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Side hustles in the COVID-19 era. A preliminary investigation in UK and Thailand on informal and part-time work during a period of employment turmoil.

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Abstract. The study's aim was to consider the motivations of workers who work part-time, work the gig economy, work informally and may have entrepreneurial aims in UK and Thailand. The notion of a side hustle to the main work, included where that main work was seen as, for instance, being a parent or other carer. Main work was not classified by level of earnings but by participant perception. In some cases there was no main job just "side" work, often whatever participants could get during the COVID era. Discussion with participants proceeded online and face to face in person. Some participants also completed a questionnaire, so producing a clear objectification for a core of participants, descriptive statistics. Otherwise the study was firmly qualitative in approach. The core descriptive statistical approach was very focused in an extensive Likert scale on motivations. Participants considered money the main motivation, whichever country and whatever the demographic of the participant. Sociability was generally seen as the lowest motivator, fifth of five potential motivators offered in the Likert Scale. Wider discussion with the core participants and others covered partly the same ground as the Likert, but participants introduced other themes for consideration, to include women's empowerment and parenting.

Keywords. Employment, informal employment, gig economy, side hustles, COVID-19, job losses, entrepreneurialism, labour market

Introduction

The COVID era is a very interesting point in time to look at sideline work. Generally it has become less available, but more needed. Often main employment has been lost and the "sideline" becomes, by default, the main, in fact only job. People search out anything.

The medical picture for COVID-19 in UK was 189,846 new people had a confirmed positive test result reported on 31 December 2021. Between 25 December 2021 and 31 December 2021, 1,051,807 people had a confirmed positive test result. This shows an increase of 48.7% compared to the previous 7 days. 1,915 people with coronavirus went into hospital on 27 December 2021. Between 21 December 2021 and 27 December 2021, 9,937 went into hospital with coronavirus. This shows an increase of 49.9% compared to the previous 7 days. There were 11,918 patients in hospital with coronavirus on 29 December 2021. There were 203 deaths within 28 days of a positive test for coronavirus reported on 31 December 2021("Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK", 2021). Total UK Coronavirus Deaths had reached 176,813 by 1 February 2022 ("Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK", 2022).

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For Thailand on 1st January 2022 for the previous 24 hrs 10 more Covid-19 fatalities were reported and 3,011 new cases registered. On 31st December 2021 3,315 Covid-19 patients were discharged from hospitals after recovering from the coronavirus ("3,011 new Covid cases", 2022) At 28th January, 2022 total COVID-19 deaths in Thailand stood at 22,129 deaths with around 2.31 million recovered cases (Manakitsomboon, 2022).

Economic indicators around the COVID-19 pandemic offer that UK GDP declined by 9.7% in 2020 (Harari, Keep, & O'Brien, 2021).Thailand's GDP fell by 6.1 percent in 2020 (Kaendera & Leigh, 2021). In April 2020, 31% of eligible UK jobs were furloughed. By January 2021, unemployment had risen to 5% (Taylor, Florisson, Frost, & Athey, 2021). For Thailand any attempt to measure unemployment rates is of dubious validity in that informal, unrecorded, employment is so prevalent. The rate for 2019 was taken to be 54.3% (Thailand, National Statistics Office, 2019). That is about 20 million workers without contributory social protection and entitlements at workplaces, such as paid leave or sick leave (International Labour Organisation, 2020). Perhaps of great import is to remember that unrecorded, unregistered means no access to occasional COVID payments. For the record ("The Bank of Thailand official", n.d.) recorded rate of unemployment was 2.25% for July 2020, against 0.98% for July 2019.

Broad employment impacts of COVID-19 are considered in some detail below through literature review especially in considering collapse of unskilled informal work availability alongside the rise of high-skilled formal part-time and sessional work through COVID. However there have also been some increases in unskilled work in both Thailand and UK, an example through the rise of food delivery. The numbers of drivers can be considered. It is also easy to look at the astounding results of those businesses whose food is delivered. A starting point for consideration might be Bangkok, which at December 2020 had 84.9 thousand motorcycle riders available for hire (Manakitsomboon, 2021). Of course they plied their trade to passengers as well as food and other goods, but with lockdown and social distancing at restaurants, when open, use to carry people was substantially down.

Grab Food is market leader for food delivery in South-East Asia, and in Thailand as a country specific. In 2020 food delivery gross merchandise value in Thailand was $2.8 Billion, of which Grab took 50%. For the whole region for 2019 to 2020 food delivery grew by 183% (Voon, 2021). Sirikeratikul (2020) notes that more than 1.8 million food delivery orders were placed in Thailand every day during March and April 2020.

