

# **Gig workers in sharing economy: Conceptualizing Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP) in e-lancing platforms**

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## **Abstract**

Sharing economy and growth of gig workers draw attention of HR manager to develop strategies for dynamic work environment. The purpose of this study is to identify motivational factors which fascinate freelancers and engage them to stay in this industry. This study is also an attempt to extend concept of value proposition in context of freelancing which provide base for long term freelancer-platform relationship. 358 freelancers participate in an online survey, and an adapted questionnaire was used for data collection. Reflexive- formative model with repeated item technique was used for measurement of Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP). Results indicate that Economic Value (EV), Autonomy Value (AV), Developmental Value (DV), Hedonic Value (HV) and Social Value (SV) significantly and positively contribute in Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP). Managerial implications are suggested to improve each value dimension and overall Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP).

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**Keywords:** e-lancing, Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP), Sharing economy, freelancing platform

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## 1. Introduction

"I think in the next 30 years, people only work four hours a day and maybe four days a week," Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba anticipated future of work force in CNBC (2017). Workplace dynamics are changing with evolvement of technology revolution era. Full-time employment is disappearing gradually and short term employment is increasing dramatically (Tench, Fawkes, & Palihawadana, 2002). Traditional HRM policies are clumsy and need to be adaptive with dynamic workplace environment. Young generation demands more flexibility, autonomy and empowerment in workplace (Kosugi & Mouer, 2008). Recruitment, retention and development of young talent are major challenges for human resource managers.

In recent years, a new culture is developed where people tend to share their belongings to the other peoples with the help of web and android based applications, which termed as "sharing economy" (Schor & Fitzmaurice, 2014). Sharing economy business model disrupted many well-established industries (i.e. transportation and hospitality) and gaining popularity in all the major industries. Uber, Olx, AirBnB, TaskRabbit, LendingClub, Fiverr and Careem are few exemplary companies which follow the sharing economy business model. Sharing economy net worth is expected to be around 15 billion US dollar and expected to grow to 335 billion US dollar by the year 2025 (PwC, 2015). In 2014, 25 percent of US workers were freelancers and this number increase to 36 percent in 2017 (Pofeldt, 2015). Under the umbrella term of "sharing economy", there are different terminologies which explain similar concepts in various discipline i.e. gig economy (Green et al., 2018), mesh economy (Turi, Domingo-Ferrer, Sánchez, & Osmani, 2017), demand economy (Roberts & Zietsma, 2018), peer to peer sharing (Golle, Leyton-Brown, Mironov, & Lillibridge, 2001), collaborative economy (Hamari et al., 2016), crowd based capitalism (Sundararajan, 2016) and e-lancing (Aguinis & Lawal, 2013). e-lancing term is used for the arrangement of freelancers and clients via platforms; which provides market place to generate services on demand (Abubakar & Shneikat, 2017; Aguinis & Lawal, 2013). Freelancers can be considered as part-time employees because of hybrid nature of freelancing; freelancers are entrepreneurs who also work on outsourced projects as employees via e-Lancing platforms. Freelancers.com, upwork.com, fiverr.com, guru.com, peopleperhour.com and 99designs.com are major e-lancing platforms which connect millions of freelancers and clients daily. These platforms open new horizons of job opportunities for entrepreneurs. In 2017, freelancer.com posted 12 million job projects and upwork.com posted 3 million projects (Iftikhar, 2017).

Like every technology revolution, IT revolution not only provides limitless opportunities but also possess some challenges for corporate world. On the bright side, many IT technician, designers, academic writers and scientists are joining this industry, and service providers find it attractive and gain economic, social, technical and emotional value. Other side of picture shows that many service providers are complaining against these sharing economy platforms. They

complain that these platforms are getting the maximum advantages and service providers are at the losing end (Bae & Koo, 2018; Ganapati & Reddick, 2018). Reich (2015) explained sharing economy as, “share-the-scrap-economy” where, “human beings do the work that's unpredictable and patch together barely enough to live on. Freelancers are not considered as employees of the platform. They are considered as independent contractors who provide their services for specific task and time. Freelancers remain deprived of provident fund, holidays, insurance and pension which are perks of corporate employees. Freelancing platforms have to think about these gig workers. Qualified pool of professionals also generates demand, and platform needs to develop strong and long-term relationship with freelancers. It is convenient for freelancers to shift from one platform to another because switching cost is very low (Kuhn, 2016). Platforms have to strategize freelancers' commitment for platform and should develop retention policy to stay competitive in freelancing industry.

