

Job Satisfaction in Transitions into Self-employment: Subjective Evaluations

Abstract

Purpose: In the current context, toxic workplaces are increasingly popular within organizations which lead to an increase in exhaustion and work related stress. Low staff morale, high employee turnover, low productivity, and poor work quality are just a few effects of this type of toxic workplace environments. Due to such negativity placed upon wage employment, people who are struggling are looking for better means of employment such as self-employment. The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate how the transitions decision of self-employment over paid employment influences job satisfaction at the individual level.

Design: A qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews. 15 individuals who have transitioned to self-employment were chosen on the basis of purposive sampling. Under the 3 main categories of self-employment, wage employment as well as job satisfaction, key findings were gathered, and conclusions were drawn based on the insights received from the interviewees.

Findings: Findings of this study clearly shows that individuals are struggling due to the degradation of wage employment and eventually self-employments do attain job satisfaction comparative to wage employment.

Implications: The findings of this study are well suited to the current world scenarios especially due to the number of suicides reported due to various issues in the workplace. The importance of the findings of this study further expands to individuals who are struggling at their workplace but has not made up their minds to transition to self-employment hence contemplating, to easily make their decisions and to get rid of their toxic workplace. The study provides provide advisable guidance to the individuals contemplating to transition from wage employment to self-employment.

Future Research Suggestions: Conducting more interviews is necessary to draw better conclusions on the subject. The concept of job satisfaction can be a subjective concept therefore, different individuals may hold different opinions which may contradict with each other, therefore is important to do more research on the subject to get wider insights.

Keywords: *Self-employment, Wage employment, Job Satisfaction, Qualitative inquiry, Toxic Workplace*

Introduction

The number of people choosing self-employment over paid employment as a career has steadily increased, especially in industrialized countries since the late 1990s (van der Zwan et al., 2018). This trend is further spread into emerging nation likes Sri Lanka; currently, self-employed individuals represent a considerable share of the total labour force. The self-employed total population, as per the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates in Sri Lanka, was 41.52% as of 2019. The decision of transforming self-employment over paid employment as a career is essentially dynamic since decisions have an impact on the worker's present and future well-being as well as the accumulation of labor experience specific to each sector (Pardo & Ruiz-Tagle, 2016).

The choice of self-employment over wage employment has been crucial due to the destructive work environments faced by daily workers. Toxic workplaces are increasingly prevalent in today's work environment; more and more people are being burnt out. Unhealthy work environments are characterized by unethical and unfair behavior, punitive measures, and hostility between employees and management (Dahal, 2022). The impact of this type of work environment is likely to lower employee morale, high turnover, poor productivity, poor work quality, and even physical symptoms each day after going through a toxic workplace. Moreover, paid employees are struggling not just with stagnant salaries, but also with the high cost of living along with rising housing, utility, and food expenditures (Poschke, 2019). Many individuals are unsatisfied with their occupations due to the stress of paying bills on a restricted income. A further driver for wage employment degradation is the lack of career growth and advancement. In addition, autonomy and control play a vital role in employment but in most instances the relevant freedom required by an employee is not provided hence leads to many difficulties starting from stress, anxiety, displeasure etc.

Literature on self-employment transitions makes a wide use of rational agent-based models (e.g.: a job quits model; job demand-control; quality of work; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; adaptation theory) assuming that individuals choose self-employment if the expected utility of this option exceeds the one associated with wage employment (Guerra and Patuelli, 2016; Nikolova, 2019). In line with that, decision of choosing self-employment over paid employment is associated with earnings, income variability, and other qualitative factors including autonomy, and flexibility. Consequently, several empirical studies demonstrate that the choice of self-employment is not solely driven by income prospects but that non-pecuniary motivations, such as achieving higher procedural utility from more freedom of decision making, flexibility, and autonomy, can play an important role (Fritsch et al., 2019). Besides the pros and cons faced by wage employees and self-employees, many policy interventions aiming to encourage self-employment have been implemented by national and regional governments around the world in order to stimulate new employment opportunities and reduce unemployment (Guerra and Patuelli, 2016), Sri Lankan national and regional policies are no exception.

