Salamon (2020) posits that there must be the implementation of policies that will assist in bolstering the economy and seeking to diversify it.

Freelancing Creating Opportunities

Finding a job as a disabled or mentally ill individual can be challenging due to various factors. While progress has been made in terms of inclusivity and equal employment opportunities, there are still barriers that can make it difficult for individuals with disabilities or mental illnesses to secure employment. In the article “Disability in Latin America and the Caribbean – Public Policy Challenges” it states that disability rates range from 5.1% in Mexico to 23.9% in Brazil, while in the Caribbean the proportion varies between 2.9% in the Bahamas and 6.9% in Aruba (ECLAC NOTES, 2012). This article also goes on to mention that In total, almost 12% of the Latin American and Caribbean population is thought to live with at least one disability, and this represents around 66 million people (ECLAC NOTES, 2012).

Freelancing offers flexibility and accommodation to those suffering from a disability or a mental illness. Freelancing allows individuals to have more control over their work environment and schedule. This flexibility can be particularly beneficial for people with disabilities or mental challenges who may require specific accommodations or have varying needs (De Souza, 2023). Freelancing eliminates barriers related to commuting or physical accessibility. Individuals with mobility challenges or who face difficulties in accessing traditional workspaces can still pursue freelance opportunities from the comfort of their own homes. It's important to note that while freelancing can offer opportunities, individuals with

disabilities or mental challenges may still encounter specific barriers or challenges. Access to appropriate resources, support systems, and inclusive platforms are crucial for ensuring equal opportunities and success in the freelancing world.

According to an article published by the International Labour Organization [ILO]; The total labor force of the predominantly English-speaking Caribbean currently stands at approximately 2.7 million people. 26% of this labor force is between the ages of 16-24 (International Labour Organization, 1996). All of whom are English speakers. This means being an English speaker in Belize is an advantage. English is growing as the language of choice for international business and trade, known as “Business English.” As much as 80% of jobs offered in Latin America require proficiency in English (Saiesha, 2022). In the Caribbean region itself there are over 16 English speaking countries and those make up over 6 million individuals (Paho.org, n.d.). Knowing this data puts member states of the Caribbean at an advantage over most of the world. This creates opportunities to earn money from foreign countries and as well provide quality living for individuals. One of the most important aspects is being able to lower the unemployment rate especially when looking at the youth unemployment rate among fresh graduates.

Platforms such as Fiverr and Upwork are among the most popular and high earning freelancing platforms. These platforms offer many online employment opportunities for freelancers. Freelancers act as their own bosses, find their own clientele, do the work, and send invoices for payments. Being self-employed also means you have the freedom to explore passion projects without stressful office politics or performance appraisals (Ahmad, 2023).



CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This chapter is to outline the research approach taken to look into how freelancing can help unemployment in Belize. Interviews was utilized as the primary technique of information gathering for this qualitative approach. The interview questions are designed to elicit responses regarding respondents' perspectives on how freelancing might encourage innovative thinking and reduce unemployment.

Research Approach and Method

The qualitative research strategy was employed for this study; The qualitative research approach was chosen since it is better at answering "how" and "why" questions (Busetto et al., 2020). According to a research by Cleland (2017), qualitative research allows you to ask questions that cannot be easily quantified in order to better comprehend human experience. Getting to know the everyday reality of a social phenomenon and studying significant questions as they are practiced helps to broaden knowledge and understanding (Neubauer et al., 2019). Qualitative approach is an appropriate method to use for this research because in this research we seek to understand if the participants study believe freelancing can be used a way to lessen freelancing and what it will take for the unemployed population in Belize to consider freelancing. These question will be hard to quantify and it best answered by using the interviewing the sampling population.

Qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring Hammarberg et al. (2016). The utilization of the qualitative technique is considered the most suitable for this research aim due to its ability to delve into and comprehend individuals' views, experiences, actions, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which they appear. The analysis of qualitative data can be conducted through the application of grounded theory methodology, which involves the development of theories or conceptual frameworks that are derived directly from the data collected. This methodology entails the continuous comparison of data in order to produce fresh perspectives and theories. Quantitative studies generally involve the systematic collection of data about a phenomenon, using standardized measures and statistical analysis. In contrast, qualitative studies involve the systematic collection, organization, description and interpretation of textual, verbal or visual data Hammarberg et al. (2016).The examination of these data can be facilitated by employing coding techniques, categorization methods, and data interpretation strategies in order to discern prevalent themes and patterns. Frequently employed

methodologies encompass thematic analysis, content analysis, and constant comparative analysis.

Research Procedure

The research process consists of a series of systematic procedures that a researcher must go through in order to generate knowledge that will be considered valuable by the project and focus on the relevant topic (Villegas, 2023). Listed below are brief steps that will be done to complete the research. The following steps can be examined, and see also figure 3.1:

1. Identifying Research Topic

Identifying a research topic is the pivotal first step in the journey of academic inquiry. This process involves a delicate balance of curiosity, relevance, and feasibility.

2. Reviewing Literature

The procedure of reviewing literature is akin to embarking on a scholarly treasure hunt. It is the crucial process of immersing oneself in the vast sea of existing knowledge to gain a deep understanding of a particular research area.

3. Developing Research Purposes and Questions

Developing research questions is a thoughtful process that begins with a clear understanding of your research topic.

4. Adopting Research Method

Identifying the research methodology is crucial because it shapes the entire research process. It determines the methods used for data collection and analysis, ensuring the study's validity and reliability.

5. Identifying Research Sample

Formulating a research sample involves defining the target population, selecting a representative subset, and determining the sample size. Begin by clearly defining the characteristics of the population your study aims to represent.

6. Developing Interview Questions

When developing interview questions for research, ensure they are clear, concise, and directly related to your research objectives. Craft open-ended questions that encourage participants to provide in-depth responses, fostering valuable insights and data collection.

7. Conducting Data Collection and Analysis

During data collection and analysis, it's essential to follow systematic procedures. First, gather data using chosen methods interviews while maintaining accuracy and consistency.