e-Lancing industry is getting competitive not only for freelancers but also for freelancing platforms. There are more than hundred freelancing platforms competing to gain attention of clients as well as freelancers. Platforms have to offer higher value to freelancers in order to attract, develop and retain them. Long-term and healthy relationship between Platform and freelancers can provide base for higher service quality to clients.

Apart from tremendous growth in freelancing, this area is still under developed in academic research. Hence, it is important to know categorically that which factors can create value for freelancers and what is their relative importance in perceptiveness of freelancers. Value proposition is proven to be a very useful tool for development of long term employee relationship which ultimately leads towards favorable business outcomes (Heger, 2007a; Marriott Jr, 2001a). Value proposition also provides grounds for strategic employee management and employer branding (Heger, 2007a). Extant literature could not provide insights about freelancer value proposition (FVP) and this research is an effort to fill this research gap. The aim of this research study is to identify and categories dimensions of Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP). Freelancer value proposition will help freelancing platforms to develop understanding about their workers. Effective talent management can provide sustainable competitive advantage to any organization (Rabbi, Ahad, Kousar, & Ali, 2015). More than 70 percent IT firms used to outsource their work to freelancers (Süß & Kleiner, 2010); and companies engrossed to contact same freelancers over time who maintain history of good work with them. So, Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP) can also help client companies to know about their part time employees.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Sharing economy and e-lancing platforms**

Sharing economy is a broader term, and often used interchangeably with

collaborative consumption, peer to peer sharing, gig economy and crowd-based capitalism. Scholars from various disciplines define this term in different contexts (Belk, 2014; Richardson, 2015; Dredge and Gyimothy, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2016; Priporas et al., 2017). Sharing economy generally refers to sharing of underutilized resources on demand with the help of internet based services. Sharing economy concept emerges from ancient concept of ‘barter system’, where people used to exchange goods with goods based on their needs (Belk, 2014). Later on, money become medium of exchange, and people used to buy goods in exchange for money. Sharing economy business models provide virtual platform to exchange resources among peers with the help of technology i.e. mobile application, website. In any sharing economy model, there are three main parties. First party is providers, which share goods and services on demand. In e-lancing, freelancers are the service providers. Second party is users who generate demand for goods and services. Here users are companies and individual clients. Third party is platform which provides virtual market for providers and users; in case of e-lancing these platforms are websites, such as fiverr.com. Sharing economy models can be classified on the basis of market structure (peer to peer, business to peer), business orientation (profit, non-profit), degree of ownership (product/service system, redistribution system, collaborative lifestyle, or type of shared products) (Andersson, Hjalmarsson, & Avital, 2013; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Möhlmann, 2015; Schor & Fitzmaurice, 2014).

e-lancing platforms provide virtual ‘market place’ which can be defined as, “website where individuals interested in being hired and employers looking for individuals to perform some type of work meet” (Aguinis & Lawal, 2013). Employer can be an individual, a company or small enterprises and often called ‘Client’ in e-Lancing. These platforms not only provide matching facilities but also provide many HRM functions such as recruiting, training, feedback and compensation.

## **2.2 Supporting theories for Freelancer Value Proposition**

### **2.2.1 Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory guides us about social interaction of human being in the society. According to this theory, human beings develop their relationships and interactions with society on the basis of rewards and costs attached to interactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976). People try to evaluate all the rewards and cost, consciously or sub-consciously. People seek and prolong only those relationships in the society which maximize their value (Edvardsson, Tronvoll, & Gruber, 2011). Different people have different preferences about values, therefore decisions about participation in a certain event is subjected to personals (Tyrie & Ferguson, 2013). People perform cost-benefit analysis based on their own perceptions and preferences.

