
Lived Experiences of Home-Based Computer Technicians

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Abstract

The study focuses on the lived experiences of an on-call computer technician whose place of work is at home but accept home services and the study used the phenomenological research design method. There were seven (7) male informants in the study and they are selected based on data saturation method. The main research instrument of the study is the researcher using interview method. Moreover, the analysis was done through detailed reading, rereading and interpretation of the transcripts and identified initial themes or codes, defining, redefining of codes and modifying of codes through association, contrasting and formulation of themes. The results revealed eight major themes including “Flexible Working Hours”, “Accessible working place”, “Financial/Economic needs matter”, “Experiencing Clients Lack of Trust and Confidence”, “No co-workers to ask for help”, “Inadequate tools and Kits used for servicing”, “Hunting for an alternative source of income”, and “What Matters is Doing the Job You Love”. It is Recommended that home service computer technicians should undergo seminars and training-workshops on the new trends and updates of the computer both software and hardware. In addition, retraining and practices to the new tools and equipment’s configure latest computer security protection software’s could be a great foundation to strengthen the technician’s knowledge and ability. Moreover, computer technicians should establish application software/online platform wherein the customer would visit the application software and apply for a service they needed.

Keywords: Phenomenology, home-based computer technician, information technology, alternative work, data saturation

1. Introduction

The figures of the workforce in the home-based categories had increased in recent years, with more people becoming familiar with the concept and with the collaboration of technology, working from home for these workers have been a conventional practice. Moreover, with the advent of the usage of media as part of a marketing model, many computer technicians are

incline to open their own businesses on computer trouble shooting in their own households rather than being hired in a big company. Likewise, having this type of arrangement in their trades allow a sense of flexibility in spending their time with their work and their families. It cannot be disclaimed that working from home has its advantages, but the queries remain, does this type of job arrangement able to fully support a household financially? Do they have stronger bonds with other family members considering their flexible time? Does working from home improved overall well-being? Are they able to effectively market the services with the use of the internet?

Zalega (2002) explained that the Internet has become the foundation of our contemporary economy, as seen by the significance of globalization and information technology. These effects and changes are also very visible on our labor market today which are inclined by the constant modification of both lifestyle and work habits. In addition, the notion of working from home have been considered over the past few decades but it seems that this idea is achieving more importance nowadays as seen by an increasing number of professions requiring only gears such as Android phones and computers with Internet access, which has a domino effect that lessens the necessity of traditional offices. This inclination rears the inquiry of whether there is a probability that with time working from home will completely substitute the traditional work (Kłopotek, 2017).

Working from home is predominantly branded by the bottom condition for physical fitness and an all-out attentiveness needed, individual control over the work pace which often arises from task that are project-based by nature (Olson et al., 1995). Therefore, for people who are taking care of small children or are disabled physically, working from home is often the only type of work they can afford. Hence, this work is chosen both a personal choice and the lack of alternatives (Kłopotek, 2017).

There have been many studies that investigated the experiences of different professionals that are working from home but only a few have focus specifically on computer technicians who are homebased, especially in the Philippines, where the type of economy is diverse. Hence, it is the premise of this study to answer those queries and explore the lived experiences of home-based computer technicians in Cebu, Philippines.

2. Methods and Materials

This study is mainly a qualitative phenomenological research design based on in-depth interviews of computer technicians who are working from home. The purpose of this study was exploring the lived experiences of home-based Computer Technicians and describe their opportunities and challenges.

The informants of the study are the seven (7) homebased computer technicians selected using data saturation to determine the number of informants. It means that if there is no more new information emerged from the interview, then the investigation stops. Moreover, to ensure the veracity of data gathered, the researcher utilized triangulation of data, by making use of data from secondary source, specifically from the informants' family members. Likewise, all the interviews were conducted on the informants' private residence.