Even though self-employment holds a superior position in the current world, it is manifest that individuals go through a major amount of stress due to long hours of work, initial losses, lack of capital, lack of work-life balance etc. therefore it leaves an uncertainty on the ultimate satisfaction attained by an individual who has transitioned from wage employment to self-employment (Poschke, 2019). Clearly, there is consistent evidence of a positive relationship between work satisfaction and self-employment (Wan, 2017; van der Zwan et al., 2018; Nikolova, 2019). In more general terms, self-employed people have often been found to experience higher levels of subjective utility or wellbeing in terms of work and life satisfaction due to higher degrees of self-determination and self-enhancement (Fritsch et al., 2019). However, on the subjective characteristics of wage employment that are expected to lead to self-employment (or entrepreneurship), as well as on the dynamics of job satisfaction, the literature is limited. As Guerra and Patuelli (2016) argued, even people select self-employment because of income variability, autonomy, and flexibility, it is important to look also job satisfaction which can be seen as an excess reward discounting future potential flows of utility deriving from a change in working conditions with respect to the current situation. An important shortcoming of the available empirical studies of self-employment is that they neglect the work satisfaction of individuals who transition from wage employment to self-employment.

Hence, the aim of the present paper is to evaluate how the transition decision of self-employment over paid employment influences job satisfaction through better autonomy, independency, career growth, and personal fulfillment, at the individual level. In line with that, the study first examines the experiences on wage employment and rationale behind choosing of self-employment over wage employment. Secondly, explores how transition to self-employment influences satisfaction with work, at the individual level.

This study then contributes to our understanding of the origin of job satisfaction and self-employment and provides an explanation how a switch to self-employment influences satisfaction with work, at the individual level. This study attempts to draw up a conclusion for the daunting dilemma of do individuals who transition from wage employment to self-employment due to various difficulties faced, ultimately attain the objective of job satisfaction. This study will mainly assist individuals especially the younger generation to make the choice of either paid employment or self-employment as a career pathway and also the individuals who are contemplating to quit their job to start up their own businesses.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides the literature background. Section 3 describes the methodology. The empirical results and discussion are reported in Section 4, and Section 5 concludes the paper.

Literature Background

Prior studies have long shown how workplace factors like autonomy, interest, and self-direction being hampered have affected perceptions of mastery and self-efficacy which has been downgraded (Schieman & Plickert, 2008; Quinlan & Bohle, 2009; Dahal, 2022). At this stage, an individual must be foregone distress at a maximum level where change of career paths is required.

The job quits literature provides a comprehensive framework to address the question of whether or not leaving a paid position for venturing into self-employment (Guerra and Patuelli, 2016). This framework indicates that optimistic people may choose to enter self-employment or simply to address differently the costs that the more heterodox option of turning to self-employment implies. Interestingly, the literature on job quits opined that dissatisfied workers have higher quit rates than satisfied workers because the former perceive the expected present value of their job as being lower with respect to the one offered by outside opportunities. Moreover, the Job Demand-Control model (Karasek, 1979) equips a theoretical lens of self-employment's health implications. It claims that a mismatch between job demands (perceived work intensity, time stress, workload, and conflicting demands) and job control (perceived control and authority over work and skill development) determines job strain (Nikolova, 2019, which may lead chronic stress, which may be associated with certain dissatisfaction. As such, job satisfaction can be seen as a reasonable indicator summing up perceptions about the comparative advantage of remaining in the current job against the alternatives.

Self-employment has been the subject of numerous studies as a risky but possibly successful entrepreneurial endeavor (Pardo & Ruiz-Tagle, 2016). In fact, people who engage in such activities in industrialized nations are often thought to be highly educated, to have wealth above average, and to have below average levels of risk aversion. Being a successful entrepreneur may be possible for self-employed people with the correct set of inclinations and talents (Dawson et al., 2009). Self-employment can also be undertaken by

formerly paid employed individuals who have unexpectedly become unemployed. Hyytinen & Rouvinen (2006) argue that in European countries selection into self-employment is mostly involuntary. For developing economies, the definition of self-employment is considerably more complicated. According to Desai (2017), there are three criteria that must be met in order to classify a given economic activity as self-employment: the formality of the work, the legal status, and whether self-employment results from opportunity or necessity. While opportunity is more strongly associated to entrepreneurship in its more traditional view, necessity would be more closely related to unemployment.

