

Symmetric Analysis of Factors Affecting Freelance Workers in the Context of OECD Member Countries

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Abstract: This research examines the effects of digital infrastructure/services and certain economic factors on creating favorable conditions for freelancers. The research was carried out in view of the growing interest in new forms of work as digitalization is reflected in the socio-economic structure. The study covers 28 OECD countries from a variety of variables-number of freelancers (NSEP), cost of living (CLM), co-working spaces (NCS), average broadband speed (ABS) and prices (ABP), average mobile speed (AMS) and the resulting freelancing score (FS)-and different databases. Symmetric (PLS-SEM) analysis was conducted to determine the level of influence of causal conditions on the outcome. According to the findings of the study, in the first phase, the explanatory power of the causal conditions for the freelance score was 90.4%. The effects of ABP and CLM on FS were significant and negative. ABS, AMS, AS, NCS and NSEP have significant and positive effects on FS. According to the importance performance map, NSEP has the largest effect on FS, while ABS is the fastest performing variable. The research helps freelancers to make their career planning in OECD countries by determining the most favorable conditions for freelancers.

Keywords: Freelance Work, Freelance Score, Career Planning, Structural Equation Modeling, Smart-PLS

Jel Codes: F66, J01, M54

OECD Üye Ülkeleri Bağlamında Freelance Çalışanları Etkileyen Faktörlere Yönelik Simetrik Analiz

Öz: Bu araştırma, dijital altyapı/hizmetler ve birtakım ekonomik faktörlerin freelance çalışanlar için uygun koşul yaratmalarına yönelik etkilerini incelemektedir. Dijitalleşmenin sosyoekonomik yapıya yansımaları ile birlikte yeni çalışma biçimlerine artan ilgiler gözetilerek araştırma yürütülmüştür. Çalışma çeşitli değişkenlerden - serbest çalışan sayısı (NSEP), yaşam maliyeti (CLM), ortak çalışma alanları (NCS), ortalama broadband hızı (ABS) ve fiyatları (ABP), ortalama mobil hızı (AMS) ve tüm bileşenlerin sonucunda ortaya çıkan freelance skor (FS)- ve farklı veri tabanlarından 28 OECD ülkesini kapsama almıştır. Araştırmada nedensel koşulların sonuca yönelik etki düzeyinin belirlenmesi için simetrik (PLS-SEM) analiz yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre birinci safhada nedensel koşulların freelance skor için %90,4 oranında açıklayabilirliği belirlenmiştir. ABP ve CLM'nin FS'ye etkisi anlamlı ve negatif olarak belirlenmiştir. ABS, AMS, AS, NCS ve NSEP'in FS'ye etkisi anlamlı ve pozitif olarak tespit edilmiştir. Önem performans haritasına göre FS için NSEP en büyük etkiye sahip iken ABS en hızlı performans gösteren değişken olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırma freelance çalışanlar için en uygun koşullar belirlenerek OECD ülkeleri nezdinde kariyer planlamalarını yapabilmelerine yardımcı olmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Freelance Çalışma, Freelance Skor, Kariyer Planlama, Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi, Smart-PLS

Jel Kodları: F66, J01, M54

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1. Introduction

After the 80s, as a result of the radical changes and cumulative developments in the socio-economic structure, there has been a tendency to continuously strive for flexibilization in the labor market. Most scholars agree that there has been a shift from traditional work to non-traditional work based on flexible, temporary, freelance work (Ashford et al., 2007). In the post-industrial period, especially in the last two decades, there has been an increased tendency towards flexible working arrangements and flexible work-life balance, work place and time, etc. (Wheatley, 2017). Thus, in the transformed working order, a more flexible mass of employees according to the fluctuations of the labor market: freelancer employees have intensified in the labor market. The fact that the advanced internet network has steadily increased globalization has actually created the infrastructure for freelancing. However, the rapid shift of employees to freelancing is usually concentrated in times of crisis. Both the 2008 crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic led to a rapid increase in freelancing (Popiel, 2017; Ayoobzadeh, 2022).