Ethical Consideration

To protect and maintain the ethical standards in doing researches, the researcher called for a conference individually with each of the seven (7) informants. Converse with them regarding the importance of the research. Revealed to them all the facts regarding the research study this includes the content and basis of conducting the study, the details why they are chosen as the informants of the study, the probable benefits and burdens of participating. Moreover, the informants were also informed that they can withdraw from participation of the study at any time is possible. Likewise, they were also informed that that their participation is voluntary in nature. During the interviews if an informant does not feel like answering a particular question, he or she had the right to say so. On the same manner the informants were also guaranteed that their identities are protected throughout the study by using fictitious/pseudo names and any information they revealed are treated with high respect and confidentially. In addition, the informants are given an assurance that they can access anything they want to know about the results or findings of the study. The participants are also given ample time to decide whether to participate in the study or not. An informed consent is signed by the respondent before the interview session commence.

Data Analysis

After each of the interviews, the researchers transcribed the data and the transcripts were analyzed using phenomenological methodology. The analysis of data was conducted through a detailed reading, rereading and interpretation of the transcripts and identified initial themes or codes, after which there was a defining, redefining of codes and modifying of codes through association, contrasting and formulation of themes as the expression of the underlying content of the text.

3. Results

There are eight themes generated in the study namely; (1) flexible working hours, (2) accessible working place, (3) Financial/Economic needs matter, (4) Experiencing Clients Lack of Trust and Confidence (5) no co-workers to ask for help (6) lack of tools used for servicing (Inadequate tools and Kits)(7) Hunting for an alternative source of income and (8) what matters is doing the job you love.

Theme 1 Flexible Working Hours

The first theme of the study is flexible working hours, which about the informants being able to modify his working works so he can do other things. One informant verbalized that he is able to work other trades because he can easily modify his work schedules.

“In terms of schedule, kana lang judwala koi trabaho e schedule judna ko kai naa man sad koi laingtrabaho.” (Participant 6)”

Another informant was saying that he schedules his working hours on weekends so he can do other jobs.

“it depends kai like me I’m an- call technician at the same time I was working regular so I need to schedule my on-call technician ako e schedule during my free time sa work like

Saturdays and Sundays that's the time I will be going to service sapag ka on call technician.”
(Informant 1)

Theme 2 Accessible working place

The second theme is about doing servicing in close areas only. This is about the informant doing service repair works in areas close to home. One of the informants expressed based on his work experience he has only done servicing work on nearby areas.

“sa routing dili mankaau kay akongna experience kay mgaduolraman sad dili man lagyu”
(informant 2)

Another informant described that he does not have a problem in terms of the location of the servicing, because he does not get work from locations that are distant.

I don't have that problem at all, because I don't get jobs like that far, it's always like here or places where all I know” (Informant 7)

Theme 3 Financial/Economic needs matter

The third theme is that money is essential to survive in daily aspect to support the daily expenses of the family needs. One of the informants articulated that he charges his client with a fixed price.

“I charge the person with the fix price which is the 500 pesos per unit, after that maonato standard namjud to siya I think until now 500 ang system unit niya ang laptop is around to 1000 to 1500” (informant 1)

Another informant verbalized that for him considered doing on call work as hobby and a part time job, saying he has to have another job to buy and sustain the needs of his family”

“Wala man sad saakongpagayoayomahugramannasiyaog hobby and then a part time job maanaa man ogwala kay naa man sad koy lain trabaho, naasadkoy salary ngakuan, kakuhaan para sad sa sustain sa needs saakongfamily. Paramaka survive sad ba in ana” (informant 5)

Theme 4 Experiencing Clients Lack of Trust and Confidence

The fourth theme of the study is about Mistrust from the client. This theme signifies that most of the time the informants **said** that their clients mistrust the payments of the services they do. One of the informants had articulated that the client is always watching and skeptical when he was doing the work, and it would make him uncomfortable while doing the job.

“theclientitselfwasalwaystherewithyou at the back sigig tan awmaconciousska in termsaimongmgalihok so thatwasthemain problema nakokaiganahankomolihokngaakora.”
(informant 1)

In addition, theinformantfurthersaidthattherewas a time when he purchasedsomepartsto be used in thecomputer he wasfixing,

the client was not convinced with the prices of the purchase even when the receipt was shown, he was still not convinced

“there was one time i was asked to purchase a whole unit somewhere in SM and the difficult was the owner or the client was not convinced of the price even though the receipt was already there so my problema was I need to verify the receipt”. (informant 1)

Theme 5 No co-workers to ask for help

The fifth theme of the study is no coworkers to ask for help, described that because being a homebased computer technician is a personal venture by being self-employed, there are no workmates to ask for help when there is a problem arises when servicing clients. One of the informants even said that when he was new with his job, he often thinks that sometimes life would be so much better if he has friends to ask for help when there are problems in doing servicing with a client.