Pardo & Ruiz-Tagle (2016) demonstrate that risk aversion, time preferences, retirement saving habits, and consumption and saving preferences are significantly influence on transition decision of paid employed to self-employed. Literature also highlighted that the opportunities and potential for growth, attain higher levels of autonomy and flexibility in their work schedules, the greater control over the balance between their work and personal lives, financial benefits and rewards and have lower levels of depression score as the main reasons for choosing self-employment over paid employment as a career at individual level (Benz and Frey, 2004, 2008; Patzelt and Shepherd 2011; Guerra and Patuelli, 2016; van der Zwan et al., 2018; Nikolova, 2019).

Several studies have convincingly shown that the self-employed enjoy higher work satisfaction than paid employees do (Millan et al., 2013; van der Zwan et al., 2018; Wan, 2017). In contrast, adaptation theory (Frey et al., 2004) opined that the enjoyment of operating independently and having autonomy are getting weaker as individuals remain self-employed for a longer time. This could be happen because of inability to detach from working to off-time due to having more flexible work hours and having more freedom to choose their working time. Thus, literature argues that self-employed individuals experience more difficulties in work life balance than paid employees do, leading to psychological stress. This could finally consequence to get dissatisfied with work life as well as leisure life (Hyytinen & Ruuskanen, 2007). At the same time, self-employment could compromise work and life dissatisfaction through the long working hours, time pressure, stress, and decreased socialization (Nikolova, 2019). Nonetheless, the question of how the transitions decision of self-employment over paid employment influences job satisfaction has received relatively less attention in the literature.

To conclude, prior studies on self-employment and work satisfaction have provided undetermined results. Further, these studies have only speculated about why the self-employed would be more or less satisfied with their lives without empirically testing explanations for their findings. More daintily, the origin of job satisfaction of individuals who transform to self-employment over paid employment, the literature is limited. Hence, we expect to explore what extent the influence of switching to self-employment on job satisfaction is persistent over time.

Method

The study explores how a switch to self-employment influences satisfaction with work, at the individual level. This study was conducted based on the research philosophy of pragmatism. A pragmatic approach acknowledges that there are many diverse ways to understand the world and conduct research, that no single point of view can ever present the full picture, and that there may be numerous realities. The essence of this study is based on individuals who have gone through wage employment then transitioned to self-

employment, thus the target population has been chosen as individuals who have transitioned from wage employment to self-employment residing in the Western Province, Sri Lanka. The analysis is based on 15 scoping case study interviews conducted with individuals who have transitioned from wage employment to self-employment. Following the snowballing sampling method, 15 cases were selected. The timeframe of the study was from April to December 2022. These participants were considered suitable because they are useful in describing lived experiences and expressing their perceptions of self-employment. These participants have varying years of experience and education levels (Table 1). Participation in this study was voluntary.

Table 1: Participant Information

Characteristic	Frequency
Gender:	
Male	08
Female	07
Education Level:	
Bachelor's degree	03
Master's degree	01
Professional courses	04
Advanced level	01
Diploma	06
Age:	
Below 25	03
25 – 30 Years	10
Above 30	02
No. of years being self-employed:	
Less than 5 years	07
5 – 10 years	04
More than 10 years	04
Experience as paid employee:	
Less than 3 years	06
3 – 5 years	07
More than 5 years	02
Income level (per month):	
Less than Rs.100,000	02
Rs.100,000 – 300,000	09
More than Rs.300,000	04
Industry related in self-employed:	
Technology	02
Marketing	03
Manufacturing	02
Hospitality and Entertainment	03
Apparel and Fashion	03
Trade	02