The career development of freelancers varies by country, perception, culture or context and it is important to continue research (Dries, 2011). As the current latest stage of development of the economy, the infrastructure of information technologies of the countries creates suitability for the field of activity for freelancers (Akhmetshin et al., 2018). Huđek et al. (2021) found that digitalization, cultural-social norms and digital technology support encourage the career development of freelancers. Damian & Empoli (2020) stated that career support and favorable conditions for freelancers increase the tendency towards freelancing. On the other hand, digital infrastructure indicators play a decisive role in terms of the sustainability and efficiency of freelancing (Ulukapı Yılmaz, 2022). Access to digital tools under favorable conditions is seen as an effective infrastructure tool in the orientation of employees by affecting the freelancing environment (Çiğdem, 2018). Internet speed is a factor that directly affects the productivity of digital nomads and freelancers and constitutes a resource in their career formation (İli & Büyükbaykal, 2023). Economic variables such as cost of living, internet prices, digital transportation opportunities are also among the important factors for location-oriented relocation of freelancers in their career management (Koloğlugil, 2019). Finally, the variables mentioned in the research are accepted as important influencing variables in the research since they play a determining role in the literature for the relocation of freelance employees in their career planning, albeit in a basic context. In Van den Born & Van Witteloostuijn's (2013) study, flexible working strategies are found to be important for the career success of freelancers and a suggestion is made to investigate the factors that may affect it in future studies. As a result of this research proposal, taking into account the gap in the literature, the research aims to provide a comprehensive and causal analysis of digital infrastructure, economic factors and their favorable conditions for freelancers. When the literature is evaluated, the fact that the relationship between the causal variables that are effective in the context of career management in the context of digitalization and new ways of working is not addressed in sufficient detail increases the importance of the study. As a matter of fact, considering the increasing importance of freelancer employees for OECD countries, the need for a comprehensive analysis in the local context emerges. Finally, research on the impact of digitalization on the ways of working has generally been carried out by prioritizing basic variables, and causal findings of variables related to freelancer career management in the context of OECD countries are missing.

In the research, it is aimed to provide insights into the suitability of freelance workers in the context of OECD countries by expanding factors such as economic and digital infrastructures, living conditions, etc. for freelance workers. For this purpose, symmetric analysis was used on the axis of the variables determined. Within the framework of symmetric analysis, the research focuses on whether various factors (internet services, cost of living, job opportunities, etc.) create favorable conditions for freelancers. With structural equation modeling, the suitability of various variables for freelancing was

discussed and the effect levels of the variables were determined. In the study, inferences were made for the conditions suitable for freelancing, which is a new field of study in the academic literature. In this way, it is possible to determine the impact levels of causal conditions that may be effective in the career planning of employees and to evaluate the factors in the local context.

2. Literature Review and Developing Hypotheses

The demand for freelancing within the socio-economic conjuncture has made research on the phenomenon valuable. The Freelance Score (FS), which is considered as a combination of favorable conditions for freelancing, is a scoring that reveals the satisfaction of employees, directs them to self-employment, increases the control of employees over their own lives, and has the advantage of flexibility. Although there is a study evaluating the factors that create favorable conditions for freelancing (Abdreisova et al., 2021), there is currently no study on the freelancing index. In addition, based on this, the impact of origin variables that include digital infrastructures and some economic conditions on the suitability of freelancing in the context of countries is evaluated. In addition, freelancers are now considered within the unlimited career model according to their suitability for freelancing (Miller, 2020). Freelancers can develop a career preparation and planning strategy when they clearly define their individual expectations (Damian & Empoli, 2020). The emergence of favorable conditions for freelancers can be a guiding factor in their career planning. For this reason, I think that determining the appropriate factors for freelancing will be a factor in employees' career choices. Finally, at this stage, hypotheses are developed by evaluating the root factors that reveal the Freelance Score (FS) in the context of academic literature.

Individuals create demand for self-employment in order to gain independence and autonomy (Murgia & Pulignano, 2021). Some freelancers may choose to freelance because they are affected by economic fluctuations and cannot find a job, rather than being able to obtain a profitable job opportunity and job autonomy (Boeri et al., 2020). Freelancers may turn to self-employment as a survival strategy for those who want to earn an income and find no other alternative, or as a response to the desire to be their own boss/entrepreneur (Burke et al., 2020). The increase in self-employment, for whatever reasons, may also increase the tendency towards freelancing, which has similar components. The following hypothesis will be tested to determine whether the widespread use of freelancing can be a factor in the favorable conditions of freelancing (Freelance Score).

H₁: NSEP significantly and positively affects FS.

The London School of Economics and Centre for Economic Performance report reveals that freelancers are experiencing financial difficulties due to increases in the cost of living, and that many workers need to work longer and more laboriously in order to make a living (Blackburn et al., 2022). Since the income for freelance workers is paid on the basis of the work performed, employees are faced with the cost of living such as insurance, food, transportation, accommodation, etc. (Karabatan & Ekiz Gökmen, 2022: 261). In addition, the cost of living and the cost-of-living crisis are experienced unequally across countries and regions (Marmot et al., 2022). This situation has revealed the necessity to evaluate each country differently. In the light of the findings in the academic literature, the following hypothesis regarding the cost of living and suitability for freelancing will be tested.