In UK the food service delivery market was valued at approximately 11.4 billion British pounds in 2020 (Lock, 2021).The total food service delivery market had been worth around 8.5 billion British pounds in 2019 (Lock, 2020). There was a 34% year on year increase in the period 2019 to 2020.

The summarising point here is that whilst it would be wrong to think there were no employment bright spots, even for those in the most informal of employment, such as motorcycle drivers, the greater picture is of extreme difficulty, especially where a history of informal employment has meant no access to State support during the COVID-19 pandemic, maybe savings never existent or long-since consumed in the early months of COVID, and the notion of capital for self-employment unlikely. Some amongst Thai participants in this research were in exactly that position, with any work they have done during the COVID-19 pandemic an extreme default position, out of absolute necessity. Other Thai participants were not so desperate, but for UK participants' financial desperation was not coming over, perhaps partly

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as a matter of having the support of a Western welfare state, with which they will have been fully registered throughout.

For the future, of course, the question is whether jobs come back after COVID-19, though arguably at least as important is what configuration they come back in, meaning not simply as full-time work, part-time work, sessional work, informal work, but in terms of the content of work, the attitude of employers and the benefits offered. Worker attitudes seem to have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Morgan (2021) has stated that "Since the pandemic, employees are leaving the workforce or switching jobs in droves". There has been an immense paradox during the pandemic that as some are fearful of losing their jobs, and actually losing them, others have been leaving their jobs of their own decision. Even in Thailand a number of examples were, anecdotally, given to the researcher. That said, the phenomenon may be at greatest in USA, though figures for UK and Ireland are not insignificant. Personio ("Counting the Cost", 2021) found 38% of employees surveyed in March 2021 were looking to change their roles in the next six to twelve months or when the economy improves. Some reasons stated were around work/life balance, a pay freeze or cut and a toxic workplace culture.

McKinsey, referring to USA, flag up that "working parents are among the record number of employees leaving their jobs or thinking about doing so" (De Smet, Dowling, Mugayar-Baldocchi, & Talloen, 2021). They also flagged that between April 2021 and September 2021 19 million US workers left their jobs and companies are struggling to address the problem (De Smet, Dowling, Mugayar-Baldocchi & Schaninger, 2021).

In fact, in summer 2021 McKinsey conducted a major study of voluntary attrition of workers in the labour market to include data-gathering from USA, UK, Australia, Canada and Singapore. Particularly relevant to this study were comparisons between parents in reasons for leaving their job, their interest in setting up businesses and their interest in taking part in the "gig" economy.

Table 1 below rank orders reasons for workers leaving their job. Sometimes values placed could be the same between parents and non-parents, for instance wishing to be valued by the organisation or wishing for a good work-life balance, but there could be substantial differences. Family care, manageable workload and ability to work remotely were of relatively high concern for parents and relatively low concern for non-parents.

Table 1. Rank Order of Workers' Reasons for Leaving their work

Reason for Leaving	Parents	Non Parents
Value to Organisation	1	1
Sense of Belonging	2	3
Value to Manager	3	2
Work-Life Balance	4	4
Care for Family	5	18
Unmanageable Workload	8	15
Ability to Work Remotely	9	20

Note: Data Source McKinsey & Company, 2021.

Parents and non-parents responded quite differently over setting up a business as impacting a decision to leave their current job or around considering leaving their current job

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to start a business. Parents were considerably more keen to have their own businesses, as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2. Percentages of Parents and Non Parents starting businesses or planning to do so

Starting Own Business Impacted Decision to Leave Last Job		Would Consider Leaving Current Job to Start Own Business	
Parent	Non-Parent	Parent	Non-Parent
39%	24%	45%	31%

Note: Data Source McKinsey & Company, 2021.

Gig work was also attractive to all respondents (De Smet *et al*, 2021). Parents though are 6% more likely to take gig jobs than non-parents with lower income workers particularly offering the attraction as flexibility afforded that way to care for family. De Smet *et al* (2021) suggest that flexibility over hours and role flexibility are two ways that employers can ensure continued support from their staff.

Parenting and employment has been particularly considered as it was directly brought up by several side-hustle participants in this study (see below), Little is even known about Long COVID as a phenomenon, let alone how to manage it medically, in terms of mental health or in terms of present and future employment and lifestyle. This testimony from a Long COVID-19 sufferer really catches the imagination: "Waking up in the morning, not moving, opening my eyes and thinking, Is this the day it's all over? Just extremely tired, and it's not like any other tiredness I've ever felt in my life. It's more extreme tiredness. It hurts…… It's a challenge to even lift your limbs, just go downstairs, make some breakfast for the kids is a challenge in itself. It's completely changed from how I was, fit and healthy to what I am now. My immediate worry is to my family. How am I going to support them? What do I have the capacity to do? At the moment it is very little" (Edwards, 2021). Nic Kimberley, a lengthy Long COVID sufferer offered: "Although I'm better, I'm still not recovered, and still living a life that is very limited. I still have painful and swollen joints. The biggest one for me though is fatigue. I sleep 20 hours a day some days. I still have headaches, high blood pressure and a racing heart beat" (Greenway, 2021)

