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## **Freelancing as a Tool of Increasing Women's Activity Rate in Kosovo**

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# Freelancing as a Tool of Increasing Women's Activity Rate in Kosovo

*An Honors Society Project*

Ema Baraku

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Second reader: Dita Dobranja, MA

July, 2020

## Abstract

This research project explores the implications of freelancing in the activity rate of women in the labor market in Kosovo. It specifically analyzes the employment barriers that women encounter such as taking care of children/elders, lack of suitable and flexible jobs, and low wage. It further elaborates on the concept of freelancing and the opportunities for Kosovar youth in general and for women in particular. The research includes a review of secondary data, an online survey, and focus group discussions. Findings from the research confirm the potential of freelancing to impact the participation of women in the job market as well as the development of Kosovo's digital economy. Though, constraints such as lack of awareness regarding remote work and lack of necessary skills are prevalent. Taking into account that there is limited research concerning freelancing in Kosovo, its prospects and activity, this project can help in filling some of these gaps.

## Acknowledgements

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## List of Abbreviations

KAS – Kosovo Agency of Statistics

EU – European Union

GNI – Gross National Income

D4D – Democracy for Development

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

UIC – Union Information Centres

IT – Information Technology

ICT – Information Communication Technology

KODE – Kosovo Digital Economy

STIKK – Kosovo ICT Association

WoW – Women in Online Work

PR – Public Relations

S4YE – Solutions For Youth Unemployment



## Statement of Problem

Kosovo has experienced positive rates of economic growth throughout this last decade, however, the unemployment rate has constantly been high. A large portion of the unemployment in Kosovo is represented by women. What is more concerning is that the inactivity rate of women is predominately higher by 81.6% compared to the inactivity rate of men at 36.7% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2019). This means that only one in five women in Kosovo is employed or looking for a job (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2019).

The main reasons why women are not part of the labor force stem from the responsibility of taking care of children and elderly, low employment opportunities, lack of affordable childcare, and level of education (Cojocar, 2017). Considering the evolution of the job market and technology, this project seeks to analyze the influence of freelancing as a tool to increase the inclusion of women in the market and the potential of the country to promote this platform. It also investigates the link between productivity and skills that come with it.

## Literature Review

### Overview of Women Activity Rate in Kosovo

Labor market in Kosovo is characterized by huge gender disparities. Data collected from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics for year 2018 show of 590,180 women of working age<sup>1</sup> only 110,340 women are either employed or looking for a job while the remaining (487,840) women are not part of the labor force at all (KAS, 2019). On the other hand, men hold a better position as reflected by statistics of 379,763 and 220,330, respectively (KAS, 2019). Transferred to relative terms, these data indicate an activity rate of only 18.4% for women and 63.3% for men. This rate of women activity is the lowest among the enlargement countries of European Union (EU) including North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Turkey, and Serbia (Eurostat, 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> Working age is from 15 to 64 years old as per KAS.

Exclusion of women from the labor market has negative implications for the economic and social development of Kosovo. In this context, a loss of 28% of gross national income (GNI) is estimated when women do not participate economically (Mantovanelli, 2019). That is because their labor potential is not utilized which causes potential output to fall. Conversely, research shows that if women join the labor market, their contribution is directly related to economic growth as it would count up to 30% of gross domestic production (GDP) (D4D, 2017). Involvement of women can put pressure on the labor market and decrease the price of wages (Malazogu, 2015). This would lead to increased demand for workers from companies and as a result, rise in the competitive wage of the country in the region (Malazogu, 2015). By becoming active, women generally improve their position in society as they gain more decision-making power regarding their choices and control over household resources (D4D, 2017). Based on Democracy for Development (D4D), when women have power over financial resources, they are more likely to invest their financial earnings to the education of children resulting in a higher overall human development index (D4D, 2017). Therefore, the exclusion of women from the job market can be perceived as a bottleneck to the social and economic progress of Kosovo (D4D, 2017).

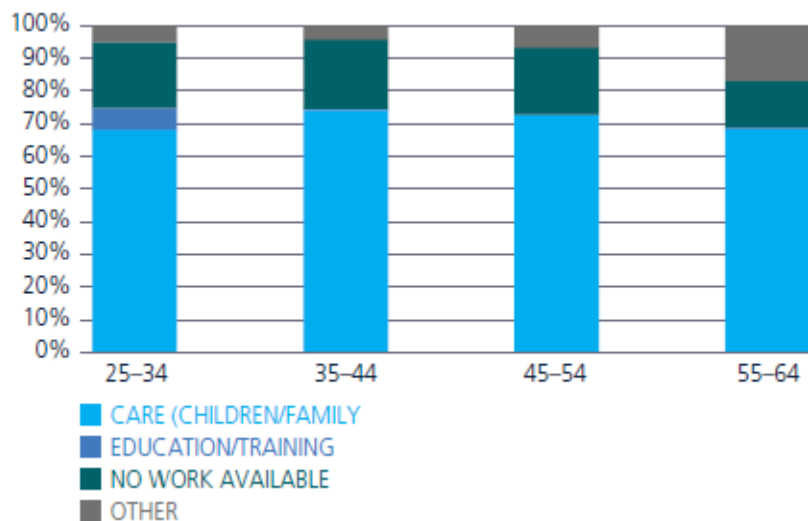
### **Reasons for Inactivity**

Studies show that the main reasons why women decide to not participate in the labor market are a combination of societal, cultural and economic constraints such as family responsibilities, lack of job opportunities, expensive childcare, and low education (Cojocar, 2017). These reasons will be thoroughly discussed in the following sections.

### **Family Responsibilities**

Lack of time to work due to family responsibilities has been regarded as the primary reason for women inactivity in Kosovo (Figure 1) in various studies conducted by the World Bank, Riinvest and D4D. Culture and social norms are perceived as highly influential determinants of women's reasoning.

**Figure 1: Reasons for inactivity**



Source: Cojocaru, A. (2017). Kosovo Jobs Diagnostic. World Bank

While inactivity of men in the labor market is attributed mainly to the low education/training and lack of job opportunities, women inactivity in the labor market is attributed mainly to family related responsibilities, defined as taking care of children or elders and household work. According to a research led by the World Bank, only 6% of inactive men mentioned family care duties as primary reason for inactivity compared to more than 65% of women (Cojocaru, 2017). In other words, women are expected to carry the burden of taking care of the house and children/elders while men are expected to provide financial security. The share of women who are not likely to work due to family responsibilities is much higher in Kosovo (almost 40%) as compared to the average 10% of women in EU (Avdyli, Salihu, & Guri, 2018). This shows that in patriarchal societies such as Kosovo, social expectations about traditional gender roles are an ultimate contributing factor that discourage women to look for a job (Avdyli, Salihu, & Guri, 2018). Family responsibilities can hinder the activity of women that are in full-employment as well. In 2018 there were 5.4% of employed women reporting that they had to work less than 40 hours a week or part-time since they had to take care of the family (KAS, 2019).

**Lack of Job Opportunities**

The economy of Kosovo has not been able to generate sufficient jobs over the past decade and this presents the second major reason why women are not part of the labor force (see Figure

1). Based on the registry of private sector firms, net job formation rate for the period from 2005 to 2014 has declined substantially from 7,000 net of formal jobs to just 1,600 in year 2014 (Cojocar, 2017). Service and commerce sectors are the only fields that have a positive performance in regards to job creation whereas manufacturing and constructing are constantly negative (Cojocar, 2017). Recently, the highest source of new jobs development have been start-up firms, however, start-up firms represent micro companies of 1 to 9 employees maximum and therefore, have low potential of growth. Thus, low job opportunities augment the already existing challenges for women in the labor market (Cojocar, 2017). Lack of job opportunities has been associated by women as well in terms of low flexibility and economic disincentives such as low wages. In a survey conducted by Riinvest Institute across Kosovo, 55% of women surveyed responded that they would join the labor market if there were more jobs that would offer flexible working hours or part-time employment (Dobranja et al., 2018). Such response supports the first cause of inactivity as most women would enjoy flexible working hours in order to allocate time for family care and household duties. Furthermore, 37% of respondents view low wages as a barrier to their labor force participation (Dobranja et al., 2018). The salary for employed women ranges from 200 euros to 500 euros with an average of 336 euros (Dobranja et al., 2018). Though such low wage is an issue faced by both genders, it is still considered a high constraint when taking into consideration the family unit elements and the effect that work has in engaging women inside their families (Dobranja et al., 2018)

### **Lack of Affordable and Available Childcare Services**

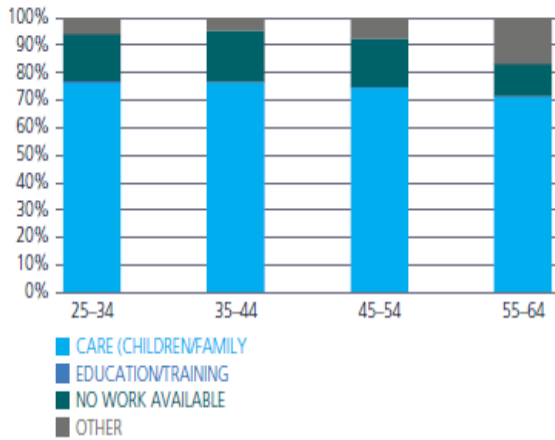
The increased price and low accessibility of childcare services is another reason why women choose not to seek for a job and instead stay at home and look for the children themselves. According to the data of Life in Transition Survey, only 2% of childcare in Kosovo is provided through public or private centers whereas 95% is offered by family members (Cojocar, 2017). The availability of public centers is usually low as only 22% of suppliers accept new clients and most of them do not work during summer, which might present a challenge for women that are in full-employment as well (Cojocar, 2017). Conversely, private centers are not affordable by the majority of population where prices range from 80 euros and above. In rural areas childcare services are almost nonexistent (Cojocar, 2017).