H₂: CLM significantly and negatively affects FS.

Spreitzer et al. (2015) found that for freelancers, shared living spaces correspond to meaningful work and have a very positive impact on job satisfaction. It is seen that the importance of the concept of leisure time, which emerged especially with digitalization, has been effective in employees' turning to other working environments outside the company (Elnur, 2024). In a study conducted in the Philippines, it was stated that freelancers felt an eager sense of belonging in shared workspaces (Tintiangko & Soriano, 2020). However, beyond the aforementioned studies, although coworking spaces have

been seen as innovative and promising for entrepreneurship and freelancing in the last decade, the lack of analysis, theory, practice and policies in this field has attracted attention (Howell & Bingham, 2019). In the individual interview research conducted by Garrett et al. (2017), the suggestion of evaluating the trend towards coworking spaces for future studies is shared. Formed with the phenomenon of leisure time, the ways of working in different fields outside the business have been effective in the formation of the freelance mass that can be ready at any time (Elnur, 2023). Accordingly, the following hypothesis will be tested in the study as an effort is made to extend the results on the relationship between coworking spaces and freelancing eligibility.

H₃: NCS significantly and positively affects FS.

Czernich et al. (2011) revealed the positive impact of the availability of broadband infrastructure on the growth rates of Gross Domestic Product in OECD countries between 1996 and 2007. According to the results of the research conducted in Finland with the theme of easy access to technological infrastructure within the scope of firms; it was found that wired networks increased employee productivity by 14% and wireless networks by 6% (Maliranta & Rouvinen, 2006). Denderski & Sniekers (2019) found that faster broadband speeds are associated with higher freelance employment and lower unemployment. Although many industry antecedents point to the positive effects of access to the internet and high internet speeds, research that directly identifies the benefits of broadband access is quite limited (Grimes et al., 2012). In this study, the following hypothesis is tested: high broadband speed creates favorable conditions for freelancing.

H₄: ABS significantly and positively affects FS.

Broadband pricing strategies promise future network expansion (Biggs & Kelly, 2006). However, many broadband providers have recently moved to continuous price increases as they face rising operating costs and inflation (Beckett, 2023). The high price of broadband service implies high reliability for the internet network but low satisfaction due to price inflation (Schwantes, 2022). Affordable access to the internet makes it possible to facilitate digital transformation towards sustainable development and to integrate the labor market into the internet network (ITU, 2022). However, studies linking high broadband prices to freelancing are limited. To this end, the following hypothesis regarding the inverse relationship is tested.

H₅: ABP significantly and negatively affects FS.

As access to mobile increases, it affects the increase of mobile users in the context of supply and demand in the labor market (Sundararajan, 2015). In the digital labor market, freelancers and job location are losing their importance (Roberts & Townsend, 2016). The important function of mobile networks is to instantly bring together freelancers and job requesters (Kathuria et al., 2017). This mobility, which creates portfolio workers, enables unlimited career opportunities for freelancers based on their individual preferences (Kazi et al., 2014). In the light of the findings in the academic literature, the following hypothesis will be tested.

H₆: AMS significantly and positively affects FS.

In Upwork's (2022) research on freelancer careers, 43% of freelancers reported that they had increased their wages compared to last year, with 36% of these individuals citing higher demand for their services as the reason. Therefore, it can be considered normal for employees to shift to the location, field, physical or virtual media where they are in demand. Riaz et al. (2021) stated that while freelancing creates job opportunities for many young graduates in response to demand, the tendency towards conditions suitable for freelancing may increase in their career development. Finally, based on the findings in the literature, the hypothesis that the demand for freelancing may be important in terms of creating favorable conditions for freelancing will be tested below.

H₇: AS significantly and positively affects FS.

3. Research Philosophy and Methodology

Within the framework of research interests that guide the paradigm and philosophy of research in social sciences, realism philosophy and functionalist paradigm based on quantitative research method were adopted in the study (Günbayı & Sorm, 2018). The philosophy of realism and the functionalist paradigm contribute to providing an objective view, perpetuating the social order and integrating current conditions according to the continuity of the social structure (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Freelancing, which is one of the most important issues in the current and future labor market, is considered valuable in terms of the continuity and functionality of the social structure in the academic literature (Podgorodnichenko, 2022). It is thought that the research will be a guide with the idea of the continuity of the social structure in terms of determining the appropriate factors for freelancing, employee preferences and career plans.