8. Generating Findings and Discussion

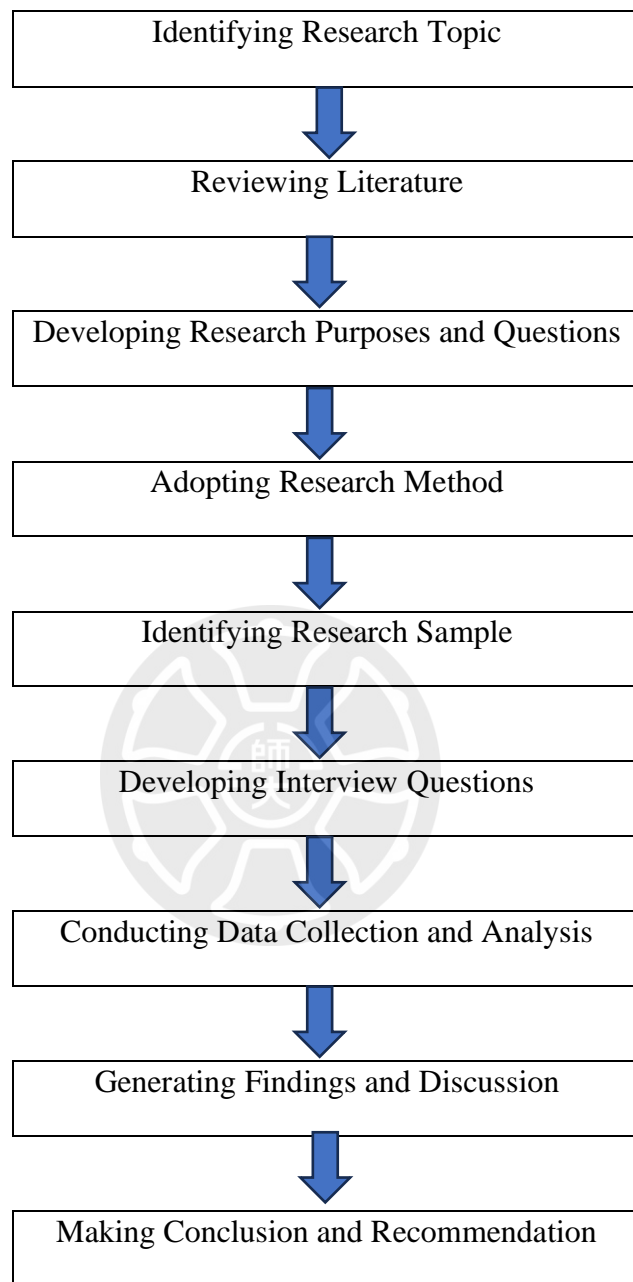
During the Findings and Discussion phase of research, meticulously present your research results, using tables, figures, and descriptive text to convey key findings.

9. Making Conclusion and Recommendation

In the Conclusion and Recommendation phase of research, you will summarize the main findings and insights drawn from your study, emphasizing their significance in relation to your research objectives.



Figure 3.1
Research Procedure



Data Collection

Qualitative data collection is gathering non-numerical information, such as words, images, and observations, to understand individuals' attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and motivations in a specific context. It aims to comprehend social phenomena by delving deeply into and analyzing people's viewpoints, experiences, and narratives (Bhat, 1992). Interviews, focus groups, and observation are popular methods for acquiring qualitative data (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). For this study, the interview method was utilized to gather information about the participants' experiences. The interview will be conducted through Zoom and recorded for quality assurance. The interview covered the individual's personal information as well as their background with freelancing as it relates to the issue. After all questions were addressed, the interview was concluded and transcribed.

The primary data collection tool for this study is an interview. Interviews was chosen as the ideal method for a qualitative study since they entail speaking with people one-on-one about their personal experience as a freelancer. It is essential for the researcher to be curious and open minded. Interview is best to dig deeper when talking to people. Pursue interesting new lines of inquiry as they are revealed. It is important for interviewer to not let existing knowledge blind them learning something new about the research in question.

The interview sequence consists of an introduction, a question, and a conclusion, with a duration of 30 minutes. A consent document confirming that all information provided in the interview is freely given, will be recorded, and will only be used for research will be delivered to the interviewee before they enter the Zoom meeting. The interviewee received a link to select a time that works for them and be able to arrange a Zoom meeting at a later time after returning their consent form. The researcher selected the interviewee by hand; it should be highlighted that they are people the researcher has worked closely with in the past and who possess extensive knowledge of the research issue variable.

Qualitative data can be gathered through the utilization of either semi-structured or structured approaches, depending on the researcher's preferred approach. According to FreeOnlineSurveys (2021) quantitative data, it is less concerned with who, what and when and more concerned with why and how. These types of questions allow researcher to understand the behaviors, motivations and feelings of participants. They are several methods for collecting qualitative data, including interviews, case studies, secondary research (record keeping), expert opinions, focus groups, online surveys (mobile, kiosk, desktop), paper surveys, and observational studies. Due to time constraints, the research employed a one-on-

one interview methodology utilizing the zoom platform. The selection of the theoretical sampling approach was based on its ability to prioritize theoretical aspects in the process of development.

Interviews

The interview was conducted in an unstructured format, employing an open-ended enquiry format. This enables candidates to provide comprehensive explanations in response to inquiries and their professional background as freelancers. According to Sybing (2024) unstructured interview is an open-ended interaction that can move in any direction that arises as the researcher and participant engage in the conversation. During the interview, questions were posed in accordance with the study theory and, if necessary, to enhance comprehension. Following the original inquiry, it is necessary to provide a follow-up question to enhance the interviewer's comprehension of the interviewee's intended message. According to Dovetail Editorial Team (2023) interviews are valuable for gaining in-depth insights into individuals' experiences, perspectives, and behaviors. They offer a unique opportunity to explore complex phenomena, uncover rich narratives, and understand the underlying meanings and interpretations that individuals assign to their experiences.

The preliminary interview commenced with the posing of a warm-up inquiry aimed at establishing the interview's tempo. The initial round of inquiries commenced by posing biological inquiries pertaining to the interviewee. Once the aforementioned piece was addressed, the interviewer proceeded to address the research question, which was derived directly from the conducted research. During the interview, the interviewer recorded notes based on the interviewee's reactions and actions in order to have a deeper understanding of the interview's atmosphere. According to Dovetail Editorial Team (2023) the conduct of the interviewer should, Allow participants to speak freely and provide detailed answers, using probing techniques to delve deeper into their experiences, emotions, and perspectives. Take notes or record the interview (with participants' consent) to capture accurate and detailed information.

The participants were provided with an information consent form prior to the interview, which served as a means for the interviewer to obtain prior consent from the participants in order to proceed with the interview procedure. Before conducting the interview, ensure that participants understand the purpose, procedures, and potential risks or benefits of their involvement. Obtain their informed consent, clearly explaining their rights as participants, including confidentiality and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time

Dovetail Editorial Team (2023) Once the consent form has been duly completed and returned to the interviewer, a hyperlink will be dispatched to the interviewee, enabling them to select a suitable time window for the initial interview. Following the selection of a suitable time, an interview link will be dispatched to the interviewee. The study's participants were selected from the population of Belize. Every interview was carried out in the individual's mother tongue, English, and thereafter transcribed.

Participants

The research sample was collected via interviews conducted with freelancers residing in Belize. Fifteen freelancers were selected using purposive sampling, specifically targeting those who have prior experience or are actively engaged in online freelancing. These freelancers are active member of the freelancing platform Upwork. During the interview, participants was questioned regarding their experience as freelancers and was requested to provide truthful responses. A total of 15 interviews was conducted, wherein each participant was allocated a time frame of 30 minutes to provide insights into their experiences as freelancers. The purposive sampling method was employed in this study since the researcher seeks to acquire practical experience with participants who are believed to possess a comprehensive understanding of the research issue.