The process of data collection was performed through open-ended semi-structured interviews. Conducting interview is the vital method to acquire useful information on job satisfaction because it facilitates to explore in-depth understanding of the issue on the lens of the participants. As Cope (2005) opined, semi-structured interviews should loosely structure to gain a first-person description of some specified domain of experience, where the participant largely sets the course of the dialogue. The semi-structured interview was entirely reliant on the participants' availability, the time constraints with respect to their

task requirements and their geographical locations. While conducting interviews, minor adjustments were included to gather more clarifications and lived experiences. The questions were constructed to gather experiences on wage employment, challenges faced when choosing self-employment, and perception of attaining ideal work environment, autonomy and control, work culture, career prospects, earnings from self-employment. The interviews lasted an average of 60 minutes and all the interviews were audio-recorded. After 15 interviews were conducted, no new information was being generated so the data collection process was discontinued (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The study started with a detailed, nuanced analysis of one case and then moving to the careful analysis of subsequent cases. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to provide the data for the analysis. The process of analysis initiated with reading and re-reading of the transcribed interview to gain an appreciation of the whole story (familiarization). Then, a free textual analysis was performed to highlight the potential significant points (sense making). The highlighted points were then grouped to form common clusters of meaning (categorization). The holistic reflective analysis of the clusters of meaning led to the emergence of themes that appeared to be salient to a particular interview (intra-case themes). After completing holistic reflective analysis of all interviewees, a meta-level analysis across the interviewees was performed (inter-case themes). Areas of shared experiences between participants were identified, and subsequently coded to allow overlapping concepts to be highlighted. This involved to aggregate sub-themes from across the cases. To improve the external validity of the study, the connections of participant's characteristics being studied (Brunner, 1987). This includes the involvement of different groups of participants at different times and identified that different participants shared similar perceptions regarding job satisfaction (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Two authors independently coded the interview themes, and afterwards shared and agreed the coding which further improved the inter-reader agreement and reliability (LeVasseur, 2003). To enable the reader to develop a detailed appreciation of the participants' experiences and to allow their voices to be heard, the analytical findings include direct quotations from the empirical material generated from the interviews.

Findings and Discussions

The outcomes of the analytical process are developed as emergent themes presented in the following sections. The emergent themes based on the cohesion of participant's feedbacks were grouped into key themes and sub-themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017) to reflect the perceptions and understanding of the participants involved in the interviews. The inclusions of some quotes are demonstrated in following sections to reflect the wider data set and analysis undertaken. First, the study examined the experiences on wage employment and rationale behind choosing of self-employment over wage employment.

Wage employees face many difficulties leading to frustration, particularly when they are underpaid, which makes them unsatisfied at work. Pay is one of the most important material factors influencing job engagement. Since it enables employees to meet their social and personal needs as well as those of their families, a suitable pay is a factor that positively supports employee engagement. Workers anticipate that their employers will pay them on time and offer at least minimum benefits, thereby giving them concrete evidence that they are working for a living which is evidently not been provided. 12 out of the 15 interviewees were highly unsatisfied with their earnings when they were wage employed and mentioned that they were taken for granted while being highly underpaid.

“I have 4 years of experience working under employers but during these 4 years the pay increments were so low that I thought to myself why I’m working so hard for such a low salary” (R4)

Along with their stagnant pay; frustration arises when human values are not appreciated, when people are just used as tools for generating income, and when people are solely viewed as resources. And the repercussions are crucial; to be more precise people have a wide variety of emotions. These emotions may include happiness, sadness, depression, anxiety, love, annoyance, and a wide range of other mental states. As the respondent opined,

“I was tired of just being an object or if I’m to be more specific a profit-making machine to my employer, so I had to quit for my own good” (R1)

Due to the contradiction between how employers view their subordinates, and the subordinates view themselves, that is where the conflict starts and wage employment is deteriorated or devalued. These conflicts between the employer and employees can go up to mental discomfort, tension among peers, an unfavorable work environment, and ultimately frustration. 13 out of the 15 interviewees held similar views on employee employer relationship as a “hostile relationship” the deterioration of wage employment.

“As humans we like to be appreciated for the work we do and for our commitment, but most employers consider their employees as robots.” (R15)

The absence of career advancement is another factor causing wage employment to dissatisfy. This is primarily due to the fact that, as humans, we dislike monotonous work and expect better career prospects, which are uncommon for wage workers. Human nature places a high value on growth, and we have an inherent urge to keep growing and developing in all aspects of our life. The ideal work environment is where you feel encouraged, engaged, and have access to all the resources you need to improve your career. Employees are more inclined to contribute to their goals and the company and to feel more satisfied at work if they believe their employer cares about their professional and personal development.