### **2.2.2 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**

Self-determination theory is about motivational factors which influence human behavior to achieve some predefined goals. According to SDT, motivational factors can be classified in two major categories; intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors (Deci & Ryan, 1996, 2008; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Intrinsic factors are related to inner self, factors which erg to do something for self-satisfaction i.e. enjoyment, passion, competence, relatedness. Intrinsic factors are not related to rational thinking or cost-benefit analysis (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the other hand, extrinsic motivational factors are related to outer rewards such as income, unemployment, political instability, technology change, economic growth (Deci & Ryan, 2010; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Here, it is important to know that these motivational factors are not opposing each other. It is quite possible, that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors support each other and magnify overall motivation of individual e.g. a person spend extra hours in graphic designing, because it is his passion and also get financial reward for his extra work.

### **2.2.3 Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theory refers to the aggregate of knowledge, skills, competencies, social networking and personnel attributes of humans which motivate them to perform task and generate measurable economic benefits (Tan, 2014). According to this theory, every individual is an economic unit and can bring economic value in the society (Fitzsimons & Peters, 1994). Human capital has following determinants; economic capital, social capital, symbolic capital and cultural capital (Nafukho, Hairston, & Brooks, 2004). Investment in any determinant will result in higher Human capital and higher economic contribution in society.

### **2.3 Freelancer Value Proposition**

Concept of Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is derived from the concept of customer value proposition (CVP) which is very popular in the discipline of marketing management. Customer value proposition is a promise which a company makes to the customer during selling of products and services in terms of exchange of values (Churchill & Peter, 1995). Similarly, Employer value proposition is promise made by the employer during job offer in terms of values in exchange of employee services (Lusch, Vargo, & O'Brien, 2007; Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015). Thomas (2018) defined EVP as, "value that your employees gain from working at your organization". if employer offers the values which employee is seeking from the job then their relationship will be very strong, long term and beneficial (Marriott Jr, 2001b).

Employee value proposition is an effective tool for strategic employee management which leads towards critical business outcomes (Heger, 2007). Another researcher suggests that Employee value proposition is considered to be the starting point for employee branding which not only contribute in overall

branding but also helps in targeting the specific potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employee value proposition is not simple listing of attributes; it is a developmental process which starts from identifying value attributes by listening and observing employees of that specific industry and then develops value delivery system. Value proposition is different for every industry and cannot be generalize to all industries and even all companies within the industry (Pratibha, 2015) . Strategic employee value proposition is a difficult process but if successfully develop then turn out to be a strategic tool to attract employees. Employee value is a multidimensional construct which comprises of social value, economic value, departmental value, application value and interest value (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). Jiang & Iles (2011) have identified value propositions in context of employee-based brand equity which comprises of economic value, social value, development value, interest value, and brand trust. Ambler and Barrow (1996) proposed functional values, economic values and psychological values should be considered while making value proposition. In China, social values and esteem values are most important for retention of current employees (Bjorkman and Lu 1999).

Similarly, we can define Freelancer Value Proposition as “Sum of values which freelancer gains from freelancing platform in return of services”. Based on above mention literature and personal interviews, we propose following dimensions of Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP).

### **2.3.1 Economic Value**

Economic benefits are considered to be driving force in all sharing economy business models. Alexander Hars (2002) analyze motivational factors in sharing economy networks and identify that economic rewards are the most important extrinsic motivational factor which enforce participants to contribute in sharing economy. Economic benefits include all the monetary benefits such as salary, bonus, commission, and compensation. Good salary and recognition among fellow workers develop positive attitude in the employees (Chew & Chan, 2008). Pay satisfaction along with supervisor satisfaction enforce employees to stay in the organization (DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004) . Vandenberghe and Tremblay (2008) suggest that employee and organization relationship is important but financial benefits are more imperative for retention of employees. Financial benefits attract entrepreneurs and professionals to contribute in sharing economy. This new innovate model of business brings financial benefits to all the contributors including customers, sellers and platform. Sharing economy service such as Uber and Airbnb are more economical as compared to traditional services (Liang, Choi, & Joppe, 2018)