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling approach, was utilized in this study. This method was selected due to the deliberate selection of a certain subset of individuals, namely freelancers, from the overall population for the goal of conducting research. The sampling size for qualitative research is typically non-specific and contingent upon the availability and inclusion of individuals within the target community under investigation. According to Vasileiou et al. (2018) choosing a suitable sample size in qualitative research is an area of conceptual debate and practical uncertainty. That sample size principles, guidelines and tools have been developed to enable researchers to set, and justify the acceptability of, their sample size is an indication that the issue constitutes an important marker of the quality of qualitative research. The study involved a sample size of 15 participants who were interviewed. There were 10 females and 5 males. To be eligible for participation in this research, volunteers were required to meet the following criteria:

1. Over the age of 18
2. Work previously or is currently employed as a freelancer
3. Be Belizean

Table 3.1*The Profile of Interview Participants*

Participants	Gender	Age	Work experience	Occupation
A(J)	Female	23	2	Customer Service
B(S)	Female	30	5	Maintenance coordinator
C(J)	Male	20	1	Leasing Coordinator
D(J)	Female	23	1	Data Analyst
E(S)	Female	27	6	Researcher
F(J)	Female	23	3	Customer Service
G(J)	Male	30	3	Researcher
H(S)	Male	37	4	Graphic design
I(S)	Male	28	6	Web developer
J(S)	Female	28	6	Content writing
K(J)	Female	21	2	Leasing Coordinator
L(J)	Female	26	3	Maintenance coordinator
M(J)	Male	26	3	Proofreader/Writer
N(J)	Female	24	2	Receptionist
O(S)	female	27	6	Qualitative analyst

Note: Junior Freelancer (J)= 1-3 Years experience, Senior Freelancer (S)= 4 years and more.

Data Analysis

The motive behind data analysis in research is to present accurate and reliable data (Bhat, 1992). To collect data for the data analysis, interviews will be conducted with 15 freelancers who can provide valuable research data. After the interview the information collected was transcribed and checked thoroughly to ensure accuracy. After the interview was

transcribed, the data was entered into ATLAS.ti for future research analysis. Next, patterns were created. This was accomplished through the creation of codes, which will permit researchers to organize ideas that are crucial to the research. Using ATLAS.ti, researchers investigated the relationships between these codes to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

The research was conducted with the ATLAS.ti software through the process of coding. The process of coding holds a key role in qualitative research. ATLAS.ti facilitates the generation of codes, which are denotative markers or descriptors employed to signify themes, concepts, or ideas embedded within the dataset. The researchers carefully examine the data and employ specific codes to categorize and analyze significant chunks of text or media in accordance with the study inquiries. Codes possess the capacity to be arranged in a hierarchical manner. Researchers have the ability to generate coding patterns that can be used to represent subthemes or interconnected topics. The utilization of a hierarchical structure facilitates the organization and conceptualization of the data. Codes can be subjected to analysis based on their frequency or their association with other codes, such as their co-occurrence with other codes (ATLAS.ti, 2023).

Open Coding

Following the initial interview, the recording was transcribed and broken down into themes and subthemes. Open coding was utilized in this study to read and analyze data, detect patterns in the data collection, and compare them to the initial patterns. Open coding is perhaps one of the least prescriptive approaches. When employing open coding, the researcher codes the data based on what researcher see in the recorders and how it is interpreted. This is a good first step in the data analysis process if your research project is focused on the development of new themes, concepts, or theories (Sybing, 2024).

In this study the data coding was coded as following example like [OS0115], the code represented an order in which data was received or can be interpreted. The code means as follows:

- O- Means participants name and can be view in the table for profile of interview participants.
- S- Means years of freelancing experience that the participant had at the time of the initial interview. (S- senior, J- Junior)
- 01- This number was used to present the number of interview questions.

15- This number represented the order of which the answer were received from participants for interview questions.

Axial Coding

After the first step of the open coding stage was completed, axial coding was used to determine how the categories are related and to explore the relationship between them. This is an important step in data analysis since it connects categories and develops coding. The axial coding stage, the researcher draws connections between discrete parts of their study represented by open codes. Axial coding consists of grouping codes and placing them in a new category that embodies a broader meaning (Sybing, 2024).

Research Quality

The quality of the research will be evaluated in this field of study. Four criteria are widely used to appraise the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Stenfors et al., 2020). When employing the qualitative research approach, these standards can be utilized in order to assess how reliable the data collection process was.

Credibility

The establishment of credibility holds significant importance in the realm of research due to multiple reasons. One such reason is that credibility serves as a determinant of the reliability of the conclusions derived from your research. The act of ensuring that one's work is regarded with seriousness by peers, academic institutions, and the wider community is of the utmost significance. Credibility is a crucial factor in guaranteeing the integrity and reliability of one's research. The utilization of dependable and precisely constructed research methodologies and data collection protocols significantly strengthens the credibility and reliability of the findings derived from the study being conducted. Here are several strategies to ensure credibility:

Triangulation

Triangulation involves using multiple methods, data sources, observers, or theories in order to gain a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied. It is used to make sure that the research findings are robust, rich, comprehensive, and well-developed (Moran, 2024). In this study, the researcher employed interviews as the primary method, supplemented by a combination of observation and data transcription. This approach was

adopted to enhance the comprehension of the acquired data and facilitate its analysis in conjunction with information gathered from previous studies.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is a valuable strategy for enhancing the credibility of qualitative research. It involves enlisting the help of other researchers, who are experts in the field, to review and provide feedback on the research process and findings (SooleenAbbas, 2024). In this study, the researcher enlisted the assistance of fellow researchers who were also classmates to gain a deeper understanding and assess the research and data acquired. This phase is crucial as it enhances the credibility of the research.

Transferability (Applicability and External Validity)

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents – it is the interpretive equivalent of generalizability Bitsch (2005) and Tobin and Begley (2004). Transferability, also known as applicability or external validity, holds significant importance for researchers. Transferability encompasses the practice of providing precise information pertaining to the participants and the study approach employed. These factors hold significant importance as they play a crucial role in influencing the reader's decision to incorporate your study into their own research endeavors. This was referred to as the “transferable judgement” by Korstjens and Moser (2017). This study further asserts that the responsibility for making transferability judgments falls with the reader, rather than the author, due to the lack of knowledge regarding the specific contextual settings of the reader. In this study the researcher ensured that the research is characterized by a comprehensive and comprehensive presentation of details, while also ensuring that the contextual information provided meets the rigorous standards expected in academic research.



CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings from the acquired data and discussions the findings and compared to the literature. It begins by introducing themes and subthemes, which were developed based on the frequency of the data collected. These themes and subthemes were then organized into a table using the code discovered from the data obtained. Details from these codes were then provided to ensure a thorough understanding of the codes and findings.

