

# Job Satisfaction and Career Growth Opportunities for Gig-Based Virtual Assistants in Bicol Region

Karen Joy A. Sapico

Graduate School, School of Business and Accountancy, University of Nueva Caceres, Naga City, Philippines

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100300500>

Received: 23 March 2026; Accepted: 28 March 2026; Published: 14 April 2026

## ABSTRACT

This study examined job satisfaction, perceived career growth opportunities, and challenges experienced by gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive research design, data were collected from 60 virtual assistants through structured questionnaires. Job satisfaction was measured in terms of compensation, autonomy, and work–life balance, while career growth opportunities were assessed through training, skill development, and advancement prospects. Results revealed that respondents were generally satisfied with compensation (WM = 3.65) and work–life balance (WM = 3.52), while autonomy showed a moderate level of satisfaction (WM = 3.40). Career growth opportunities were positively perceived, particularly in training and skill development, although advancement pathways were less clearly defined. Among the challenges, workload management emerged as the most significant concern, followed by communication barriers and misaligned client expectations. The findings indicate that while virtual assistant work provides flexibility and income opportunities, improvements in workload management, communication systems, and structured career pathways are necessary to enhance long-term sustainability. The study contributes to the growing literature on gig economy employment by providing localized insights and practical recommendations for virtual assistants and stakeholders.

**Keywords:** job satisfaction, virtual assistants, gig economy, career growth, workload management

## INTRODUCTION

The gig economy has significantly transformed labor markets by enabling flexible and remote work arrangements. In the Philippines, the rise of virtual assistants (VAs) has contributed to employment opportunities, particularly in regions with limited traditional job markets. Despite its growth, concerns remain regarding job satisfaction, career progression, and sustainability in gig-based work.

Previous studies have highlighted that while gig work offers autonomy and flexibility, it often lacks job security and structured career pathways (Wood et al., 2021). Additionally, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model suggests that excessive workload and insufficient resources may lead to burnout and reduced satisfaction (Demerouti et al., 2001). Meanwhile, Social Cognitive Career Theory emphasizes the importance of skill development and perceived opportunities in shaping career growth (Lent et al., 1994).

This study aims to assess job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, and challenges experienced by gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region, providing insights for improving sustainability in this emerging workforce.

## Research Objectives

This study aimed to assess the level of job satisfaction among virtual assistants in Bicol Region, in terms of compensation, autonomy, and work-life balance; to examine the perceived career growth opportunities available to virtual assistants in Bicol Region including training, skill development, and opportunities for advancement; to determine the common-related challenges encountered by virtual assistants, including workload management, communication barriers, and client expectations and to develop a strategic framework designed to enhance job satisfaction and facilitate sustainable career growth for virtual assistants operating within the gig economy.