“As we all know, self-employment is not for everyone. But if you have the urge and courage to do big in life, self-employment is the way to success. I personally think, if you have the potential, wage employment just deprives your talent, skills, abilities.” (R10)

“My ideal work environment is one where empowerment and growth are encouraged at every level, along with a positive work-life balance.” (R12)

Employee turnover occurs when workers become aware of unacceptable, unfair, and uncivil behavior from leaders/managers. Leaders or rather managers should simultaneously inspire and encourage their workforce, while minimizing their differences and fostering synergy for the company goals, to be ultimately achieved. Respondent 2 mentioned that based on his experiences, all employees share at least one leader and sometimes a couple of leaders who make or have made their lives miserable. A highlight of the interviews conducted was that majority of the interviewees have faced situations

where their boss had taken credit for their achievements which has resulted in pure disappointment.

“We have all have heard the statement, people don’t leave their jobs they leave their managers” (R2)

“There were times where my superior made me work even during the lunch break just because he wanted to show off to his boss” (R5)

Their fundamental job expectations include receiving fair treatment, working in a secure atmosphere, and being motivated to give their all to their jobs which can be identified as the bare minimum expected by an employee. Unfortunately, majority of these expectations have not been fulfilled of the participants. Employees are forced to take on severe workloads and make concessions as a result of job instability, financial difficulties, and the competitive labor market. In many organizations, long hours are also correlated with devotion and loyalty. Employers who expect their employees to stay late into the night or change their plans at the last minute are widespread. The interviewees also mentioned that these employers have taken this situation to a point where they’ve made employees feel like it is normal to be overloaded with work.

Safe, sanitary, secure, and healthy working circumstances are regarded as essential components of the psychological contract, along with equal pay. It is more difficult for us to feel valued if we believe that others receive preferential treatment because we begin to question our own exclusion and 12 out of the 15 interviewees were treated unfairly in comparison certain other colleagues in their workplace. The psychological contract stipulates that employees will receive fair compensation, and if they believe this condition has not been met, trust will diminish, and disengagement will result.

The respondents also highlighted that factors which bring happiness to them were having a sense of purpose, feeling valued, the availability of wellness programs and fringe benefits, feeling engaged, working in a collaborative environment, having flexibility, fair performance evaluation and transparency and working in a positive workplace culture.

“I felt undervalued if certain requirements are not met. This is about the organizational frameworks, rules, and managerial practices that shape how we experience the workplace.” (R1)

A clear message from the participants is that wage employed were experienced with unfair and insufficient income, distractive employee-employer relationship, destructive leadership, work load, limited career growth potentials and unfair working culture. Consequently, these factors closely associated them to choose of self-employment over wage employment.

The next sections discussed the emergent themes identified regarding attainment of job satisfaction through the transition to self-employment.

Self-actualization

Self-actualization is the full growth of one's capacities and enjoyment of life, as well as the full realization of one's potential (Navajas-Romero et al., 2019). Being fully engaged in life and realizing what you are capable of are two of the main requirements for achieving

self-actualization but reaching such a state will be utterly difficult being wage employed (Cooper & Artz, K., 1995). Majority of the participants (13) mentioned that widening their potential, personal and professional growth, realizing what they're capable of, sense of purpose is what gives them job satisfaction. They also mentioned they were never able to push themselves to do better in life when they were working under an employer but being self-employed have helped these individuals to widen their scope in life rather than being restricted by boundaries.

“In my personal opinion, job satisfaction is the extent to which an employee feels self-motivated, content & following what you like” (R7)

The respondents further opined that self-employment facilitates certain aspects which they haven't been able to experience being a wage employee, include; being able follow your passion or rather engage in your dream job, come out of your comfort zone and do something worthwhile, testing your potential, experience quick growth and development etc.

“I personally think that being my own boss has a big effect on my level of satisfaction” (R9)

Furthermore, when you work hard as an employee, you might get such things as an "employee of the month" certificate, a minor pay boost that only marginally raises your hourly income or maybe even just a simple "pat on the back" acknowledgment from superiors during a business meeting. However, if you regularly perform effectively as a self-employed business owner, your entire company benefits, your income progressively rises, and as a result, you have a far larger sense of fulfillment and happiness.