Truthfully, not much is known about Long COVID. Dr Jason Seewoodhary, a GP at Barbourne Health Centre in Worcester has said "In three or four years we will know a lot more about Long COVID" (Greenway, 2021). Research effort is simply focused elsewhere in the COVID-19 issue. The largest global study of Long COVID (to January 2021) took place in London, UK. Many patients were found unable to return to work within 6 months (Meredith, 2021). An estimated 1.3 million people were suffering from the UK as at 6th December 2021 (Binding, 2022). No judgement can be made of the longer term care needs of sufferers. No judgement can be made of the longer term work capability or employment needs of those with Long COVID. Above all there is no real notion of what the "long" in Long COVID might mean. Given so much incalculability and so many potential hurdles in all types of employment and all work scheduling types, extreme flexibility on the part of employers seems to be the watchword as previously.

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Literature Review

Note from the outset that there were three broad elements of literature review. Firstly, there was pre-reading, for instance general academic literature around the topic of side-hustles, part-time work and informal work. Secondly, there was pre-reading around the specifics of motivations of workers who undertake these kinds of labour. The Likert scale used in this research was derived in part from that pre-reading. Thirdly, there was ongoing reading during the research, reflecting emergent themes out of participant interests and suggestions in the qualitative part of the study, mainly a reference to parenting and women's empowerment.

Informality has been a major topic in social sciences for a number of years, maybe particularly associated with the collapse of the Soviet Empire so from the early 1990s onward (eg Morris & Polese, 2016). This intense interest creates two problems for the researcher, first that the informality material is often dated and secondly that it is very often dominant within the literature as against material on formal part-time employment. A particular issue becomes whether the balance of the literature reflects the position on the ground during the COVID-19 era. A moment's pause prompts potential thought in the negative in that informal workers only show one side of the COVID-19 employment story out of the fact that informal workers are often those of lowest education and skills. A precision gauging of the truth of this is available for Thailand through the work of Peter-Cookey and Janyam (2019). The authors asked informal workers themselves and their customers to assess the workers' skill levels. Overall indications were that workers were at the novice level.

In many developing countries, the informal economy is the main source of employment for as many as nine out of every 10 workers (Pina, Kotin, Hausman, & Macharia, 2012), These employees are useful in times of boom, easily disposable in times of bust such as during COVID. Alternately, during the COVID period the need has often been for more hours from highly educated and highly skilled personnel, for instance in the medical field, such as doctors and nurses. Clearly there is no simple answer in labour flexibility. Simply, an unskilled informal worker does not become a highly skilled Emergency Room nurse overnight, if ever. That said it is potentially being flippant to disregard skills among informal employees. It may be rather more a question of what skills are paid regard, let alone monetary reward by the wider society (eg Basole, 2014).

In June and July 2020 Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) undertook a highly relevant study in Bangkok, Thailand in conjunction with local NGO Homenet Thailand. Findings included as below ("COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy", 2021; Sarah Reed, personal communication, 2022).

1. For April 2020 (lockdown period), 47% of all respondents reported average daily earnings of zero. This included 100% of massage therapists, 73% of home-based workers, 55% of street vendors, 34% of waste pickers, 18% of motorcycle taxi drivers and 5% of domestic workers.
2. Recovery appears to be slow. By June/July 2020, daily average earnings for most worker groups were still only a portion of December 2019 levels: 46% for home-based workers, 49% for massage therapists, 57% for waste pickers, 58% for motorcycle taxi drivers, and 64% for street vendors.
3. 35% of participants reported an increase in household responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, or care since December 2019, when Covid arrived in Thailand.
4. 25% of home-based workers, 19% of massage therapists, 18% of motorcycle taxi drivers, and 14% of waste pickers reported hunger among adults in their households over the last calendar month.

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5. 84% of workers borrowed money, drew down savings, sought financial help from friends or family, sold or pawned assets, or had family members leave the home in the last calendar month.
6. Workers expressed ongoing anxiety about exposure to COVID-19 infection, a fear that is particularly acute for massage therapists, motorcycle taxi drivers, and waste pickers due to the nature of their work. The reference here was during the April 2020 lockdown period and/or on returning to work after the April 2020 lockdown.

It is very easy to pick up other areas of activity that might go unconsidered as informal work and instead go by the label "freelance". Known personally to the researcher are three wedding planners and one lighting designer who simply could not get work.

