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Local Development Organization
Sürdürülebilir Yerel Kalkınma Derneği

SYRIANS' ONLINE EMPLOYMENT



INDICATORS
A chance of improvement



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About LDO

LDO is a non-governmental civil society organization, licensed in Turkey since 2016. Implementing governance and capacity building programs, developing policies and studies, providing basic services and contributing to achieving food security and protecting rights and freedoms, for local administrations and civil society organizations, youth and women, relying on experts and specialized institutions, to establish decentralization and principles of good governance and achieve stability and sustainable development.



About INDICATORS

INDICATORS is a company specialized in analytics, research, and consulting, established in 2017, in Turkey, Gaziantep, provides services that related to data, which is data collection, development of data collection tools, data quality management, building data coding and archiving systems, as well as data analysis for different types of research studies...

INDICATORS provides services in business, humanitarian, and research sectors, seeks to contribute in the development of the capabilities of the different types organizations in the field of data and analytics, through the provision of consultancy, training and scientific guides, in a way to increase the degree of the use of data and gives a clear vision of organization's situation and estimation of future changes that may occur, which will be reflected as decisions based on a good knowledge of their results.

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Executive summary:

Many researches show that the future of the online work will become equal to (if it did not exceed) the typical business and the working from office by 2025¹, this matter is not deemed strange if we compare the advantages and benefits of online work that both workers and employers gain, as for employers, online work (remote business) helps reducing the production expenses and costs (because companies do not have to rent building and offices for their employees nor to pay transportation allowances or other kinds of payments), also, online work contributes to increasing the companies' ability to hire competent employees in various areas, in addition to their ability to keep their employees who might consider resigning because their areas of residence are far from their work location. As for the workers, online work offers them work stability, as they are not forced to attend at specific time and location, which means that changing their areas of residence or being forced to travel shall not cause them to lose their jobs. Online work also provides workers flexibility in performing their tasks, as they can choose their working hours that suit their personal circumstances and commitments. Also, online workers are not confined to search for jobs only within their geographic areas, but they can work and communicate with companies and clients all around the world.

The aforementioned advantages of the online work make it a perfect solution for the current situation of the Syrians because it suitable for the circumstances they are facing in terms of instability and being forced to flee their areas of residence. Online work also contributes to solving the unemployment and lack of job opportunities problems, in addition to the economic benefit that the online worker may gain due to the fluctuations of the currencies exchange rates, whereas he may receive the most of his wages in foreign currencies. Online work is also a great opportunity for special categories to work, including women and people with disabilities, which results in benefitting from all human resources.

Based on the importance of the online work for Syrians, we conducted this study which aims to empower Syrians to start working online through identifying the extent to which they are familiar with online work, work platforms, and methods of contracting and receiving wages, in addition to knowing their skills and potentials which qualify them for online work and to know the most prominent difficulties and challenges they face and weaknesses they have, and to offer proposals and recommendations to solve these problems and to identify their needs and seek meeting them.

The study was conducted in June 2020, and it covered Aleppo and Idlib in northern Syria. During the study term, 5 online work consultant experts were

¹ <https://22arabi.com/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85-2019/>

interviewed using an interview guide that includes open-ended questions, in addition to 11 online workers from these areas who were interviewed using an in-depth interview questionnaire, also, a random sample of 500 Syrian males and females were interviewed using a questionnaire that includes closed-ended questions, this sample mainly included youth with various educational levels.

The study results showed a low level of awareness of the online work concept among Syrians, in addition to lack of knowledge among the majority of them about the method of using online work platforms, methods of contracting and receiving wages. As for having the required skills that qualify them to work online, study results showed that a good proportion of Syrians have many skills that qualify them to enter the world of online work if suitable circumstances and conditions were available and if they get the required support. A considerable percentage of Syrians did not know that the skills they have may be a good source of income if they worked online. Regarding the availability of work requirement, more than half of the study participants do not have a computer, which is considered one of the main online work requirements, while the vast majority of Syrians have internet access. Electricity is also available for 6 to more than 10 hours daily for more than half of the study participants, while for 42% of the participants it is only available for 2 to 6 hours, which may not be sufficient for finishing online worker's daily tasks. As for people with disabilities, the difficulties they face according to experts are lack of the special requirements that suit the type of disability they have, in addition to their need for psychological and moral support.

Based on the above, we stress the necessity of taking procedures that will empower Syrians to work online by launching projects that aim to increase their awareness of the online work concept and its importance and the basic information about it such as methods of contracting and receiving wages and methods of using online work platforms, in addition to developing Syrians' skills and building their capacities that are suitable for working online. These projects shall also work to provide tools and equipment required for online work such as computers, specialized tools and electricity sources. As for people with disabilities, it is necessary to provide them with tools and equipment that are compatible with the type of disability they have. We also stress the necessity of following up on those people after they start working online and providing technical and advisory support for them, especially during the initial work stages.

Findings:

First- In terms of knowledge about basics of online work:

- 1- Almost half of the study participants do not have knowledge about the concept of online work, while 40% of them already have knowledge about it, and the percentage of those who have worked online or people who are currently working was 8% and 7% respectively.
- 2- More than half of the study participants said that they have friends who work online.
- 3- More than two thirds of the study participants do not have any idea or knowledge of how to use online work platforms.
- 4- About three quarters of the study participants do not have knowledge of online work contracting methods or the methods that guarantee that they will receive their wages.
- 5- More than two thirds of the study participants do not know the methods of transferring money to pay online workers' wages.

Second- skills of Syrians to work online:

- 1- More than three quarters of the study participants believe that they have skills that they can utilize in working online. The most important of these skills are data entry, education, data analysis and essay writing.
- 2- The percentage of those who indicated that they have skills in the fields of websites designing, developing mobile phone applications, and programming is low, knowing that these fields' services are the most demanded services in the online work market.
- 3- Nearly two thirds of the study participants have an average English language level or less, which constitutes an obstacle for them when they start working online, and prevents them from reaching a wider variety of customers.
- 4- About two thirds of Syrians have a good MS OFFICE level and above, and these programs are important tools for providing online work services.
- 5- More than half of the study participants have good knowledge of training and meetings programs such as (Zoom - Skype - Google Meet), which became an alternative to physical communication and meeting after the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 6- The vast majority of the study participants have experience in using social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn... etc.), knowing that these platforms increase individuals' chances in succeeding in online work and marketing their services and thus reaching more clients.

Third- In terms of services that Syrian online workers provide:

- 1- The most prominent services provided by Syrian online workers are essay writing, photography, graphic design, education, and consultancy services.
- 2- In terms of demand, the most demanded services in the Arab online work market, according to experts, are websites designing, translation, programming, E-marketing, and video editing services.
- 3- There are many services that are highly demanded in the online work market, as is the case with websites designing, programming and developing mobile phone applications, but the percentage of Syrians' exploiting of the demand for these services is very low.

Fourth- Females' online work:

- 1- The percentage of females who believe they have a skill that they can utilize in working online is 80%.
- 2- Education is one of the most prominent skills of females for working online, followed by data entry, data analysis and essay writing skills.
- 3- More than half of the female study participants have a good MS OFFICE level and above.
- 4- The percentage of females who possess skills or experience in programming, websites designing, developing mobile phone applications, and graphic design is low.
- 5- More than two thirds of the female study participants do not have knowledge about online work platforms, and 79% do not have knowledge of online work contracting methods or methods of transferring money and paying wages.
- 6- Approximately half of the female study participants have good to very good English language level.
- 7- The majority of Syrian women browse social networks such as (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) on a daily basis, which increases their chances to work online, as this shows a basic knowledge of online communication and coordination methods.
- 8- Over 90% of the female study participants expressed the desire to learn and acquire skills that would qualify them to work online.
- 9- Experts believe that women should be specifically targeted with training on information security and social networking protocols, in order to be able to protect themselves from any blackmail or cyber-hacking cases.

Fifth- employment of the people with disabilities:

- 1- Experts believe that online work is an important opportunity for the employment of people with disabilities because it does not require any physical effort nor commuting to and from workplaces, also because it

grants people with disabilities opportunities and wages equal to healthy people who perform the same work and tasks.

- 2- Some types of disabilities such as visual impairment or amputation of both hands are obstacles that hinder the ability of people with disability to work online, especially when accompanied with lack of tools and equipment that are compatible with the disability they have.
- 3- Empowering people with disabilities to start working online requires taking some actions, as in addition to the general training the people generally need, experts believe that people with disabilities should be morally rehabilitated by targeting them with psychological support sessions.
- 4- Empowering people with disabilities to start working online requires providing them with special tools and equipment that are compatible with the type of disability each of them has such as (special keyboards – computer mouses – speech to text conversion programs... etc.).

Sixth- advantages and opportunities that online work provides for Syrians:

- 1- More than one third of Syrians who live in Syria are currently not working.
- 2- About two thirds of people who are working are with temporary contracts, and the work of 10% of them is seasonal, which means that job opportunities of the vast majority of people, if any, are unstable.
- 3- The average number of conventional daily work hours is 7 to 8 hours.
- 4- Results of the study show that monthly expenses of the study participants are higher than their income, therefore, in order to bridge the gap between their income and expenses they need an additional or alternative work to the conventional work to gain higher income.
- 5- Experts estimates the average monthly income of online workers during first six months at 150 USD, knowing that this amount can double depending on the efficiency and skill of the worker and his ability to promote his work and attract more clients.
- 6- The average number of daily online work hours is only 5 hours, thus all people, even people who are already working, can work online.
- 7- According to online workers who participated in the study, the period they took to achieve an adequate income from their online work ranged between few months and two years.