3.1. Research Data

Various data were used in the research. The data includes individual factors that may be important for career planning for freelancers in OECD countries and an overall rating of these factors. The data for the study consists of an outcome variable (Freelancer Index) and its combined components of seven separate condition variables. The Freelancer Index is derived from the scores shared by Tipalti. When calculating the Freelance score, the constituent factors were ranked separately with a score out of 10. Then, each of them is averaged to obtain a freelancing score out of 10. The higher the score, the better and more suitable a country is for freelancing.

Table 1. Variable Data and Definition

Factor	Indicator	Description	Source
Freelancer Skor (FS)	Number of Self-Employed People (NSEP)	The first component of the Freelancer Index is the number of self-employed people in 2021. It includes the number of self-employed people per 100,000 people within countries. The higher the density, the greater the tendency to freelance.	OECD ¹
	Cost of Living (Monthly) (CLM)	Another factor that constitutes the outcome index is the Cost of Living in 2022. Accordingly, the cost of living in dollars is calculated for each country. This cost represents the amount of money needed to maintain a level of comfort such as housing, taxes, food, various services, etc.	World Population Review ²
	Number of Coworking Spaces (NCS)	Another causal condition is the number of Coworking Spaces in 2022, which represents the number of places where freelancers work. Includes the number of coworking spaces per 100,000 people.	Coworker ³
	Average Broadband Speed (ABS)	It is calculated by measuring average internet download speeds in megabits per second. As the speed of the internet, which is the basic building block of freelancing, increases, employees can continue their work under more favorable conditions.	World Population Review ⁴
	Average Broadband Price (ABP)	Another influential condition in the formation of the freelance score is the Average Broadband Prices in 2020. This factor reveals the cost of accessing the internet.	Cable ⁵
	Average Mobile Speed (AMS)	It is calculated by measuring average internet download speeds for mobile devices in megabits per second. As mobile, which is the basic building block of freelancing, increases, employees can continue their work under more favorable conditions.	World Population Review ⁶
	Annual Searches (AS)	It includes searches for freelancers for each country. It is effective in revealing the job demand for freelancers. 2021 is the number of Freelancer Demand.	Google Ads ⁷

3.2. Data Analysis

In the research, first of all, a basic bibliometric analysis is carried out on the Web of Science database in the background and a framework of the academic literature on the

¹ <https://data.oecd.org/emp/self-employment-rate.htm> (Date of access: 07.01.2024).

² <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/cheapest-countries-to-live-in> (Date of access: 07.01.2024).

³ <https://www.coworker.com/> (Date of access: 07.01.2024).

⁴ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/internet-speeds-by-country> (Date of access: 07.01.2024).

⁵ <https://www.cable.co.uk/broadband/pricing/worldwidecomparison/#:~:text=The%20five%20countries%20with%20the,another%20in%20the%20Near%20East> (Date of access: 07.01.2024).

⁶ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/internet-speeds-by-country> (Date of access: 07.01.2024).

⁷ https://ads.google.com/intl/en_gb/getstarted/ (Date of access: 07.01.2024).

subject is established. In the empirical phase of the research, a symmetric analysis technique is carried out to evaluate the factors related to the ability of freelance workers to work in appropriate and good conditions. With the functionalist perspective used in the research, quantitative research method is adopted to determine the effect of condition variables on the outcome variable to ensure social sustainability. Within this relationship network, in the first phase of the research, structural equation modeling was used to test the effects of latent variables on the outcome variable through a hypothetical model. PLS-SEM was used to test complex hypothetical models (formative and reflective) in SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2016). PLS-SEM provides path modeling to determine whether the hypothesized causal variables are the cause of the outcome variable (Garson, 2016). SmartPLS 4.0 package program was used for this analysis. It is an important tool that can overcome the difficulty in reconciling the theoretical context with empirical findings, especially with the complex structure of variables (Richter et al., 2022). The SmartPLS package program was preferred because it has advantages such as providing appropriate results with low sample size, working with multiple complex variables, being user-friendly, not requiring normal distribution and being used especially for forecasting (Ringle et al., 2015).

4. Empirical Findings of The Research

4.1. PLS-SEM Analysis Results

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is used to investigate whether there is a problem regarding the internal relationship between the latent variables for the predicted model. VIF values are used to evaluate the collinearity between indicators before conducting path analysis in the research model. A VIF value of 5 and above indicates that there may be common method bias (Hair et al., 2016). According to the findings shared in Table 2, VIF values are between 1.222 and 4.245 and it is accepted that there is no collinearity problem in the research. The effect size (f-square) expresses the shares/effects of the inclusion of exogenous variables in the model to explain the endogenous variables. An effect size value of 0.35 and above means that a high effect is created for the model (Cohen, 1995). According to the findings shared, it was determined that the effect size of all latent variables for the model was quite high.