Freelancing and Unemployment Gap

Under the over-arching theme, "Role of Freelance in Bridging the Unemployment Gap" in Belize, the table 4.1 reorganizes the previous themes into sub-themes under this broader theme from the data:

Table 4.1

Freelancing and Unemployment Gap

Sub-themes	Concepts	Details
Provision of Opportunities	Difficulty in job search, stressful job search processes, absence of opportunities for fresh graduates.	Highlighting how freelancing offers fresh graduates and other job seekers an alternative path to employment by circumventing traditional job search challenges.
Experience and Qualifications	Unavailability of jobs for underqualified individuals, freelancing as an alternative for university dropouts, providing options based on experience rather than formal qualifications	Discussing how freelancing provides a platform for individuals who may not meet the strict qualification requirements of traditional jobs, allowing them to leverage their experience instead.
Inclusivity	Offering chances to earn regardless of background, providing work for individuals with disabilities, ensuring equal opportunity through freelancing	Emphasizing freelancing's capacity to offer work opportunities that are more inclusive, reducing discrimination based on background, education, or physical ability.
Economic Resilience	Difficulty finding jobs post-COVID-19, tapping into global opportunities, better stability during pandemics	Addressing how freelancing has offered a resilient alternative during the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19

Sub-themes	Concepts	Details
		pandemic, highlighting its role in providing stability and access to global job markets.
Training Strategy	Government support and training, inclusion of freelancing in the curriculum, providing seminars by experienced freelancers, strategic training initiatives	Outlining the importance of structured training and government support in preparing the workforce for freelancing, thus enhancing their employability and familiarity with the freelance economy.
Temporary Solution to unemployment	Concerns over the sustainability of freelancing, instability of freelance work, preference for traditional employment for stability	Recognizing the challenges and limitations of freelancing as a long-term solution for unemployment, including concerns over its stability and sustainability compared to traditional employment.

Provision of Opportunities

The unemployment gap in Belize can be viewed from the aspect of participants as difficulty in getting into traditional jobs, especially for fresh graduates. The issue for fresh graduates is the absence of opportunities and the difficulty in job search. The process as adjudged by graduates is quite stressful and suggests that this is a part of the unemployment gap that freelancing can fix. According to one participant:

“Yes, I believe freelancing will be relatively new in Belize, providing opportunities for fresh grads like myself and allowing folks to avoid the rigorous job search among graduates.” [CJ0112]

Experience and Qualifications

Experience is an important issue when it comes to traditional hiring in Belize. According to some of the participants, employers in companies in Belize require years of experience in Belize. One participant noted that:

“Traditional opportunities are harder for me as a new graduate because employers require 5 to 6 years of job experience, which is unrealistic for a new university graduate.” [MJ0613]

Another issue that the participants shared is the issue of qualifications. Freelancing helped to provide opportunities for participants who are more or less unqualified to compete in the traditional workspace of Belize. According to one of the participants:

“I think traditional job is harder for me since they have a specific standard and qualification and I am a university dropout; nevertheless, freelancing offers me a better and more options with my years of experience working.” [SS0605]

This suggests that freelancing can enable under qualified citizens showcase their skills as they work on freelance jobs. This way they can garner experience and compete in traditional jobs. According to one participant:

“Yes, I believe it can reduce unemployment, especially among new graduates like myself who have no work experience. Freelancing provides opportunities for recent graduates to obtain experience without being unemployed.” [DJ0907]

However, some participants do not agree with the opinion that traditional jobs actually serve as the preparatory stage for freelancing and not the other way round. According to the participants:

“No, traditional work helped me prepare for being a freelancer and understand the software I would need as a freelancer.” [HS1107]

“No, I believe I gained experience in a traditional setting and discovered that it was not suitable for me, but I am grateful that I had the opportunity to explore traditional work. I am also grateful that I discovered freelancing at the right moment and am now earning money doing what I enjoy.” [OS1107]

“No, because traditional work taught me the most of the skills, I needed to be an effective freelancer, thus I believe I began freelancing at the ideal time.” [NJ1112]

This suggests that freelance’s ability to help job seekers attain the desired experience is not shared by all participants.

Inclusivity

Freelancing also bridges the gap by giving everyone a chance to earn a living. Thus, issues like discrimination may not negatively impact talents in Belize when they freelance. One of the participants noted that:

“Absolutely, I believe that this may be used to reduce unemployment because freelancing gives everyone, regardless of background, an equal opportunity.” [HS0701]

This point is further buttressed by a participant with disability who noted that freelance availed the opportunity to work and earn despite having a disability as this would have affected his earning opportunities in Belize. According to the participant:

“Yes, because it offers open position for unemployed individual who struggle to find job because of a disability or any challenge that might be in today's economy”
[OS0115]

Economic Resilience

Participants also noted the gap created by the pandemic which made jobs difficult to find in Belize. Freelance presented an opportunity for graduates to tap into global opportunities and make money. According to one of the participants:

“Yes, I believe that jobs are difficult to find after covid, thus freelancing will provide new opportunities to lessen the unemployment gap” [BS0102]

Some participants also feel that the availability of freelance job opportunities during the pandemic lends credence to its possible influence in bridging the economic gap.

“In my opinion, job stability in freelancing is better than traditional employment because when looking at the covid-19 pandemic, traditional jobs were not available but freelancing jobs were not substantially affected.” [CJ0203]

Training Strategy

A strategy to bridge the unemployment gap through freelancing can occur through strategic attempt to train citizens to take on freelance jobs. This strategy was highlighted by most of the participants as one way to bridge the unemployment gap. Training was viewed as a strategy to expose Belize citizens to being comfortable with the idea of freelance. This suggests that not many Belizeans understand the idea of freelancing neither are they exposed to it. Thus, they may be uncomfortable with the idea. According to two participants:

“Yes, if the government provides some type of start-up assistance and training, I believe citizens will be open to the possibility of becoming self-employed and working from the comfort of their own homes.” [DJ0804]

“Yes, I feel that training or workshops on how to use a computer to conduct fundamental tasks such as Microsoft or accessing the internet can be beneficial to Belizean citizens, and I believe they will eventually be comfortable being a freelancer.” [KJ0811]

Participants interviewed were certain that if there is a national strategy to support freelancers through training and equipment, it will help bridge the unemployment gap in the future. According to one participant:

“Yes, if the government partners with freelancers to offer basic training in Microsoft, I believe the future for unemployment in Belize would be less. It can also assist the GDP in Belize.” [MJ0813]

However, there is a conflict of ideas as to the nature of this training and the partnerships required. Some participants were of the opinion that this partnership or strategy should not be about government partnering with freelancers rather freelance should be included in the curriculum. According to three participants:

“Yes, I think that freelancing should be included into entrepreneurial classes and should one considered small business option.” [AJ1101]

“Yes, I believe if I learned about freelancing in school I would have chosen it earlier.” [CJ1103]

“No, I believe that the government and schools should work together to increase the number of entrepreneur programmes so that students can consider freelancing as a career option.” [JS1010]

While other participants believe that the government collaborating with freelancers and paying them is the best way to achieve sustainable collaboration and training. According to one participant:

Yes, I believe this relationship can succeed if the government pays experienced freelancers to offer seminars on pursuing self-employment through freelancing.” [LJ1012]

Overall, in addressing the unemployment gap through freelancing training, the participants collectively agree that a structured strategy towards freelance training will expose more people to the freelance economy. This will help them understand their options and how to apply their skills to this economy at the end of their training. Thus, freelance can bridge the unemployment gap in Belize by providing trained and qualified individuals who can compete globally in the freelance economy, acquire experience, and can also contribute locally.