Freelancers utilize their free time, underutilized skill, knowledge and capabilities to gain financial benefits. Majority of freelancers are part-timers, and they do work to add extra money in their regular salary. e-lancing platforms are proven to be alternative of corporate jobs in the time of great recession of 2007-2009

(Friedman, 2014). e-lancing platforms provide win-win situation for both clients and freelancers. Clients find the most economical deal according to their project requirements, and freelancers earn money for their underutilized resources (e.g. time, skills, and knowledge). Based on above mention arguments it can be hypothesized that.

H1: Economic value positively contribute in Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP)

### **2.3.2 Social Value**

Social interaction and networking is basic instinct of human beings. People care about their image and social status in the society. Social value is combination of psychological benefits provided by employment to improve social status of employees. It is established that social value is important factor, which motivates to participate in sharing economy networks, especially in knowledge sharing and information sharing platforms (Hung, Durcikova, Lai, & Lin, 2011). People think that participating in sharing economy can help to gain social acceptance and good for reputation (Wasko & Faraj, 2005) . In online platforms, individual participate in collaborative networks to gain recognition among peer groups (Carrillo & Gaimon, 2004). Reputation among peer group is considered to be an important extrinsic motivational factor for corporate employees. Another research verifies that reputation among peer group is important motivational driving force for content writers and open source project participants (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007).

H2: Social value positively contribute in Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP)

### **2.3.3 Autonomy Value**

Degree of freedom in decision making and work management is refers to autonomy value (Fornes, Rocco, & Wollard, 2008). Autonomy is very important intrinsic motivational factor which enhances knowledge sharing in an organization (Foss, Minbaeva, Pedersen, & Reinholt, 2009). Autonomy of employees enhances creativity, innovation and organizational commitment. In traditional organizations, it is established that work autonomy increase employee commitment towards organization (Aube, Rousseau, & Morin, 2007). Traditional organizations have defined reporting structure and work procedures which offer low flexibility in work so autonomy is low for employees. Project-based work and temporary organizations offer higher flexibility and autonomy that's why employees are more motivated towards their work (Hanisch & Wald, 2014; Nuhn & Wald, 2016). In freelancing, work flexibility and autonomy is very high as compared to corporate jobs. Freelancers can choose their projects according to their skills set and can also structure the work according to their own schedule. Freelancers are independent, empowered, and autonomous. They do not follow formal dress code, work hour timings and hierarchy structure. They are self-managed and self-motivated.

H3: Autonomy value positively contribute in Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP)

### 2.3.4 Developmental Value

Developmental value can be defined as, “degree to which organization provide opportunities to employees in career growth, recognition among peer group, professional development, confidence and career enhancing experience” (Berthon et al., 2005) Jiang and Iles (2011) identified that developmental value is one of the most important dimension of organizational attractiveness and Employer Based Brand Equity (EBBE), which means that employees value those companies and employers who offer better opportunities for skill development, professional development and career advancements. Any mean of developmental value ultimately contribute in organizational commitment and employee satisfaction (Tansky & Cohen, 2001). Lack of professional opportunities and work related factors effect turnover intensions (Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009) Freelancing offer variety of projects, exposure and challenges which help freelancer’s to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities.