“Saonakatong bag-o pa ko, naagyudna, dili man judmalikayangud, maonangusahaynindut ta mangutanasaakoamego kung nakasugatnabasiya ani nga problem, unsay mgapama-agiba, pero, dili judmalikayanbitaw.” (informant 4)

Likewise, another informant articulates that in some cases when he could no longer fix the computer, and since there is no other technician to help him, he would just refer the client to another expert.

“in case ngadilinaku ma dagayo ilang computer, dili sad nakupugsonakongkaugalingon, kay wa man sad koykuyug lain nga technician ngamoayo, akung buhatun, akonalangsiya e refer gyud ug kanangmgakuangga expert gyud ana” (informant 2)

Theme 6 Inadequate tools and Kits used for servicing

The sixth theme is the lack of tools that is used for servicing, since being a homebased technician and not working for a company is a personal venture sometimes informant grumbled that they do not have enough tools to use during servicing their clients. One of the informants have verbalized that during servicing there is a tendency that, he did not have the set tools to fix the problem of the client.

“maona so tendency you do not have the set of tools and other thing is when there is a problem baliknasad ka magbalikbalikkabasaimong service” (informant 1)

In addition, another informant has noted that even though he does not have the right tools for the job and only a Philip screw driver with him he would still take the job as it would be a waste of profit if he does not.

“ahwbisagwalakoy tools kaayo adto-on gyudnanako, usahay mag dala ra ko og philip screw nga gamay nya eraser or usahay manghuwam ko kanilagengkalit-kalitbaanugon man sad balibaran” (informant 4)

Theme 7 Hunting for an alternative source of income

The seventh theme of the study is about Pursuing other trades. This theme represented because homebased technicians are able to control their working hours, they are able to pursue other means and ways to earn additional income for their families. One of the informants have noted he has a business on building computers for vending.

“Niya electronics man ko ato, payag-payag pa ko gamay diri, niyamao to si victor maoypanday, basta naaymo order nga peso net, mag himo mi atopwertingdaghana, nyaako-ako ra assemble ato. (informant 4)

Likewise, another informant has articulated that he is currently and is teaching four subject preparations each semester.

“sapangannga on-call nga in-ana kay naa pa baya lain trabahousahaynaapud baya tay lain buhatonon, usahaygani nay magpaayonakoglaptonmubalibadnalang ko. okay kapoy kay kuan man kanangnaa kay laingbuhatononba, naa pa baya koyklase usually amosakada semester naa mi upat ka subject preparation nya lain-lain among “unsay ngan ana kanang nay lain lainnamobuhaton” (informant 5).

Theme 8 What Matters is Doing the Job You Love.

The eighth theme of the study is doing the job you love is what matters. This theme signifies that the informants are happy and contented with the current state of their livelihood. One of the informants described that being an online computer technician is a challenging work and facing different problems during servicing from time to time, and with that it brings excitement and happiness.

“I think ahmm I choose this kind of job because it’s very interesting its very challenging I started being an on-call computer technician I was still in high school. I do service I face another problem sugodnasadkog lain ngaproblema interms sa computer aside from that I can build trust when it comes to my clients so they would highly recommend me into something that is splinter and its give me excitement and happiness.” (informant 1)

Likewise, another informant has verbalized that being an on-call technician is part of him, it brings enjoyment and consider it as a hobby.