Seventh- availability of online work requirements:

- 1- Electricity is also available for more than half of the study participants for 6 to more than 10 hours daily, which enables them to finish their tasks if they start working online, while for 42% of them, it is available for 2 to 6 hours, which may not be sufficient for many of them to finish their online work daily tasks.

- 2- The vast majority of study participants have internet access.
- 3- According to experts, Syrians in Syria, even those to whom electricity and internet access are available, may face many challenges while working online due to repetitive electricity power cuts, poor internet connection and high cost of fast internet connection subscription.
- 4- More than half of the study participants do not have a computer, which is an essential tool for working online.
- 5- More than 80% of the study participants do not have specialized online tools (professional cameras – voice recorders... etc.).

Eighth- Challenges facing Syrians' online work:

- 1- Intense competition is one of the main challenges facing online workers according to experts, because online work platforms depend on the clients' reviews, which means that new online workers do not have any reviews, which decreases their chances of contracting with clients, and forces them to accept working for any wages whatsoever during their initial work stages.
- 2- Lack of banks in areas that are out of regime's control is an obstacle that hinders online workers' ability to receive their wages, knowing that many establishments and companies refuse transferring money via nonofficial money transfer agencies for fear of financial accountability.
- 3- In addition to trainings on online work basics and specialized trainings, experts mentioned some important trainings that all Syrians who want to work online must have in order to protect them from embezzlement and blackmail that they may be subjected to. These trainings include trainings on information security, networks, e-pay and legal trainings about cyber-crimes and property rights.
- 4- Experts estimate the training period that that can be sufficient for taking the new trainee to an acceptable level that helps him to enter the online work market at three months, therefore, trainees may face difficulties in covering their monthly expenses during this period.
- 5- Syrians may encounter rejection of contracting with them for online work because they are from a country that is living an internal conflict.

Recommendations:

To humanitarian organizations interested in Syrians' employment:

- 1- Encouraging Syrians to switch towards online work by increasing their awareness of its importance, advantages, and the monthly income which they may make of it.
- 2- Qualifying Syrians to start working online by launching training programs on the basics of online work, such as using work platforms, contracting and payment methods.
- 3- Launching specialized trainings in the highly demanded fields of online work market, such as translation, programming, website design, developing mobile phone applications, graphic design, editing video and photos, data entry and analysis.
- 4- Increasing the ability of people who want to work online to expand their businesses and target larger variety of clients by targeting them with the following courses and capacity building programs:
 - A. E-marketing Courses.
 - B. English language courses
 - C. Communication skills and CV writing skills.
- 5- Launching a training on MS Office programs, as mastering these programs is extremely important for people who want to start working online.
- 6- In order to protect online workers, especially females, from fraud, embezzlement and extortion that they may be subjected to, we suggest targeting them with training courses in the field of digital security, safe social networking protocols, networks and e-pay, in addition to some legal courses related to cyber-crimes and property rights.
- 7- Providing people who are qualified to work online with the necessary equipment to start working, such as computers and specialized devices such as cameras, for example, and electricity sources (solar energy panels and batteries)
- 8- Providing operational costs for online workers during the initial stages of work until they become able to make sufficient income to cover their expenses and the operational costs of the work.
- 9- Enabling people with disabilities to work online by providing them with the training and equipment needed by healthy people, in addition to providing them moral support to work and providing them with special equipment and tools that are compatible with the type of disability they have.
- 10- Launching a training platform that provides Syrians with training materials on online work based on the market demand priority.
- 11- Proposing projects that cover the expenses and requirements of new online workers during the start-up period, which is 3 to 6 months on average.
- 12- In order to provide a suitable workplace for the displaced who live in the camps in particular, internet cafés can be established and equipped with

all the requirements of the online workers, and people who want to start online work can be offered subscriptions.

- 13- Creating digital work platforms for Syrians' online work to increase their job opportunities after completing their training.
- 14- Regarding women, we recommend providing trainings that suits them in terms of the timing and the content of the training, such as including information security, privacy protection and social networking protocols.
- 15- Communicating with the Turkish governmental agencies and working to open branches of PTT Banks to facilitate money transfers.
- 16- Providing technical and advisory support to online workers, especially during the initial work stages by contracting with specialized experts who follow up with the online workers, offer them advice and guidance and answer their inquiries.
- 17- Launching Syrians' online employment projects faster to benefit of the increasing demand for online work due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Recommendations to Syrians who want to work online:

- 1- Working to increase their English language level and e-mail skills, which would enhance their communication with potential clients, especially on international level.
- 2- Focusing on the major in terms of developing its related skills, especially the services that are highly demanded within the same major to enhance the quality of the provided service and consequently increasing their wages.
- 3- Regarding people who are working in conventional jobs, it is recommended to start working online along with their current work in order to switch towards online work gradually until they finally become permanent online workers.
- 4- Having more knowledge about the concepts and platforms of online work, and the methods of having better reviews on these platforms.
- 5- Being patient during the initial work stage and giving it its time (for about 6 months) and focusing on acquiring practical experience instead of focusing on wages, even if this required providing some voluntary services.
- 6- Identifying the best social network for marketing the service they provide, which is most followed by clients interested in these services.
- 7- Not only focusing on Arabic platforms, but also following a variety of work platforms of various languages such as English and any other languages they fluently speak.
- 8- Thinking of a solution for the problem of money transfers since they start working online, especially in light of opening branches of Turkish banks in Syria, or by finding alternatives such as friends and relatives who can handle these transfers abroad.

- 9- Forming social networking groups that include specialized people and experts to exchange experiences and share information about fields of online work.

Methodology:

A- Research objectives:

This study aims to:

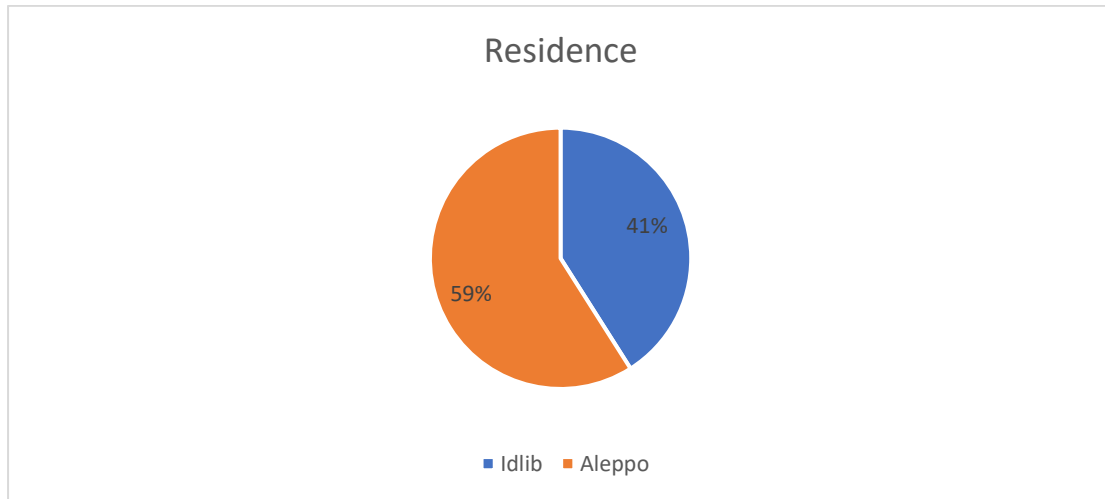
- Identifying the level of Syrians' awareness of online work concept, methods of using work platforms and methods of contracting.
- Empowering Syrians' to work online after knowing their capacities and capabilities that suit the nature of online work.
- Offering any suggestions that help Syrians overcome the obstacles and challenges that face them when they start working online after identifying these obstacles.
- Identifying weaknesses of people who want to work online in order to work on address and overcome these weaknesses.
- Offering proposals and ideas for projects that are suitable for the current Syrian situation and sharing these ideas and proposals with active organization which are interested in Syrian context.

B- Data sources:

- Syrian individuals: to know their opinions about online work and the level of their awareness of its concept, to know what tools are available to them that help them work online, and what challenges do they face in light of the current situation in Syria, and to identify the extent of their interest and desire to work online.
- Syrians who work online: to discover how they started working, how they make their income, what are the obstacles they face and what they need to develop their work.
- Experts in the field of online work: to take their recommendations about working online in light of the Syrian situation, and to know how Syrians face the challenges of online work and what are the actions they need to take in order to start and then continue working online.
- Secondary sources: by perusing former researches and studies related to the subject of study to know the rates of demand for online work and the most demanded services.

C- Scope:

- Date of conducting the study: June 2020.
- Geographic area: the study covered liberated areas in northern Syria in Aleppo and Idlib governorates. The chart below shows the geographical distribution of members of the study sample:



D- Sampling:

Study's data were collected through questionnaires with the following distribution:

Online workers: 11 interviews were conducted with online workers who live in northern Syria using an in-depth interview questionnaire.

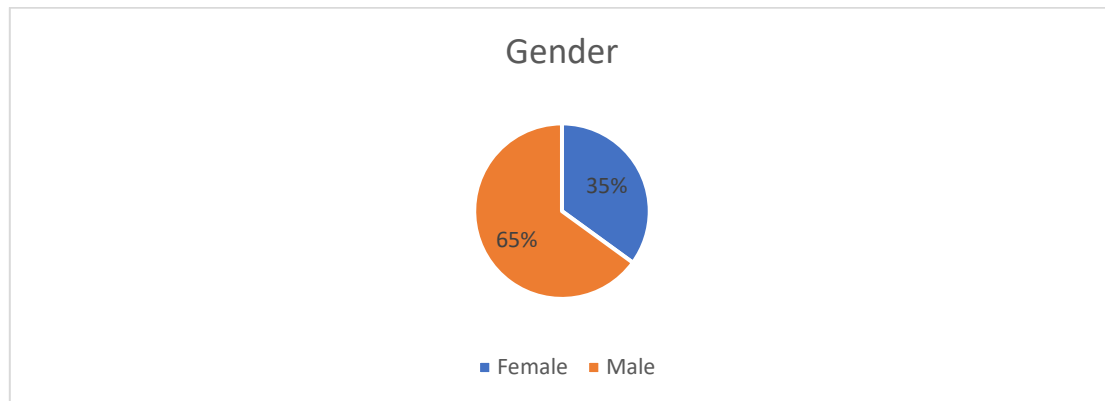
Experts: 5 interviews were conducted with experts using open ended questions (unstructured questionnaire). 4 of these experts live in northern Syria (Aleppo and Idlib) and one in Spain.