In order to address this issue and increase women's participation in labor market, many EU countries have established legal provision to childcare. For instance, countries such as Malta implemented a free childcare program for children under the age of three (D4D, 2017). Austria invested 800 million euros to improve the quality and increase the number of childcare centers. Whereas UK, launched joint parental leave, allowing in this way parents to distribute 52 weeks of paid leave and pay after the birth of the child or in cases of adoption (D4D, 2017).

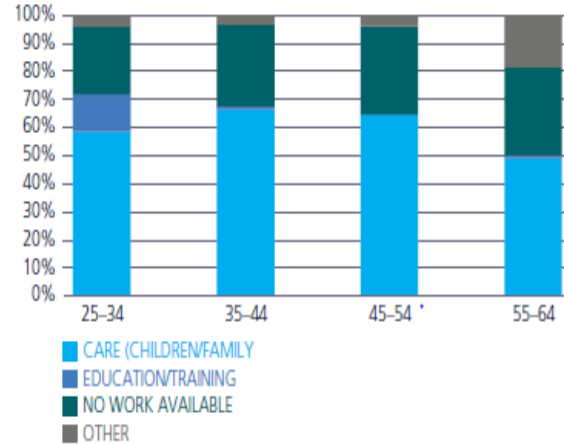
### **Education and Training**

Education is an essential component that impacts the participation of women in the workforce. Even though education is not perceived as the main reason why women decide to not join the workforce (Figure 1), research indicates that there is a proportional relationship between the level of education among women and their activity in the workforce. According to a survey conducted by D4D of a sample of 1,070 participants, covering all seven regions of Kosovo from age 18 to 64 years old, 95% of women who have completed primary education or less have not looked for a job in the "last three years" (D4D, 2017). On the other hand, the majority of participants who have applied for a job obtain a bachelor or master degree (D4D, 2017). This shows a negative correlation between level of education and inactivity which means that the lower the level of education, the more likely are women to not join the labor market and vice versa. Moreover, women of the age cohort 25 to 34 years old who have obtained only primary education or less (Figure 2) are more prone to not join the workforce because of family care duties compared to women in the equal age cohort that have obtained secondary level of education or above (Cojocar, 2017). For those that have completed upper secondary education or above, the cause of inactivity is more related to lack of job opportunities (Figure 3).

**Figure 2: Reasons for inactivity regarding women with incomplete secondary or lower level of education**



**Figure 3: Reasons for inactivity regarding women with upper secondary or above level of education**



Source: Cojocaru, A. (2017). Kosovo Jobs Diagnostic. World Bank

Training is another important aspect when observing women’s participation in the workforce. Almost 75% of inactive women never received any kind of training and from this high percentage more than half of them claim that if adequate professional training was provided, they would be more willing to join the workforce as they would feel that their skills would enhance and as a result their opportunities of finding a job will increase (Dobranja et al., 2018).

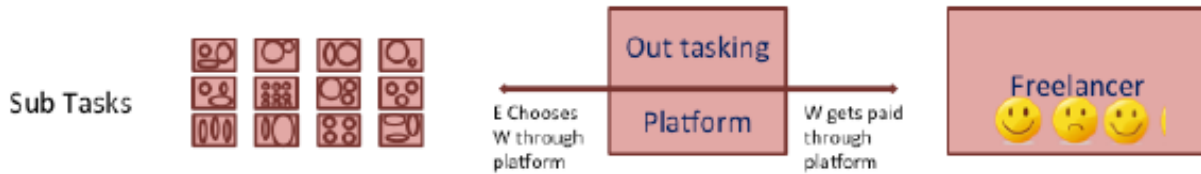
### Introducing Freelancing

During the recession of 1970, many big corporations went through deep financial crisis that imposed the search for alternative ways of reducing expenses. They came up with the idea of moving parts of manufacture to low-income nations in order to decrease expenses but keep high levels of production (Stenlundim, 2018). This process of outsourcing production ignited recently a new type of employment called freelancing. Freelancing can be explained through the gig economy, where workers take on individual projects promoted by companies on the internet and perform their tasks without a long-term commitment. This work is often performed in the comfort of home through access to internet connection. For managers this means adaption to economic cycles without the need to adjust capital as fixed cost. Whereas, for employees this is an opportunity to be part of the job market, which would otherwise require movement, along with

freedom to be flexible in terms of working hours (Stenlundim, 2018). The spread of this type of employment has increased tremendously across the world over the years. US leads the list with 56.7 million freelance workers or 78% growth from previous year, followed by UK (59%), Brazil (48%), then South Asian countries, Pakistan (47%), India (29%) and Bangladesh (27%), while from EU countries, Ukraine (36%) and Serbia (19%) are on top of the list (Gilchrist, 2019). The share is largest among the age cohort of 18 to 35 years old which means that millennials are looking for more creative and flexible job opportunities and shifting further away from traditional aspects of workforce (Gilchrist, 2019).

Freelancing can be performed through companies or agencies that provide freelance labor, independently, or usually through online platforms such as Freelancer, Upwork, PeoplePerHour, Workana and so on. The online platforms operate through sourcing and vetting procedures (Corporaal & Lehdonvirta, 2017). That is, they devote effort to gather as much as possible from the demand side – organizations or contractors, and supply side – freelancers, then through vetting which is a system set up to guarantee an essential degree of value among its clients, for instance by skills evaluation or background tests, these two sides match (Corporaal & Lehdonvirta, 2017). The recruiting process is relatively simple. The organization or client publishes the project that they need help with and interested freelancers present a proposition. The client assesses the recommendations and proceeds with interviews for selected aspirants on chat or video call. When the client chooses the freelancer that best accommodates their needs, the online platform prepares the contract. Based on the agreement that the freelancer and the client have reached, the contract can be fixed or hourly (Popiel, 2017). When the contract is fixed then the freelancer offers a minimum bid for a fixed-rate project, whereas when the project is divided on particular objectives to be completed on specific periods of time then the charge is per hour. In this case, Upwork particularly monitors the process by screenshotting the screen every 10 minutes in order to make it possible for the freelancer to document its working hours (Popiel, 2017). Deliverables are posted in the platform and then upon their completion, after the client approves that the work was done correctly, the compensation is made (Corporaal & Lehdonvirta, 2017). A visual representation of this process can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Overview of the mechanism of freelancing



Source: Galpaya, H., Perampalam, S., & Senanayake, L. (2017, September). Exploring online freelance workforce in Sri Lanka\*.

### Opportunities of Freelance Work

The growth of freelancing can be explained by the features and services it enables. Freelancing provides an array of benefits to today’s workforce but flexibility in terms of hours and location is on top of the list. Considering that freelance work is not based on fixed location and set working hours, freelancers have the commodity of choosing where they work from and how much they work for. As such, they make choices that best suit their needs and qualities (Muhammed, 2016). For instance, a student can work from the library or a café during breaks, a mother can work from home and look after the children, and so on. As a result, costs of commuting are diminished and time is allocated to other areas of life. These features are so attractive that according to Ai Group Workforce Development (2016), half of Australians claimed that they would risk losing 20% of their salary in exchange for the opportunity of flexible arrangements. Freelancers are not the only ones who receive the benefits of flexibility. The contractors gain as well from the liquidity in human capital, enabling economies of scale at every stage of project operation (Ai Group Workforce Development, 2016). While usually it takes more than 30 days for a worker to be hired through conventional recruitment methods, online platforms can finalize this process in just about 3 days (Ai Group Workforce Development, 2016). Apart from this, freelancers hold the power of choosing their own workload, thus increasing their authority (Muhammed, 2016). They decide which projects to undertake and which ones to lay off when it gets busy. In addition, they get to establish their own rates. As a result, the freelancers’ self-esteem increases which leads to better performance and efficient time management (Muhammed, 2016). Higher payment for work done is perceived as another advantage of freelancing. Based on a study done in 2015 by Payoneer on 180 countries, people that perform freelance work get paid an average of \$21 per hour and around



\$39,000 annual salary which is considerably higher in comparison to compensation received by traditional employees in most of these countries (Business News Daily, 2020). However, it is worth mentioning that these figures are taken as global averages, thus, compensation can differ greatly depending on industry, payment method, etc. Additionally, another study conducted in the U.S by Edelman Intelligence stated that freelancers who perform services that require a higher level of skills earn more than 70% per hour at a rate of \$28 compared to other workers in the economy that have an average rate of \$18.8 (Booth, 2019).

