

Marginalization (Under-utilization) of Graduate Freelancers in the Gig Economy

Dr. Reuben Ng

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

National University of Singapore

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E-mail: sprng@nus.edu.sg



Adapting the Concept of Underemployment for Graduate Freelancers in the Gig Economy

“Underemployment reflects underutilization of the productive capacity of the labour force. Time-related underemployment, which is the only internationally accepted statistical definition of underemployment, examines the extent to which a person is insufficiently engaged in employment based on hours of work. **Specifically, it refers to persons working part-time but are willing and able to engage in additional (full-time) work.”**

Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower

<https://stats.mom.gov.sg/SL/Pages/Underemployment-Introduction.aspx>

- **Underutilization of graduate freelancers in the growing gig economy has not been widely explored.**

Study Aim

- Our study seeks to explore this concept of ‘underemployment’ (marginalization) among graduate freelancers.
- Scenario 1:
 1. Graduate freelancers driving full-time for Uber/Grab.
 2. These are graduates doing non-graduate jobs.
 3. From a compensation perspective, they may earn as much, or more, compared to a fresh graduate (as a full-time employee).
 4. With the phasing-in of self-driving vehicles, driving jobs of graduate freelancers will be disintermediated without any skills and resources to transit to other gigs.
 5. Graduate freelancers who do non-graduate gigs are on the policy fringes and deserves more attention.

Project Approach

Survey of graduate respondents:

- N=1298 graduate freelancers.
 - N=107 full-time graduate freelancers.

This group is further segmented into categories for comparative analysis:

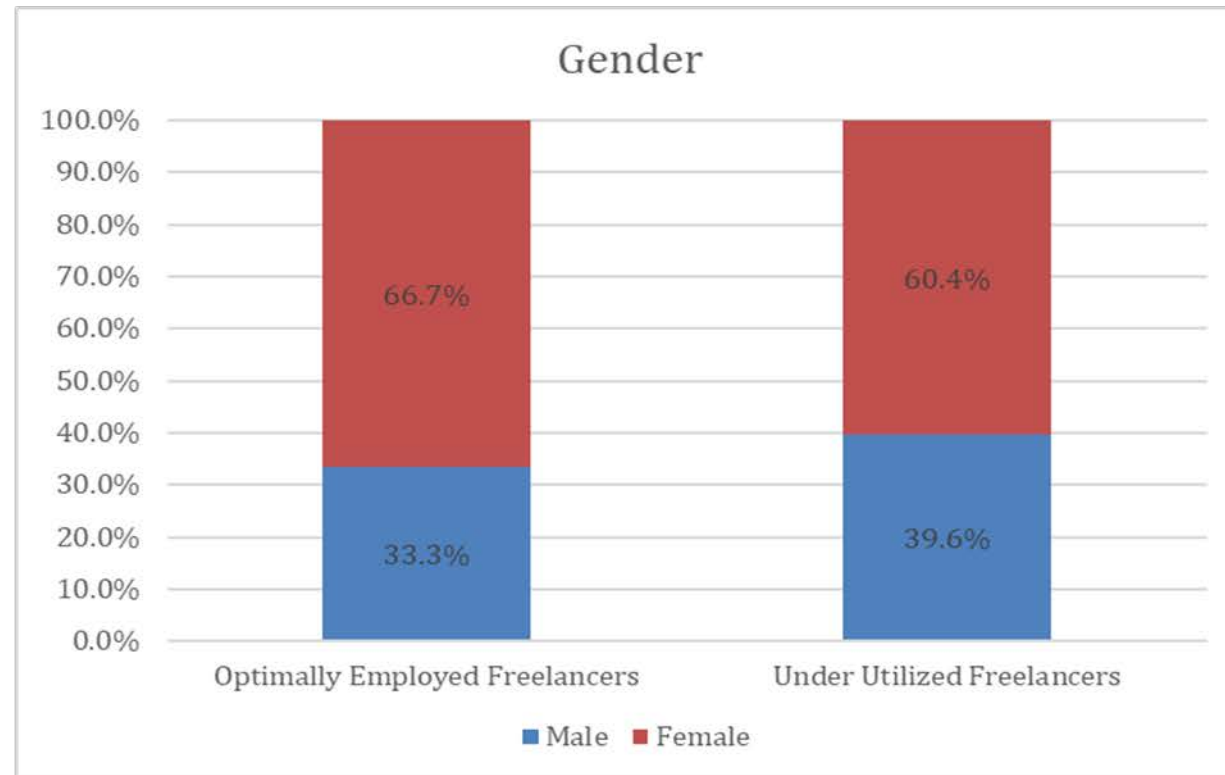
- OF : Optimally Utilized Freelancers (Working in a Professional/Managerial capacity)
- UF: Under Utilized Freelancers (Working below the Professional/Managerial capacity)
 - Measured by SSOC (Singapore Standard Occupational Classification System).