Temporary Solution to Unemployment

However, there are concerns that freelance is quite unsustainable when compared to the traditional work model. This means that freelance may not be a suitable strategy to reduce the unemployment gap. According to one participant:

“No. Not long term. Because it is too unstable in the long run. One may have a job for a few months and be unemployed for the rest of the year. It can help by creating opportunities, but I do not see it as a solution.” [NJ0714]

Similarly, one participant noted that the permanent solution to the unemployment gap can only come from traditional jobs as freelancing only provided the option of earning good money rather than the stability required to bridge the unemployment gap. According to the participant:

“From my experience freelancing job is not a permanent solution to unemployment but it does give an option to earn money on the other hand traditional employment offers more stability is a permanent solution.” [OS0215]

Challenges Of Freelancing

The challenges of being a freelancer were highlighted by study participants highlighting the key issues. Under the overarching theme "Challenges of Freelancing," the table below organizes the discussed challenges into sub-themes, codes, and details derived from the study participants' experiences:

Table 4.2

Challenges of Freelancing

Sub-themes	Concepts	Details
Lack of Retirement Plan and Benefits	Difficulty obtaining traditional benefits, lack of paid sick leave, absence of retirement plans and paid vacation	Participants highlighted the absence of benefits commonly provided in traditional employment, such as paid sick leave, retirement plans, and paid vacations. This absence presents a significant challenge for freelancers who must manage these aspects independently, without the support structures available to traditional employees.
Unsustainability	No job security, need to constantly hunt for new opportunities, risk of client funds running low	Another significant challenge identified is the inherent job insecurity within freelancing. Participants expressed concerns over the need to continually search for new projects due to the short-term nature of freelance work and the potential for client budgets to deplete, which can lead to periods of unemployment.

Lack of Retirement Plan and Benefits

Participants noted that there is difficulty in freelancers obtaining benefits that are available to the traditional worker. This could pose as a challenge for freelancers or individuals who want to get into freelancing. According to three participants:

“Traditional employment provides a better package in terms of benefits such as paid sick leave, retirement plans, and two weeks of paid vacation. Meanwhile, freelancing only pay cash for hours completed.” [LJ0312]

“Freelancer offers a better financial package than traditional employment for the short term, meaning while you are employed as a freelancer, you get paid twice as much as a person working in the traditional work environment, but when it comes to a retirement plan, it does not offer much benefit because if you are not working, you will not be paid.” [BJ0302]

This suggests that freelancing does not cater for the regular needs of employees. As noted in these contributions, participants who want to engage in freelancing are assured of huge financial or monetary benefits, however, some intrinsic benefits are lacking for the freelancer.

Unsustainability

Participants note that there is the problem of having to search for jobs periodically. This could pose a challenge as there is no job security and there’s the possibility of the client running out of funds. According to one participant:

“The greatest challenge is having to hunt for new opportunities periodically since the project is short-term or the customer budget has run low.” [LJ0912]

This issue was also shared by another participant who noted that there is the constant need to search for fresh opportunities. According to the participant:

“The greatest challenge is securing employment that are not long-term, so I have to continually searching for fresh opportunities.” [ES0905]

These sub-themes encapsulate the primary challenges faced by freelancers as identified by the study participants. The lack of stable benefits and the continual need to secure new work reflect core areas of concern that can impact the sustainability of freelancing as a long-term career option.

Benefits of Freelance

Table 4.3 reorganized the previous topics into sub-themes under the overarching theme, "Benefit of Freelancing" in Belize, based on the data.

Table 4.3
Benefits of Freelancing

Sub-themes	Concepts	Details
Flexibility	Ability to select the frequency of work and the amount of money earned, as well as the ability to take vacation time	Participants emphasized the benefits typically offered in freelancing, such as the freedom to choose the number of days they want to work. In addition, you have the capability to choose the desired hourly rate for your service.

Flexibility

Most participants agree that freelance is flexible and freelancers can address work challenges when they see fit. This is in contrast to traditional work where there is high job demand. According to two participants:

“Yes, freelancers have the freedom to work when and on whatever project they deem appropriate. Meanwhile, traditional employment is more rigorous when it comes to office hours and tasks.” [FJ0406]

“A typical job can be extremely demanding working long hours, sometimes on the weekends, and following your employer's schedule—a completely different experience than freelancing, which allows you to establish your own hours and go at your own speed.” [AJ0401]

Freelancing also allows citizens to work independently without involvement in non-work activities such as work place politics and work-life balance. According to two participants:

“Undoubtedly, freelancing provides individuals with flexibility, allowing them to work at their own pace without the stressful workplace politics.”

“Not only do I have more time to be a full-time mother and spend time with my family, but I also earn more money and work fewer hours than I did at my regular bank job.” [AJ0301]

However, one participant argues that freelance could be difficult with respect to flexibility and work-life balance. According to one participant:

“No, because being a freelancer that is successful requires to meet deadlines and provide efficient and proper work, sometimes more than traditional employment. Freelancing can be more competitive.” [NJ0414]

Discussion

All individuals included in this study fell within the age range of 20 to 40 years. Each individual possesses a diverse range of years of experience in the realm of freelancing. The study encompasses a range of experience, spanning from 1 to 6 years. The shared experience between the new freelancer, who has recently started freelancing, and the seasoned freelancer was evident in their responses to a few questions posed by the interviewer. However, their answers exhibited a high degree of similarity in relation to the overarching question of freelancing in Belize and its impact. The responses varied in terms of personal experiences and their implications for the future of freelancing in Belize.

Freelancing Opportunities

Regarding the creation of new opportunities in Belize through freelancing. The responses had a high degree of similarity. All the respondents expressed agreement with the notion that freelancing has the ability to generate new work opportunities in Belize, hence potentially mitigating the prevailing unemployment rate. Respondents recognize that freelancing is a viable choice for those in Belize who struggle to find traditional employment, which is often the primary reason why people choose freelancing as a career option.

Respondents recognize that freelancing might potentially generate income for the country by allowing individuals to share their talents abroad and contribute their expertise to the global labor market. According to Akhmetshin et al. (2018), these sole proprietors who are working as freelance have been contributing significantly to the global economy with freelancers contributing more than 1.5 trillion, globally in 2017. This presents Belize with an opportunity for growth and development. One participant proceeded to suggest that freelancing has higher financial benefits in terms of hourly rates when compared to traditional work in Belize. Compensations are calculated in US dollars, which then values twice when converted to the currency of Belize.

When asked if freelancing can be used to bridge the unemployment gap in Belize, one respondent affirms that it can, as it is exceedingly challenging to secure employment for

individuals with disabilities in Belize's economy. This is due to the lack of accommodations and inclusivity for individuals with disabilities in the current environment. However, as a freelancer, you can work from home and have a dedicated space that accommodates your impairment, enabling you to earn a living. When comparing this data to the literature it was mentioned by De Souza (2023) in his article that Freelancing eliminates barriers related to commuting or physical accessibility. Individuals with mobility challenges or who face difficulties in accessing traditional workspaces can still pursue freelance opportunities from the comfort of their own homes. This flexibility can be particularly helpful for individuals with disabilities or mental disorders who may necessitate certain adjustments or have diverse requirements.