Unfortunately no statistics are available for expansion in some areas of part-time working in Thailand, such as nursing. Note, though that that is not comparing like with like in that those part-time work availabilities would have been contractual and requiring high-level and particular skillsets, such as Emergency Room Nursing.

Turning now to UK these expansions can easily be seen and represent a change of balance in requirements, that change toward skilled workers, however casual the work, that is skilled and properly contracted. UK NHS hospitals are coping with emergency admissions and hospital stays through COVID, together with high staff absences through contraction of COVID or isolation through contact with COVID. NHS hospitals are not the sole pressure point within the NHS system through COVID. Staff have to be acquired to inject people at immunisation centres, to undertake administration at immunisation centres and to guide visitors about the vaccination centres, finally to set up and take down such facilities. Some of this army of workers, will be volunteers, but relatively few. Most will be highly skilled, paid workers, particularly nurses and nurse managers.

A snapshot was published by The Guardian on Saturday 31st December 2021 (Campbell & Morris, 2021) offering that on 26th December 2021 a total of 24,632 personnel in acute NHS trusts were absent because they were sick or quarantining as a direct result of either the Delta or Omicron COVID-19 variant. That was more than double the 12,240 who could not work for that reason on Sunday 12th December and 31% up on the 18,829 recorded on the 19th December. Staff shortfalls are covered by NHS trust staff banks (people working directly for the NHS trusts on a sessional basis) and through agencies. Both are expensive options, the agencies particularly so. Both will run short themselves of staff to fortify the supply chain.

The second task listed pre-reading around the specifics of motivations of workers who undertake the various labour arrangements mentioned for this study. This was problematic. Generally material is very dated, looking at contractual part-time work and that vis a vis full-time contractual work in such dimensions as organisational citizenship (eg Stamper & Van Dyne, 2003).That said, the opposite does occur, but the contemporary material is often heavily focused on the gig economy, and that viewed in terms of online platforms, Apps. Kuhn and Galloway (2019) very much affirm this interpretation, then own it. Across time, the researcher is, therefore, often faced with very limited approaches from previous researchers as against the multitude of potential meanings and labour types that this study wished to cover. Simply looking at Bangkok and only the informal labour categories that WIEGO covers ("COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy", 2021) is instructive. These categories are covered: Domestic Workers, Home-Based Workers, Street Vendors, Waste Pickers, Motorcycle Drivers and Massage Therapists.

Where older approaches were useful was in considering part-time and full-time workers against each other in terms of motivation and output and particularly whether side-work affected full-time workers in their main contract fulfilment. On that last point Sessions,

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Nahrgang, Vaulont, Williams and Bartels (2021) conclude that side hustles boost full-time job performance, specifically that "Overall, performance enrichment from side-hustles was stronger than performance conflict" (Sessions *et al*, 2021). In fact, one might argue that person enrichment is really the underlying story. Rosenblat (2016) considers ridehailing workers. He argues that there is a range of motivations, including lacking another job, but often social motivations are important. Driver motivations are, in part, not financially concerned. Sessions (2019) surprised himself by finding a balance in favour of role continuity, comfort at least through proximity. It is worth noting the background to Sessions' hitherto direction of travel from Schwartz (1992) introducing a fundamental universal value of stimulation, then Cable and Edwards (2004) having aligned the stimulation value with a need for variety

Urbig, Reif, Lengsfeld, and Procher (2021) look specifically at entrepreneurial side jobs and full-time employer reactions. Actual outcomes in the relationship are context specific, but can be positive, including to the full-time employer. Pre-experience with enterprising individuals leads to greater optimism. Entrepreneurial mindsets may be established within the established organisation.

Finally, there was the ongoing reading during the research, reflecting emergent themes out of participant interests and suggestions in the qualitative part of the study. Of course, through interaction, particularly interview-based, many themes emerge, some relatively minor even if repetitively heard. Two substantive themes emerged, around parenting and women's empowerment. These themes were often inter-related, were raised by women and essentially arose through women in UK, women's empowerment singularly so.

It is estimated that women lost 64 million jobs globally in 2020-21(" COVID-19 cost women", 2021). Gabriela Bucher, Executive Director of Oxfam International, commented: "Economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic is having a harsher impact on women, who are disproportionately represented in sectors offering low wages, few benefits and the least secure jobs……..and that has come at a cost of at least $800 billion in lost wages for those in formal employment" (" COVID-19 cost women", 2021). Closely note that income loss as referring only to women in formal employment when women are present in the informal economy and disproportionately so.