Since freelancing entails no confinement to location, global market exposure is an obvious outcome. A freelancer will be able to serve a client in Germany or Pakistan while enjoying a cup of tea in Pristina. Digitalization has enabled this interconnectivity that fosters new opportunities and collaborations for freelancers and bridges the gap between nations. On the other hand, to the contractors, global exposure means a larger pool of hardworking, diverse and talented experts to choose from (Ai Group Workforce Development, 2016). One of the greatest advantages of freelance work is the enhancement of skills. Experience received while working at the same time in an assortment of fields and with different clients, advances soft skills and the ability to manage various kinds of situations. As Jalan suggests “while it's always good to excel in one subject, freelancing exposes you to various kinds of companies and domains. As a result, you learn more in say five years of freelancing than being in one or two jobs in that same period of time” (Jalan, 2018, p.4). Overall freelancing is perceived to increase job satisfaction and thus, productivity and improve health solely through the freedom of choice that it provides (Muhammed, 2016).

### **Challenges of Freelance Work**

Despite the advantages of flexibility, development of skills and international exposure, freelance work has its disadvantages as well. Initially, there is a lack of security when doing freelance jobs. That is because there is no guarantee of continuous work. Once the project is completed, there is a high possibility that the contractor may not resume the contract. As a result, there is a chance that the service provider can go from having a high income during a month, to become jobless in the next one. This uncertainty is one of the highest challenges of becoming a freelancer. According to a research conducted by Upwork, almost 63% of freelance workers pinpoint the lack of security in terms of financial proceedings as their biggest barrier (Upwork,

2018). Another factor that correlates with no security includes social benefits and taxes. In traditional employment, health insurance and employment tax are covered by the employer, while in freelancing these fees are a responsibility of the worker itself. So, there is no social protection system (The Simple Dollar, 2019). This represents an additional burden for freelancers as they have to manage their finances, accounting and billing, on top of the work they do. In addition, health insurance can be costly for individual cases. Therefore, 44% of freelancers believe that no regulation in terms of social benefits and employment tax is a significant issue (The Simple Dollar, 2019). As global promotion has its advantages in terms of connectivity and thus more job opportunities, it also indicates that there will be more competition between workers. In turn, competition leads to a potential drop in earnings as each worker bids against another in order to win projects (Stenlund, 2018). Last but not least, there is growing concern that this emerging type of employment is causing a decrease in wellbeing. A research with 1,100 freelancers found that around 52% of employees who worked remotely were likely to experience feelings of left out and isolation (Russell, 2019). This is due to the transactional environment a virtual platform conveys. Since there is no human interaction while working remotely, the focus is shifted exclusively on tasks and inputs rather than relationships. It is estimated that workers who socialize for just 15 minutes, increase their work performance by 20% (Russell, 2019). This shows how important a social workplace is. In addition, the feelings of being left out can be attributed to the way organizations perceive freelancers. Namely, since these labor costs are not fixed, there is a tendency that contractors are driven by the need to complete the project and hence, neglect the significance of the individuals who are completing it (Russell, 2019). These situations can contribute to workplace stress and anxiety and therefore impact negatively the health of freelancers (Russell, 2019).

### **Freelancing and Women Activity Rate: The Case of Bangladesh**

Freelancing can be perceived as a tool of increasing women's activity rate. Considering that reasons attributed to women inactivity rate do not necessarily reflect their unwillingness to join the labor market but rather constraints the market itself has imposed, remote work is perceived as a way of lowering these barriers through the flexibilities and opportunities it provides (Islam,

n.d). A positive connection between women's activity rate and freelancing is portrayed following the example of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is a middle income country located in South Asia who has constantly experienced high unemployment rates among women and youth (Islam, n.d.). Half of the population consists of women and most of them due to constraints in labor mobility and household responsibilities cannot join the traditional employment (Islam, n.d). The government, specifically the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, has made extensive investment during the last years in online economy with the purpose of increasing the inclusion of these women in the workforce (Islam, n.d). Freelancing usually offers job opportunities in technical fields such as web development and IT, accounting and finance, customer service, project management, and writing (Bibby, 2016). Many women lack these skills, hence, the government has developed a preparation program that trains women on such services (Islam, n.d). The program is free of charge and enables enhancement of technical skills and productivity. This proved to be effective as 15,000 participants became registered freelancers while 500,000 more expressed their interest to be part of the training (Islam, n.d.). As a result, significant improvements in the women's position regarding their employment opportunities were made. A recent study showed that a share of 25% of freelancers in the country are women and they are performing better than men (Mahmud, 2018). Their performance is evaluated at \$2 higher compared to that of men (Mahmud, 2018). Moreover, the government is looking for ways to incentivize existing IT organizations to let women get trained in these facilities and acquire knowledge that would lead to a potentially higher payment. Other initiatives undertaken by the government include the establishment of Union Information Centres – UIC which has generated a total of 4,500 centers across the country, especially in rural areas. Through these centers people get informed about education, job opportunities, wellbeing and so on (Islam, n.d.). While another government action constitutes the implementation of new legislation to create hi-tech parks which will attract foreign direct investments through the promotion of technological advancements. Therefore, with the growing speed of digital technology, Bangladesh has decided to unleash its growth potential through outsourcing and freelancing.

It is important to note that even though every nation is diverse in its political and economic situation, observing the process of how Bangladesh managed to increase women participation rate can be used as a benchmark example for Kosovo, given its high inactivity rate of women in the labor market.

## Methodology

This research paper intends to investigate the impact of freelancing as a platform to increase the participation of women in the labor market of Kosovo. It also tries to analyze the capabilities of the nation to support this initiative as well as explore the implications of abilities and efficiency attained when engaging in freelance work. This study offers a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research through collection of the primary and secondary data, as explained further below.

## Secondary Data

Since existing research on the freelancing work in Kosovo is lacking, reports based on the broader subject of online economy were used in order to provide an assessment of remote work. Information and data gathered from STIKK and KODE enabled the examination of freelancing by observing the strengths and challenges of the digital market in Kosovo. Furthermore, through the help of A.U.K Training and Development Institute office, I was able to get access to the Women in Online Work (WoW) project which correlates specifically to the topic of this research, thus providing insightful information on how freelancing impacts women's activity rate.

The secondary data collection regarding the potential of freelancing market included the following resources: "Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) - International Development Association Project Appraisal Document (P164188)" published in 2018 by World Bank; the STIKK and Kantar report published in 2019 on "Internet Penetration and Usage in Kosovo", "Mapping of ICT Sector Labour Supply and Demand" produced by STIKK in 2015 and the World Bank report in 2016, "Kosovo Digital Economy: Skills for Job".

Limitations concerning secondary data research were lack of data on the general public's perception toward freelancing and information on actual freelance activity. Therefore, a primary research was conducted.

## Primary Data

The primary research data were collected through an online survey, one focus group discussion and personal interview.

## Survey

The survey questionnaire was designed based on the knowledge gained from the global literature and in accordance with the feedback of the project advisors. The purpose of this survey was to collect data on how the public, gender-wise, defines their challenges when it comes to employment and how freelancing is perceived in general. The survey contained 14 questions that divided into demographics, labor, and remote work related information. The questionnaire was structured using close-ended multiple choice, and Likert scale questions. It was conducted in English and Albanian language (the informed consent and English version of the survey are attached in Appendix 1 and 2), while it was distributed through social media, mainly Facebook, contributing to a total sample size of 288 respondents.

## Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion was conducted with five women who work as freelancers. The participants belonged to the age group 18 to 25 years old. All of them performed their work through the platform Upwork. The discussion lasted about an hour and a half and it was voice recorded based on the participants' consent. The list of questions is presented in Appendix 3.

*Participant A* was a senior studying energy policy and economics. She had been working part-time on small projects for about two years and her work consisted mainly of Content Writer and Data Analyst.

*Participant B* was studying mathematics while working full-time as Operational Support, Data Entry and Catalog Specialist for three years.

*Participant C* was a junior and had been working as a freelancer for two years mostly as Virtual Assistant, Admin Support and Social Media Manager.

*Participant D* had completed her nursing degree while started working two years ago as a freelancer after she joined the Women in Online Work training. Her experience is featured in the case study as well.

*Participant E* had a degree in design and communications and recently joined the freelance world as Creative Director.

### **Personal Interview**

*Participant F* could not join the focus group discussion so a personal interview was conducted. She was an inactive women who recently became active by working as a freelancer. Her story is highlighted in the second case study.