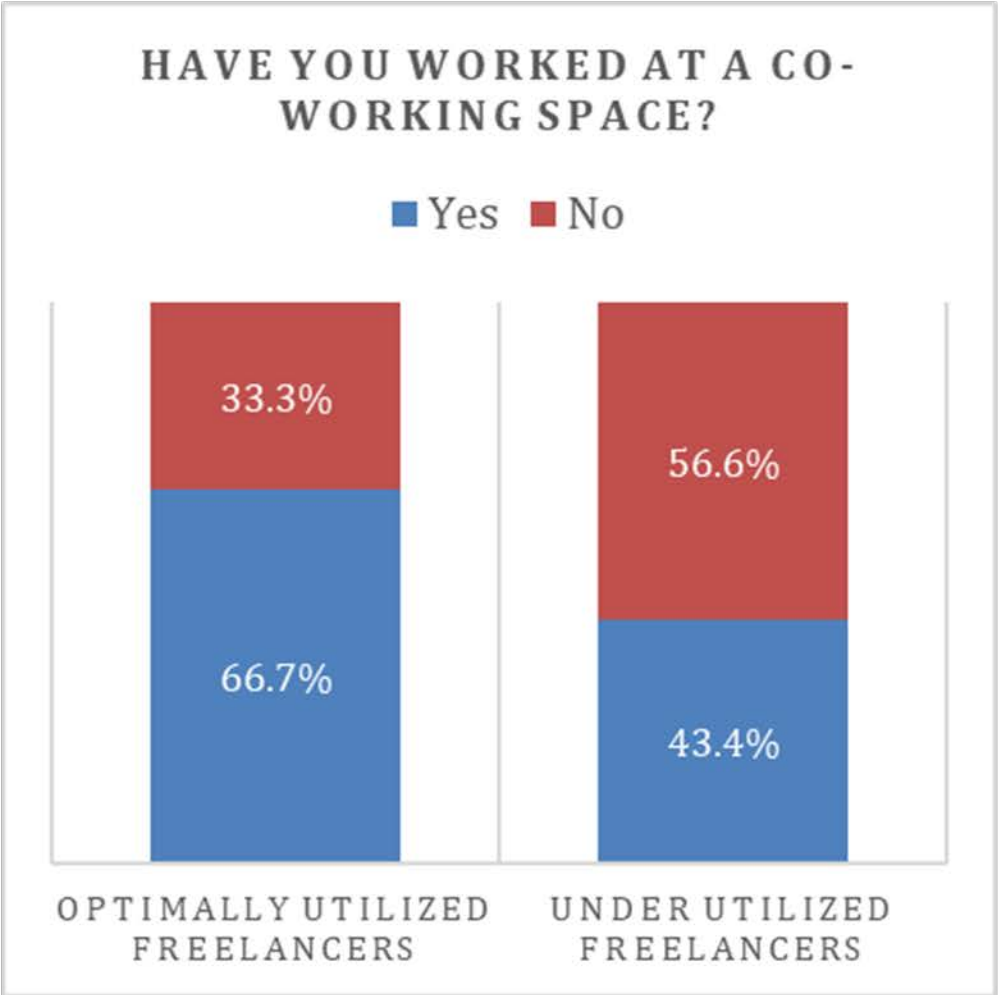
The image features three silhouetted construction workers on a roof against a bright, hazy background. The worker on the left is carrying a ladder. The worker in the middle is leaning forward, and the worker on the right is standing upright. The word "Insights" is centered in the middle of the image.