Job Stability Compared to Traditional Employment in Belize

The broad responses from respondents were straightforward to compare, but the answers to the questions about more specific experiences were much more visible. During the course of the interview, participants were asked regarding their assessment of the influence of freelancing on job stability in comparison to traditional employment in Belize. The responses among all the participants varied, although they were interconnected. One of the addresses raised concerns about the longevity of freelancing as an employment option, with concerns regarding its long-term sustainability.

It is widely recognized that freelancing does not provide any form of employment stability. One participant reported instances in which they were hired by a client, only to subsequently lose their contract due to the client's inability to sustain the agreement due to budgetary constraints. Comparing this response to the others was straightforward as they all acknowledged that regular employment provides a lasting resolution to unemployment and delivers a more favorable compensation package for the future. The respondent further stated that the absence of job security is a factor that individuals may choose not to pursue a career as a freelancer. Freelance work, as opined by Wright (2016), offers an alternative for income-earning that is viable, but is argued to be unsustainable.

The concern raised regarding the instability of freelancing, as comparison to regular employment, is the absence of paid time off for freelancers who are ill or wish to take vacation time. The respondent indicated that their compensation is solely based on the number of hours they work. When comparing this to traditional employment, there are significant differences. In Belize, traditional employment requires around 2 weeks of paid time off only for vacation purposes. This time off is obligatory by the government of

Belize. Additionally, traditional workers in Belize are entitled to 16 sick days at their workplace. Another concern raised was the absence of a retirement plan in freelancing, which is a crucial aspect of traditional employment in Belize. This requirement is mandated and safeguarded by the labor code of Belize, specifically Chapter 297.

Collaborative training for future freelancers

During the interview, a question was made on the potential collaboration between the government and freelancers in order to generate new chances for the future of freelancing or address the issue of unemployment in Belize. The participants' responses to this topic exhibited a predominantly varied nature, as they expressed different points of view. This inquiry was formulated to examine the perception of freelancers regarding the potential of individuals to address the issue of unemployment, as well as the factors that would influence freelancers to contemplate freelancing as a viable career path.

The response exhibited significant variation and was highly diverse. Among the 15 responses, 7 respondents advocate for the government to establish training programs and provide start-up assistance to unemployed individuals, equipping them with the necessary skills to pursue a career in freelancing. Out of the 7 responses, 5 said that the government of Belize and the ministry of education should collaborate to incorporate an entrepreneurial class into the curriculum. This would enable students to learn about various fields of entrepreneurship and its associated responsibilities. Additionally, it was suggested that there should be provision for instruction in fundamental computer technology functions. One participant suggested that acquiring proficiency in Microsoft is an excellent foundation for freelancing. Therefore, the government should provide technological training and incorporate it into the school curriculum.

It is suggested by freelancers that the collaboration between the government and experienced freelancers should be approached as a means to effect change within the education system. One participant suggested that if the government intends to engage in collaboration with experienced freelancers, it would be beneficial for the freelancers to receive cash compensation for their time. This aspect should be regarded as a legitimate possibility for freelancing. One participant provided a response that varied from the remaining 14 responses, however it remained largely consistent with the collective responses. They argued that government investment in small business fairs can serve as a means to promote freelancing as a viable career option and provide individuals with access to

complimentary computer training sessions to enhance their proficiency in utilizing computer capabilities for work-related tasks.

When questioned about their willingness to pursue freelancing sooner, 7 out of the 15 respondents answered affirmatively, citing their readiness from school as the reason. One of the respondents stated that they acquired knowledge about freelancing via a friend. They expressed the belief that if freelancing were included as a primary option in the curriculum, it would have been a preferred choice for new graduates due to the chances it provides. The remaining 8 people expressed their belief that they entered the field of freelancing at an ideal moment. One freelancer went on to say that they felt they began at the ideal time, having gained sufficient knowledge from traditional work to be a good freelancer. Another response indicated an opposed tendency towards regular employment, as individuals tend to view freelancing as a part-time alternative rather than a permanent means of securing employment.





CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The present chapter comprises four distinct sections, including the conclusion, implications, limitations, and suggestions. The conclusion component of the investigation will encompass the main finding. The implication will examine the theoretical contribution. This section will address the limitations that have been noticed and their effects. Additionally, the concluding section will provide suggestions for future research.

Conclusions

The primary objective of this research was to examine the potential of freelancing in reducing unemployment in Belize. This study employed a qualitative methodology to gain a deeper understanding of the present freelancing landscape in Belize. Quantifying this dynamic without data provided by an official government office in Belize would be exceedingly challenging. This study focused on recruiting proficient freelancers from Belize who possess expertise in the specific subject matter. By doing so, valuable information can be obtained to enhance the current research and facilitate a qualitative analysis through the examination of codes and patterns. The participants in this study spanned in age from 20 to 40, with work experience ranging from 1 to 6 years.

The researcher conducted interviews with a sample of 15 individuals, all of whom had previously consented to participate in the research and authorized the use of their information for research purposes. Upon receiving approval from the participants, they were granted access to a 30- minute zoom meeting. During this interview, they were given the chance to express themselves without restriction. This allowed the interviewer to analyze their behavior and make note of significant matters that emerged throughout the interview. Upon concluding the interview, the interviewer proceeded to transcribe the gathered information for the goal of doing research. The process involved the generation of codes and themes within the atlas.ti platform in order to establish patterns for analyzing the replies.

In this study, numerous intriguing findings were made. An essential question in this research was if the participants, who are currently freelancers, felt that freelancing can be used to bridge the unemployment gap in Belize. All participants unanimously agreed that freelancing in Belize had the potential to generate new employment opportunities and establish a distinct market segment. Participants argue that integrating freelancing into traditional work sectors can help reduce the present record-high unemployment gap resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic. Participants noted that this initiative not only benefits freelancers, but also presents an opportunity for them to return funds into the country. They

can achieve this by leveraging their expertise and experience in the international labor market, generating income and making a valuable contribution to Belize's gross domestic product (GDP).

Participants in this study acknowledged that while freelancing can be a viable means of reducing unemployment, it is not a long-term solution as it is mostly utilized for short-term purposes. The participants in this study indicate that freelancing operates on a per contract basis, and there are numerous causes that frequently lead to the termination of a contract. Reasons for contract termination may include budget depletion or insufficiency. For instance, one participant reported that their contract concluded due to a lack of the client's budget, rendering them unable to continue rendering their services as part of the team. This study revealed that traditional employment provides a long-term remedy for unemployment by offering a permanent answer. Traditional employment provides a more comprehensive package, including benefits such as paid sick leave, vacation time, and a retirement plan. Freelancing lacks these perks and compensates freelancers only based on their working hours. While the funds are sufficient to support a certain lifestyle, it is highly unsustainable.

The income generated by freelancing is reported to be more than that of traditional employment available in Belize. Freelancers receive payment for their work based on an hourly rate in US dollars, enabling them to earn a higher amount per hour compared to a traditional employee. However, traditional employees enjoy perks that are not available to freelancers. Many additional charges are deducted straight from the freelancer's earnings. For instance, freelancers are responsible for paying for healthcare expenses themselves, as insurance coverage is not provided as part of their employment benefits. Freelancers must allocate vacation time without compensation for both the time spent away from work and the hours not worked. Additionally, they are responsible for establishing a retirement plan solely based on their hourly earnings. This differs from traditional employment since employers typically establish a retirement plan on your behalf.