### **Limitations**

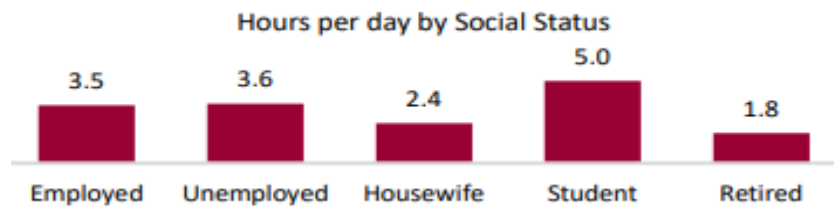
The limitations of conducting research on this topic included lack of academic and credible research regarding remote work considering that is a relatively new field in the market. As for the primary research there is an unequal contribution of men and women, which may lead to biased results. Therefore, in certain occasions calculation of percentages was obtained from each category of gender and afterward assessed. In addition, even though a sample size of almost 300 participants is considered as acceptable in terms of margin of error, as the questionnaire was distributed online, a convenient sampling was used instead of random sampling.

## **Results from Secondary Data Research**

The online economy has been conveyed as a significant sector for the economic development of Kosovo. The Government of Kosovo is estimated to be responsive of the possibilities that the digital economy (freelancing included) offers in terms of combating unemployment/underemployment and producing income, therefore, a special emphasis is projected in this area (World Bank, 2018). According to Kosovo Digital Economy (KODE) report, there is potential for growth in this field, however, public relations (PR) policies in this area are limited compared to other countries in the region (World Bank, 2018). The market for online services is evaluated as strong and ambitious due to accumulated 54 Internet Service Providers – IPSs and an increasing rate of established companies that provide information and communication technology (ICT). The ICT industry has experienced a rapid growth in past years by contributing over 116 million € in the GDP of the country in 2015 through employing 3.2% of the population and providing higher-paid jobs (World Bank, 2018). The infrastructure designed for delivering online services is solid particularly in urban areas. In addition, internet is widely used in Kosovo

with 63% of the population accessing the internet services daily in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). According to a national survey with a 1,100 participants sample size conducted by STIKK and Kantar, however, this percentage has increased significantly in 2019 with 81% of citizens being daily users of internet and 96% of households having a network-based web connection (STIKK & Kantar, 2019). The use of internet is correlated to determinants of age and education since the younger and the more educated a person is, the usage of internet services is higher. Whereas, when breaking it down to social status, internet penetration is lower among retirees and housewives (Figure 5).

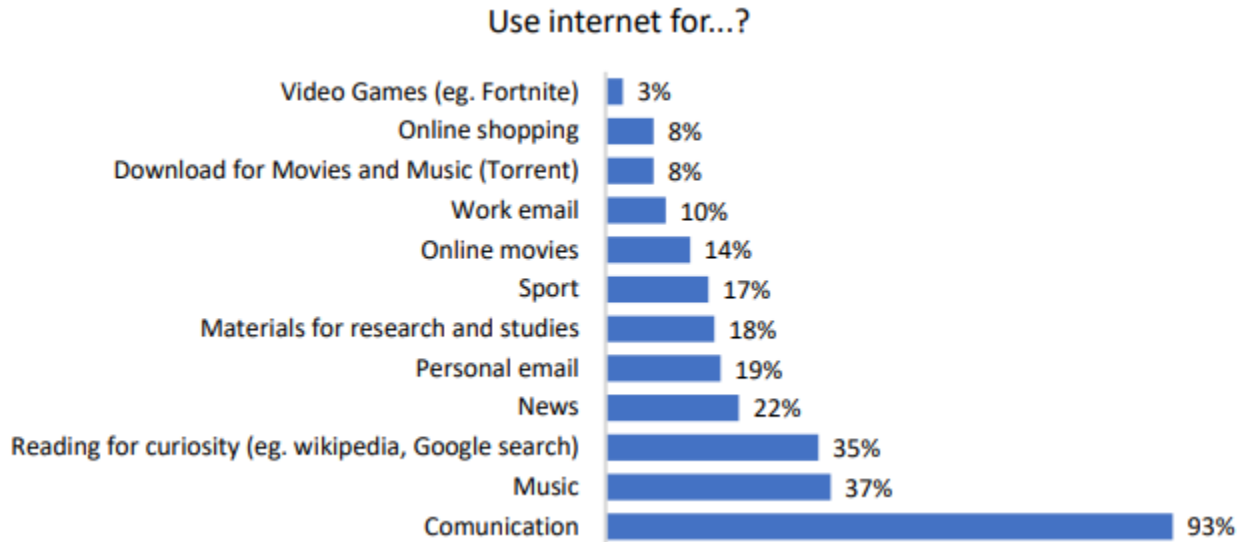
**Figure 5: Daily usage of internet disaggregated by social status**



Source: STIKK & Kantar. (2019, October). Internet Penetration and Usage in Kosovo.

Nonetheless, findings suggest that this widespread connection is mostly utilized for communication while job related information acquisition is not practiced (Figure 6). Moreover, the use of computer for work is expressed by 54% of citizens but only 11% use it regularly while 18% rarely do so. Working from the computer is mainly associated with students and those employed (STIKK & Kantar, 2019). However, there is a lack of awareness among the population about the potential of internet to find jobs, learn, and access institutional services (World Bank, 2018).

Figure 6: Reasons for using internet



Source: STIKK & Kantar. (2019, October). Internet Penetration and Usage in Kosovo.

The high-speed internet broadband is perceived to support enhancement of skills and generation of income online, however, World Bank estimates that only few households have a high-speed connection. Therefore, this can certainly constrain their access to the opportunities obtained from the digital economy. Despite these, the main obstacle in the growth of this economy is portrayed by a gap in skills among Kosovars. World Bank assesses that there is lack of sufficient aptitude and competences to provide services in this area (2018). This is supported by a report published from STIKK which shows that the demand of ICT companies for capable labor is high however the supply is not matched. As a result, ICT companies express low satisfaction with the level of quality produced from the suppliers (STIKK, 2015). In addition, there is low participation, predominately youth and women, when it comes to performing these services. This can be expressed through lower enrollment rates in university on subjects related to information technology such as computer science, engineering, etc. “Weakly developed career guidance and counseling system is contributing to the problem” since these subjects are perceived as difficult and time-consuming by the general public (Kosovo Digital Economy: Skills for Job, 2016). Instead, youngsters and women are opting for “easier” professional occupations (Kosovo Digital Economy: Skills for Job, 2016).

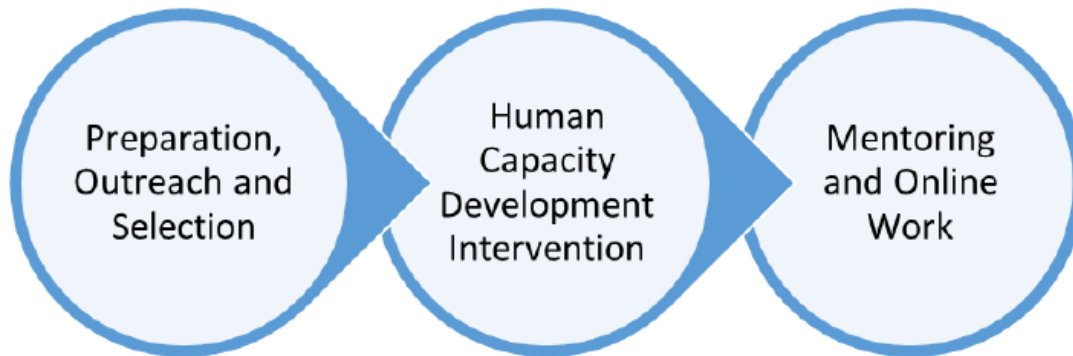


Considering these challenges, the International Development Association has offered 20.7 million € to the Ministry of Economic Development of Kosovo in order to launch the digital economy project with the objective of developing the country's connections to the global economy and increase employment opportunities. KODE project is expected to build a foundation for high-speed broadband; the project will prepare and interface women and youth to encourage access to online business prospects, and open connection services to family units and establishments in chosen underrepresented provincial zones (World Bank, 2018).

### **Women in Online Work - WoW**

There are certain initiatives that have been implemented by the Government of Kosovo to tackle the inactivity rate of women and the potential of digital economy at the same time. The Ministry of Economic Development in cooperation with the World Bank and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation initiated a pilot project called Women in Online Work (WoW) in 2016. This project was implemented with the purpose of increasing the knowledge of remote work opportunities for unemployed women and enabling them to generate income (World Bank & S4YE, n.d.). The target group consisted of women of age from 18 to 34 years old who had completed or were in the process of completing a higher level of education (World Bank & S4YE, n.d.). The project was initially concentrated on rural areas of Lipjan and Gjakove in 2016 and then was extended to Pristina during 2017 (Brochure WoW, n.d.). Seeing the positive outcomes of such initiative, other international donors have expressed their willingness to help, hence, five municipalities have been covered (Brochure WoW, n.d.).

An insight on the implementation process of this project in the instance of municipalities of Podujeve and Mitrovica is provided through the A.U.K Training and Development Institute, implementing partner for this case. The execution of WoW involved three phases as depicted in Figure 7 (WoW Final Report, 2017).