Work with own passion

It is important that self-employees possess the sufficient amount of perseverance and dedication along with hard work, long hours in order to succeed. They must put in the maximum effort, and be passionate about the work they do, and ultimately succeed because they can persuade others through the worth of their ideas (Dahal, 2022). The most common answer received was the fact that these individuals or rather self-employees get the opportunity to follow their passion hence they enjoy the work they perform rather than working towards succeeding someone else's passion.

There have been many situations where superiors have taken credit for great findings and innovations of subordinates which ultimately hinders or demotivates individuals to make use of their potential. However, with self-employment, the relevant individual may reap the benefits of your own findings, innovations, discoveries etc. which motivates individuals to follow their passion. Majority of the interviewees held the same opinion where what motivates them to follow what they're currently following is the fact that they're pursuing their passion, owning the risks as well as the benefits rather than going through all the hard work for the success of your boss.

“The appeal of self-employment is undeniable: it provides self-direction and self-expression, in addition to the opportunity to avoid unsupportive bosses, awful coworkers, and poisonous workplaces.” (R2)

Career growth and prospects

Based on Chirkov (2003) findings, he holds the following view which is high levels of turnover occur from employees losing interest in their jobs due to a lack of career advancement and growth opportunities, while self-employment offers many opportunities for personal and professional development. Majority of the people are reluctant to come out of their comfort zone due to their own convenience hence they're stuck with a routine job where personal and career growth is at a minimum level. The respondents mentioned that they're not glued to a boundary and that the specialty of being self-employed is that they're open to many avenues and opportunities hence their career prospects are beyond imagination.

“Self-employment is the only path where people are being properly pushed out of their comfort zone”. (R3)

Dalimini and Barnard (2019) stated that people or human beings in general place a high value on growth, and we are compelled to keep growing and modifying every aspect of our existence. The findings further indicated that to leave your comfort zone and enter the fear zone requires guts. It is impossible to improve upon prior experiences without a clear route map. This might make people feel anxious. But if they persist long enough, they will enter the learning zone, where they pick up new abilities and find creative solutions to problems. A new comfort zone is developed after a learning phase, increasing one's capacity to achieve even greater heights. Being in the growth zone is what it means to be like this. It's crucial to note that, similar to most attempts at behavioral change, entering the development zone becomes more difficult in the absence of some degree of self-awareness. As such, taking the challenge of being self-employed shows the first step of personal growth as well as career growth.

According to Pardo & Ruiz-Tagle (2016) self-employment is a potentially lucrative but risky and challenging entrepreneurial venture. Those who partake in such activities are frequently perceived as having higher levels of education, money, and risk aversion than the ordinary person.

“Being self-employed, every day is a new day with new knowledge, learning and experiences” (R8)

Autonomy and control

Self-employees have the chance to transform their passion, ambition, and abilities into a business and leading to earn money doing what they enjoy. Working for yourself frees you from the restrictions that comes with working for an employer, allowing you to be as creative as you desire. Your mission, standards, rules, values, branding, and target market can all be shaped as you wish when starting your own firm, which lends itself to creativity (Douhan & van Praag, 2009). People in traditional job situations are frequently required to follow a routine, which some find to be excessively repetitive. Being self-employed has certain benefits, one of which is having a more varied daily schedule. Adapting, learning, and overcoming obstacles are necessary for a growing company. The variety appeals to many people since it inspires innovation and enthusiasm.

Moreover, self-employed individuals are free to choose their own working hours and locations (Han & Wang, 2023). As respondents highlighted, even though this might be a big advantage over traditional employment, it can also make it hard to keep your personal

life and work distinct. Lack of set office hours and working from home might cause interruptions during working hours and make it harder to unwind during downtime. By establishing distinct boundaries between the two, you may avoid this. This can entail designating a specific time period for your work-related tasks and, whenever feasible, avoiding working in the same physical environment as where you unwind or sleep. You must learn self-discipline as you don't have a supervisor.