Individuals: 500 questionnaires with closed-ended questions (structured questionnaire) using simple random sample, some of these individuals live in Aleppo and the others in Idlib, and all of them were above the age of 18.

Sample properties:

Age: the youngest study participant was 18 years old, while the oldest one was 56. The average age of the participants was 40.

Gender:

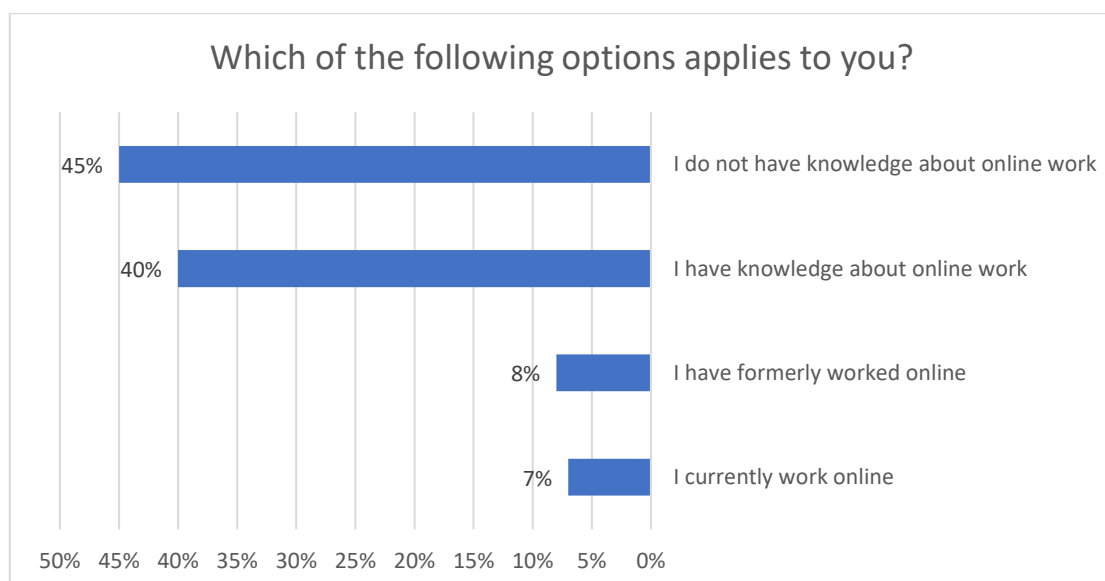


First: Syrians' capacities for online work:

Awareness about online work:

Approximately half of the study participants have no knowledge about online work, which is considered to be the gate to this field of work, while 40% of them have former knowledge about it. This knowledge came from many sources, at the foremost of which is personal relations with friends, as more than 50% of participants have friends who work online, some of these friends are participants' co-workers at their conventional work, and they work online as a secondary work, while other friends they either met during a training course or they are school colleagues.

Training courses in fields that are related to online work such as translation, editing and designing for example, were inspirational for a lot of people who started working online, in addition to articles and posts published on websites, blogs and social media platforms that explain the basics and mechanisms on inline work, supported by videos of simple and clear training courses and educational series published on YouTube.



The aforementioned information does not mean that anybody who have heard or read about online work have a good knowledge about online work platforms and methods and about how to make income of it, as more than two thirds of them of them have no idea about the work of these platforms, while only one third of them have knowledge about it. As for those who have knowledge about these platforms, the experience of the majority of them is below medium level, while only one fifth of them is well-experienced.

In this context, we find that about three quarters of the participants do not have any knowledge about online work contracting methods, whether these contracts were permanent, temporary or service contracts, nor have any knowledge about the guarantees that they will receive their wages, which is an obstacle to their work and leads to loss of their rights.

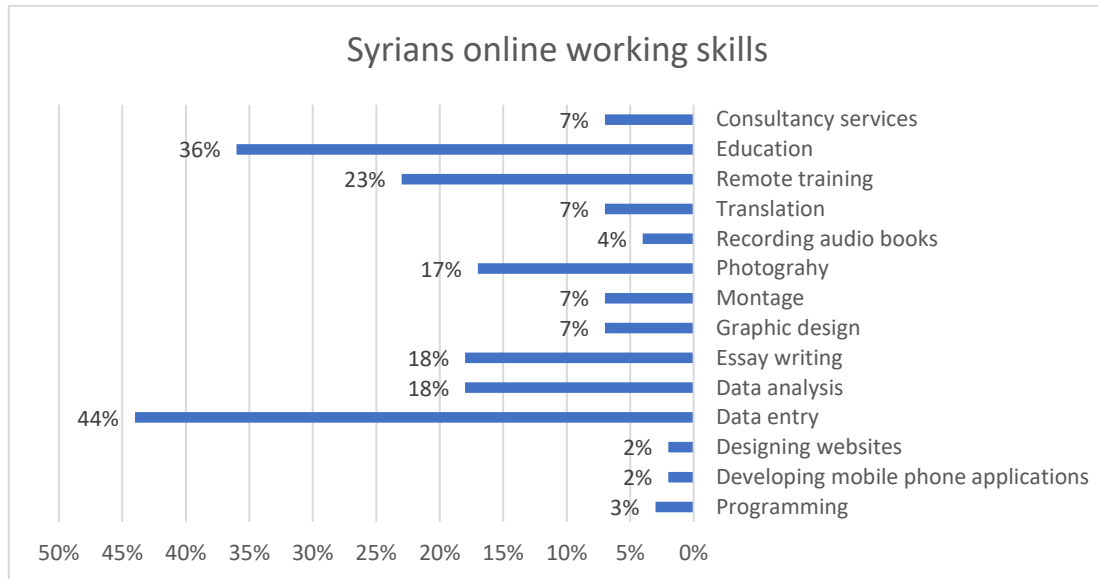
Lack of knowledge is not limited to using the platforms, as more than two thirds of study participants do not know the methods of transferring money for paying wages of online workers, whereas some of them are still conventionally receiving their wages by hand, or by a transfer through Syrian money transfer agencies, which is sometimes sent to the account of a friend or a relative. After opening branches of Turkish PTT Bank in northern Syria, some online workers switched to receive their wages through these branches.

As for the required period for acquiring experience in online work, it ranges between 3 to six months according to experts, and it is divided to three stages:

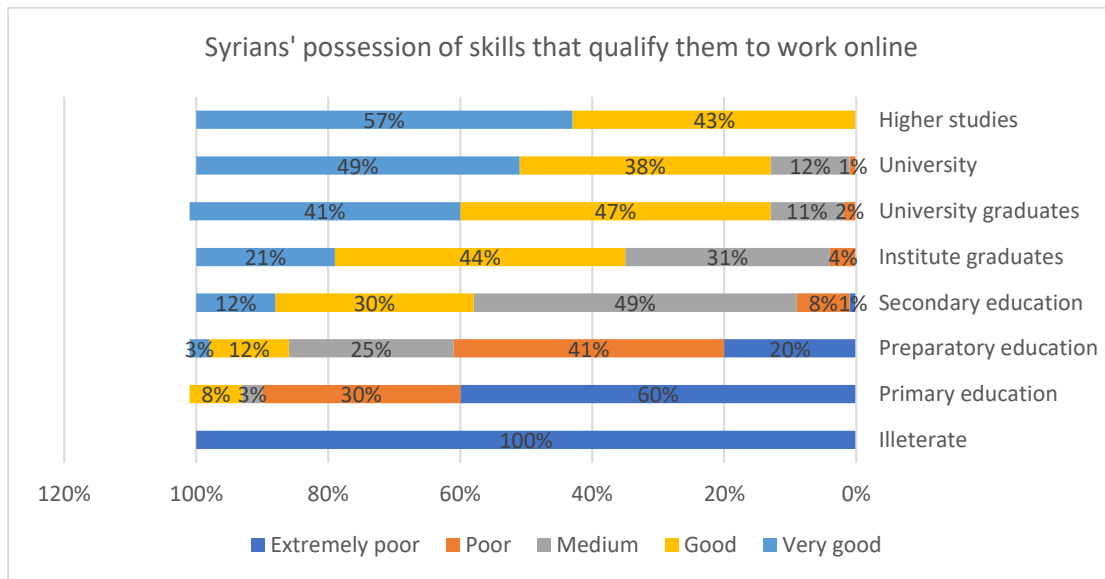
- 1- Learning basics of using computer (ICDL) for people who do not have it.
- 2- Learning techniques and skills of remote work.
- 3- Optional stage which is acquiring more specialized online work skills, which can be acquired after experience and practice.