**Figure 7: Implementation phases of WoW**

Source: WoW Final Report. (2017). A.U.K Training and Development Institute.

The Preparation, Outreach and Selection phase included identification and organization of the training facility; mobilization campaign; and screening and selection of participants. In order to be eligible for participation, women had to undergo English Placement Test and Technical Expertise Test. The first one evaluated proficiency in English language in terms of listening, vocabulary, reading and grammar while the second one tested participants' knowledge on ICT. Whereas, final screening comprised of interviews held face-to-face or online. The first phase was completed for four weeks.

The second phase consisted of Human Capacity Development Intervention or said otherwise as the training procedure. As presented in Figure 8, training is first attributed to general education. That is, the participant will initially learn how to use an online platform; create a personal account in English; how to communicate and promote itself to potential clients; and master management skills. Once general education is fulfilled, professional skills attributed to freelancing services will follow. The technical courses were aimed at bookkeeping through Intuit Quick Books Online, android application development and social media marketing. The second phase was delivered for approximately 2 months as training took place three times a week, including Saturdays.

**Figure 8: Curricula of Human Development and Intervention Phase**

GENERAL COURSES			
All 100 Participants (divided in 2 cities; in 2 groups per city, @25 candidates per group)			<b>Training Hours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remedial English</li> <li>• Soft Skills (Communication Skills/Personal Development and Marketing/Management Skills)</li> <li>• Online Work and Online Platform Course</li> </ul>			Up to 50 in-class training hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WebEx online based courses with all participants on time management, customer care, billing and financial management and Kosovo tax rules</li> </ul>			
TECHNICAL COURSES			
30-35 candidates (1 group per city, ~15-18 candidates per group)	30-35 candidates (1 group per city, ~15-18 candidates per group)	30-35 candidates (1 group per city, ~15-18 candidates per group)	<b>Training Hours</b>
<b>Bookkeeping QuickBooks Online (Intuit)</b>	<b>Android™ Application Development</b>	<b>Social Media Marketing</b>	Up to 50 in-class training hours

Source: WoW Final Report. (2017). A.U.K Training and Development Institute.

The final phase entails mentorship of participants after completing the training process. The objective is to follow up and guide the online work produced by the participants especially through monitoring the completed jobs and amount earned from each task. Participants were monitored for about three months after graduating (WoW Final Report, 2017).

There were certain challenges observed during the implementation of this program such as high dropout rate and struggles in teaching technical courses in a short period of time (World Bank & S4YE, n.d.). From 192 participants in Gjakove and Lipjan, 92 dropped out while only 100 graduated from the program. Reasons behind this were argued to be lack of necessary English skills and thus motivation to continue the demanding training, and dissatisfaction regarding the intensity and curricula of the program. Additionally, trainers reported having difficulties in delivering effectively the course material in a span of two months. Beside these, other challenges including selection bias and low representation of minorities were stated. Many participants had high digital literacy which was not in line with the purpose of enhancing the skills of women from rural areas. Moreover, marginalized and minority groups were not included (World Bank & S4YE, n.d.).

Overall, this project proved to be successful as participants started winning their first contracts at the end of third week of training. 67% of women who graduated from this program obtained at least 1 job online during the program (World Bank & S4YE, n.d.). From this percentage, the majority were successful bidders – gained 1 to 5 online contracts, and the rest were highly successful bidders – 6 to 20 online contracts (World Bank & S4YE, n.d.). In terms of income, the average earnings per month of women active graduates were at 450\$ or 400 euro, higher than the usual average wage per month (Kosovo’s Women Go WoW, 2016). Some of the participants even started their own start-ups (Kosovo Women in Online Work, 2017). One of the most significant outcomes, though, remains the development of skills and confidence for women to climb the employment ladder (Kosovo’s Women Go WoW, 2016).

#### **Participant D: Testimonial from a WoW beneficiary**

Participant D had just finished her undergraduate degree for nursing when she heard a promotion campaign that trainings for women were going to take place in Podujeve. She was amazed not only that the target market was women and their professional development, but also for the innovative approach of the employment provided. Like most young people in Kosovo, Participant D did not have previous knowledge of freelancing or online work but she decided to give it a try.

The trainings provided by WoW were intensive, she recalls, from the simplest technical details to the specifications in professional branches undertaken for the future. The delivery of materials was clear and well organized corresponding greatly to the practical parts. Information was offered for various freelance platforms but training was mostly directed toward Upwork. The part that impressed her the most was access to consultation and mentorship even after she completed the program. Though, she wishes the training lasted a bit longer.

Finding the first job had been challenging for her but through small steps she has been able to create a career as a freelancer, not only in the field which she was trained for but also in other areas. She is currently an E-commerce Manager and Catalog Specialist for two big international companies and sees this as a certain employment option in the future.

Grateful for the guidance and the opportunities this program has enabled, Participant D believes that it is very necessary for our women and young people to be informed about the possibility of online work and participate in trainings such as WoW. This way the number of unemployed is reduced, economy is strengthened and general labor market is enhanced.

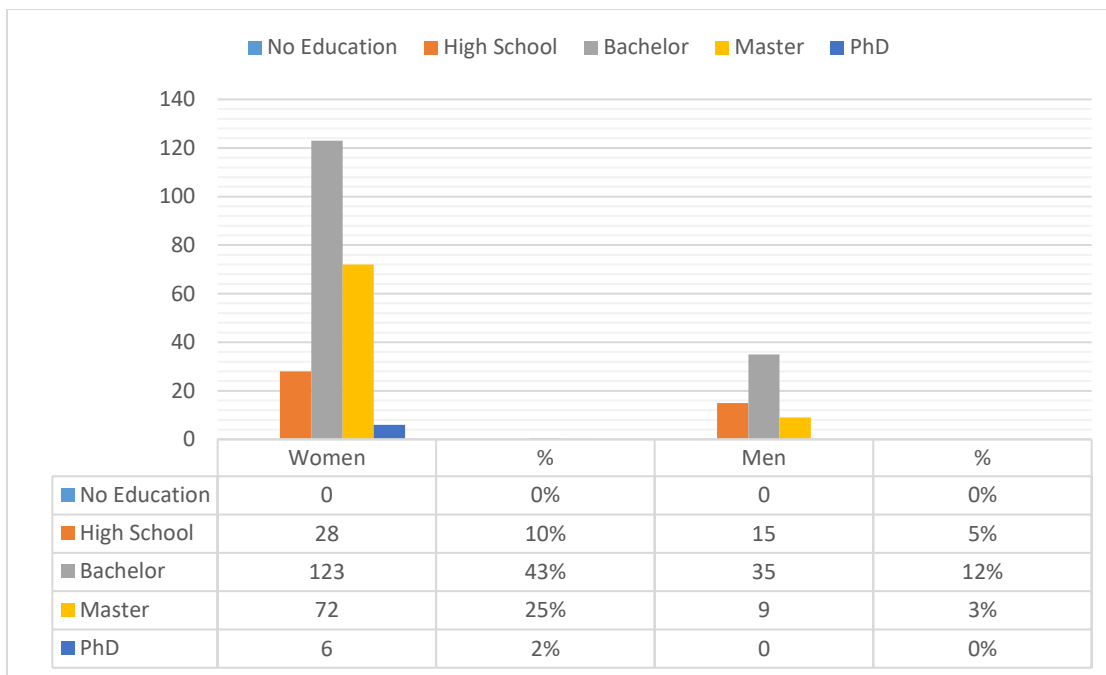
*The world is making great strides toward digitalizing traditional work, and each of us is just a click away from employment.*

## Primary Research Results

The outcomes from the survey and focus group discussion were classified in four categories including: barriers in the labor market, perception of freelancing in Kosovo, freelance activity, and women and freelancing. These categories will be explained separately and thoroughly.

The results drawn from the online survey show a total of 288 responses, where 229 respondents are women or 79.5% whereas 59 respondents are men or 20.5%. More than half of the participants correspond to the age group from 18 to 25 years old respectively 55,9%, while age group 26 to 35 years is the second largest representative group. When it comes to education, the highest level obtained for the majority of respondents (55%) is Bachelor Degree, 28% have a Master Degree, 15% got a High School Diploma while only 6 people have a PhD (2%). The graph below shows the levels of education corresponding to each gender with women respondents having a higher level of educational attainment compared to men.

**Table 1: Number of women and men as per levels of education attainment**



Source: Online Survey (2019, November).