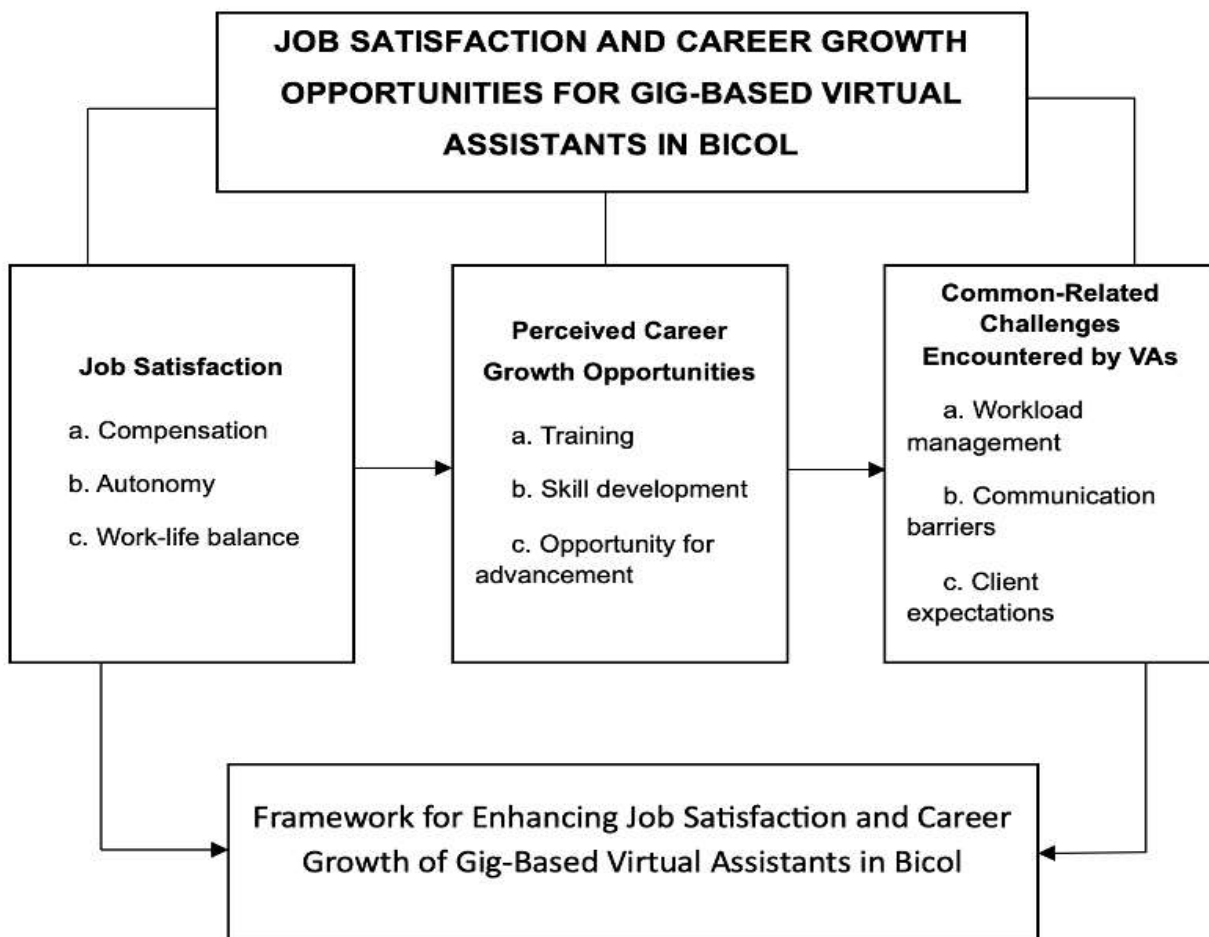
## Scope and Delimitation

This study examined the job satisfaction and career growth opportunities of gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region, Philippines. It focused on job satisfaction in terms of compensation, autonomy, and work–life balance, and career growth opportunities in terms of training, skill development, and advancement. It also identified common challenges, including workload management, communication barriers, and client expectations. The respondents consisted of 60 virtual assistants residing in the Bicol Region with at least six months of experience. A quantitative-descriptive design was employed using a structured questionnaire to collect data on the identified variables. The study was limited to virtual assistants within the Bicol Region and excluded other gig workers and freelancers outside this field. It did not include respondents outside the region.

## THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory. Herzberg’s theory explains that job satisfaction is influenced by motivators such as autonomy and growth and hygiene factors such as compensation, where motivators enhance satisfaction while hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction. SCCT explains career growth through self-efficacy and learning opportunities, while JD-R theory emphasizes the balance between job demands such as workload and job resources such as autonomy.

The conceptual framework posits that job satisfaction (compensation, autonomy, work–life balance) influences career growth opportunities (training, skill development, advancement), while work-related challenges (workload management, communication barriers, client expectations) affect both variables.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

---

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology section presents the research design, respondents, data gathering tools, data collection procedure, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations of the study.

### Research Design

The study employed a quantitative-descriptive research design to provide a comprehensive understanding of job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, and challenges among gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region. Quantitative research focuses on collecting numerical data and analyzing it using statistical methods to describe patterns and trends. Descriptive research is appropriate for presenting the current conditions of the respondents, including their level of job satisfaction, perceived career growth opportunities, and encountered challenges. It allows the researcher to systematically describe characteristics of a population without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

### Respondents/Participants of the Study

The respondents consisted of 60 gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region, selected using purposive sampling. This method was chosen to ensure that all participants met the inclusion criteria, particularly having at least six months of experience in virtual assistant work. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate because it allows the selection of respondents who have relevant knowledge and experience related to the study. This ensures that the data collected are aligned with the objectives of the research and reflect the actual experiences of virtual assistants.

### Data Gathering Tools

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, and work-related challenges of gig-based virtual assistants in Bicol Region.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher administered a structured survey questionnaire to the identified virtual assistants in the Bicol Region to collect quantitative data on job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, and work-related challenges. Prior to data collection, the instrument was subjected to expert validation, and reliability testing yielded acceptable internal consistency. The researcher ensured proper coordination during data collection to maximize response accuracy and completeness. Upon retrieval, the responses were systematically checked, coded, and organized to facilitate statistical analysis. This procedure ensured that the data gathered were reliable, consistent, and suitable for quantitative interpretation.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data gathered in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to address the research objectives, consistent with quantitative research procedures described by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Descriptive statistics are appropriate for organizing and summarizing numerical data to identify patterns and trends within a population. To determine the level of job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, and work-related challenges, the weighted mean was employed. The weighted mean is widely used in survey research to compute average responses based on assigned scale values, providing a more precise representation of respondents' perceptions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The computed values were interpreted using a Likert scale to determine the level or extent of each variable.

### Ethical Considerations

This study involved the participation of selected virtual assistants in the Bicol Region. The researcher ensured that all ethical standards were strictly observed, particularly in maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents by protecting all collected information and using it solely for academic purposes. Prior to data

collection, respondents were provided with clear information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study. Informed consent was obtained to ensure that participation was voluntary and based on a full understanding of the study. No form of coercion was involved in the recruitment of participants. Respondents were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The researcher upheld ethical principles such as voluntary participation, data privacy, and respect for participants to ensure the integrity and credibility of the research process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of the data gathered on job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, and challenges experienced by gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region.