However, to look only at financial computations is entirely wrong. What of women's sense of self-worth? And, truthfully, part of that may have an economic connotation derived from women's contribution to family income if minimised through COVID (eg"COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy", 2021). What of women's increased unpaid roles as carers during COVID? (eg Power, 2020; Ketunuti & Chittangwong, 2020). A mixing of just these variables, a few among many, leads to questioning about tensions within households and the rise of gender-based violence, including within the home (eg Grierson, 2021 ; Usta, Murr, & El-Jarrah, 2021)

Taking self-worth as a specific is important as it was noticeably so in this study, but that is not to deny classical concerns around worker/parent conflict. The point is that it becomes perfectly possible to question one's worth, so self-worth, as both a parent and a worker. Srivastava (2007) has argued simply that "Work and family cannot be considered as separate entities". There can be specifics, for example around time allocation between competing work and family priorities. That is practical. But something deeper can arise, feelings of guilt, noted by 11% of the Srivastava (2007) respondents. Those can arise out of the allocation choices made.

The Srivastava (2007) respondents were employees. Webster and Zhang (2020) considered self-employed women offering their services through a Swedish online food

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platform called Yummy. These were highly motivated, highly entrepreneurial women, aiming to develop their businesses into significant income streams. They were family women too. Webster and Zhang (2020) argue that the women "are constantly negotiating tensions of starting businesses and balancing home life". Particularly "all women found it difficult to balance the unpredictable workload with other activities" (Webster & Zhang, 2020). Husbands' expectations were especially difficult. Some husbands were involved and supportive, others highly resistant. The gig work is not just that of technological engagement but very much involved in social context. Out of that the women's personal sense of validation becomes open to question and certainly individually context-driven.

Methodology

The research question for this study was "what motivates workers to have side-hustles?" and that was pursued through a mixed-method approach. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are present. The qualitative elements were very varied to include online and face to face discussion with participants, generally to a semi-structured format and always without hypotheses. There was also observation, the latter often a precursor to highly focussed interviewing. Equally observation was used in its own right, including literally watching as workers changed from one side hustle to another and between work and unemployment as the COVID-19 pandemic progressed.

Overall, the qualitative work was in the phenomenological tradition. It aimed for rich and detailed data, the gritty, messy lived experiences of participants as raw, unmediated by analysis as possible, goal free (Scriven,1991) on the part of the researcher, participants speaking for themselves, so a highly participant orientated part of the study, in fact as much as possible owned by the participants, not the researcher.

However highly desirable the range of qualitative contacts and contact types, including the highly informal, a core, a "backbone", of highly objective quantitative data was also pursued. This was done through questionnaires, with the questionnaire very much focused in a Likert scale for completion. The Likert, questioning very clearly, accurately and objectively, assesses motivations in having a side hustle or side hustles. The Likert scale, both questions and scoring possibilities, is shown below at table 3:

Table 3. Likert Scale of Motivation for Side-Hustles

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
To try something new			✓	
To have a hobby		✓		
To socialise				✓
To make money	✓			
To begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source.	✓			

To summarise the mixed methodology used in his study, the hope is to gain the broad sweep picture through the quantitative work whilst, also, gaining detail information and insights, with the information contextualised through the qualitative elements. The complexity of reality is not foregone. Put simply, following Jick (1979), the hope is that researchers can,

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by using a mixed-methodology, cancel out some of the disadvantages inherent in singular use of either quantitative or qualitative methodology.

One disadvantage in this study lay in the necessary choice of non-probability convenience sampling, but in alignment with the exploratory and mainly qualitative basis of the study. This included that snowballing was mobilised to actually locate those involved in side-hustling.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in processing of quantitative data, while qualitative data was processed manually. That said, qualitative data was held in a well-organised and highly retrievable way using Quirkos Computer Assisted Qualitative Data analysis software to produce a solid audit trail of the researcher's work.

Analysis

Whereas the research question for this study was simply what motivates workers to have side-hustles, inevitably there were conversational digressions in that participants wished to consider not only motivations brought up by the interviewer but other motivators and also get into some discussion of what can lay in the way of pursuit of the simplest of motivations, what complications and what reconciliations and compromises have to be made, what de-motivations have to be faced. However, through all these complexities there can be unexpected learning and unexpected rewards, for instance learning about the self and understanding the needs of others, for example within the family. New motivators may be found.

Given the complexities likely to be discussed in the phenomenological qualitative tradition, at the outset it was decided that there must also be a core, objective, quantitative element to the study, the straightforward research question simply and solidly reached. The questionnaire-based, quantitative element of the study involved twenty-four respondents, fifteen from UK, nine from Thailand. Questionnaires were completed between September and December 2021, contemporaneously with qualitative data-gathering. Details of the quantitative, questionnaire-based respondents are in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Gender, Age and Highest Education of respondents in side hustles quantitative survey

	Thailand	**UK**
Gender	1 Male 8 Female	7 Male 8 Female
Age	Age Range: 24-49 Median Value: 31 Modal Value: 29	Age Range: 21-67 Median Value: 45 Modal Value: 53
Highest Education	Range: High School - Postgraduate Modal Value: Undergraduate Degree	Range: Further Education - Postgraduate Modal Value: Undergraduate Degree

Ultimately table 4 is presented mainly to give readers a mental picture of the respondents. In fact analysis in terms of correlations and cross-tabs did not yield much statistically significant information on the interplay between variables in the quantitative study.