Table 2. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

	VIF	f-square
"ABP"->"FS"	3,79	0,61
"ABS"->"FS"	1,22	2,34
"AMS"->"FS"	2,36	0,90
"AS"->"FS"	1,23	1,24
"CLM"->"FS"	4,24	0,57
"NCS"->"FS"	2,24	0,65
"NSEP"->"FS"	1,74	1,93

NSEP: Number of Self-Employed People; **CLM:** Cost of Living (Monthly); **NCS:** Number of Coworking Spaces; **ABS:** Average Broadband Speed; **ABP:** Average Broadband Price; **AMS:** Average Mobile Speed; **AS:** Annual Searches; **FS:** Freelance Score

In the predicted model, the ratio of exogenous variables explaining the endogenous variables (R^2) expresses the percentage of explanation. An R^2 value of 0.75 and above indicates that the model has a very strong explanation rate (Hair et al., 2011). According to the model shared in Figure 1, the ratio of the component variables of the Freelance Index (FS) explaining the FS is a very high value of 90.4%. Therefore, FS has a high explanatory power in the proposed model.

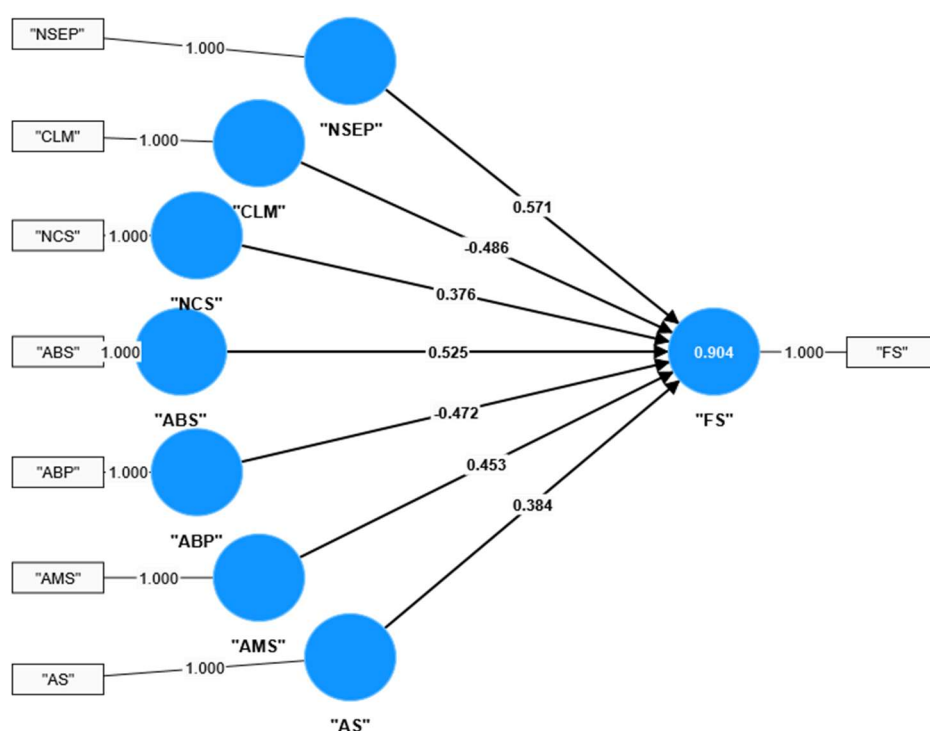


Figure 1. Structural Model

In PLS-SEM, a nonparametric resampling procedure is followed for the significance of the estimated path coefficients (Davison & Hinkley, 1997). Revealing the path coefficients is important for determining the effect of the relationship between variables. Standard path intervals (original sample) vary between -1 and 1, and it is stated that values far from 0 are included in the high path coefficient (Garson, 2016). In path analysis, hypotheses are rejected when the p value is higher than 0.05 and the t value is between -1.960 < t < 1.960 (Yıldız, 2020). The path analysis of the research is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results with Path Analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	H	Results
NSEP->	0.57	0.57	0.13	4.33	0.000	H ₁	Supported
CLM->	-0.48	-0.47	0.16	2.92	0.004	H ₂	Supported
NCS->	0.37	0.36	0.13	2.85	0.004	H ₃	Supported
ABS->	0.52	0.52	0.09	5.56	0.000	H ₄	Supported
ABP->	-0.47	-0.47	0.15	3.12	0.002	H ₅	Supported
AMS->	0.45	0.44	0.13	3.31	0.001	H ₆	Supported
AS->	0.38	0.37	0.08	4.81	0.000	H ₇	Supported

According to the path analysis and hypothesis test results of the research in Figure 1 and Table 3, no insignificance was found for t and p values. Accordingly, ABP and CLM have a significant and negative effect on FS. On the other hand, the effect of ABS, AMS, AS, NCS and NSEP on FS was found to be significant and positive. Although the effect sizes of the variables are close to each other, the variable with the largest effect is NSEP (0.571) and the variable with the least effect is NCS (0.376). Finally, all hypotheses were supported.