While freelancing may not be a long-term solution for able-bodied folks, what about those who are physically disabled? This research has identified a permanent solution for individuals who are unable to secure traditional job due to a certain condition. This study revealed that Belize lacks the necessary infrastructure to support individuals with disabilities. As a result, freelancing is being considered as a long-term solution for people living with disabilities, as it enables them to earn income from the convenience of their homes while receiving the necessary support to actively participate in society.

The participants of the study assert that in order to address the unemployment gap in Belize, freelancing must be promoted as a career alternative through government initiatives. The study participants expressed the belief that the education system in Belize should incorporate additional entrepreneurship programs, including freelancing as a viable small-business alternative. Participants assert that collaboration between the government and the ministry of education is necessary to develop a curriculum that provides a greater number of courses in entrepreneurship and equips students with the skills necessary for future employment. The key area to focus on for future employment opportunities in Belize is technology. Participants advocate for increased government investment in small business fairs and technology training in Belize. This would enable the unemployed sector to gain access to educational training, thereby equipping them with the necessary skills for the job market.

In summary, the research revealed that freelancing can indeed bridge the unemployment gap in Belize by offering employment and generating new opportunities for individuals facing difficulties in securing traditional jobs or seeking additional income. Freelancing can serve as a means of returning funds into Belize if the government invests in education and incorporates entrepreneurship into the education system. This would allow students to view freelancing as a viable career option or a supplementary source of income alongside their traditional employment. Another way the government might engage in education is by organizing a job fair and advocating for freelancing as a viable career option. In addition, they can allocate resources towards technology courses, enabling individuals to acquire fundamental computer skills and essential software knowledge required for freelancing. In conclusion, it is worth noting that freelancing provides a temporary solution to unemployment, and participants perceive freelancing as less stable than traditional work.

Implications

Practical Implications

The study participants participated in discussions regarding their individual experiences and viewpoints on freelancing and its capacity to alleviate unemployment in Belize. All participants in this study have observed and encountered the impact of freelancing on unemployment, drawing comparisons between their own personal experiences and the subject under discussion. In this study, all participants unanimously acknowledged the significant role of the Belizean government, specifically the Ministry of Education, in promoting freelancing as a viable career choice. The participants suggest that the introduction

of entrepreneurial classes in early education can facilitate this. The participant stated that it can be beneficial as it will encourage learners to think more from an entrepreneurial perspective rather than subscribing to traditional career methods. The results of this study also show that the government of Belize can promote freelancing by using small business fairs. Participants in these events feel that citizens who have already left the educational system can benefit from a small business fair, which can also be used to promote training opportunities and freelancing.

Participants believe that citizen involvement in job fairs and technological training might serve as an initial step into freelancing and a means of lowering the unemployment rate in Belize. Technology training can provide citizens with knowledge of fundamental computer functions and the ability to effectively browse the internet for job search purposes. Given the ongoing evolution of technology, it is crucial for schools and educational institutions to ensure that their teaching and training methods are regularly updated in order to match the demands of the labor market.

Ultimately, the Belizean government and the Ministry of Education may consider these findings as valuable insights to effectively reduce Belize's unemployment rates. If the school system implements a curriculum that prioritizes entrepreneurship in education and actively encourages freelancing as a viable option for small business ventures. Freelancing will become more prevalent in conversations about self-employment. Inadequate funding for self-employment courses throughout early stages of education by the government could potentially lead to an increase in the unemployment rate, which may be significantly impacted by unforeseen events like the Covid-19 pandemic. Freelancing offers recent graduates the chance to gain professional job experience, which can ultimately prepare them for long-term employment, seen as a more permanent solution to unemployment.

Theoretical Implications

This study includes useful qualitative data, such as current freelancers who have experience freelancing in Belize and understand what it takes to be a freelancer in Belize. This research lays the framework for future quantitative research. This research provides excellent qualitative data on freelancing as it exists in Belize today, as well as how to provide detail from experienced freelancers on how freelancing can help Belizeans with unemployment. The study's findings provide insight into what it will take to close the unemployment gap. This study provides an opportunity for future scholars to conduct

research on how the Belizean government might put the idea from this study into reality to reduce unemployment in Belize.

Research Limitation

While this research provides useful information on How Can Freelancing Help Unemployment in Belize? It is vital to acknowledge the study's limitations. This study had some constraints along the way. These limitations highlight the problems encountered during the research process and provide context for comprehending the findings.

One of this study's limitations is its sample size and generalizability. This study only looked at current freelancers, so the scope of what was addressed was extremely narrow. This study only had 15 participants, which may be challenging because it only covered a subset of the Belizean population rather than the entire country. Another limitation was time constraints; due to the limited time available for data collection, only very particular individuals were chosen to collect data from. Due to the limited time available, it is nearly impossible to investigate long-term trends and changes throughout time. The third research constraint revealed was the data collection methodology; this study used an interview method. The interviewer asked the questions, and the interviewee answered them. This method is considered biased since it is primarily reliant on participants' responses and their perspectives on the research issue, and responses differ from person to person, making each response potentially biased. These restrictions imply that, while the findings are significant, they should be interpreted with caution and should only reflect their specific populations, not the entire Belize region. To reduce response bias, the interviewer ensured anonymity, so the respondent felt comfortable sharing their actual viewpoint rather than a biased one. Another way for mitigating limitations is probing, which was done during the interview. This strategy was employed following answering to answer questions in the interview, followed by asking them "How question" or "Can you explain further?" This strategy was ideal since it allowed the interviewer to obtain honest ideas and go deeper into the interviewee's opinions regarding the research. This ensures that the data for the study is reliable and reflects actual opinions.

Recommendation For Future Studies

While this study provides vital insights into How Can Freelancing Help Unemployment in Belize?, it also highlights areas where more research is needed. Based on the limitations, these recommendations can be applied to new response questions raised during the study process.

First and foremost, the data from this study was gathered purely from the participants' experiences. As a result, there were no further data collection methods other than the sampling size. The Longitudinal investigations can be used in future investigations. This strategy will help future researchers comprehend development and change across time, allowing them to trace the process of How Can Freelancing Help Unemployment in Belize? Following the covid-19 epidemic, freelancing has grown in popularity, and more individuals are considering it as a career option. As a result, future researchers will need to update their study and findings as time passes and technology advances. Collecting data at several points for later analysis can also be used to investigate patterns in cross-sectional data.

Second, the study focused on a very narrow set of people: freelancers from Belize who work on the Upwork platform. Future studies should incorporate a more diversified sampling population, including more than one freelancing platform, to make the research findings more generalizable and improve the overall findings of the study. This is significant because it will provide new insight into the research topic, and the information gathered will be used to develop a ground-breaking research theory that can be used by Belize's education system and small business development institutions to examine and change their strategy in order to reduce the country's unemployment.