H4: Developmental value positively contribute in Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP)

### 2.3.5 Hedonic Value

Hedonic value in context of customers refers to “those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of product usage experience” (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) Hedonic value is combination of enjoyment, fun, pleasure, excitement and perceived benefits which a person experience while using product, service or performing any activity. Enjoyment is regarded as an integral motivational factor in different collaborating economy platforms especially in information sharing platform and social media platforms. Another research suggested that enjoyment is one of the driving force for users to contribute and help in online information sharing system (Chung-Yan, 2010; M. Zhang, Cheng, Luo, & Fu, 2016)

H5: Hedonic value positively contribute in Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP)

### 2.3.6 Work-life balance value

Work-life balance can be defined as, “the ability of individuals to combine work and household responsibilities successfully regardless of age or gender”(Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). WLB can also be defined as, “an overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of one’s degree of success at meeting work and personal role demands” (Valcour, 2007). The work life balance has received immense intention in the past decade. Many research studies indicate that work life balance is consider to be very important aspect for



employees and leads towards critical outcomes i.e. productivity, creativity, performance, satisfaction and commitment (Chiang, Birtch, & Kwan, 2010; Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Hobson, Delunas, & Kesic, 2001; Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne, & McCarthy, 2013). Long office hours and overtime meetings disturb the personal life of individuals. Work life imbalance negatively affects creativity, productivity, organizational commitment and life satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Work life imbalance positively affects absenteeism, stress, job turnover, domestic violence, illness and parenting problems. Absence of formal dress code, procedural protocol, time bounding are inherited characteristics of freelancing which are great attractions for freelancers. Freelancers can design their own work schedule and decide when to work and how much to work. Based on the above literature, we can suggest the following hypothesis.

H6: Work life balance value positively contribute in Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP)

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Instrument design and measures**

The instrument design process initiated with review of relevant literature. Semi-structure interviews were conducted with freelancers, in order to explore insights of freelancers' perception about the value system. Fifteen freelancers from different working background were interviewed, and they share their views about various factors which engage them to work in freelancing industry. Interviews indicate some common dimensions of Employee Value Proposition (EVP) such as social value, economic value and developmental value; and also highlight some new dimensions which consider being important form freelancing industry prospective such as autonomy value, work live balance value and hedonic value.

Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP) is considered to be second order reflective-formative construct because all the six dimensions are explicit in nature and cannot be used interchangeably. Six dimensions are considered as first order reflexive measures, while Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP) is taken as formative measure derived from six dimensions. Reflective- formative model also helps to identify the relative importance of each dimension.

All six dimensions in the research model such as Economic Value (EV), Social Value (SV), Developmental Value (DV), Autonomy value (AV), Emotional Value (EV) and Work Life Balance Value (WLBV) measures are adapted from existing literature. Constructs are adapted to operationalize in E-lancing context, five-point likert-scale is used to measures responses, anchored by "Strongly Disagree" (1) and "Strongly Agree" (5). Appendix A lists all the items with their respective sources.

### 3.2 Sample and Data collection procedure

Non probability techniques are used in this study for data collection because of limited resources. Questionnaire was posted on various freelancing groups in facebook.com such as Pakistani freelancers, freelancers in Pakistan, Upwork freelancers, freelancing with Hisham Sarwar. Questionnaire was also circulated among students of Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST) and University of Sargodha (UOS) who have freelancing experience in any capacity. Total sample size contained data from 358 respondents. Sample size fulfills criterion of “ten times rule” Barclay (1995) and Hair (2017) guidelines of PLS SEM with 5% probability of type 1 error.

Sample contained 55.9 percent male and 44.1 percent female respondents. Part-time freelancers were 88 percent and full time freelancers were 12 percent. Major platforms accounted in the sample are Fiverr.com (36.6%), freelancer.com (29.6%) and upwork.com (16.5%). Sample accounted 41.1 percent beginners, 34.6 percent middle level and 24.6 percent expert freelancers.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Items	Categories	Percentage
Platform	freelancer.com	29.6
	UpWork.com	16.5
	Fiverr.com	36.6
	Guru.com	7.3
	99design.com	8.4
	Others	1.7
	Gender	Male
Female		44.1
Experience	less than one year	41.1
	1-3 years	34.6
	More than 3 years	24.3
Job Type	Full time	12
	Part time	88

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Evaluation of measurement model

This study used first order reflexive model and second order formative measurement model with repeated items technique. All the proposed dimensions of FVP; including economic value, social value, developmental value, hedonic value, autonomy value and work-life balance value are measured with reflective

measurement model. FVP is taken as second order formative model and measured with repeated items technique. According to F. Hair Jr (2014), reliability and validity are two major concerns for testing first order reflexive measurement model. To evaluate measures, following parameters are estimated, including composite reliability, average variance extracted, individual indicator reliability and discriminant validity hair (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014).