Non-parametric correlations for the Thai Age data were made using Spearman's Rho and no significant correlation was noted with other Likert data. For other Thai demographic aspects, Gender and Education, cross-tab analysis was made using Chi Square tests (Pearson).

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A significant relationship was noted between educational level and undertaking side hustles with a motive of their becoming full-time and a main source of income.

Non-parametric correlations for the UK Age data were made using Spearman's Rho and no significant correlation was noted with other Likert data. For other UK demographic aspects, Gender and Education, cross-tab analysis was made using Chi Square tests (Pearson). A significant relationship was noted between educational level and undertaking side hustles with a socialising aim.

Moving on from demographic considerations, questionnaires included a Likert scale-based question set requiring categorisation of participants' answers as strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree the question's proposition. The propositions as to side hustlers' motivations covered to try something new, to have a hobby, to socialise, to make money, to begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source. Table 5 gives the rank order of participants' answers for both Thailand and UK:

Table 5. Rank Order of Participants' answers on their motivations to undertake a side-hustle – Thailand and UK

	Thailand	**UK**
1	To make money	To make money
2	To try something new	To have a hobby
3	To begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source	To begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source
4	To have a hobby	To try something new
5	To socialise	To socialise

To make money was the prime motivation in both Thailand and UK among side-hustlers. To socialise was the least favoured motivation in both Thailand and UK. The third most favoured motivation out of five in both Thailand and UK was to begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source.

The themes of the quantitative Likert questioning were now taken for discussion with participants in the wider study. The movement into phenomenological, qualitative approaches introduced less structure with opportunity for a more timbred approach by participants, including more detailed storytelling.

Perhaps the most interesting information revealed lay in different interpretations of socialising as important in taking a side hustle, one conceptualisation networking, the other straightforwardly social such as interesting conversation. This difference is characterised in these participant quotes: "Social media (FB), linking with partners, talking about what I do nonstop to everyone I meet" (Male, UK). "I've had about 6 job offers in the past couple of weeks and I got them all just by chatting to some people at the pub, they have never seen me doing theatre work or seen my cv so especially in the theatre industry it's all about the soft skills for sure" (Female, UK). "To socialise" said a participant (Female, Thai). This was clarified as interesting, pleasant, conversation just as with the researcher at that moment.

Concerning having a hobby through their side hustle participants made these comments: "Practice my creativity skills. I want to have my first solo exhibition!" (Female, Thai). "I am at peace and at my happiest when I am making my own skin care products. Which makes me feel fulfilled being of service to people" (Female, UK). "I like the buzz of buying

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and selling whilst making a profit" (UK, Male). "The things I have chosen are much more fun and if I could make a permanent living doing them I would" (Male, UK). "Sometimes "this looks fun, might be worthwhile in the long term"" (Male, UK). "To hobby" - soap-maker (Female, Thai).

Turning to the variable of to begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source as a motivator in having a side hustle one participant had an unusual view: "The money from this is minimal (a few hundreds) but has always been about learning with the aspiration to apply lessons learnt to my own small business should I ever opt to open one. Have toyed with the idea but have enough plates to spin at the mo!" (Female, UK). More usual was: "The things I have chosen are much more fun and if I could make a permanent living doing them I would" (Male, UK).

In considering trying something new one young woman (Female, Thai) had a fascinating insight, saying that her need was to make money, which prompted the thought of trying something new and that developed into a (jewellery-making) hobby. She even argued that she herself was surprised as she has several friends who had a pre-existing hobby that they turned into a business. Another young woman (Female, UK) is using side work as a means to widen her experiences within her nursing profession, with differing assignments, and especially differing from her full-time assignment. One young woman (Female, Thai) perhaps summarised all these points "I think about to do something new, just want to get experience and make money also".

Making money was by far the greatest point made in discussion responses, thereby aligning with the quantitative date. The concerns to make money, sometimes only money, were nearly always stated without elaboration, elaboration presumably considered inappropriate. Some examples follow that are slightly more full: "Just money" (Female, UK). "It's purely out of financial need" (Female, Thai). "Mostly money" (Male, UK). "My retirement age plan" (Female, UK). "Extra money/pay my rent" (Male, UK).