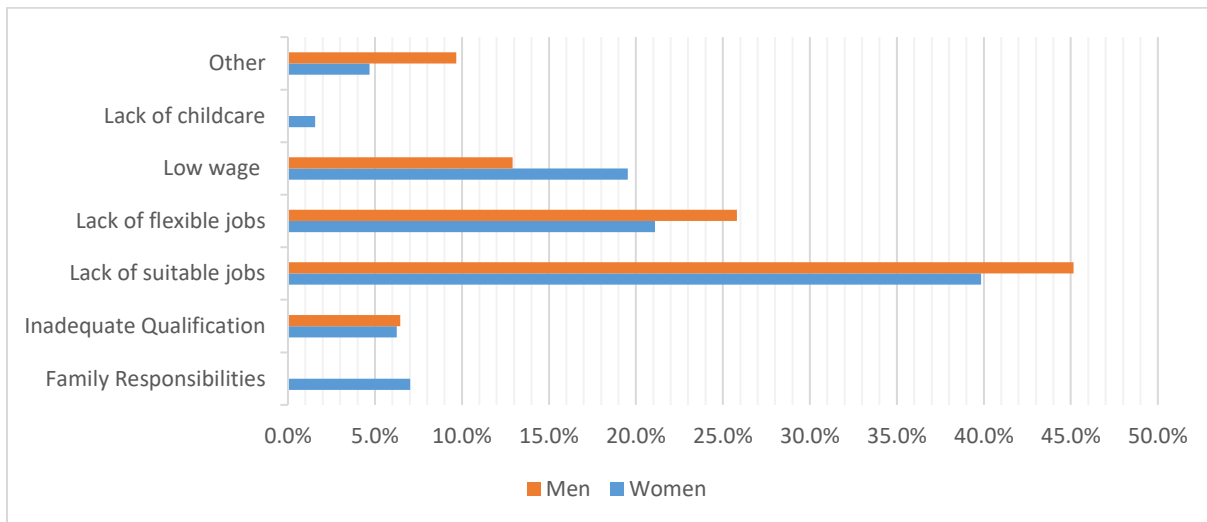
Regarding employment status, 53.1% of women reported working, from which the majority are involved in full-time jobs while 13.2% work part-time. Whereas for those who do not work, 21.2%

are interested in finding a job compared to 5.2% who are not interested at all. The results suggest that this inactivity is mostly present around women who belong to the age group 18 to 25 years old (93%) and have completed High School (33%) or a Bachelor Degree (46.7%).

### Barriers in the Labor Market

The labor market in Kosovo as described in the Literature Review is characterized by imperfections that constrain the willingness of an individual to participate in the market. According to the survey results, 49.7% of men and women reported having encountered difficulties during their job application. On the other hand, 40.9% did not have any difficulties and 9.4% were not sure if they have encountered one. The main barriers reported were lack of suitable jobs, lack of flexible jobs, low wage, and inadequate qualification.

**Table 2: Barriers faced in the labor market**



Source: Online Survey (2019, November).

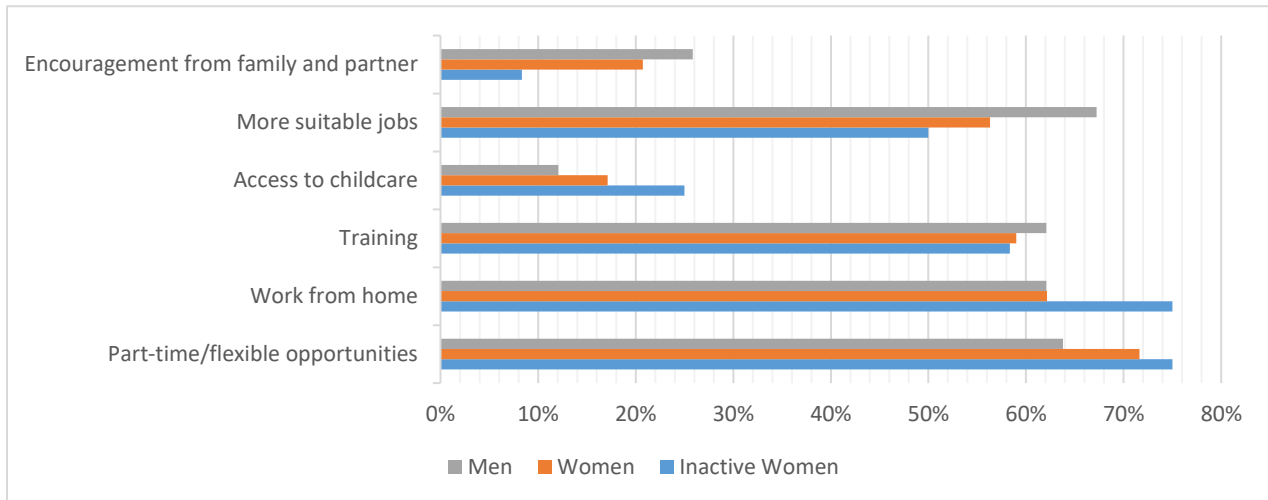
Lack of suitable jobs is perceived as the highest constrain for both genders as the existing jobs do not satisfy their needs since they both share the opinion that different and more jobs by default should be created in the market. When it comes to access to childcare and the responsibility of taking care of children or elders, only 1.6% and 7% respectively, stated having come across these barriers. These reasons were attributed to women who were married and had children whereas these issues were not stated by men. In addition, other obstacles such as politics, nepotism, and male favoritism were pointed out. It is important to mention that the greatest barrier faced by

inactive women is perceived to be low wage by 50% while lack of suitable jobs follows closely with 30%. This goes to show how discouraged women feel when they are not given a proper compensation for work done. While work in itself is viewed as a significant advance towards financial independence of women and as an instrument for improving their haggling position inside the family unit, when the reimbursement level for paid work stays low, such outcomes are exceptionally far-fetched. Subsequently, taking into account that more than one of every three women sees the low wage as a barrier, it demonstrates that the labor market fails to reward women correspondingly for their work, therefore, there is no incentive for women to look or search for a job. Instead discouragement and hesitation prevails.

When the respondents were asked about the factors that would improve their work experience/ participation in the job market, incorporation of part-time/flexible opportunities, possibility to work from home, availability of more suitable jobs and greater access to training were perceived as the top answers for both genders. This is in line with the barriers that they are facing. We can see that in general men and women think that the labor market in Kosovo should offer more options that are not limited to location and time and are essentially more adaptable to their needs. Likewise, the 5.2% inactive women stress these factors as fundamental for their involvement in the job market. Meanwhile, being encouraged from family and partner had a share of 22% while only 16% of respondents circled having access to childcare as contributing factor to improvement of their work experience or job participation. Women who are married and have children are more likely to express the need for childcare services compared to men and this is in line with the cultural norms and mentality of the country that they should be responsible for taking care of the descendants. In addition, 25% of women who are not economically active claim that access to childcare is a significant aspect that would increase their willingness to join the job market. The crosstab analysis showed that this group of inactive women who responded this way, do not actually have children, belong to the age group 18-25 and have completed only high school. This means that childcare projects a constraint to future employment even before having a child and is closely related to low levels of education attainment. On the other hand, greater encouragement from family and partner is highly associated to women and men who are single and have completed their undergraduate studies, which means that there is lack of support from family units regarding

their employment. This support could be any type of moral and/or financial support that young people need in order to pursue their dreams.

**Table 3: Factors that would improve work experience/ participation**

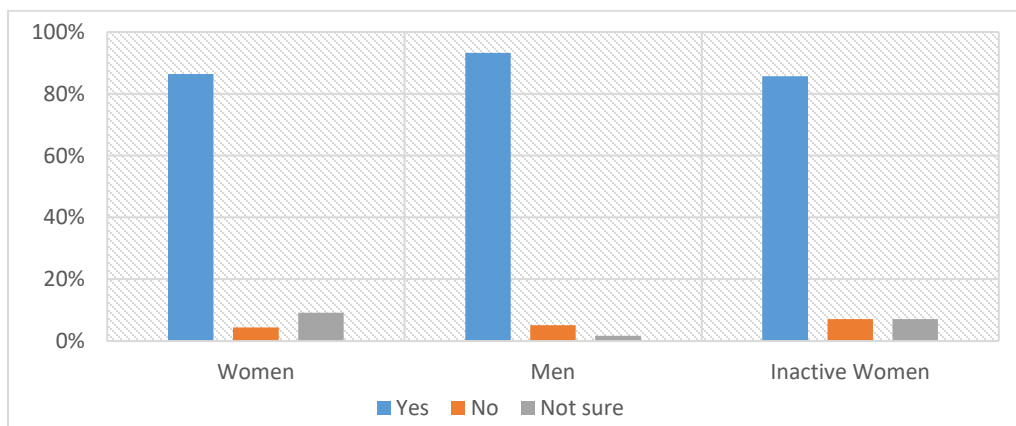


Source: Online Survey (2019, November).

### Perception of Freelancing in Kosovo

The findings from survey suggest that 88% of respondents would be willing to join the freelance world. This includes 88.2% of employed women, 82% of those who are currently looking for a job and 86% of inactive women.

**Table 4: Willingness of respondents to work as freelancer**



Source: Online Survey (2019, November).