#### **4.2 Reliability and validity of first order model**

All the dimensions fulfill the reliability and validity criterion suggested by F. Hair Jr (2014), except work-life balance value dimension which exhibit lower factor loading, Cronbach's Alpha and AVE. This is exploratory study and there are no established guidelines about freelancer value proposition, so we can delete proposed dimension. Table 2 shows that five dimensions (EV, DV, AV, SV, HV) meet the minimum criteria of 0.5 of average variance extracted (AVE), 0.7 for rho\_A and 0.7 for composite reliability (CR) (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, 2017). Recommended criterion for individual outer loading is 0.7, but in exploratory studies, slightly lesser values are also expectable if AVE and CR meet the criterion (Hair, 2017; Hulland, 1999). Table 3 shows that outer model meets the criterion of discriminant validity; square root of AVE of each construct (EV, DV, AV, SV, HV) is greater than its correlation value with other constructs.

Table 2: Parameter Estimates (reflexive) of first-order model

Construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A
Economic Value (EV)	EV1	0.757	0.544	0.827	0.720	0.724
	EV2	0.775				
	EV3	0.689				
	EV4	0.727				
Developmental Value (DV)	DV1	0.741	0.528	0.817	0.701	0.704
	DV2	0.674				
	DV3	0.733				
	DV5	0.755				
Autonomy Value (AV)	AV1	0.734	0.536	0.822	0.711	0.717
	AV2	0.670				
	AV3	0.711				
	AV4	0.751				
Social Value (SV)	SV1	0.812	0.646	0.846	0.726	0.728
	SV2	0.813				
	SV3	0.786				
Hedonic Value (HV)	EV1	0.695	0.630	0.835	0.720	0.778
	EV2	0.812				
	EV3	0.864				

Table 3: Square Root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	AV	DV	HV	EV	SV
Autonomy Value (AV)	<b>0.732</b>				
Developmental Value (DV)	0.647	<b>0.727</b>			
Hedonic Value (HV)	0.140	0.113	<b>0.793</b>		
Economic Value (EV)	0.503	0.521	0.154	<b>0.738</b>	
Social Value (SV)	0.377	0.399	0.102	0.539	<b>0.804</b>

### 4.3 Evaluation of structural model

Collinearity is an important concern for second order formative construct, which can be defined as “the reciprocal of the tolerance; among the formative dimensions” (Fu, Liu, Wang, & Chao, 2018). Collinarity can be analyzed with the help of variance inflation factor (VIF) and Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio of correlation (HTMT). Table 4 shows that VIF values for all the dimensions are below the cut-off of 5. HTMT values are also below that cut-off point of 0.85, so there is no issue of multi-collinearity. Table 5 shows that all the first order constructs are significant at 0.05 levels. In addition, t- values of all dimensions calculated with the help of bootstrapping are also above 1.96. So, Autonomy value, developmental value, hedonic value, economic value and social value contribute significantly in freelancer value proposition. Hence, we accept H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5. If we look at beta coefficient value, it is evident that autonomy value (0.312), economic value (0.306) and developmental value (0.301) are strong dimensions of freelancer value proposition. Social value (0.254) and Hedonic value (0.249) also significantly predict freelancer value proposition but beta coefficient are relatively low.