“I choose this kind of job is most of the time akongpagkatechnicianma on-call man or something, basta ang akongpagka technician is like a part nagyudnasaakongkalingawan, enjoyment, hobbies unsapanadiha, part saakongkaugalingonba, ganahangyud kayo ko mag sige ug ayo, maayo man or dili basta ganahan ra kaayu ko magsigegpamungkag, maogyuy usual nako,.” (informant 2)

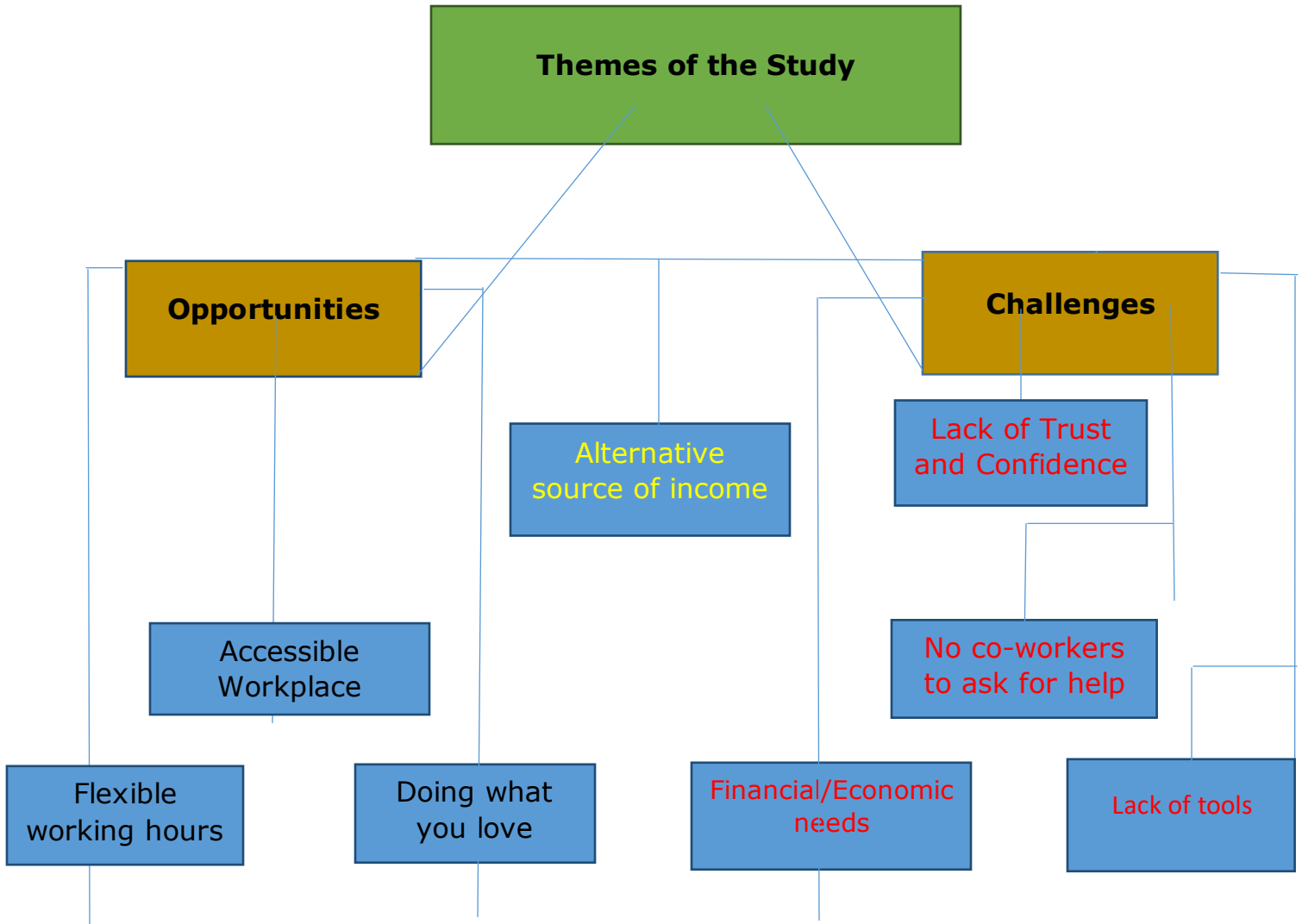


Figure 1. the Data Coding Proces

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that doing home-based works allow flexibility in the working hours as they are able to control their working hours and they are able to manage their time efficiently, able to balance time with the family and work. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) noted that flexibility gives a worker the capability to regulate when, where, and how much time will be spent doing the work, flexibility certainly adds to the development and management of work and life responsibilities. Thus, a worker might end up fulfilling his work as well as well his roles in

the family easily. In addition, both gender due to the new family patterns use flexible working hours, where both parents have equal roles in the family and double income in the family. Thus, it is important for both of them to successfully fulfil work and life responsibilities and achieve work-life balance. Likewise, Rego (2009) explained that a fruitful completion of responsibilities in life like the roles in the family results in better work routine. While discovering a balance in life and work responsibilities upsurge general satisfaction in life.