Syrians' online working skills:

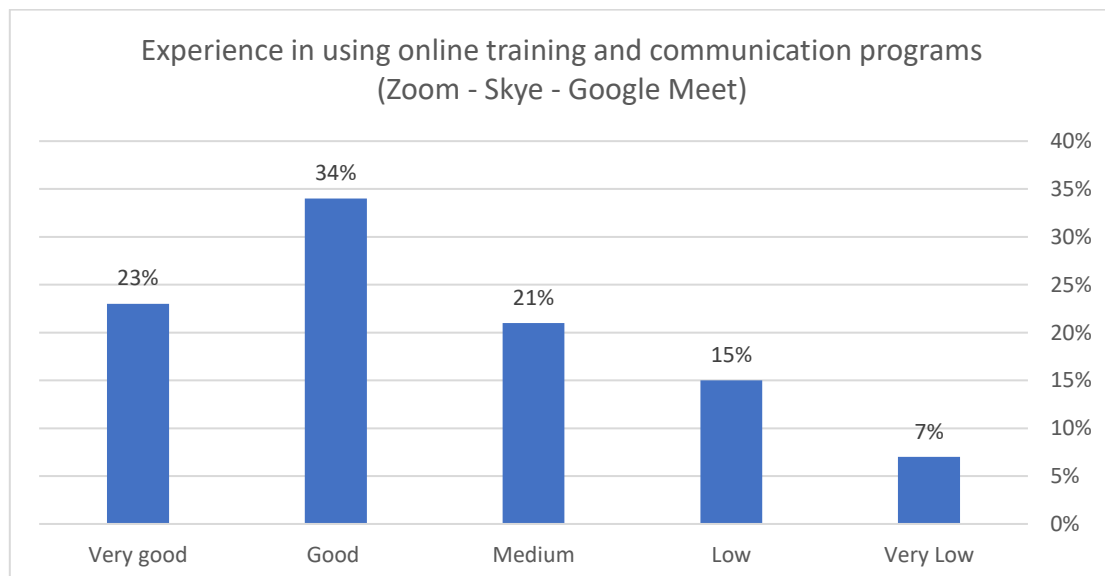
More than three quarters of the study participants believe that they have skills that they can utilize in working online, the foremost of which are data entry, education, data analysis and essay writing, while the percentage of those who said that they have skills in the fields of designing websites, developing mobile phone applications, and programming is lower, knowing that these fields' services are the most demanded services in the online work market.



The relation between educational level of the study participants and having skills that qualifies them to work online is clearly seen, as people with education levels that are higher than secondary school such as students and graduates of universities, institutes and higher studies are the majority of those who have skills that help them to work online, even though they do not acquire actual knowledge and practical experience directly from their education, but the skills they acquire during their education such as languages for example help them understand training information easier, or allow them to depend on self-learning, especially because university graduates and students have recently experienced self-learning during their summer vacations. Also, young people who are new graduates and job seekers are constantly seeking to enhance and develop their skills in order to increase their chances of getting a job, in addition to that, university graduates and students are usually experienced in information technologies. As for Syrians who have formerly attended online training or education, it did not exceed one third of the participants, which means that two thirds of them did not receive any former trainings, which explains their weakness in the field of online work.



As for having knowledge about programs that increase individuals' ability to work online, study results showed that about two thirds of the participant have a good to very good experience level in using Microsoft Office programs which are considered an important tool for providing online work services in a form that suits the client. Also, about half of the participants have good experience level in using training and meetings programs such as (Zoom, Skype and Google Meet) which became an alternative for physical communication and meetings after Coronavirus pandemic.



As for social networking platforms such as (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) in particular, study results showed that more than 90% of the participants have experience in using these platforms, knowing that these platforms stimulate cooperation and knowledge sharing among individuals, which in turn increase

the chances of having a successful online work and service marketing, thus attracting more clients.

According to experts, the most likely category to practice online work and learn its skills are young people, especially university graduates, however, there are people who are highly experienced in some fields, such as designing, who do not have higher studies or university degrees, these people need a long period to prove themselves in their fields of work, especially because working in fields of information technology and programming requires that the applicants have degrees that prove their experiences.

Online services that Syrians provide:

The most prominent services that Syrian online workers provide are essay writing, photography, graphic design, education and consultancy services². As for the demand, according to experts, the most demanded services in the Arab online work market are:

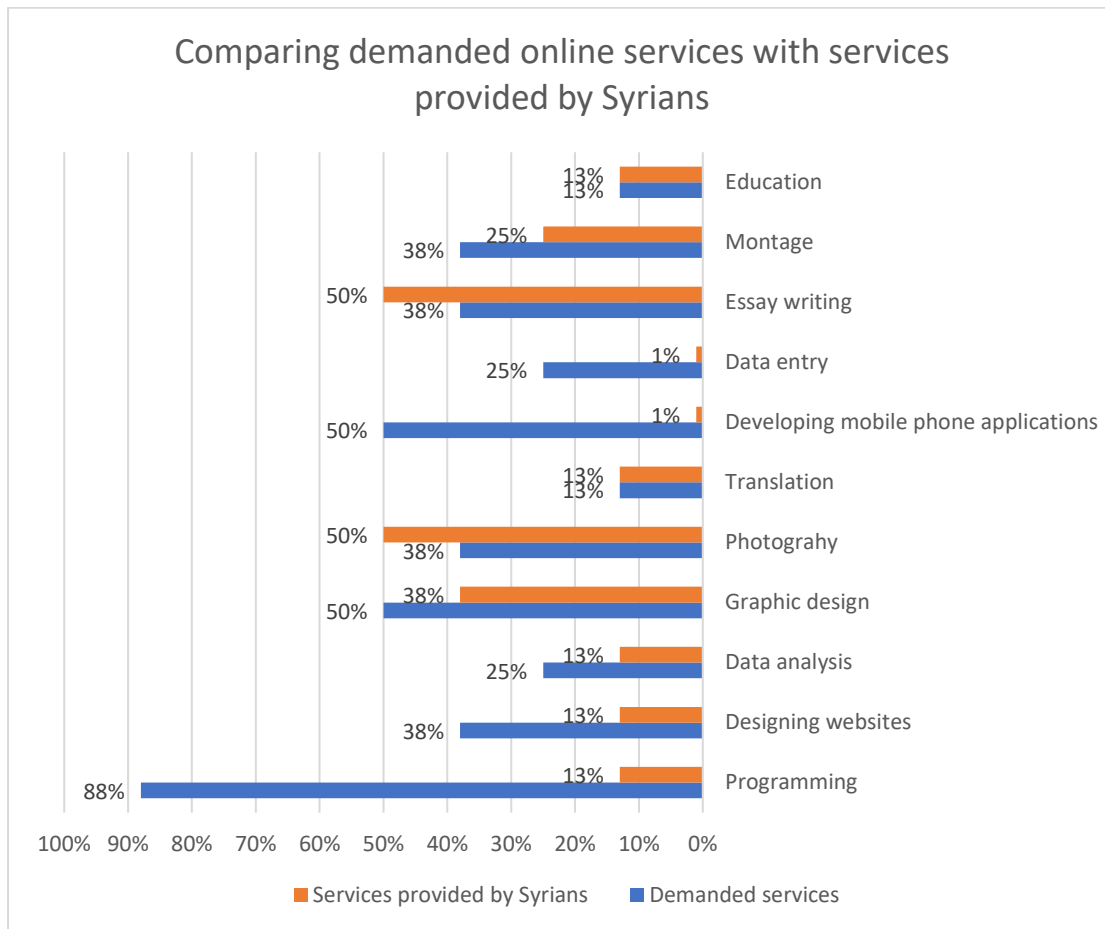
- Website development.
- Managing MS Excel files (data entry and analysis).
- Translation services.
- Lingual editing and proofreading.
- Video editing.
- Programming.
- SEO and E-marketing.

The demand on these services differs from one country to another depending on the economic and livelihood situation of the country and the nature of sectors in which the economic activity of that state concentrates.

In general, we find that there is a proportionality between services that are demanded in the online work market and the services Syrians provide such as education, montage, translation ad essay writing. On the other hand, there are many highly demanded services in this market such as designing websites, programming and developing mobile phone applications, however, the percentage of taking advantage of the demand on these services by Syrians is extremely low as seen in the below chart³:

² Study on Syrians' online work, INDICATORS Center, 2018.

³ Study on Syrians' online work, INDICATORS Center, 2018.



This chart shows that Syrians who provide data entry services are 1%, despite that the demand on this service in the online work market is somewhat high and that that the highest percentage of participants who said that they possess skills that qualify them to work online said that they possess the skill and experience in data entry (44%), which confirms that there are true job opportunities for Syrians that they can exploit if they became aware of the importance of the online work and if they were supported by providing them with tools and equipment they need to start working online, in addition to increasing their experience in methods of contracting, using online work platforms, communicating with clients and marketing themselves.

Experts of the field of online work said that the most famous online work platforms in the Arab region are Khamsat, Nabbesh website, Mustaqil and Tarjimly website, they also said that the most useful social networking sites for services marketing are LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, and that online workers can use various platforms simultaneously to market their services. The most required mobile phone communication applications for managing communication and services marketing are: **Ahrefs, BuzzSumo, Facebook Audience Insights, Google AdWords, and Slack.**

Second: Females' online work:

Special Advantages:

Many Syrian families depend on women as family's breadwinners as a result of the Syrian war and the absence of men due to arrest, injury or death, and in many cases they work to provide a second source of income even in the presence of men to meet the financial requirements of their families due to the poor economic conditions in the country and the low income of workers compared to the daily living expenses. The percentage of working women among the study participants is 50%, knowing that the average number of their working hours is 7 hours per day.

Many working women are often forced to leave work in order to allocate their full time for taking care of their families or due to the difficult working conditions, therefore, online work for females became very important because it provides them a suitable opportunity for them to achieve their goals, because online work does not differentiate between women and men, and if females possess the required experience and knowledge, their chances of getting a job are high. Online work also provides a suitable work environment for women away from the social constraints such as customs and traditions or the rejection of the parents or husband of females' work, because the female online worker will not have to leave her house nor mingle with men.