Insights

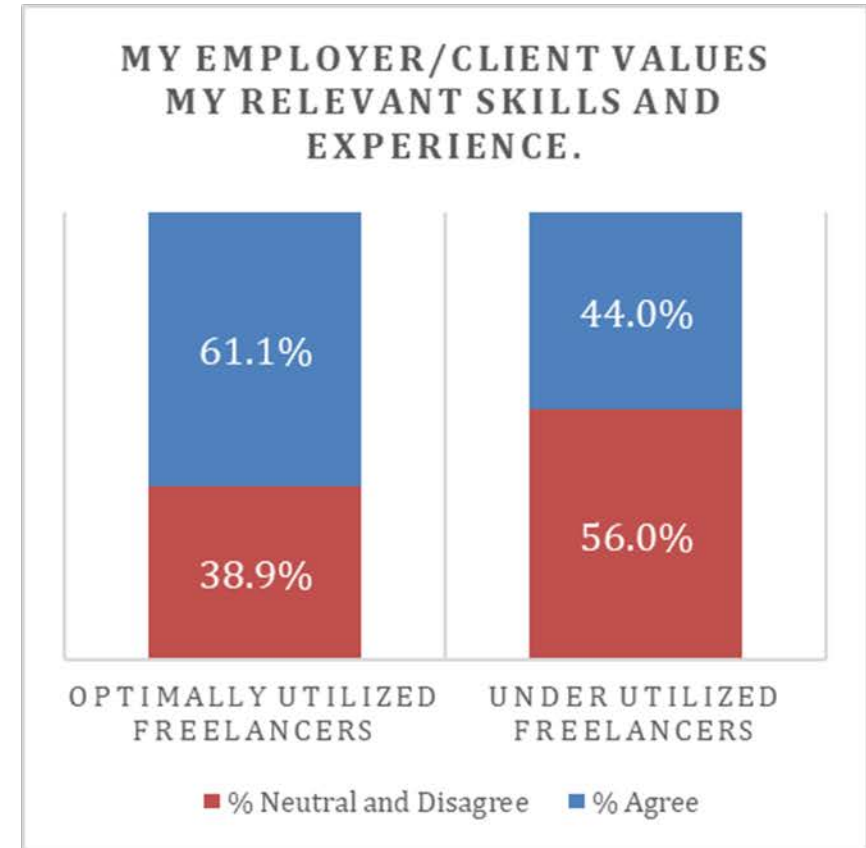
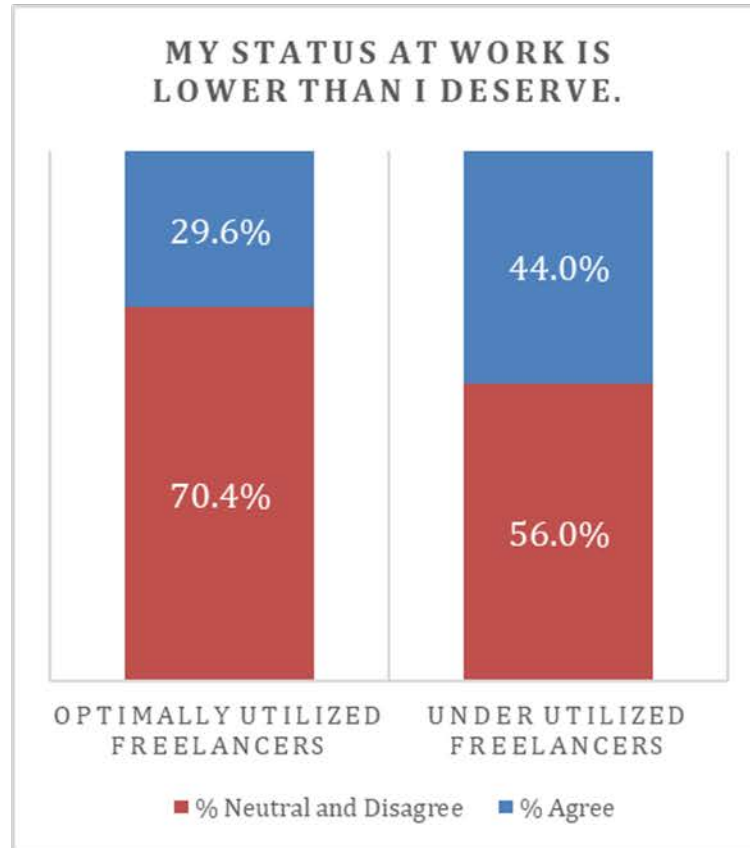