Importance-Performance analysis provides researchers with the opportunity to enrich PLS-SEM analyses and to obtain additional results and additional findings (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Importance-performance map (IPMA) extends the findings by taking

into account the importance level and performance indicators of each variable (Uymaz & Arslan, 2022).

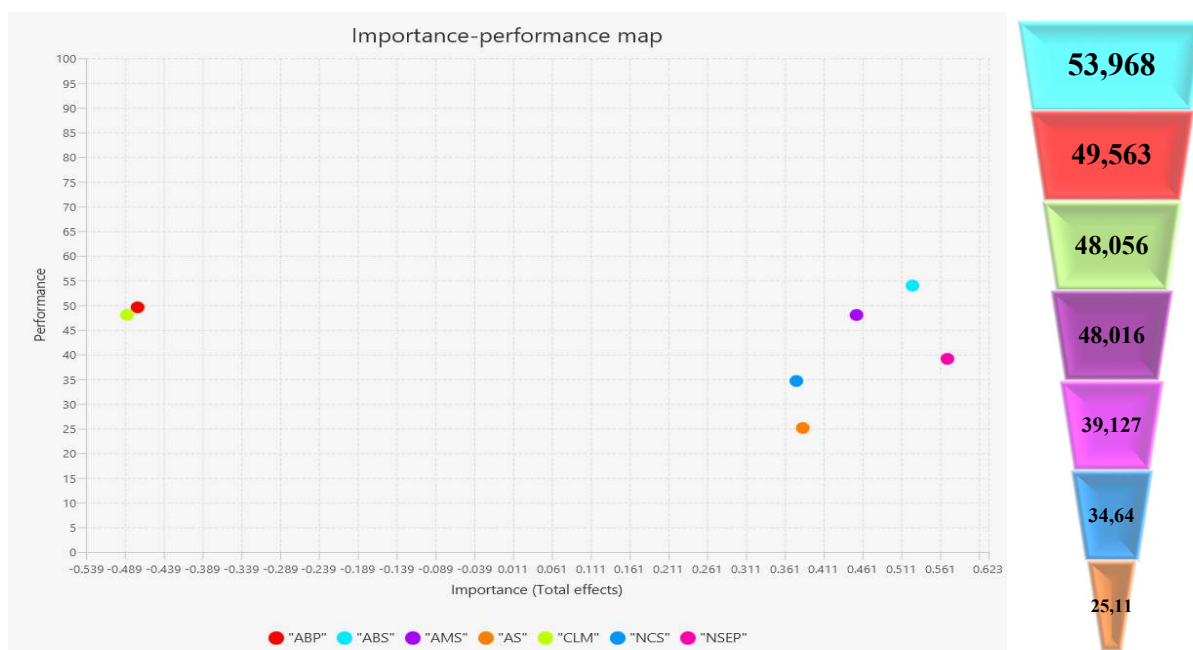


Figure 2. Importance-Performance Map and Performance Indicators

According to the IPMA findings shared in Figure 2, the variables with the highest importance and performance indicators are quite close to each other. Accordingly, the variables with the highest importance value for FS are NSEP (positive impact), ABS (positive impact), CLM (negative impact), ABP (negative impact), AMS (positive impact), AS (positive impact) and NCS (positive impact). In addition, the highest and fastest performance variables that can have an impact on FS are ABS, ABP, CLM, AMS and others. Although NSEP has the highest value, ABS is identified as the variable with the fastest performance/fastest impact for FS. NSEP, on the other hand, has a long-term impact on performance. The second most important variable is ABS and the variable with the second fastest impact is ABP. AS and NCS variables are determined as the two variables with the lowest level of importance and performance output for FS compared to other variables.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This research has various assessments for the variables that create conditions favorable to freelancing or that create obstacles to it in OECD member countries. As a result of the assessments, it is aimed to create an infrastructure for potential freelancing career planning. In the first phase, the effect size and importance-performance map of the relevant variables on FS were found. According to the results of the structural model shared in Figure 1, the ratio of exogenous variables explaining endogenous variables was determined as 90.4%.