On the other hand, there is a great opportunity for women to work with companies from different time zones, thus, they will be able to work in evening period, and the most important point is that this type of work gives them freedom of choosing work hours in a manner consistent with their household obligations, which conventional work cannot grant.

Females' capabilities for online working:

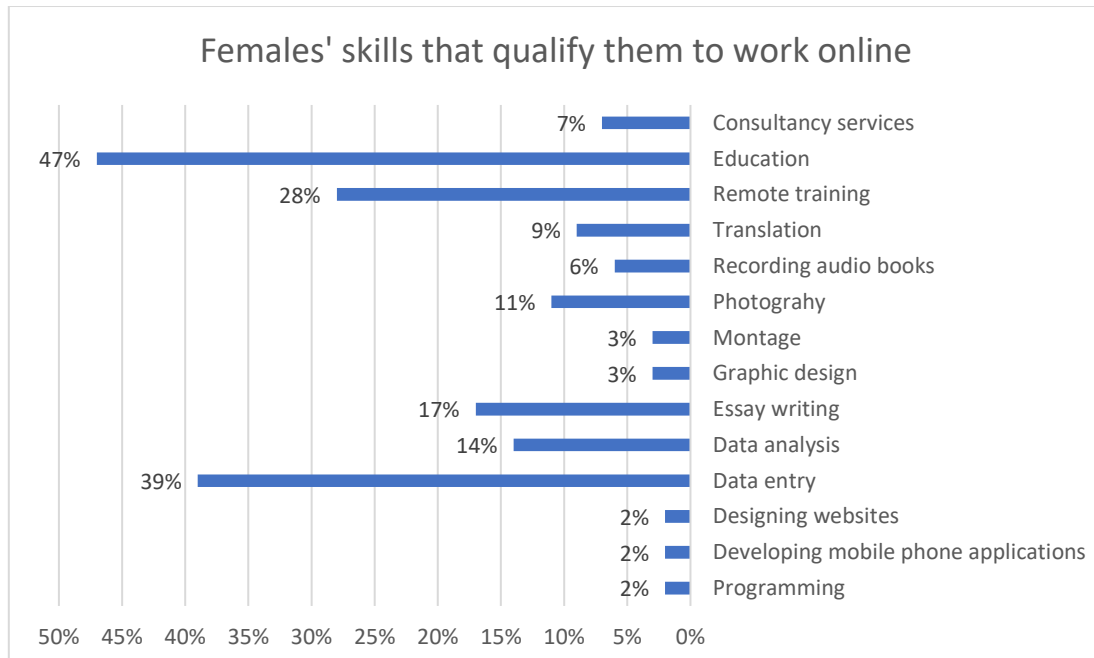
In general, study results show that the percentage of women who believe that they possess a skill that can be utilized for working online is high as it reached 80%, the foremost of these skills is education, as about half of the female study participants said that they have experience in education and teaching methods. It can be said that the field of education is an important opportunity for females' online work, as it is compatible with the nature of women on one hand, and on the other hand, the demand for online education services is higher now due to the Coronavirus crisis that affected the world. It should be noted that 10% of the female study participants are already working in the field of education.

In terms of skills that qualify females to work online, education is followed by the skills of data entry, essay writing and data analysis, which primarily need a

good level in MS Office programs, and in this regard, study results showed that more than half of the female study participants are good at working on office programs.

Study results showed that the percentage of females who have skills or knowledge in programming, designing websites, developing mobile phone applications, graphic design and montage is very low, knowing that these services are considered the most demanded services in the online work market.

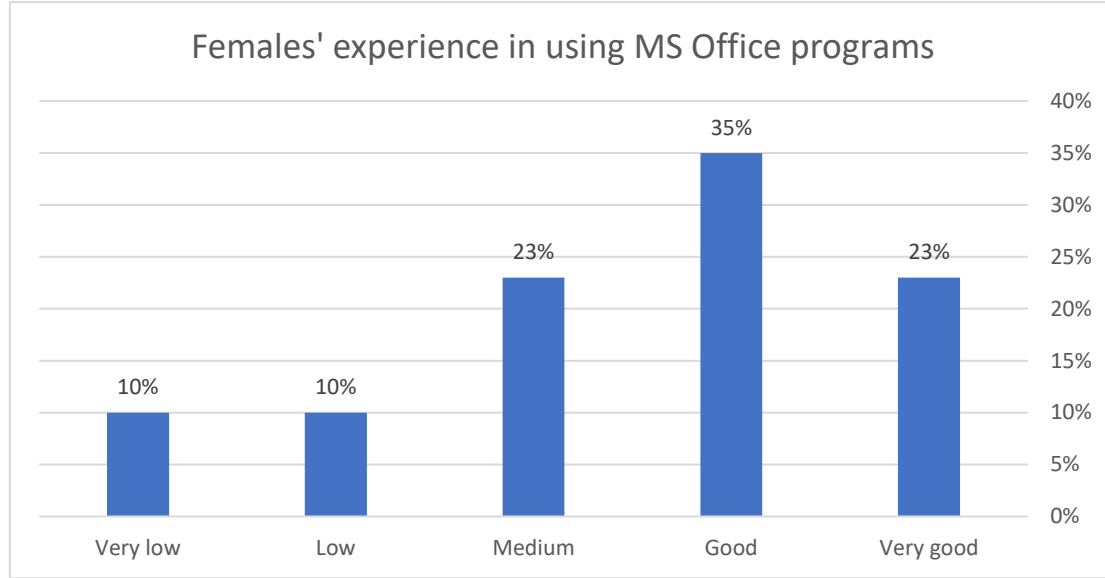
It should be noted here that one of the experts stated that the most suitable fields of online work for women are remote administrative coordination, digital assistance to managers, translation and proofreading, organizing meetings and tasks, in addition to managing Zoom platform meetings and designing brochures.



As for females' knowledge of the online work basics, the study results showed that more than two thirds of females have knowledge about online work platforms, and 79% have no knowledge of online work contracting methods or methods of transferring money to pay online workers' wages. Also, 40% of them do not know that they can make a good income by working online, which shows the importance of increasing women's awareness of the concept of online work and targeting them with training courses to increase their experience and knowledge of online work basics and methods.

As for additional skills and capabilities that increase the opportunities of women to get a job, we find that approximately half of the female study participants are good to very good in English, and 9% of them said that their language level qualifies them to work in the field of translation, which usually provides a good income and is highly demanded in the online work market. In general, languages

increase the opportunities of having a job and take the worker from local to international level and allow him to access new work fields and jobs, and increase his income rates. The study also showed that more than half of the female participants are good to very good in using MS Office programs.



Among the factors that develop females' online work is the ability to use social networking platforms, especially for marketing their services and skills, which increases their chances of having additional sources of income, and as an example of the skill of women in this field, we find that many companies around the world contract with women to promote their products, and the type of contracting is mostly the work from home (online work). It should be noted that more than 80% of Syrian women browse social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) on a daily basis.

The percentage of female participants who showed desire and willingness to learn how to work online was more than 90%. As for the training that women in particular need to work online, according to experts, it is not different from training needed by men because it is the same field of work. These trainings include basics of using computers, browsing internet, and English language, in addition to training on programming and MS Office programs. It should be mentioned here that one of the experts listed some trainings that females should have, which are trainings on information security and safe social networking protocols in order to be able to protect themselves from blackmail or cyber-hacking.

Third- Employment of people with disabilities:

Syrian war caused an increase in the rates of physical disabilities, and people with disabilities struggled to obtain jobs that are suitable to their special situation, and in case they get a job, it would be a low-wage job with low professional level and low promotion opportunities. The suffering of people with disabilities is also increased due to the absence of a government and civil administrations that issue laws and take procedures that contribute to employment of people with disabilities.

In this regard, experts confirm that online work is a suitable opportunity for people with disabilities, and that it creates them fair and suitable working conditions, as it does not require a physical effort nor commuting to and from workplaces. Online work also grants people with disabilities equal opportunities and equal wages with healthy people who perform the same work and tasks in addition to providing them with safe and healthy working conditions.

It should be noted here experts said that there are many obstacles and challenges that prevent some of the people with disabilities from working online, and these obstacles vary according to the type of disability they have, for example, entering the online work market will be difficult for those with a visual impairment or amputation of both arms, but it is not impossible, as the obstacles they face can be overcome by providing them with special suitable tools such as devices, equipment or computer programs that are compatible with the type of disability each of them have.

Among the challenges facing people with disabilities is the lack of programs that support Arabic language that help some people with disabilities to use computers, such as text to speech or speech to text conversion programs, which are programs for writing and reading in the blind language (Braille), in addition to some devices designed to suit certain disabilities, such as keyboards that are used with feet instead of hands.

In addition, some of the people with disabilities need to choose professions that are appropriate with the type of their disabilities, for example, a person who has speech difficulties cannot provide education or training services, therefore, capacity building programs must be chosen to suit the fields of work in which the person with a disability can work. In this regard, experts stated that the most useful trainings for qualifying people with disabilities to work online are trainings that suit their situation, such as trainings on using speech to text conversion programs and other programs that facilitate their work according to the type of disabilities they have, in addition to general trainings such as ICDL, MS Office Suite, design programs, and data analysis programs for example. It is also necessary to mention the necessity of providing moral rehabilitation for

people with disabilities for work by targeting them with psychological support sessions.