Another finding in the study is that working home-based allows the worker to do computer servicing only on areas nearby, it would allow him to save both time and money as it would lessen the commute budget. Stadtlander, Sickel, LaCivita and Giles (2017) suggested that there are helpful features of having to work at home, such as having the flexibility to set your own hours, being capable of controlling work-related disruptions, and reducing stress levels through not having a daily travel to work. Likewise, the finding of the study also revealed homebased workers tend to love their job more because they could spend more time with their love ones and they are able to achieve work life balance. Aycan et al. (2007) narrowed that the people only with work and family and prioritized the notion of life balance with a more holistic view can achieved satisfaction at work.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that having to work at home and having the control of the working hours, will be able them to work two jobs. Kimmel & Conway (2001) described that helpful benefits may accompany on having two jobs like an in increased income, the attainment of a new skills, or individuals satisfaction absent in one job. On the other hand, Rodell (2013) recommended that keeping a second work can sidetrack an individual since having two job alter different and competing demands from the two jobs. In addition, the study also suggested that money is important for these homebased technology workers as it is their motivation to work. Furnham (1996) discussed that money is a necessary and indispensable aspect of our lives and existence. It is significant not only to take care of our life socially but also formulate a key element for our emotional and financial happiness. Money is powerful as it has ability to influence peoples' well-being and cognition. For those who has a shortage of money, it becomes a motivator. Money has also had an influence to incite fretfulness and sadness for those who have it in scarce.

Moreover, the finding also revealed that customers of home-based technology workers have a tendency of not trusting them and they have less confidence on the work they do. Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa (2004). Articulated that constructing a confidentrepute is a hard, costly, and a time-consuming development that necessitates a great deal of reliable relationship that enhances behavior on the part of the worker towards its customers. On the same manner, another result of the study revealed that having no co-workers to ask for help in a job is a disadvantage for being a homebased technology worker. Zhou & George (2001), described that the purpose of having valuable feedback and support from coworkers may be a striking influence in promoting the strength of relationships among workers which may allow the workers to tap into the new ideas and knowledge resources of their exchange partners. Likewise, obtaining valuable pointers from coworkers has been associated with producing

new and useful solutions. Lastly the study revealed they since the homebased technicians work alone, they sometimes lack the tools needed for servicing. Rodríguez, Linares and González (2009) described that a surplus of negative emotions is related to the confidence of a worker of its competence as well as the lack of tools.

5. Conclusion

Home-based service computer technician offers a new job opportunity in the field of Information technology industry and at the same time a good avenue to strengthen family ties especially during these trying times in our life. Yet, it accompanies also a lot of challenges to the computer technicians that need to be addressed to cope the demands of the target customers in the market. Aspiring workers for this type of job need to learn and acquire new interventions regarding the new updates and trends of computers and other technology related discoveries to attract more customers in the market. Yet, honing their skills in this field cannot be done by themselves alone, any kind of supports from different agencies especially from the government is commendable. Furthermore, it yields that being a home service computer technician required less effort for the reason that they don't have a boss to give orders but on the other hand their income depends on the recommendations from their previous customers. Thus, advertisements, promotional ads and other form of supports especially from the government is highly valuable and appreciated in this new scheme of work.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that home-based service computer technicians should undergo seminars and training-workshops on the new trends and updates of the computer both software and hardware. In addition, retraining and practices to the new tools and equipment's configure latest computer security protection software's could be a great foundation to strengthen the technician's knowledge and ability. Moreover, computer technicians should establish application software/online platform wherein the customer would visit the application software and apply for a service they needed.

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