

## The Potentials of New Work Environment for Dynamic Workforce in the 21st Century of Malaysia Context

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Received: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020

Final version received: 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

As the world of work is in constantly changed, new technologies and behaviours are introduced to our organization. In order to fulfil the personality's character, economic needs and individual needs, the global workforce is now becoming more dynamic due to this randomness. The new dynamic workforce required a different demand for working environment as the current traditional workforce and the contemporary workforce is no longer able to fulfil the current needs or facilitate the new workforce environment. Nowadays, people are working in a disorganized, scattered and no collective workforce environment. There are no support systems or facilities to solve the issue which lead to a decrease in productivity. Hence, to increase productivity, new support system, facilities or community play an essential role in this matter. The paper aims to identify the potentials of a new work environment for a dynamic workforce and provide suggestion and interventions for a dynamic workplace. The article included studies published by various authors, books and journals. The data will be gathered through the questionnaire, which has been distributed to targeted audiences such as freelancer, remote worker, nomadic worker and others who are determined to be the dynamic workforce in this study. Furthermore, the data results have been carefully collected, analysed and concluded. The outcome will help create a better understanding of the potentials of the new work environment for the dynamic workforce, which can be used as a guide for any development of a new work environment in the future.

**Keywords:** Dynamic workforce, Digital nomad, Dynamic workplace, Gig economy, Dynamic behaviour

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, the world of work is continuously changing powered by new technologies and growing globalization. Agrarian economies predominantly gave way to industrial economies, which in turn have become service economies, and now the experience economies eclipsed the service economies (B. Joseph and Korn, 2011). There have been visible shifts in the entire sectors, and occupations resulted in some have disappeared or replaced as seen in any revolution (Deloitte, 2018). Rules, roles and skills needed in the workplace have been transformed over the recent decade as the increasing use of

digital technologies. Malaysia is no exception in this trend.

The global workforce now is becoming more dynamic due to its randomness to fulfil the personality's character, the economic needs and the individual needs. This has created a new dynamic workforce that requires a different demand for working environment as the current, traditional and contemporary workplace is no longer able to fulfil the needs or facilitate the new workforce environment. As technology advances, proximity is now revolutionized, and it can be formed from anywhere in the globe. A result in the digital transformation has blurred the

boundaries of work, workplace, workforce and society. To manage the dispersed workforce effectively, it will be the challenges face by current employers (Sparkwork, 2019). Workplace design in this digital age is evolving, which means our organizations are entering new technologies and behaviour (Morgan, 2013). For the time being, people are working scattered, disorganized, and no collective workforce without any support system or facilities.

Open-plan workspace is designed to encourage collaboration among co-workers but is labelled as a disaster by the Chicago Tribune for unhealthy territory design trend (Jeff, 2018). The open-plan workspaces lower productivity and performance as there are lack of face to face interactions, lack of privacy, job dissatisfaction, and increased workplace noise (Jia, 2019). This has resulted in a reduction in productivity as there is no dedicated space for the needs. In Malaysia, there is still lacking this new support system or community for the dynamic workforce. Three main factors are identified in the new work environment, which is gig economy, nomadic workforce and dynamic of human behaviour.

## 2. FACTORS

### 2.1 Gig Economy

Over the last few years, the gig economy has brought significant impact across the world. In this gig economy, people are employed under 'flexible' arrangements such as 'self-employed worker' or 'consultants,' working just to finish a specific errand or for a defined time (Friedman, 2014). According to the data results from the survey by Kelly Services, 2019, 31% of the world's labour force prefers the flexibility and freedom of self-employment. At a global level, Asia can consider as the head in the gig economy with the 84% demand in hiring free agents. Temporary, flexible and mobile jobs are prevalent in a gig economy, where companies prefer to recruit independent contractors and freelancers rather than full-time employees. A gig economy threatens the conventional system with full-time workers who rather focus on lifetime employment instead of changing their current positions or working environment.