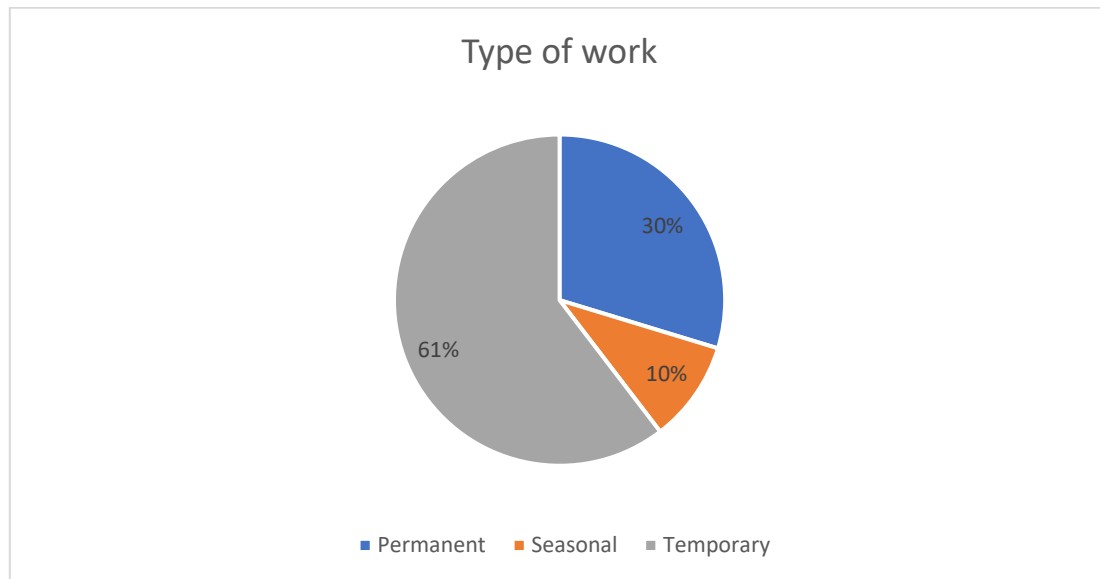
As for the equipment and tools that people with disabilities need be able to work online, special devices for people with disabilities such as (special keyboards – special computer mouses – voice recognition programs) are generally the most important, in addition to providing them with equipment and programs that make their work easier. These equipment and programs may not be available for free, which forces them to purchase them at expensive prices (such as speech to text conversion programs).

The optimal suggestion according to the opinion of experts and the experience of online workers is to provide trainings with compensations to ensure acquiring a certain specialization, and then including the people with disabilities in trainings in a company to gain practical experience, and they should receive compensations for this working period.

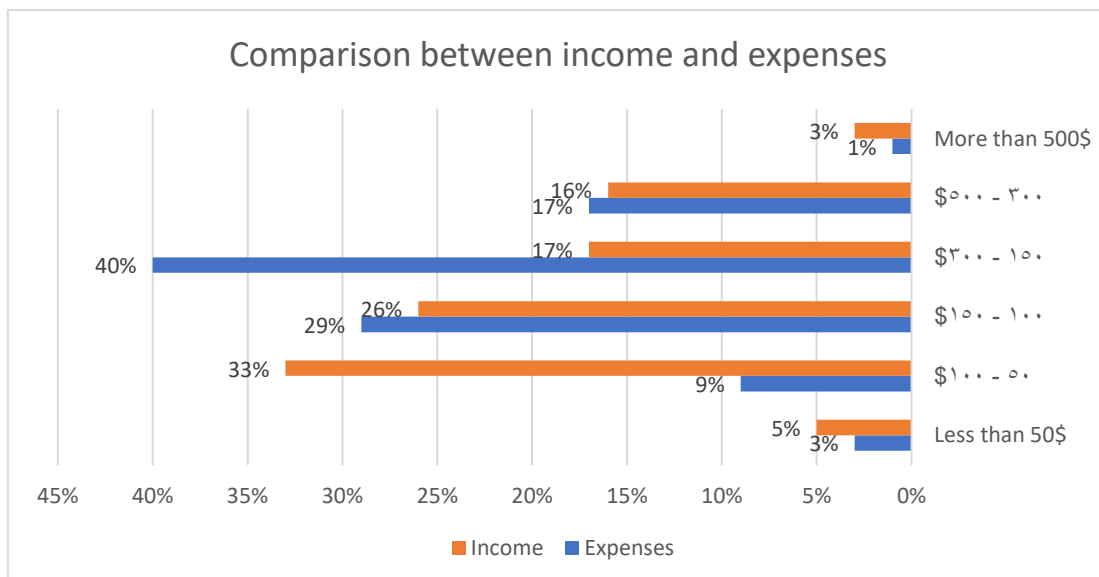
Fourth- Syrians' opportunities in online work:

Syrians' monthly income:

Due to the poor economic conditions that Syrians who live in Syria are experiencing, in addition to the continuous displacement and lack of security, more than a third of Syrians (within Syria) are currently not working, and those who work, almost a third of them are employees, and less than a fifth work as farmers or ordinary workers, knowing that the average number of daily work hours is between 7 to 8 hours. As for the nature of work, we find that about two thirds of the study participants who are currently working are working with temporary work contracts, which makes them always threatened with losing their jobs and afraid of being forced to look for a new job, and 10% of them work with seasonal contracts, and only 30% of them have a permanent job, which means that job opportunities of the vast majority of people, if any, are unstable.



On the other hand, by comparing the monthly income that participants who are currently working get with their monthly expenses, we notice a gap between income and expenses for the majority of them, and that their monthly wages are insufficient for covering the expenditures of their families, therefore, and in order to overcome this issue, they need an additional or alternative work that would provide them higher income.

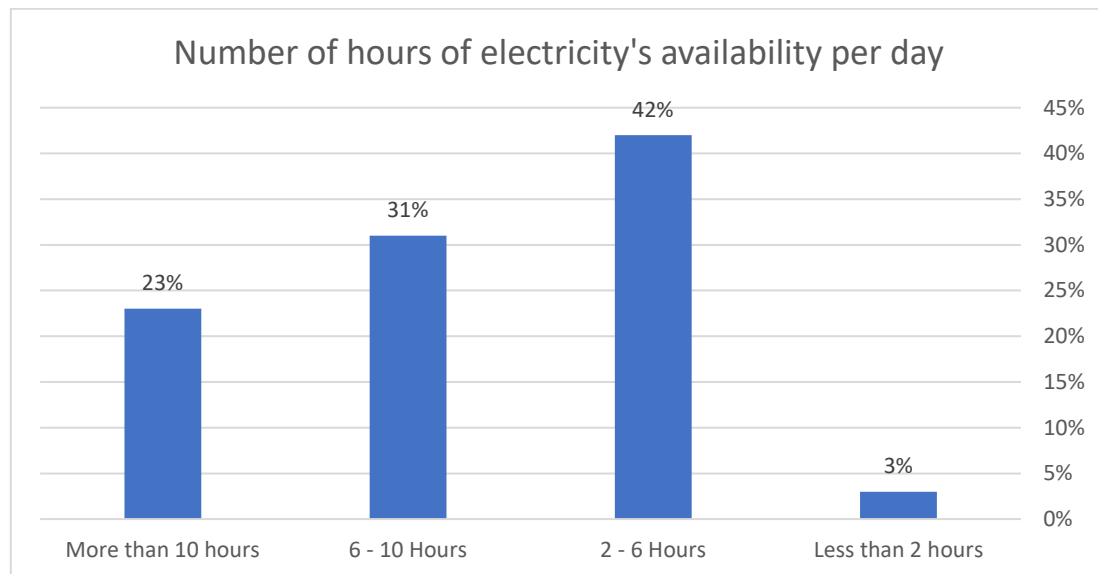


This shows the importance of online work in providing additional income for individuals to enable them to cover their living expenses, as experts said that the average monthly income of online workers during the first six months of working online is estimated at an average of approximately 150 USD if the worker managed to work well and apply the training he received. this amount may double, but this depends on the efficiency and skill of the worker, the high quality of the services he provides and his ability to market his services and attract more

customers. As for the online workers among the study participants, their income is between 100 - 500 USD per month, which is the total monthly income for most of them, while their average daily working hours are only 5 hours. As for the period that online workers took to reach an adequate income from online work, it ranged from several months to two years.

Availability of online work's requirements:

The availability of electricity is one of the main requirements for Syrians in Syria who want to work online. The results of the study show that electricity is available for 6 to more than 10 hours daily for more than half of the participants which helps them finish their work which does not exceed 5 hours daily as mentioned earlier. There are various electricity sources such as governmental electricity grid, neighborhood generators subscription, or solar energy panels and batteries. while for 42% of the participants, electricity is only available for 2 to 6 hours, which may not be sufficient for many of them for finishing their daily online work tasks, therefore, we suggest providing them with electricity sources (solar energy panels – batteries... etc.) to facilitate their work.