Finally, because this research has already paved the way for future research on this topic. Future study could concentrate only on economic impact assessments. Future researchers can focus on quantitative research and collect data from various organizations in Belize, allowing them to conduct research based on Belizean statistics, which can then be linked to this current study and contribute to lowering Belize's overall unemployment rate. Focusing on the economic impact can assist in developing policies that promote the growth of freelancing opportunities. Expanding freelancer prospects must begin at the educational level, and as such, it is an issue that the Belize Ministry of Education should study. If sufficient research is conducted, it can help to Belize's growth and thus be viewed as a means for the Belizean

government to attempt to eliminate unemployment in Belize. Starting with education can simply mean introducing entrepreneurship as a career option and incorporating technology into the educational system for pupils as early as possible.



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APPENDIX A INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Dear Participants

I am a graduate student of National Taiwan Normal University. Currently, I've reached the research phase of my studies and I am currently studying freelancing as a way to lessen unemployment in Belize. I would greatly appreciate your participation in my Interview, which will take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

This interview is entirely voluntary, and all responses will be kept strictly confidential. The submitted information will only be used for research and will not be shared with any third parties. You can contact me at camrynmendoza15@gmail.com if you have questions regarding the research. We appreciate your consideration and time. I look forward to your participation in this study.

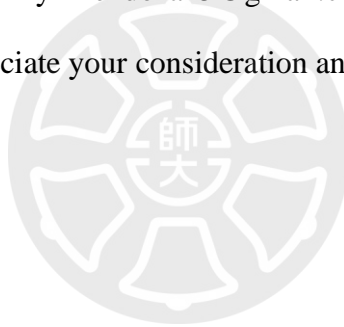
Sincerely,

Camryn Mendoza

Graduate Institute of International Human Resource Development (IHRD)

National Taiwan Normal University

Advisor: Dr. Chih-Chien Steven Lai



Subject: Invitation to Interview

Dear Participant,

I appreciate your attention in reviewing my consent form. If you consent to participating in my research, kindly affix your signature below.

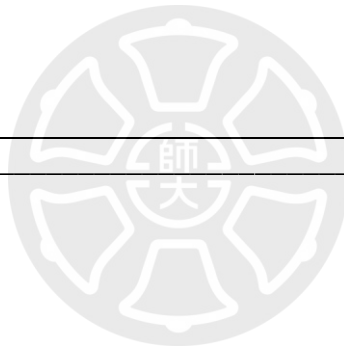
Interviewer/Researcher: Camryn Mendoza

Interviewee/ Participants

I authorize Ms. Mendoza to use my information for research purposes.

Signature: _____

Date : _____



APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interview questions for this study are designed based on the research purpose and questions. The list of questions is presented below:

1. Do you think freelancing can open new opportunities in Belize? Why? why not?
2. How would you rate the impact of freelancing in job stability compared to traditional employment in Belize? Give examples.
3. How would you compare the financial benefits and standard of life of being a freelancer to traditional employment?
4. Do you think freelancing can work as an option to lessen the brain drain from traditional employment?
5. What are some factors that contribute to you choosing to be a freelancer and not a traditional employee?
6. Do you find it harder to get freelancing opportunities or traditional employment opportunities?
7. From your experience as a freelancer; Do you believe that freelancing can be used as an option to lower the unemployment rate in your Belize? Why?
8. Do you believe that citizens from Belize that are unemployed would consider freelancing as an option to get back into the employment field if the government was of assistance?
9. What are the challenges and benefits associated with being a freelancer?
10. Do you believe that collaboration among government and freelancers can create opportunities for future entrepreneurs and overall contribute by lowering the unemployment rate in Belize? How?
11. Do you believe if you had the access to entrepreneurial classes you would have taken this step earlier in life?
12. Would you ever consider leaving the freelancing field and returning to traditional employment? Why not?



APPENDIX C SUMMARY FROM INTERVIEW RECORD

Example: Participant #1

1. Do you think freelancing can open new opportunities in Belize? Why? why not?

Yes, freelancing is an uncommon way to make money, but there are opportunities to earn enough money to support one's standard of life. I believe that freelancing may create chances in Belize by focusing on a certain niche, allowing Belizeans to earn more while spending less.

2. How would you rate the impact of freelancing in job stability compared to traditional employment in Belize? Give examples.

According to my experience, work stability is one of the primary reasons why people do not consider freelancing as a career option. I mention this because sometimes you obtain long-term contracts and the client's money runs out, leaving you jobless, and short-term contracts finish quickly, leaving the freelancer unemployed and forced to look for new clients.

3. How would you compare the financial benefits and standard of life of being a freelancer to traditional employment?

In my opinion, there are many benefits. Not only do I have more time to be a full-time mother and spend time with my family, but I also earn more money and work fewer hours than I did at my regular bank job. However, the biggest difference is that, as I mentioned earlier, freelancing is not a permanent job, whereas my traditional bank job was guaranteed money and was a permanent position.

4. Do you think freelancing can work as an option to lessen the brain drain from traditional employment?

A typical job can be extremely demanding. working long hours, sometimes on the weekends, and following your employer's schedule—a completely different experience than freelancing, which allows you to establish your own hours and go at your own speed.

5. What are some factors that contribute to you choosing to be a freelancer and not a traditional employee?

For me, the greatest factor was having more free time, followed by the financial advantages.

6. Do you find it harder to get freelancing opportunities or traditional employment opportunities?

From my own experience, traditional employment is considerably easier to obtain, even though I love being a freelancer and encourage people to give it a try. I mention this because, traditional employment is quite clear about what they are seeking for, they

typically receive less resumes daily, and Belize is a very tiny country as compared to freelancing which is a world wide gig.

7. From your experience as a freelancer; Do you believe that freelancing can be used as an option to lower the unemployment rate in Belize? Why?

Absolutely, I believe that this may be used to reduce unemployment because freelancing gives everyone, regardless of background, an equal opportunity. Local jobs, in my opinion, are quite particular about the qualifications they want and the degree that is needed, while being a freelancer only requires experience and a strong CV.

8. Do you believe that citizens from Belize that are unemployed would consider freelancing as an option to get back into the employment field if the government was of assistance?

I believe there are two ways to look at this. First, the younger generation may pursue freelancing if they have support from the Belizean government. The second group consists of older, more conventional generations; I think they will favour formal work over freelancing because the latter requires one to stay current with technology.

9. What are the challenges and benefits associated with being a freelancer?

The hardest thing about being a freelancer is maintaining motivation. This is because, at times, working from home might make you feel at ease and a little lazy, but maintaining motivation to complete tasks on time is crucial to maintaining a good reputation as a freelancer. For me, the greatest advantage is having more free time, which enables me to pursue social work outside of work.

10. Do you believe that collaboration among government and freelancers can create opportunities for future entrepreneurs and overall contribute by lowering the unemployment rate in Belize? How?

Yes, if the government collaborates with entrepreneurs they can open doors for the unemployed sector therefore lowering the unemployment rate.

11. Do you believe if you had the access to entrepreneurial classes you would have taken this step earlier in life?

Yes, I think that freelancing should be included into entrepreneurial classes and should one considered a small business option.

12. Would you ever consider leaving the freelancing field and returning to traditional employment? Why not?

No, freelancing gives me time with my family.