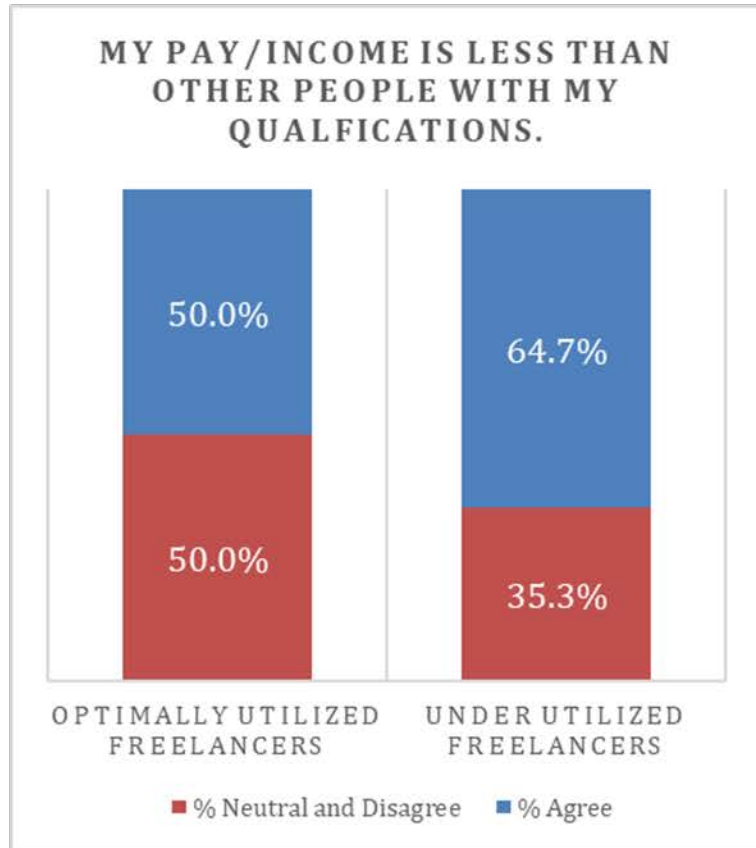
Gender