Among the conditional variables in the context of OECD countries, the variable with the highest effect size and positive correlation for FS eligibility was identified as NSEP (Table 3). Despite having a high positive effect size, it has a longer-term effect compared to some other variables (Figure 2). These results for NSEP-FS confirm its high association with freelancing, which Cieřlik & Dvouletý (2019) identify as one of the components of freelancing in their study. Freelancers have increased their importance due to the continuously rising demand for them, the widespread use of outsourcing, and economic volatility (Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2019). These reasons have contributed to the adoption of

freelancing as it has increased the tendency towards flexible working and thus created favorable conditions for freelancing (Burke, 2015). In Fritsch & Storey's (2014) study, it was determined that freelancing and freelancing is one of the important steps in career development rather than the ultimate goal. In fact, freelancing and, indirectly, a venture-based career based on freelancing is based on the principles of unlimited career (Arulmani et al., 2014). The study found that NSEP, a potentially important variable for freelancers' career planning, encourages FS.

Another finding regarding the negative impact/inverse relationship of CLM on FS supported my hypothesis. CLM is the variable with the highest negative impact. In addition to its high importance, it is also the third variable with the fastest impact on FS. It is the variable with the fastest impact among the negatively correlated variables. In the Rockefeller report (Farmer, 2020, p. 6), it is stated that freelancing is growing in the Western US and some other states and that the tendency of freelancers towards places with low cost of living is increasing as the way work is carried out is based on individual-flexible production. According to Petryshyn & Vovk (2020); freelancers consider the cost of living and move to low-cost medium and small cities where it is convenient to work via the internet. It is seen that the fact that freelancer work has the advantage of being carried out in a flexible location and the high cost of living can be effective in the career planning of the person. So much so that freelancers who can continue their work remotely can even have the opportunity to become digital nomads between countries depending on the cost of living and can continue their careers in various locations (Thompson, 2018). However, it should not be forgotten that for freelancers who work in close-location-physical jobs, career planning based on the cost of living is entirely based on location preference between job opportunities and costs (Jarvis & Pratt, 2006).

In the study, the effect of NCS, which can create an infrastructure for digital work, on FS was found to be positive. Although there is a positive correlation for the provision of co-working spaces and conditions suitable for freelancing, it can be said that it has less impact compared to all other variables. In parallel with this, it is among the variables that have the least rapid impact on FS. Coworking spaces are the space where entrepreneurs, start-ups and freelancers come up with innovative ideas beyond their daily work (Bouncken et al., 2020). Kraus et al. (2022) examined the research on the phenomenon of coworking spaces in Web of Science and found that coworking spaces are also suitable for freelancing, which is innovative, rational and collectivist thinking. Finally, in line with the findings of my research, the advantages provided by coworking spaces have a positive impact on freelancing and encourage employees to do so. Many freelancers prefer to work in coworking spaces, which allows them to plan their careers and maintain the activity of the business (Garrett et al., 2017). In addition, freelancers can experience changes in their career planning in different dimensions thanks to the guidance, advice and incentives they receive in the socialization environment that freelancers can obtain in coworking spaces (Spinuzzi, 2012; Reuschke et al., 2021).

As another digital infrastructure, ABS is the second most influential variable for FS and has a positive correlation. ABS is determined as the variable with the fastest effect on FS. Therefore, broadband speed creates a fast and effective effect for freelancing. In the study conducted for online freelancers, 50% of the users stated that they plan to increase the width of the internet broadband service in order to continue their work under favorable conditions (Liaqat & Liaqa, 2021). Improved broadband service improves and facilitates communication with customers for freelancers (Devi et al., 2021). Therefore, freelancers are likely to make their career planning according to areas or locations with developed broadband infrastructure service. Broadband service, provided by governments and firms, is considered as an attractive factor for freelancers' careers (Mettler & Williams, 2011).

For FS, ABP was identified as a negatively correlated variable. As access to digital infrastructure becomes more difficult, eligibility for freelancing is restricted. ABP was found to be the second fastest influencing variable for FS and the fastest variable in terms

of negative association. In Romke & Sayed's (2018) interview study, it was determined that the reasons why young people in Bangladesh stay away from freelancing in their career planning are poor internet connection and high internet prices. Academic research examining the impact of ABP on freelancing is quite limited. For this reason, this research can make valuable contributions to the conceptual framework.