Their reasoning is accredited to the attractive features this employment option provides primarily flexibility, ability to focus on other things, global exposure and high payment (Appendix 4). On the other hand, 4% of respondents reported unwillingness to consider freelancing as a job option whereas 7% were not sure. No security and high competition are thought of as the main drawbacks (Appendix 5). In addition, lack of sufficient information (Appendix 5) regarding this type of employment is perceived to be a prevalent restraint for both genders including inactive women. According to the focus group discussion, in general there is low awareness about remote work in Kosovo, especially among women (Focus Group Discussion, 2020). The only ways you can become aware of freelancing is if you have relatives or friends that are involved in this work or through training. Thus, main sources of information regarding this type of employment would be word-of-mouth and self-initiative. Focus group members stressed the lack of promotion by governmental institutions as an important factor (Focus Group Discussion, 2020).

### Freelance activity

The main driver for getting involved into freelancing for most of the participants was the opportunity to be financially independent and at the same time pursue an education. Participants stated that the skills required to become a freelancer include technical abilities such as computer literacy and research.

*“If you do not have computer literacy then you will not be able to survive let alone dominate in the market”* (Participant B, 2020).

Apart from these, soft skills such as hardworking, passionate, as well as common sense on how the online world operates, are deemed as very important (Focus Group Discussion, 2020). Contrarily from the traditional jobs, it seems that freelancing can be performed without any professional experience and/or degree attainment. One of the participants explained:

*“I had just completed high school and I was looking for a job so I joined Upwork. My English was not that good and I did not have any experience but I was able to get a job and have been working ever since”* (Participant C, 2020).

Based on the focus group discussion, most of the clients deliver trainings and teach you how to do the job when they see that you are lacking the necessary abilities. On the other hand, there are clients that expect you to have those skills, so here your research skills and self-initiative make the difference. When asked about their opinion on availability of these skills in our country, there is the perception that these technical and soft skills are not as much developed in Kosovo. The main gap lies within the education system and curricula that are more oriented toward conservative methods such as memorization and use of textbooks whereas doing research and incorporation of technology is rarely practiced. This gap is mostly seen in public universities and it is constraining the opportunities of students that want to progress with the advances of the future (Focus Group Discussion, 2020). There is also the other ground of thought that students are not using their devices for development purposes and are not taking the initiative to learn more. Nonetheless, the shortage of these skills is perceived to be in line with the labor market conditions in Kosovo in the sense that there is a small emerging number of companies that require digital knowledge and outsourcing services (Focus Group Discussion, 2020).

Freelancing has become an attractive type of employment for people that possess the necessary skills due to a rather high compensation in addition to the ability to work with a flexible schedule and choose short-term or long-term projects, as well as collaboration with international companies and individuals, which confirms the results from the survey and literature review. Apparently,

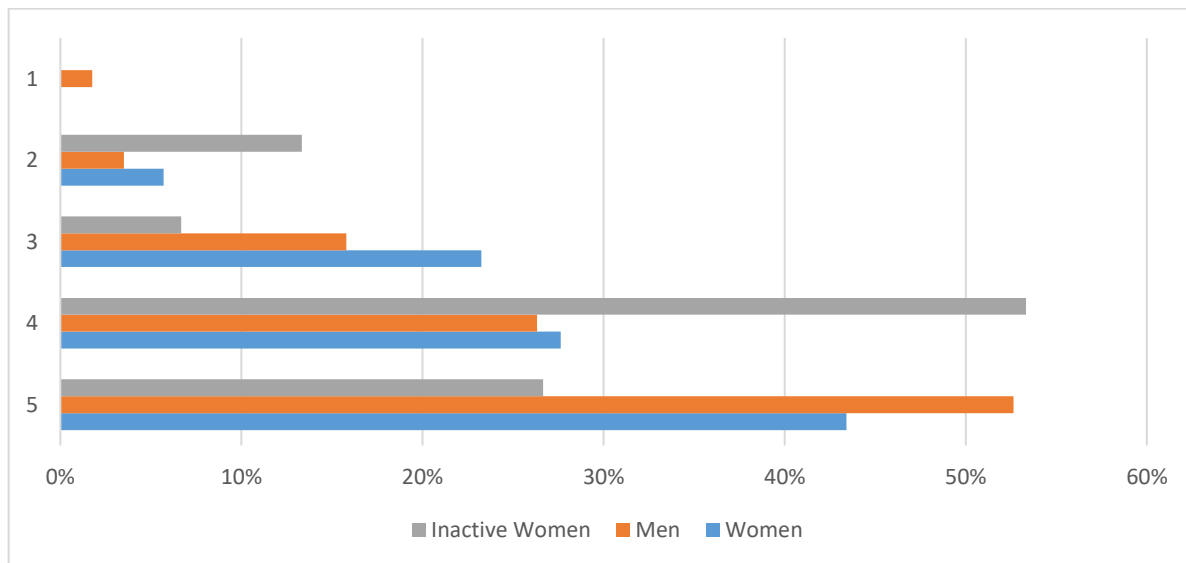
*“You can get the same amount of payment working for four hours as a freelancer like you would if you worked eight hours in a job in Kosovo”* (Participant C, 2020).

Focus group participants reported being more productive and useful as a result of these opportunities. They could focus and complete their work in a short period of time without having the pressure of the supervisor and colleagues around them. For others, their motivation derived from the fact that their work was being appreciated.

*“It seems to me that I am working for a client of mine. This is my client and my input is being valued. Whereas, in traditional employment is usually the name of the company that is recognized”* (Participant A, 2020).

In the questionnaire a Likert scale of 5 was used to assess the Kosovars opinions on whether flexible working hours increase productivity. From 1 being fully disagree to 5 – fully agree, this statement is supported by both genders, including inactive women. Around 53% of men and 43% of women fully agree that productivity is improved by shorter or flexible working hours. Whereas over 50% of inactive women partially agree.

**Table 5: Perception on whether flexible working hours increase productivity**



Source: Online Survey (2019, November).

Participants express, though, that there is growing concern on freelance activity due to global competition, especially during recent years when an increasing number of Philippine and Pakistani workers are entering the market and pulling down prices by offering way cheaper labor hour rates. This factor together with the volatile nature of freelance work expands the uncertainty and security gap. Additionally, the women respondents shared that the high taxation rate of 20% to 500\$ imposed by the online platforms is a very big constraint when you initially start working and can be discouraging to continue. They also point out that Kosovo is not listed in the country list of Upwork or any other platform and international payment methods such as PayPal are utilized which Kosovars are not very familiar with. Even though they would like to be represented by their country, since the option of choosing Albania is available, they do not perceive these factors as barriers or constraints.

## Women and Freelancing

Women constitute a significant part of our society and their exclusion is deemed detrimental for the prosperity of a nation. Freelancing is viewed as a saving grace especially for women who are married and have children (Focus Group Discussion, 2020). Historically, women have been forced to weigh between sacrificing the opportunity to bear children or progress further in career. Filled with guilt and dictated by social norms, many women have been compelled to leave their dreams behind and solely take care of the family and household. With the introduction of freelancing such a sacrifice is not the option anymore. By not being limited to location and time, freelancing provides the opportunity to flexible activity and full authority. Women can choose how they want to work and how much they want to work while still taking care of children or others. Subsequently, their financial resources increase and they have more power in decision-making. For the participants, the biggest benefit of freelancing is financial independence and empowerment of women (Focus Group Discussion, 2020). According to Participant E, the labor market in Kosovo is still surrounded by a patriarchal wave that tends to discriminate against women (Focus Group Discussion, 2020). In freelance there is no limit or inequality with such concern.

### **Participant F: Story of an Inactive Woman**

Participant F got married in a time and place where being a working wife was frowned upon, therefore, she embraced the housewife life after receiving her high school diploma. She raised three smart children and took care of everyone. Her oldest daughter started working remotely after she turned 18 years old. Being a mother for her meant that you need to keep up with your kid's interests, so in her case that included keeping up with the new technology and the internet in general.

After her husband was fired from work unexpectedly, Participant F and her family faced a rough patch financially. So, she decided to finally take an active role and help out with the family income, and being familiar with the technology and the online world turned out to be an immense advantage. After creating her profile, she put her efforts towards finding a job with her current abilities. Data entry project for 5\$ it is. And then another job for 20\$. Slowly she started amassing enough income to help the family with monthly expenses. After 40 years of living, Participant F explains that she has never been happier and prouder than she is now.

The story of participant F serves as a source of motivation for other inactive women out there that want to join the labor market as freelancers. Since the integration of women in employment does not profit women only, policies that tackle the promotion of freelancing should be encouraged and implemented. By changing the position of women from inactive to active, the burden of half of the population is lifted and prosperity is restored.