So far discussion of qualitative responses has been repetitive with the themes covered by the quantitative study. However, new themes were introduced out of interaction with the qualitative participants, and also existing ones re-considered. The additional themes that evolved were concerned with enhancing consideration of self-worth through side-work and that brought forward reflection on parenting by some participants. On the last there can be negative impact of side hustles on parenting such as work/family conflicts over no or too little family time and children's homework (eg Srivastava, 2007). Participants in this research were not unappreciative of difficulties, but readily saw positives within the family and perhaps particularly relative to their children. Those positives became motivators toward side-hustles for the parents. Equally, though rising self-worth and empowerment was seen for the parent themselves. There was a substantial self-development strand to these thoughts. This caused scrutiny of the previous something new and hobby themes as there were undoubtedly elements in discussion under those that referred to self-development. Ultimately, though it was decided to keep those discrete themes due to alignment with the quantitative work.

Background to both of the themes self-worth and parenting may be taken from a lengthy quote from one participant in this study: "I know people who regard me as 'not working' and basically look down on me because I don't bring in an income. And who I will start to look more worthy to now I'm cramming in work and handing my child over to my mum a few hours a day. Being a parent is the hardest job I've ever done, with the longest hours. I don't get a break, even when I go to bed as I'm still usually up through the night" (Female, UK).

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Another participant, unknown to the first, in effect developed this theme as to why she followed a side-hustle: "To make me feel more real and engaged with society. To make me have a sense of self and feel that I am doing something worthwhile that will make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged people" (Female, UK). She added "Being a mum is not who I am but what I am. My job helps to complete me as a whole person".

Elsewhere in conversation this participant moved away from self-worth and personal development and toward parenting. She expressed this motivational aim: "To teach my child better about society and give him the better part of me. To teach him to aim high in life doesn't mean money or status but doing good and being the best person you can be at what you want to do" (Female UK). This clearly related to her own participation in society as she saw enabled through her part-time working.

Another participant offered a more simplified view of her side-hustle as offering "Regular income to provide my children and family (my full time clients ha!) with a stable home environment. Despite the 'side-hustle' being mentally exhausting at times due to complex nature of socio-politics at play, there is a high price tag attached to the role and it allows for many modern comforts (home, holidays/breaks, gigs, hobbies, etc)…… This really allows us to choose the educational facilities available to the boys/pay for what we deem to be a good fit in terms of schooling and nursery" (Female, UK)

A Thai participant (Female, Thai) took up that theme of the family being her full-time job, a family that includes four children. She feels she needs to be there for the children constantly, but the family income needs a boost through her earning. Her compromise is to run a prepared food and ingredients stall on the street for a few hours each evening. She is a well-qualified graduate, clearly not maximising her income or the benefits to the family as seen in the last example. Her route is to maximise her availability to the family.

Finally, a UK example may be instructive in the participant's particular concerns, but also, simply, that they include future orientation which was not generally coming over from the group of parents. The participant argued her motivation toward her side-hustle as "To have a career and identity beyond being a mother that I can continue when they have grown and left" (Female, UK).

Discussion

In the Analysis section above it was noted how in the relatively unstructured environment of qualitative interviewing participants were eager, often very eager, to put forward their own suggestions as to motivators toward side-hustles. They also added de-motivators. Two particular interests, allied with one another, very clearly emerged. Empowerment and self-development was one theme. Parenting was another theme. These themes were obviously dearly held in that they were put forward by participants themselves, but also indicated by some highly emotive language that participants used, now reproduced in the Analysis section.

The Introduction to this article is also, in places, highly emotive, albeit not of language but of content. Thousands of COVID-19 deaths and casualties are mentioned for both Thailand and UK.

However, COVID-19 was only ever mentioned in passing by participants. It was never developed sufficiently by participants to be labelled a theme. Several participants lost their jobs (one initially suffering reduced hours) through COVID-19. Yet more were self-employed and simply could not find contracts as COVID-19 and lockdowns gripped both Thailand and UK. Discussion with wedding planners and a lighting designer come readily to mind. Another, oppositely, was only drawn to self-employment as she could not get work as an employee during

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the pandemic, having accompanied her husband to a new job overseas (in Thailand). The list of types of work involved was varied and covered both Thailand and UK. In UK furloughing was also prominent.

The relative silence about COVID-19, which affected people's work life, is at first seemingly perplexing. There was no circumstantial or processual elaboration, no taking the opportunity to offer their COVID-19 story. Cold hard facts were presented in a few words: "The factory laid me off".