Table 4: Collinearity

Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio of correlation (HTMT)						VIF
	AV	DV	EV	HV	SV	
AV						1.855
DV	0.812					1.905
EV	0.695	0.727				1.757
HV	0.190	0.182	0.192			1.030
SV	0.523	0.557	0.745	0.149		1.457

Table 5: Structural Equation Model

	B	SD	t- test	p-value
AV→FVP	0.312	0.013	24.016	0.000
DV→FVP	0.301	0.010	30.442	0.000
HV→FVP	0.249	0.012	21.431	0.000
EV→FVP	0.306	0.012	26.456	0.000
SV→FVP	0.254	0.011	23.499	0.000

## 5. Discussion and implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the dimensions of freelancer value proposition. Identification of dimensions of value is the first step towards platform-freelancers long term relationship. This study provides many useful insights which can help platforms to build good relationships with freelancers and improve service quality of the platform. Identification of value dimensions and development of freelancer value proposition is theoretical contribution of this study. We proposed six dimensions of Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP), including Economic Value (EV), Developmental value (DV), Autonomy Value (AV), Hedonic value (HV), Social Value (SV) and Work Life Balance Value (WLBV). Apart from WLBV, all the other dimensions show statistical support and proven to be dimensions of Freelancer Value Proposition (FVP). In order to enhance overall FVP, platform should try to focus each value dimension.

Following aspects could be the possible reason for rejection of WLBV. Work flexibility and no formal restrictions are beauty of freelancing, but it is also quite possible that freelancer could not manage work scheduling and overdo work for financial gains which leads towards stress. Freelancers have to create balance by themselves because there are no time restrictions. In initial level, it is very difficult for freelancer to manage scheduling and therefore, get exhausted very soon. Another factor could be deadlines, freelancer have to meet tight deadlines so they could not spend time with their family. Previous studies also suggest that deadlines plays important role in work stress and work life balance of freelancer (Grzywacz, Carlson, & Shulkin, 2008; Shevchuk, Strebkov, & Davis, 2018). In our sample, most of the respondents are at initial phase of their freelancing career, so possibly they are facing problems in scheduling and deadlines.

Economic Value (EV) is appeared to be important dimension of FVP. Normally, freelancers bid for project and it is in the hands of freelancer that how much money is sufficient for particular project; but platform can also play important role to enhance economic value. Platform should provide economic incentives and charge less commission fee. Apart from charging less commission fee platform should also focus on ease of payment to freelancers. Platforms focus on quality services to clients and often ignore freelancers. Mostly, platforms hold freelancers payment to ensure service quality to clients. Freelancers complain that clients often did not properly communicate requirements which lead towards payment issues. Fiverr.com is the pioneer freelancing platform which ensures freelancer payment by introducing 'upfront payment'. Clients have to pay in advance while placing project, and platform transfer money to freelancer upon completion of project. Banking system in third world countries is also not efficient, so companies should also consider regional constraints.

Developmental Value (DV) is key dimension and should be main focus of platform to maximize FVP. Freelancing help to learn new skills, knowledge and develop capabilities. Almost all freelancing platform provide basic training and have demo videos about layout and functionality of platform, but advance

professional training about skills is missing. Platforms should introduce professional certifications and recognize the certified freelancer on their profile. On the one hand, this will help freelancers to develop their skills and on the other hand it will help clients to find right person for job and help to improve service quality. Rating system is not best representative of freelancers' skills. Rating does not tell about variety of skills that freelancer possess.

Autonomy Value (AV) is inherited benefit of doing freelancing. Freelancing platforms offer wide range of projects, freelancers have liberty to choose projects and can work according to their own will. Freelancing gives them a sense of 'be your own boss'. Platforms can play role to increase this value by developing trust among freelancers. Freelancers may fail to complete a project due to certain reasons i.e. lack of skills. On request of freelancer, platform can provide assistance to complete the project by connecting to other freelancers.

In E-lancing, social value (SV) is related to reputation and networking. Freelancing platforms offer virtual community of like-minded people. This value can also be increased by offering informal 'chat sections', 'monthly discussion topics' and 'recognition certificates'. Freelancing platform can also send online greeting cards to freelancers based on their data i.e. birthday card.