It is a common practice in the corporate world that individuals get judged for who they are, and it compromises the true potential of oneself (Simoes et al., 2016). Hence working for yourself does not require you to please anyone else but yourself who opens up you to many opportunities and avenues resulting in reaching heights you never even dreamt of.

“I work to create results, not to impress others.” (R9)

This statement further shows that the participants adore the independence along with the autonomy and control they have received most importantly being self-employed. It is also confirmed that external individuals will not and should not affect your success when working for yourself.

Earning flexibility

Your potential income when working for yourself is ultimately based on your own efforts and initiatives. There are limited prospects for advancement into more profitable positions as a wage employee (Poschke, 2019). Pay increases are typically infrequent and, when they do occur, they are usually minimal. However, as a self-employee, earning potential is only constrained by individual's own competence and willpower (Nikolaev et al., 2020). The findings emphasized that being self-employed increases earning potential because you have more control over your schedule and can take on additional work at different times of the day. The possibilities are endless financially.

“In terms of earnings, for self-employee sky is the limit”. (R9)

It is true that there is always risk involved in initiating a business; however the benefits greatly outweigh the risks if people do things systematically. Self-employment paves the way to many sources of income, if a particular individual has the courage to pursue their passion.

“Being self-employed, I don't have to put all my eggs in one basket, which opens hundreds of avenues to earn income”. (R10)

It is further notified that numerous new chances or rather opportunities are emerging every minute for self-employees to make money, many of which can be pursued from the convenience of your home with just a basic internet connection. These opportunities are not open for wage employees as they're stuck with their employer and even if an opportunity is raised, they might not have the time needed. When you work for yourself, you are in charge of building those connections and networking on your own. Through networking, business owners may have the chance to work together to form partnerships, leading to generate more earning capacities.

Most importantly, 13 out of the 15 interviewees mentioned that, even though transitioning to self-employment came with many consequences and challenges.

“.. the struggle was totally worth it, hard work and patience is all that matters”. (R1)

When you are the boss of your own business, you are ultimately responsible. Establishing your own business and developing a clientele may be a stretched, strenuous, and occasionally frustrating process. Self-employees need to wear many different hats, make decisions they have never made before, and subjects never thought about before. Being an entrepreneur requires people to frequently venture outside of your comfort zone.

“You are sacrificing immaterial comforts in favor of future improvement. Your sacrifices will be amply repaid as long as you remain dedicated to your chosen course of action because you are paying for the chance to achieve success in your own business.” (R4)

Finally, overall view of the findings revealed that, working for yourself has numerous advantages, you may also encounter challenges or barriers along the way. Building up your own brand and starting your own business may be a long, difficult, and occasionally stressful process hence it is not a smooth task. You need to have the perseverance and determination to keep going and work even harder, even when the progress is slow. Your income could fluctuate; especially in the beginning because you're starting from scratch and not that you're working for an already established business. Therefore, it can take some time before you start to turn a profit, and you'll always have overhead costs to cover despite situation. Given the hardships, establishing yourself in the market is a timely process which takes more than a year or two hence we cannot expect an individual who has only been in self-employment for a couple of years to provide a firm answer to the question of have you attained job satisfaction through the transition to self-employment.

In sum, the findings of the study show that insufficient income, distractive employee-employer relationship, destructive leadership, work load, limited career growth potentials and unfair working culture instigate individual to choose self-employment over a regular paid job. Furthermore, the study identified that employee who transited from paid employment to self-employment attained job satisfaction with the aspects of self-actualization, engaging the career with own passion, experience of career growth and prospects, enjoyment in autonomy and control, and earning flexibility. In a nutshell, the remarks of the interviews can be illustrated in Figure 1 (Annexure).

Implications and concluding remarks

The respondents of the study specifically were requested to provide advisable guidance to the individuals contemplating to transition from wage employment to self-employment. Based on the opinions given by the respondents, the study has drawn the following recommendations and suggestions. Thus, the recommendations are solely based on insights gathered from respondents and key findings of the study.

Being self-employed, you have to take on all the responsibilities that come with being your own boss. You will occasionally find yourself soaring alongside eagles in the sense beginning to do things beyond yourself. Much has been said about the unique kind of individual who can work for themselves. It takes a special kind of person to take the initiative in a competitive market and set his or her own direction. The moment you make the decision to work for yourself, the stability of a fixed income or hourly wage vanishes.