AMS and FS are positively correlated. Mobile speeds can create favorable conditions for freelancing. The level of impact is moderate compared to other variables such as speed of impact. Teodoro et al. (2014) found that fast access to mobile workforce applications creates favorable experiences for freelancing and employees are motivated. In the study of Daniel et al. (2018), the interviewee stated that providing instant mobile communication quickly provides positive factors in the career conditions of freelancers, such as flexibility, independence, etc. Finally, in my research, the relevant variable that may be important for the potential career planning of freelance employees was tested and the hypothesis was supported.

The study reveals the positive effect of AS for FS. The positive relationship of AS to FS is a variable that has a very long-term impact as it has the lowest speed of impact. Hong & Pavlou (2013) report that the continuous demand for freelancers is an indicator of the success of the market. Therefore, we can infer the success of freelancing with the effect of annual search/demand. Especially with the Covid-19 pandemic period, as job demands have shifted to online-based freelancing, employees also make their career planning in accordance with freelancing in order to sustain their lives (del Rio-Chanona et al., 2020). In the study of Dunn et al. (2020), it was determined that more than 40% of the demand for online labor markets in 2020 originated from the USA, while the supply, which is constantly increasing in response to demand, is spread in various countries. When the current version of the data shared in the study is evaluated, the increase in demand after the 2020s, which occurred in a fluctuating manner but with a rising momentum, brought about an absolute increase in the supply of countries such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the USA.^{8,9} The search/demand for freelance labor force has revealed that employees organize their career planning according to freelance work and this situation coincides with the finding of the research.

6. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study provides theoretical and practical contributions on freelancing and related variables, which are still in the process of intensification. Li et al. (2020) theoretically identified that the economic and environmental performance of a country may encourage freelancers. First of all, in the theoretical context, the most important contributions of the research are to provide in-depth insights into the impact levels and causal relationship of the factors suitable for freelancing, which have not yet been extensively examined in the academic literature and are expected to gain more importance in the current and future labor market. All hypotheses are accepted and should be tested in future studies.

In practical terms, various findings regarding the demand for freelancing have been shared in the literature. In Idress et al.'s (2022) study, the conditions that affect career satisfaction in freelancing were identified as factors such as proactive personality, self-efficacy, and digital technology support. In Damian & Capatina's (2019) research on individual interviews, it is stated that freelancers make career plans depending on their strategies, income conditions, decision-making mechanisms and demands. In the research, factors favorable to freelancing, digital infrastructure and economic conditions were taken into consideration rather than the perspective of the employees. Therefore, the demand for freelancing expands the scope of freelancing by considering the digital infrastructure and economic conditions for the academic literature. In this way, a basis has been created for employees to make career choices by evaluating which factors can be

⁸ <http://onlinelabourobservatory.org/oli-demand/> (Date of access: 19.01.2024)

⁹ <http://onlinelabourobservatory.org/oli-supply/> (Date of access: 19.01.2024)

effective in career planning, which factors can have a rapid effect, location selection according to causal conditions, the effect of causal conditions on career choices and the appropriate conditions in the context of countries.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Studies

In recent years, freelancing has become increasingly widespread in the global context, especially in the period when knowledge-intensive forms of work are in vogue. This prevalence has brought about the need for research on the orientations of freelance employees. Flexible working styles provide employees with autonomy in terms of when, how and where to carry out responsibilities with agile working arrangements and are also effective in the spread of digital nomadism (Jarrahi et al., 2021). In particular, economic conditions and psychological components are increasing the points to be taken into consideration for the career planning of freelancers (May et al., 2022). It is known that digital infrastructures are among the leading factors in making freelancers' jobs sustainable (Idress et al., 2022). According to Gussek & Wiesche (2024), even though working on independent digital labor platforms has become increasingly common, detailed research on understanding the career volatility of employees has been lacking. Recognizing this gap, the research was conducted to evaluate it in the context of OECD countries. When the literature is evaluated, the research findings based on the causal relationship between the number of freelancers, cost of living, co-working spaces, average broadband speed and prices, average mobile speed, and the freelancing score that emerges as a result of all components have proven to be important in terms of the career orientation of the employee. Moreover, among these variables, the variables with high importance and high performance have been separated. Although the research has revealed valuable symmetric findings, it allows for the direction of future research with various limitations.

Since the research directly addresses the type of work, the conditions suitable for freelancing were evaluated. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the research does not directly make inferences about career planning for freelancers. It contributes to revealing/testing the factors that may have an impact on their career planning and creating a basis for career planning. However, this situation necessitated research focusing directly on freelance employees for the tested model, which is seen as the basis. In this way, it will be confirmed whether these factors are valuable in the career planning of employees. Moreover, the study is based on quantitative research methods. For the sake of data diversity, research focusing on employees should be supported by qualitative research techniques, especially the views of individuals.

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