## Recommendations

Despite the fact that initiatives were undertaken to increase the activity rate of women in Kosovo and capabilities have been fostered to offer employment opportunities through digitalization, this research paper reveals that this potential is greatly challenged by lack of awareness and absence of sufficient technical skills when it comes to working online. Therefore, certain recommendations were compiled to tackle these challenging areas and enable extensive reach of inactive women:

- **Facilitate promotion of freelancing by initiating awareness campaigns**

The research findings show that the main challenge for the development of freelancing in Kosovo is lack of sufficient information regarding this type of employment among the public. In order to overcome this problem, it is recommended that governmental institutions promote online work by establishing widespread awareness campaigns. The awareness campaigns should tackle the opportunities this employment offers as well as include testimonials from active freelancers specifically women so that credibility is increased. Promotion of freelancing could also be done by following the example of Bangladesh through implementing UICs across the country, even though the costs incurred will be higher.

- **Enable the expansion and progress of the Women in Online Work project**

Although WoW has been very successful in achieving its objective of enhancing the skills of unemployed women in the online world, there were some shortcomings reported by secondary research and the box study of the WoW participant. By increasing the length of the training procedure and thus decreasing its intensity, the motivation of participants would improve and the

dropout rate would go down. In addition, cooperation with civil society organizations through expansion of this project to other municipalities would contribute to a larger target audience and greater reach of inactive women.

- **Reform the education system by emphasizing computer literacy**

This is a long term goal that would tackle the lack of skilled labor problem in Kosovo. Through reforms in the education system that represent a focus on information technology and research, enhancement of skills is achieved from an early age. This would benefit the ICT sector as there would be a larger pool of suppliers to choose from while the costs of providing training for new employees would be eliminated.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this research paper was to examine the capacity of freelancing to increase the inclusion of women in the labor market of Kosovo; assess the potential of the government to encourage it, and investigate the link between productivity and skills. The findings from the qualitative and quantitative analysis suggest that one way through which the barriers faced by women who are inactive in the labor market could be overcome through the possibilities that remote work offers. According to the primary research and the literature review, inactive Kosovar women encounter constraints such as low wages, lack of suitable and flexible jobs, and family responsibilities that discourage their employment participation. However, 86% of surveyed inactive women report willingness to join the labor market as freelancers. This willingness is attributed to the opportunities this type of employment provides mainly flexibility in terms of working hours and location, high payment, possibility to focus on other things, and global exposure.

The in-depth focus group discussion with freelance women showed a positive correlation between freelance activity and productivity. Freelancers reported feeling more motivated and carrying out their tasks in a shorter timeframe compared to traditional employment merely due to the flexibility that remote work entails. The perception that flexible working hours enhance productivity was

supported by the survey results as well where both genders including inactive women corresponded.

While there are several prospects for the development of the online economy in Kosovo, there are also some challenges that restrain this growth. The analysis of secondary data suggests that with a high rate of internet penetration, solid infrastructure, and significant growth of the ICT industry, Kosovo has potential to provide employment opportunities and facilitate the generation of income through the digital market. In addition, the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Economic Development in terms of the KODE and WoW project present a commitment of the government toward this area as well as targeting underrepresented social groups such as women and youth. On the other hand, the focus group discussion confirms a general lack of awareness among the citizens especially women regarding the implications of online work. With word-of-mouth and training being the only source of information, the need for government involvement in this direction is emphasized. Shortage of technical labor skills required to perform online work is considered as another big challenge as it negatively impacts the supply of ICT companies and the development of this field. Considering these challenges, creating awareness campaigns as a short-term goal is recommended while putting emphasis on information technology in the education system is projected for long term. With other scholars at the forefront, I hope that research on freelancing proceeds its innovative practice with enquiries such as these.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

# Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research RIT Kosovo

**Title of Project: Freelancing as a Tool of Increasing Women's Activity Rate in Kosovo**

**Principal Investigator:** Ema Baraku, RITK Student  
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1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to explore the influence of freelancing as a tool to increase the inclusion of women in the labor market and the potential of the country to promote this platform.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer 14 questions during this interview.
3. **Duration:** It will take about 6 minutes to complete the interview.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be used only for academic research purposes as part of the research technique in the Honors Capstone course.
5. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date

## Appendix 2

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Please specify your gender: *Tick the relevant box*
  - Female
  - Male
  - Refuse to answer
  
2. Please specify your age:
  - 18 – 25
  - 26 – 35
  - 36 – 45
  - 46 – 55
  - 55+
  
3. What is your highest educational qualification obtained?
  - No education
  - Primary School
  - High School
  - Bachelor Degree
  - Master Degree
  - PhD
  
4. Please specify your civil status:
  - Single
  - Living with a partner
  - Married
  - Divorced
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Refuse to answer
  
- 5. Do you have children?
  - Yes – *please specify number of children* \_\_\_  
*please specify age of children* \_\_\_
  - No
  - Refuse to answer
  
- 6. Do you work?
  - Yes, full-time
  - Yes, part-time
  - No, but looking for a job
  - No, I am not looking for a job
  
- 7. What is the main reason you have looked for a job?
  - Need for additional family income
  - Opportunity for professional advancement
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 8. Have you encountered any barriers during your job application?
  - Yes
  - No
  - I don't know/ I don't remember
  
- 9. If YES, what is the main barrier that you have encountered?
  - Taking care of the family/ household duties
  - Inadequate qualification
  - Lack of suitable jobs available
  - Lack of flexible jobs
  - No access to affordable childcare services
  - Low wage
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 10. Which of the following options do you consider as the 3 most important in improving your labor market experience / for your participation in the labor market?
  - Greater encouragement from partner and family
  - Access to adequate childcare
  - More suitable jobs available
  - Part-time / flexible employment opportunities
  - Opportunities to work from home

- Greater access to professional training that increases the likelihood of employment
- I'm not interested in working
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Would you consider freelancing (flexible work with no long-term commitment to any employer) as a potential job option?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

12. If question 11 NO/NOT SURE why would you not consider it? *Tick up to 3 three answers.*

- No security
- Low payment
- High competition
- Lack of regulation
- Lack of skills
- I don't have enough information
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

13. If question 11 YES, why would you consider it? *Tick up to 3 three answers.*

- Flexibility in terms of working hours and location
- High payment
- Authority
- Opportunity to focus on other things
- Exposure on the global labor market
- Enhancement of skills
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you agree with the statement below? *Tick the relevant number (1- fully disagree; 2 – partially disagree ; 3- agree; 4 – partially agree; 5 – fully agree)*

Flexible working hours increase the performance of a worker      1 2 3 4 5

## Appendix 3

### Focus Group Discussion

- Where did you first hear about freelancing? What factors influenced your decision to work as a freelancer?
- What skills does a person need in order to work as a freelancer? How much do you think these skills are present in our country?
- What makes freelancing an attractive employment opportunity for people with the necessary skills?
- How do you perceive the impact of freelancing on increasing work efficiency?
- What are the obstacles that freelancers face during their work or even people who hope to work in this field?
- How much do you think women in Kosovo are informed about this type of work?
- How do you think freelancing would affect the development of the position of women in Kosovo and reduce the barriers they face for activism in the working society?
- Do you think freelancing is a more appropriate option for women in the Kosovo labor market compared to a regular job based on your experience (If so, why? If not, why not?)
- What would you recommend from your experience as a freelancer for other women and not only?

Appendix 4

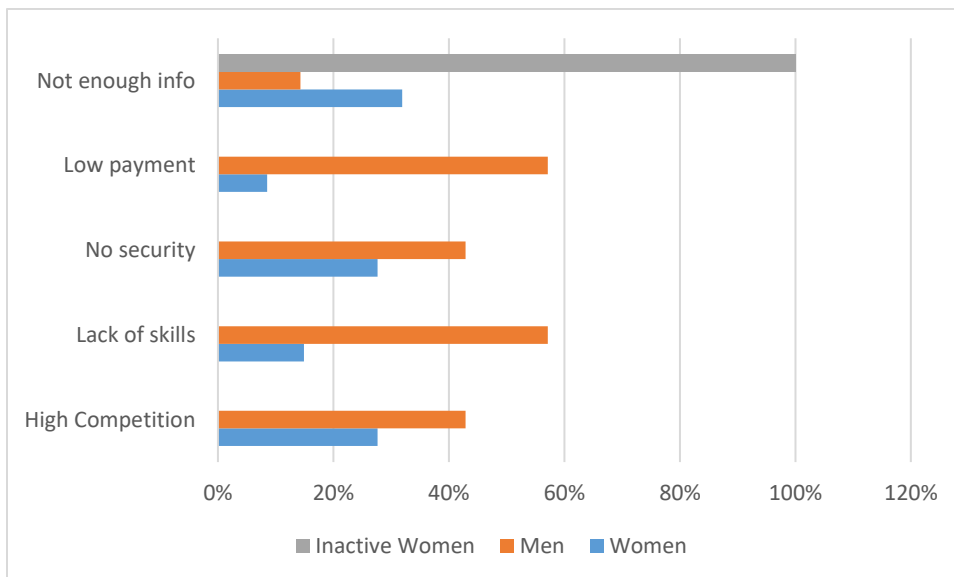
Table 6: Why would you consider freelancing as a job option?



Source: Online Survey (2019, November).

Appendix 5

Table 7: Why wouldn't you consider freelancing as a job option?



Source: Online Survey (2019, November).