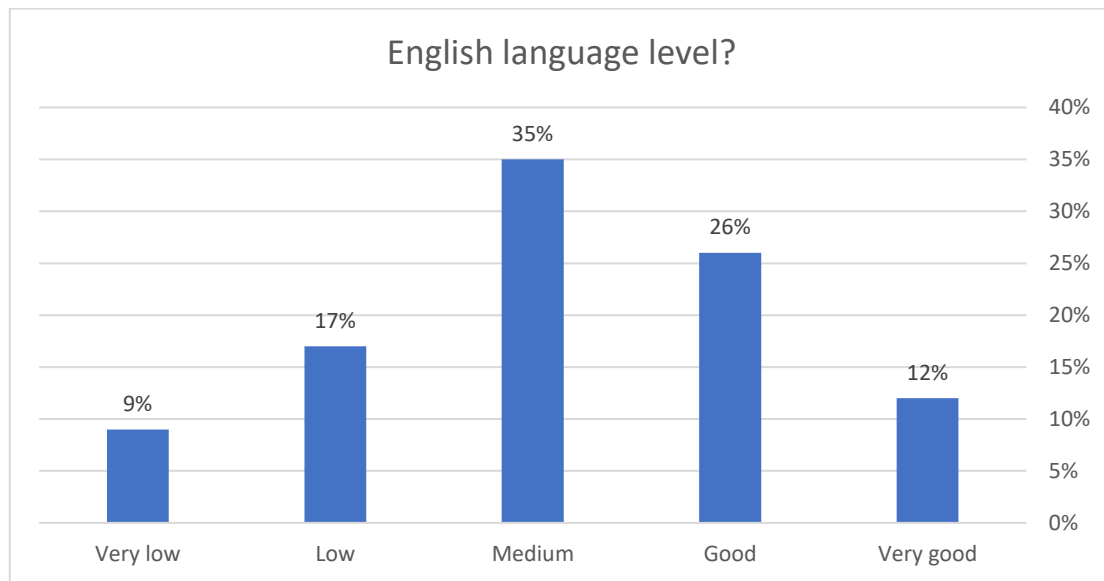


As for the internet connection, which is the link between online workers and their clients, it is available to the vast majority of the study participants in both types (satellite and DSL), but despite the availability of the internet connection, experts said that there are some problems that may face people who want to work online, which mainly are poor internet connection in light of high cost of fast internet connection subscription which many Syrians in Syria cannot afford, and the problem of frequent internet interruptions in Syria.

As for Syrians possession of computers, the study results show that more than half of the participants do not have computers, and that more than 80% do not

have the specialized equipment that online work requires in their field of work (professional cameras, sound recorders... etc.)

Due to the importance of working on international platforms such as: **Fiverr, Up Work, Freelancer** website and **people per hour**, English language has become one of the most important requirements for online work, and the study showed that more than a third of the participants have a good English language level or above, while about a quarter of them have low or very low level, and if the language level is low, providing services will remain limited to the Arab clients only or confined by language barriers, for example: persuading the targeted customers to buy a specific product requires knowledge of their language, culture and needs, which is a part of the basics of marketing and trade, therefore, it can be said that he will lose a large number of customers, and his work will only be limited to Arab customers. On the other hand, there are some services that cannot be learned or provided without mastering English language, such as programming, designing websites, translation and English language teaching services.



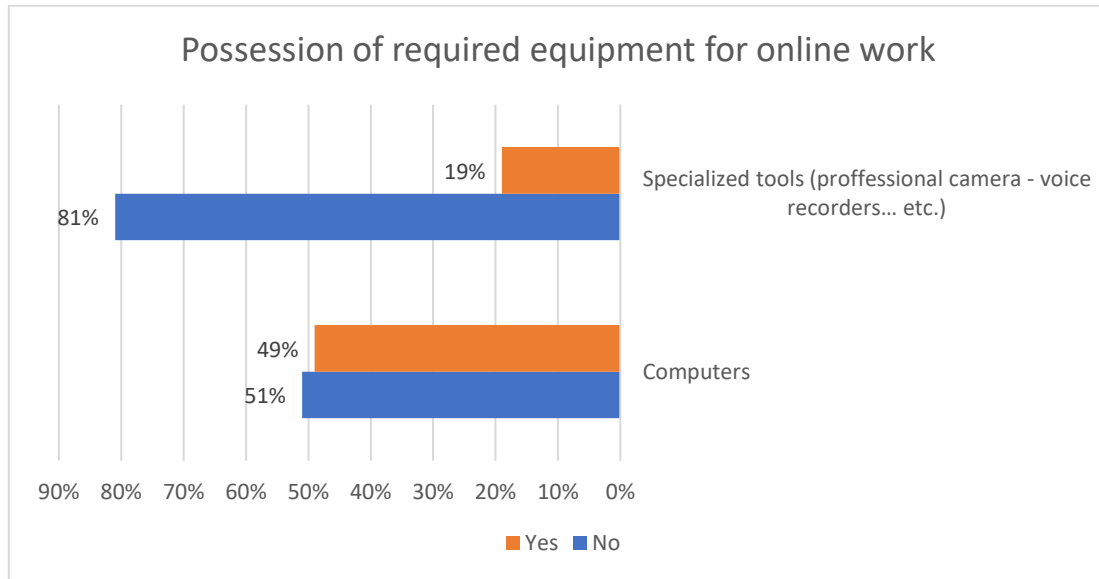
According to experts, English language allows online workers to market their services in new markets and makes dealing with online work platforms easier, as foreign platforms has millions of visits and daily purchases, and it is also useful in managing contracts, training and self-development of the online worker, and it is said that the number of people who use internet in English is four times the number of who use it in Arabic, in addition to that, more than 90% of the learning resources and support platforms are in English, therefore, online worker, regardless of his experience, will need to read and research some of his work's aspects, and many of which are not available in Arabic.

Online worker's experience in the mechanisms of transferring money that he will receive is also considered a work requirement, on the other hand, we find that only about a third of Syrians have knowledge of methods of transferring money to pay the wages of the online work. The first step is to open a bank account, if possible, to facilitate the transfer process, knowing that the areas in which the study was conducted do not contain banks, except for the PTT bank that was opened by the Turkish government, and it only exists in the regions of Azaz and Jarablus, which means it is impossible for a large part of Syrian online workers to open a bank account. One of the alternatives used to overcome this problem is that more than half of the Syrians have relatives or acquaintances who have bank accounts in other countries and are willing to help them in transferring their online work wages if needed. In addition to bank transfers, transferring money through informal money transfer agencies is also one of the solutions that are used, as they adopt the traditional system of remittances, but most companies, especially the large ones, refuse to deal with this type of remittances for fear of facing legal problems and financial accountability.

Challenges of online work:

Syrians face many obstacles in getting an online work, the first of which is the low level of awareness of the concept of online work, as nearly half of Syrians do not have any knowledge about online work, in addition to the problem of the poor internet connection and the possibility that it is interrupted for somewhat long periods of time. Online work usually needs a fast and semi-permanent availability of internet connection, which increases its financial cost. The problem of power cuts or lack of availability at all times is also a difficult challenge to online workers in Syria, as previously mentioned, about half of the study participants have electricity available from two to six hours daily, of course, those who have electricity available for less than four hours a day will not be able to accept all requests for their services nor finish their tasks, even those who have electricity available for more than six hours a day may face the problem of power cuts for several days in spite of the availability of alternative electricity sources such as using solar panels, the price of these panels is considered high for people who are living in Syria, in addition to not being constantly effective, such as during Winter.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, there is the problem of shortage of basic online work requirements such as computers and required equipment and tools for each field of work. It is noticeable that even of these equipment and tools were available, its specifications may not serve the online worker optimally, this problem was mentioned by one of the study participants who is an online worker, he said that he has an old slow computer while his profession requires a computer with modern features. It is actually difficult for many Syrians who live in Syria to buy modern tools because they are expensive.



As for attempting to enter the field of online work, especially in the initial stages, there is a difficulty in business marketing and a lack of experience in using online work platforms, beginners do not know which websites and pages are interested in the services they provide, nor do they know how to manage their accounts on these platforms and the methods of marketing that is commensurate with each platform, and it is noticeable that even the online workers have weakness in skills of marketing, communication with clients and promoting their work through online work platforms, as the majority of online workers who participated in the study said that they use social media and mobile phone communication applications (such as WhatsApp and E-mail) to communicate with clients and to market their work, while a few of them (only two) use online work platforms to market their work or to communicate and contract with clients.

English language is also a challenge to many people in entering the field of online work, and the problem is seen in several aspects, including the inability to enter the international work markets and being limited to the Arab market, in addition to the inability to use some programs that are only available in English, such as programming languages, and the problem of limited self-development resources available in Arabic language. In this regard, it was noticed that the majority of the study participants' English language level is medium or less, which is insufficient to help them develop their business, while the level of 38% of them is good to very good.

One of the main challenges that new online workers face, according to experts, is the intense competition, because online work platforms adopt the clients' reviews in its work, which means that beginner online workers do not have any reviews or evaluations, which decreases their chances of contracting with clients,

and they become forced to accept working in exchange for any wages whatsoever during their initial stages.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, there is the problem of being subjected to fraud, especially for Syrians, as most Syrians are unable to have a formal work contract that guarantees their rights because they live in areas out of the control of the Syrian government and because of not having their identification documents they need for contracting. According to one of the experts, there are many cases of fraud by some of the entities which request online services, which represent themselves as governmental entities, such as some universities that provide virtual education but do not physically exist. Also, E-piracy is one of the dangerous problems facing online workers, which Syrians know nothing about it nor about methods of protecting themselves from it, therefore, it is necessary that people who want to work online be targeted with training courses on information security and digital security.

In the end, online workers and experts stated that many clients refuse to work with Syrians, especially workers residing in Syria and in the opposition controlled areas, for fear of being accused of dealing with terrorists and because of lack of evidence that confirm the nature of the work provided by the Syrian worker and guarantee the client's right when a work dispute occurs.

Syrians needs for online work:

Empowering Syrians to work online requires humanitarian organizations and parties that are concerned with Syrian's employment to take many measures and launch projects that work on improving their skills, rehabilitating them, providing them with requirements they need to start working and creating appropriate conditions for their work.

First of all, it is necessary to work on launching training packages on the basics of online work, such as using work platforms, methods of contracting and money transfer methods, as the study results showed a very low level of awareness and knowledge among Syrians about these basics as mentioned earlier, and in addition to these training packages, Syrians must be encouraged, especially those who are unemployed or who suffer a disability, to switch towards online work by raising their awareness of the importance of online work and its advantages and the amount of income that they can make from working online, as the study results show that more than a quarter of the participants do not know that they can make a good income through working online.