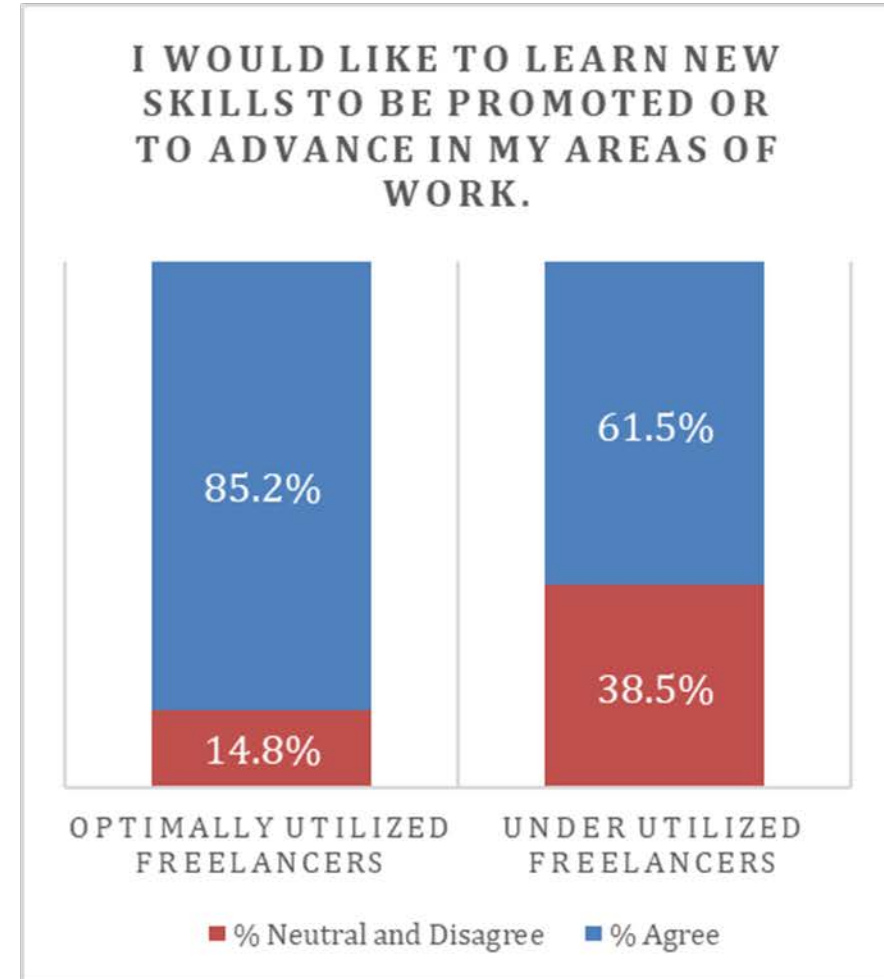
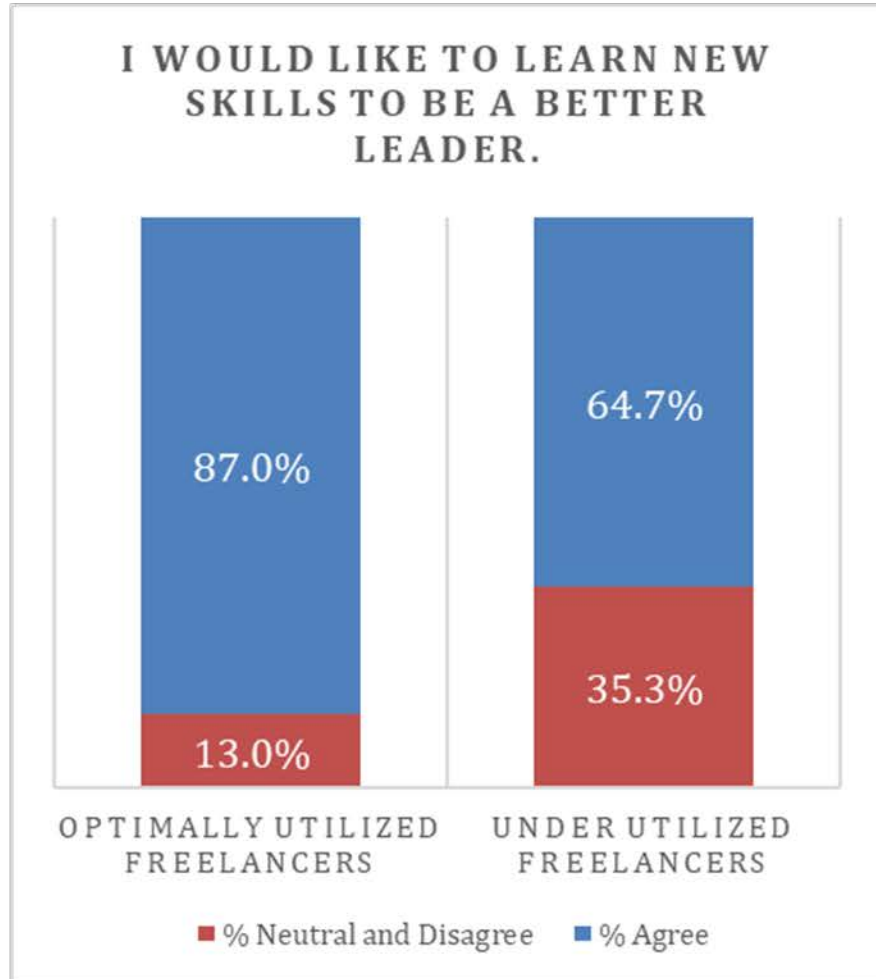
Optimally-utilized gradate freelancers are more likely to congregate at co-working spaces and participate in Hackathons