Much academic work has been undertaken on the meaning of silence in conversation, dating from around the work of Jaworski (1993) and arguably focused in linguistics, though to include semiology. Without the elaboration mentioned the concern is that something important might be missed in the pure academic sense or for future applied action. Maybe COVID-19 labour market experiences imply valuable changes in approach by banks and fintechs in anticipation of labour market volatility, with the concomitant of earnings volatility?

All this said, the whole point propounded by recent writers on silence is precisely that silence actually speaks, sometimes loudly (eg Murray & Durrheim, 2019). In other words, the concentration of this thread of recent researches, linguistics based, has been on the communicative value of silence. Equally, though, there can be other bases for silence or relative silence.

Saving face may be a particularly obvious example, especially in very face-concerned Asian societies such as China, Japan and Thailand. Brill (2010) has offered that "Saving Face signifies a desire—or defines a strategy—to avoid humiliation or embarrassment, to maintain dignity or preserve reputation". A very simple version can be that what you avoid committing to, you cannot be held to account for, loose face over. Keeping quiet over intentions can be an obvious commonsense. Likewise revealing personal history in general may invite negative response, so why do it, including over COVID-19 history and employment history during the pandemic?

Turning now from what was not articulated during this survey to what was the most obvious starting point is the themes that participants themselves put forward, parenting and empowerment/self-development. To summarise the gist of what was being said the desire was to elevate self-worth through being considered to have social value. The latter appears to be aligned by participants with working outside of parenting and the family, a full-blown member of society, with economic productivity being part of the contribution. There were open statements of alienation. One parent, already mentioned, wondered what for her when her children grew older and left home. All comments flagged issues for the young women (no males commented) to address, but also something for the wider society to address from how worth is so often considered in terms of income-earning or at least job title. The descriptor "parent" does not seem valued or at least that is how it appeared to these young women, although responsible for the health, welfare and development of the basic building block of society, the family.

Specifically on parenting there appeared anxiety among survey participants as per the findings of Srivastava (2007), that is in reconciling the demands of family and work life, for instance finding time to help children with homework. For parents in this survey it all came down to a choice to accent being with children or providing for them. In the survey the latter meant providing a high-quality life in terms of education and activities. Sadly this choice brought out in this this survey related to the participant demographics but not all demographics. Many parents in Thailand do not have choice, having to take whatever work is available, whenever available, to support the most basic life for their families, with, from discussion, school fees coming particularly hard.

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Moving to the more straightforward data, directly derived from the simple research question what motivates workers to have side-hustles it is to be again noted that data collection was addressed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the former case a Likert scale was a major element in the questionnaire adopted. It had respondents consider five potential motivations toward informal, gig and part-time work. The propositions as to side hustlers' motivations covered to try something new, to have a hobby, to socialise, to make money, to begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source. Respondents answers might be to strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree the listed motivation. To make money was the prime motivation in both Thailand and UK among side-hustlers. To socialise was the least favoured motivation in both Thailand and UK. The third most favoured motivation out of five in both Thailand and UK was to begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source.

Conclusions

- Results from this study could not have been clearer, and very similar for both Thailand and UK. Side-hustlers were most motivated by money and least motivated by sociability. To begin a business that will become full-time and a main income source was placed third in rank order of motivations in both countries. The reference there is the quantitative Likert. The qualitative work again found money a strong primary motivation, though sociability was more elevated by some participants than in the quantitative part of the study.
- The study successfully located broadly similar groups for participation at both locations, particularly in terms of educational profile. Perhaps similarity of results arises out of that. But, of course demographics went unrepresented or under-represented, the latter including men, particularly Thai men. Future research needs to be undertaken involving different demographics and enabling comparisons between demographics. Likewise different locations must be surveyed.
- As any survey, this study was limited in terms of time and place. Other times and places might produce different results. That may be particularly true in that an aim in this study was specifically exceptionalist, namely undertaking the study during the COVID-19 pandemic. What differences might there be in other, more usual, times has to be tested by future researchers.
- At the least COVID-19 made data collection more difficult and less balanced. In Thailand face to face collection was the norm even for quantitative questionnaires. Respondents in Thailand were effectively walked through even the quantitative questionnaires. Qualitative data collection in Thailand was through face to face interview. References to observations being made and noted were very real, as was collection of conversation snippets, but only in Thailand. Visiting UK had to be abandoned, mainly due to issues getting back into Thailand. The upshot was that data collection for UK was singularly digital, albeit involving a variety of tools.
- Completely beyond the scope of this enquiry but researchers must and will consider public policy generated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the labour market as a particular case in point. Meant there is a temporal element in that maybe this reflective, "what learned" approach is properly undertaken in the longer term when less in the eye of the storm, frankly, even less emotionally involved. That said it may be noted that already there appears some interest in different outcomes in USA and

Japanese labour markets as potentially resultant upon differing public policy during the pandemic.

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