This implies that you rule over everything related to your company. What you put in will ultimately influence how much you receive out which is important to keep in mind.

As the respondents highlighted, you must plan and get ready for the journey ahead whether you are beginning your new professional life as a sole proprietor or a limited corporation. Build a client base and potential job leads while you are still working a steady job to demonstrate to yourself that you won't be sitting around waiting for work to come in once you make the full transition. Spend some time sharpening your main marketing materials, such as your website and social media profiles, to ensure they are as professional as possible. Financial planning is one of the most crucial steps in making the switch from a full-time job to self-employment. Since the first few months of self-employment are typically spent growing the company, it is likely that your cash flow will be less than it was when you were receiving a regular income. In the months prior to quitting your employment, make preparations by setting aside a little bit extra from each paycheck. This will enable you to focus on growing your new business instead of constantly worrying about money. Get ready because steering towards self-employment can be challenging, especially when you initially start out. Make sure you have enough money for your living expenses in addition to the money you will need for the first six months of operating your new business, which is something highly encouraged.

Moreover, any business idea you have it should be thoroughly investigated before you decide to fully commit to it. Start by asking yourself numerous questions to ensure that your service or product will address a specific issue for a specific demographic. When you already have a solid concept, you should test it out and discuss it. Finding out the reality of the situation from your friends, coworkers, and test clients can be a terrific method to make the necessary adjustments and improvements. Most importantly, majority of the individuals have a tendency to strive for the best and anticipate the best. Perhaps it's because entrepreneurs tend to be optimistic people. In truth, no strategy no matter how well planned has ever made it past the initial shock of dealing with the actual world. If you want to succeed, you must prepare for the possibility that things could go wrong - extremely badly. That last aspect is really important and is the secret to succeeding as a freelancer.

It is of utmost importance for anyone planning on transitioning to self-employment to keep in mind that self-employment is a 100% risky challenge and attaining job satisfaction through working for yourself will not be achieved in a couple of months however, since it is a timely process, job satisfaction will be eventually met with the right amount of commitment, skill, and patience. Therefore, always be mindful and never give up until your ultimate goal is met. In sum, it is important to identify that self-employment is a timely process which cannot immediately reap benefits hence the process may take more than one or two years for an individual to establish in the market.

Moreover, it is likely that, given the dominance of levels over variations in job satisfaction, people will tend to absorb temporary shocks in job satisfaction without changing their perception about the alternatives. Therefore, more attention is needed for those individuals that show persistent low (or high) satisfaction levels. Self-employment has become contentment or a fulfillment to individual seeking to work for their selves due to having the opportunity to become their own bosses, exercise unrestricted creativity without worrying about manager disapproval, and have total control over the majority of business decisions. On these notes, having a profitable business, self-actualization, engaging the

career with own passion, experiencing of career growth and prospects, enjoyment in autonomy and control, and having the freedom to make changes as one sees fit are the rationale behind the attaining job satisfaction in self-employment. These aspects have led to encourage start-up activities, although their effects are often disputed.

Finally, organizations/firms should pay more attention to their coworkers that are dissatisfied with actual work conditions (such as insufficient income, distractive employee-employer relationship, destructive leadership, work load, limited career growth potentials and unfair working culture) if they want to reduce turnover. On the other hand, they should care about pecuniary dissatisfied coworkers if their aim is to reduce risks of future competition.

The study concludes with some limitations that may be worth exploring in future research. The study mainly focused on the interpretations of fifteen main participants involved in the self-employment. A wider and more diverse group of participants from different semi-urban and rural locations and few participants, who felt negatively about self-employment, would have made the study more representative. Another limitation is the fact that we are not able to distinguish between the entrepreneurs and the self-employed more generally. There may be unobservable characteristics such as peer group effects, ambition and risk taking ability that may also affect the choosing self-employment over paid employment. These aspects could be explored in further research, and it is likely that these unobservable factors would reinforce the attainment of job satisfaction. Finally, future work is needed to establish quantitative aspects if these results need to get generalizable.

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Annexure 1:

Figure 1: Data structure for attainment of job satisfaction through the transition to self-employment