In addition to the trainings on the principles and basics of online work, specialized training packages must be launched in the fields of work, with concentration on fields which services are highly demanded in the online work

market, such as programming, designing websites, developing mobile phone applications, graphic design and montage. It is also possible to build the capacities of university graduates with skills of teaching and training, which are highly demanded, by targeting them with ToT (training of trainers) courses and using online education programs, online meeting programs, and remote education tools.

Some experts stated that there are general trainings that all Syrians who want to work online must have, which are trainings in the field of information security, networks and electronic payment, legal trainings on cybercrime and property rights, computer basics, an introduction to the internet, cloud storage and online correspondence and self-marketing, in addition to training on Microsoft Office packages and programs. In addition to the aforementioned trainings, it is important to improve the skills of people who want to work online in the fields of marketing, communication with clients and writing resumes.

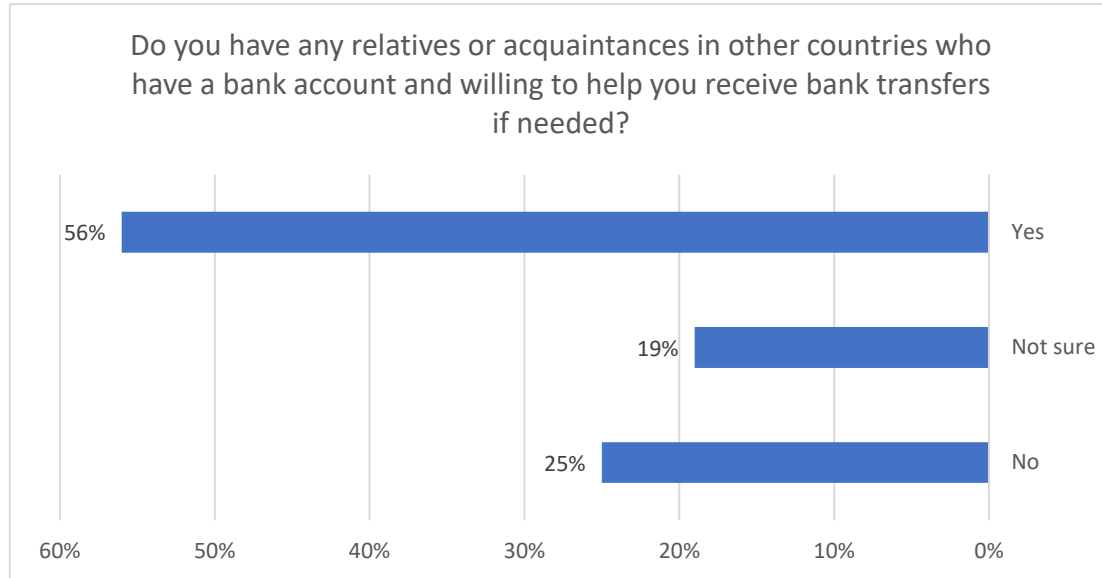
In a preliminary estimate, experts said that a period of three months of training could be sufficient to take new trainees to an acceptable level to help them enter the field of online work and gain experience in general skills and training on a certain specialization in which they continue their professional life.

Training stage shall be followed by the stage of empowering Syrians to start working by providing an appropriate working environment and providing people who want to work with the necessary equipment and tools such as computers, cameras, headphones, audio devices and other specialized equipment according to the field of work. One of the experts said that IDPs who live in camps need providing an appropriate place for work the most, and he suggested establishing public libraries that are equipped with computers, means of communication, and electricity sources.

In the same regard, and given the low income of new online workers during the first months of their work, it is better, according to the opinion of an expert, to provide the operational costs of work in addition to supporting online workers with monthly financial sums that help them cover their living expenses. This support can be provided as a loan that will be recovered after the worker starts working and making adequate income.

In order to overcome the problem of financial transfers for residents of northern Syria who want to work online, a memorandum of understanding can be concluded between organizations interested in employing Syrians and Turkish Post PTT, which has branches in Syria and has a bank that allows opening bank accounts, therefore, it is necessary to communicate with the Turkish Post in order to take measures that facilitate opening bank accounts for Syrians who want to work online, and to increase Syrians' awareness of the importance of opening bank accounts and the facilities that it provide in the process of receiving

financial payments. it should be mentioned here that Syrians' relatives and friends who live outside Syria constitute a practical solution to the problem of receiving money, as most Syrians have relatives and friends have bank accounts outside Syria and are willing to help them receive money.



One of the experts said that targeting people who want to work online with capacity building programs and developing their skills and providing them with necessary work equipment is not sufficient to guarantee their success in working online, but they should also be followed up during initial stages, and they must be offered technical and advisory support, in addition to answering their inquiries and helping them overcome the problems and difficulties they may encounter.

As for people with disabilities, empowering them to start working online requires all of the aforementioned support in addition to providing them with moral support and psychological rehabilitation and preparation for working, in addition to providing them with special equipment and tools that are compatible with each type of disability they have.

Finally, while talking about training, we see that remote training (online training) is the optimal way to provide training in light of the current circumstances and the spread of the Coronavirus, as it also facilitates the participation of women and people with special needs in the provided trainings, in addition to the fact that remote training allows having the assistance of specialized and highly qualified trainers, whether they reside in or outside Syria.

Physical attendance training can also be adopted to benefit from its advantages as it provides direct contact between the trainer and the trainees and helps to convey ideas more clearly and allows the trainer to follow up with the trainees and correct their mistakes, but in this case it is necessary to take procedures to protect the trainer and trainees by equipping the training halls in a manner that applies the rules of social distancing and safety requirements.

Online work during the spread of COVID-19's pandemic:

The Coronavirus pandemic, which began to spread at the end of the year 2019, caused enormous economic losses incurred by the global economy, these losses have caused millions to lose their jobs. According to a study conducted by researchers from the Australian University of Sydney, the outbreak of the epidemic and the measures taken to limit its spread have cost the global economy 3.8 trillion USDs, and caused 147 million people to lose their jobs⁴, which shows the weakness and fragility of office work. To confront the negative effects of the Coronavirus, most companies and even states' governments have adopted a remote work method instead of office work. At the time when the effectiveness and efficiency of remote work is being analyzed after it became one of the effective measures for combat the spread of the virus, discussions are rising about the possibility of adopting this work method to become permanent for some professions even after overcoming the epidemic⁵, therefore, the opportunities of getting job opportunities by people who are qualified to work online will double.

On the other hand, it must be noted that switching to online work may have negative effects on Syrians as a result of the increase in supply and the intensification of competition in the work market, here, the importance of improving the efficiency of workers in marketing themselves so that they can attract more clients is seen.

Returning to the study results, more than half of the online workers who participated in the study said that their income decreased as a result of the losses of companies in general, which caused decreasing workers' wages in addition to the weakness of activities and transactions in all sectors in general. Some of workers who work in designing websites attributed this problem to the

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suspension of Google AdSense services, which affected their income as a large part of the websites that they usually design were requested by the clients to benefit from Google AdSense⁶. On the other hand, some online workers indicated that their income remained the same or increased because the nature of their work does not require direct contact with people, and it was conducted online even before the Coronavirus pandemic and remained as it was before. Another reason that caused increasing their income is because the demand for online work, education and training has increased.

Fifth- Bright spots:

Asa'ad:

Asa'ad is a 35-year-old Syrian man married and supports 7 individuals, he lives in Al-Dana area.

He started thinking about working online because he lost his basic job as a result of being displaced, so he started buying and preparing the necessary equipment for work (a computer, an internet subscription, a separate room at his house), then he started attending online trainings on online work, then on services marketing through online work platforms and websites, thus he learned all of that with his personal effort through remote training websites and platforms such as UDEMY. His good English language level and his information engineering academic major helped him attain his online training. Then he started providing graphic design services that he learned. His contracts with the clients were made according to the type of service he provides.

The platforms he uses are the Arabic Khamsat platform, LinkedIn and Facebook, and he uses a laptop with excellent specifications for his work. His average income in the first six months was 100 USD, while his current average income is 300 USD. One of the challenges he faced during his work, especially the initial stages, is the lack of electronic payment methods, therefore, he receives his wages for the services he provides through an intermediary who lives in Turkey.

⁶ Google AdSense tool is considered to be Google's advertisements program which allows showing companies' advertisements on internet blogs, provided that it is designed using another Google tool which is AdWords.

Mohammad:

Mohammad is a 40-years-old man, married to two wives and a father of five children, three of them are the children of his first wife and the other two are from his second wife, Living in Syria.

He started thinking about working online because of two reasons, the first of which is the Coronavirus pandemic and the restrictions that resulted from it, and the other is having a good experience in training. At first, he applied for a job announced by an organization that wants to hire a trainer for a training on strategic planning, Mohammad got the task after he showed a sample of previous trainings he conducted and his training qualifications.

For obtaining contracts, Muhammad depends on published request of trainers announcements, or on the knowledge of the training requesting parties, as he does not use online work platforms for communication with clients.

Mohammad provides training in several fields such as strategic planning and project management. Among the factors that helped him provide these trainings is his academic major, as he is a graduate of the Faculty of Commerce and Economy at the University of Aleppo, in addition to having attended many trainings and his self-education efforts, which have greatly helped him develop his skills and experiences. Muhammad is well-experienced in using ZOOM program, which is one of the most important online training programs.

Mohammad faced many challenges in the beginning of his online work, including lack of experience in preparing the training package, the difficulty of obtaining work contracts, and the problems of poor internet connection.

His average income in the beginning was about 400 USD per month, but currently his income may reach 600 USD or more, knowing that his work is based on providing temporary services for clients.

As for the equipment he uses in his work, they are a laptop computer and a high-resolution camera. Regarding the method of receiving his work wages, it is done through remittance and exchange agencies inside Syria (Hawala system).



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