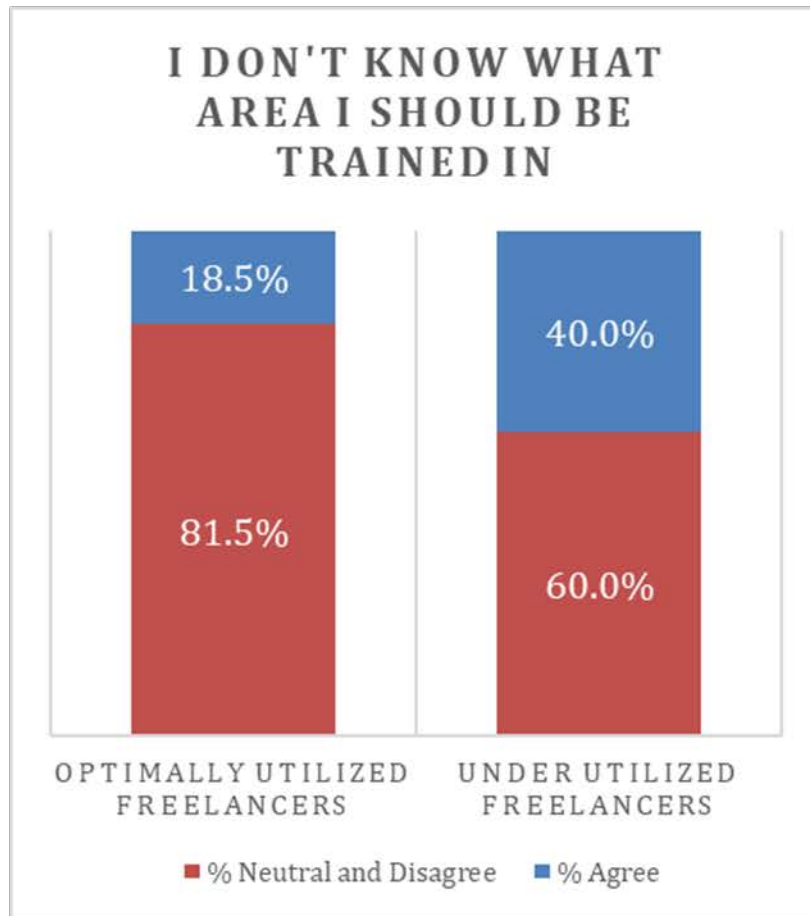
Under-utilized graduate freelancers are more pessimistic about their gig income, status and recognition



Under-utilized graduate freelancers are less open to upskilling and deep skilling



Under-utilized graduate freelancers show an awareness gap in skill advancements



Implications for Policy and Practice

1. Graduate Freelancers are not a homogenous group.
 - Optimally utilized and under-utilized.
2. Intervention considerations:
 - a) Promote openness to up-skilling and deep-skilling.
 - b) Increase awareness in skills advancement opportunities.
 - c) Partner with platform companies (e.g., Uber/Grab) and unions (e.g., growth plans).



Thank you!

Reuben Ng

spprng@nus.edu.sg