With the technology advances and the growth of digital platforms, the emergence of the gig economy in Malaysia has made it easier for people to make a living without being bound to a

single work or workplace. Like the rest of the world, the number of independent employees without a full-time job has grown exponentially in Malaysia. INTI International University and Colleges also surveyed 300 fulltime freelancers and the statistics that explain the gig economy shown in figure 1. According to Thomas Menkhoff (SMU Social Media Team, 2019), Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources (Education) at the Singapore Management University's (SMU) Lee Kong Chian School of Business, the phenomenon of the gig economy is increasing and most certainly here to maintain.

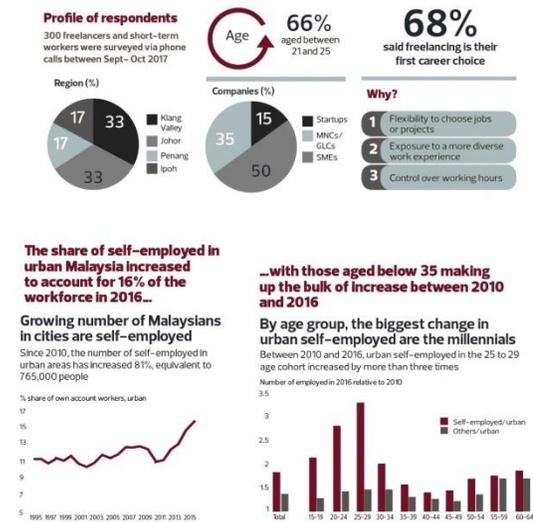


Figure 1: Survey results from 300 fulltime freelancer in Malaysia (Source: Idris, 2017)

### 2.2 Nomadic Workforce

According to Menkhoff (SMU Social Media Team, 2019), the growth in technological advances in the gig economy has developed new nomadic ways of working, including digital nomads, new platform enterprises or created new values. This has included independent local freelancers or solo entrepreneurs who often combine their work and travel as they can work on the go or wherever the job takes them. The nomadic workforce is in the rise with the help of technology infrastructure and smart devices accessible via cloud-based technologies (Jennifer, 2019). In fact, by 2035, one billion workers are expected to fall into the digital nomad category (Figure 2). With the advancement in technology, the phenomenon expanded as the growth of support systems such as co-working spaces,

online job and information platform, and the normalisation of this lifestyle. This shows no signs of slowing down, with more employees appreciating their lifestyle and employers promising more excellent options in flexibility to attract and retain workers (Elaine, 2018).

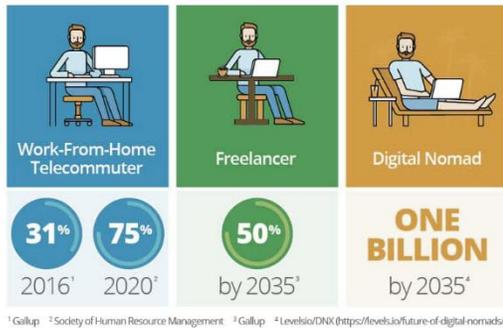


Figure 2: Estimated number of digital nomad in 2035.

(Source: Jennifer, 2019)

In the online gig economy, most nomadic workforce begins their remote work by doing one-time work from a digital platform that connects freelancers to employers in a just-in-time environment (Thompson, 2019). Employers are no longer required to overspend in aspects such as office space or healthcare. Figure 3 shows the workspaces of digital nomads in Southeast Asia. The majority choose living space such as hotels/hostels as their workspace coming up with coffee shops or food establishments.



Figure 3: Workspaces of Digital nomads in Southeast Asia

(Source: Liyana, 2019)

While we continue to refine our definition of digital nomadism, we are opening up more opportunity for employers and government to respond strategically to digital nomadism (Wang et al., 2018). As technology advances, proximity is now revolutionized, and it can be formed from anywhere in the globe. Workplace and workspace will be more dynamic with the work and live behaviour of nomadic workforce. The digital transformation has resulted in blurring the boundaries of workforce and workplace, which

became a challenge for the employers to monitor or coordinate scattered workforce effectively.

### 2.3 Dynamic Human Behaviour

Human behaviour is anything we do which can be observed in some way. It is referring to the way people acts and how people interact with each other in an organization. It also determined the potential and expressed capacity of a human in their daily life no matter physical, mental or social activity. Human behaviour is a dynamic phenomenon which changes due to factors such as new experiences, learning, socio-cultural variations, biological and psychological process. Organizational behaviour is the research of human behaviour on both group and individual performance within an organization or the same working environment. It also determines the impact of human behaviours on certain aspects in an organization such as work structure, presentation, communication, team performance, motivation, leadership and so on. Assessment of human behaviour is a necessary process affecting many aspects such as marketing, security, transportation, health care, smart devices and so on (Souissi, 2018).