Hedonic Value (HV) is combination of joy, excitement, pleasure, fun and positive feeling which a person experience while performing some activity. Layout of freelancing platform can play an important role to enhance this value. Layout should be attractive and have nice combination of colors and text styles. Use of emoticons under limits, can also bring excitement and enjoyment. Quotes and gif can also be used to keep them motivated. Google.com use gif to recognize world special days in very effective manner without creating irritation for users.

## **5.1 Limitations and future directions**

This study was first effort to explore dimensions of freelancer value proposition (FVP) and further investigation is required to validate the construct. Majority of respondents were initial level freelancers and generalization of result is limited. It would be interesting to investigate role of different demographics on freelancer Value proposition and attitude towards e-lancing platforms. Value proposition is a developmental process which starts from identification of values and leads towards incorporation of values in value delivery network. Further studies can focus on methods to improve values for freelancers (i.e. training) and their effect on organizational outcomes (i.e. commitment, satisfaction, turnover, productivity).

### Appendix 1: Survey Instrument

Construct	Item	Measures	Source
Economic Value (EV)	EV1	I am getting an above average basic salary.	(Almaçık & Almaçık, 2012)
	EV2	I am gaining an overall attractive compensation package.	(Almaçık & Almaçık, 2012)
	EV3	I save more money because of participating in this freelancing platform.	(Lee, Chan, Balaji, & Chong, 2018)
	EV4	Freelancing platform is an economical alternative to traditional service provision.	(Lee et al., 2018)
	EV5	I can find good deals in freelancing platform.	(Lee et al., 2018)
Social Value (SV)	SV1	This freelancing platform would help me to feel acceptable in the society	(Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; T. C. Zhang, Jahromi, & Kizildag, 2018)
	SV2	This freelancing platform would make a good impression on other people	(Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; T. C. Zhang et al., 2018)
	SV3	This freelancing platform would give its users social approval	(Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; T. C. Zhang et al., 2018)
	SV4	Freelancing platform help me make new friends.	(Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; T. C. Zhang et al., 2018)
	SV5	This freelancing platform is recommended by my friends.	(Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; T. C. Zhang et al., 2018)
Work life balance value	WLBV1	There is a good fit between my personal life and work life.	(Wu et al., 2013)
	WLBV2	There is a good fit between my job and my personal health.	(Wu et al., 2013)
	WLBV3	(-)I often did not have enough time for my family or other important people in my life because of freelancing	(Abstein, Heidenreich, & Spieth, 2014)
	WLBV4	My work offers schedule flexibility	(Wu et al., 2013)
	WLBV5	(-)At home I was often in a lower mood as I would have liked to be because of the freelancing work	(Abstein et al., 2014)
	WLBV6	This job enables me to continue living where I live now.	(Wu et al., 2013)
Autonomy Value (AV)	AV1	I had the opportunity to set my own priorities at work	(Spanuth & Wald, 2017)
	AV2	I had the opportunity to choose my specialization related assignments.	(Spanuth & Wald, 2017)
	AV3	In my last project, I had a lot of possibilities to make my own decisions	(Spanuth & Wald, 2017)
	AV4	I have autonomy in setting my income per hour rate	(Spanuth & Wald, 2017)
Developmental Value (DV)	DV1	Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular freelancing platform	(Reis, Braga, & Trullen, 2017; Ronda, Valor, & Abril, 2018)
	DV2	Feeling good about myself as a result of working for a particular freelancing	(Reis et al., 2017; Ronda et al., 2018)



		platform	
	DV3	I am gaining career-enhancing experience in my freelancing platform	(Reis et al., 2017; Ronda et al., 2018)
	DV4	This platform provides opportunity to get global exposure through working on foreign assignments.	(Reis et al., 2017; Ronda et al., 2018)
	DV5	Freelancing platform is springboard for future employment	(Reis et al., 2017; Ronda et al., 2018)
Hedonic Value (HV)	HV1	I think freelancing is enjoyable	(Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016b)
	HV2	I think freelancing is fun	(Hamari et al., 2016b)
	HV3	I think freelancing is interesting	(Hamari et al., 2016b)

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