It is crucial to understand why human behaved or performed in the working environment and how it affects the productivity of the workforce. The new world of working environments has shifted to team atmospheres, where the skill sets have become more diverse and intertwined. Human behaviour is a personal and dynamic process to be considered by employers when motivating their employees (jrf20, 2016).

### 3. DISCUSSION

With the technology advances and the growth of digital platforms, the emergence of the gig economy in Malaysia has made it easier for people to make a living without being bound to a single work or workplace. The current gig economy has increased new nomadic ways of working, including digital nomads, new platform enterprises or created new values. The nomadic workforce expanded as the growth of support systems such as co-working spaces, online job and information platform, and the normalisation of this lifestyle with the advancement in technology. This phenomenon shows no signs of slowing down, with more employees appreciating their lifestyle and employers promising more excellent options in flexibility to attract and retain

workers (Elaine, 2018). Despite the rise of the gig economy, a study shows that sense of isolation and helplessness are built into the mundane nature of the gig economy due to worker isolation and precarious existence. Work is fragmented into small, discrete tasks that isolate workers from the productive process (Kirven and Control, 2018).

Due to the dynamic of human behaviour, some people choose to do their job surrounded by other people to avoid feeling isolated. Some people would prefer to have communication and collaboration with each other in a workspace. This new workforce continues to challenge the idea of the traditional workplace, and the most significant changes are that the workforce is no longer needed to work in a preordained workplace. In the dynamic workplace, moving between locations should be seamless, communications and collaboration should be effortless, and innovation and ideas encouraged (Mick, 2016). As the open-plan workspace and co-working space are no longer fulfilling the needs of the new work environment and increasing number of workforce choosing remote working and self-employed, dynamic workspaces should be proposed to accommodate the dynamic workforce.

As the rise of the dynamic workforce, future workplaces will not necessarily increase new permanent positions, but rather to increase reliance on more temporary, flexible and outsourced services. The most appealing third places will capitalize on new technologies such as café, library, hostel, and commuter and so on. Figure 4 shows the changing palette of work setting; the total space demand for desk space is reducing and requires other forms of workspaces (Harris, 2015).

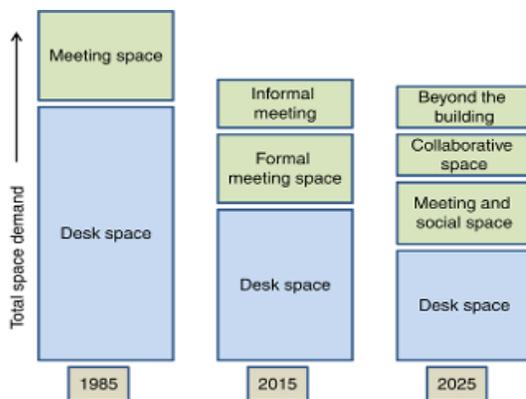


Figure 4: The changing palette of work settings.

(Source: Harris, 2015)

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the workplaces need to change when the world of work changes, traditional workplace is no longer able to fulfil the needs of the current dynamic workforce, as shown in figure 5.

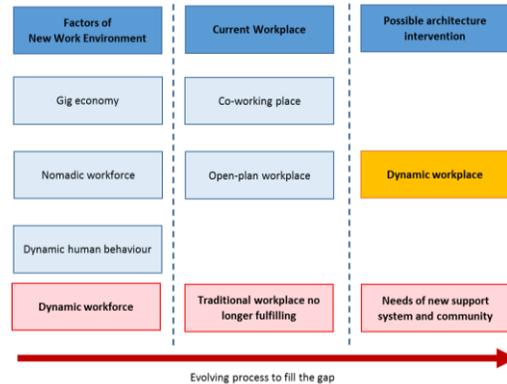


Figure 5: Conceptual framework for possible architecture intervention for the dynamic workforce in Malaysia 21st century context.

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