### Level of Job Satisfaction among Virtual Assistants in the Bicol Region

Table 1: Job Satisfaction of Virtual Assistants

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Compensation	3.65	Highly Satisfied
Autonomy	3.40	Satisfied
Work-Life Balance	3.52	Highly Satisfied
Overall	3.49	Satisfied

The findings revealed that virtual assistants generally reported a high level of job satisfaction, particularly in terms of compensation and work–life balance. This suggests that the flexibility and earning potential associated with virtual assistant work contribute positively to overall satisfaction. Remote work arrangements are often linked to improved well-being and reduced stress due to flexible schedules and the elimination of commuting. However, autonomy was rated at a moderate level, indicating that while virtual assistants experience some degree of independence, their work is still influenced by client expectations and task requirements. This implies that autonomy in gig work may be present but not absolute, as control is often shared between the worker and the client.

### Perceived Career Growth Opportunities among Virtual Assistants in the Bicol Region

Table 2: Career Growth Opportunities

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Training Opportunities	3.55	Highly Satisfied
Skill Development	3.50	Highly Satisfied
Advancement Opportunities	3.30	Satisfied
Overall	3.45	Satisfied

The results showed that virtual assistants perceived positive career growth opportunities, particularly in terms of training and skill development. This indicates that respondents recognize the importance of continuous learning and upskilling in maintaining competitiveness in the gig economy. However, opportunities for advancement were rated relatively lower compared to other indicators. This suggests that while virtual assistants can improve their skills, there are limited structured pathways for career progression. This finding aligns with existing studies indicating that gig workers often experience growth through skills rather than formal promotions

### Common Challenges Encountered by Virtual Assistants in the Bicol Region

Table 3: Challenges Encountered

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Workload Management	3.60	Highly Challenging
Communication Barriers	3.45	Challenging

Client Expectations	3.40	Challenging
Overall	3.45	Challenging

The findings identified workload management as the most significant challenge among virtual assistants. This indicates that handling multiple clients and tasks can create pressure and difficulty in maintaining efficiency and balance.

Communication barriers also emerged as a notable challenge, particularly in coordinating with clients across different time zones and relying on virtual communication tools. Differences in communication styles and the absence of face-to-face interaction may contribute to misunderstandings and delays.

Additionally, client expectations were identified as another key concern, as unclear instructions and changing requirements can affect performance and productivity. These challenges highlight the complexities of working in a remote, client-driven environment.

### **Strategic Framework for Enhancing Job Satisfaction and Career Growth of Virtual Assistants in the Bicol Region**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher developed the G.R.O.W. Strategic Framework to enhance job satisfaction and support sustainable career growth among gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region. The framework is anchored on the key results of the study, particularly on job satisfaction factors, perceived career growth opportunities, and the common challenges experienced by virtual assistants. It provides structured and practical strategies that address the identified gaps in compensation, autonomy, work–life balance, training, and work-related challenges.

**Economic Sustainability Pillar.** This pillar focuses on ensuring stable and sustainable income among virtual assistants. It is anchored on the finding that respondents reported high satisfaction in compensation, yet still face challenges related to workload and income consistency. In the short term, virtual assistants are encouraged to improve income stability by enhancing pricing strategies, negotiating fair compensation, and increasing client diversification. Skill specialization is also emphasized to enable access to higher-paying opportunities. From a sustainability perspective, economic stability ensures continuous participation in gig work and reduces financial vulnerability. In the long term, strengthening income streams, improving rate structures, and maintaining consistent client acquisition contribute to financial resilience and sustainable career development.

**Social and Professional Sustainability Pillar.** This pillar emphasizes well-being, work–life balance, and continuous professional development. It is anchored on the findings that virtual assistants experience high work–life balance satisfaction, but encounter challenges in workload management, communication, and unclear client expectations. In the short term, virtual assistants are encouraged to establish clear work boundaries, improve communication practices, and engage in continuous learning through training and skill development. These actions enhance both personal well-being and professional competence. From a sustainability standpoint, maintaining work–life balance and strong professional relationships supports long-term engagement and reduces burnout. In the long term, continuous skill enhancement, effective communication, and balanced work practices lead to improved job satisfaction, career growth, and professional stability.

**Institutional Sustainability Pillar.** This pillar focuses on strengthening structural support systems that influence virtual assistants’ work environment. It is anchored on the finding that career advancement opportunities remain less defined, indicating the need for better support mechanisms and structured career pathways.

In the short term, virtual assistants are encouraged to utilize available platforms, networks, and training institutions to access learning opportunities and professional support. Establishing clear agreements with clients and using structured workflows also improves work conditions.

From a sustainability perspective, institutional support enhances career continuity and professional legitimacy. In the long term, improved access to training programs, clearer career pathways, and stronger platform or community support contribute to sustainable career progression and long-term success in the gig economy.

---

## Limitations of the Study

The study was based on self-reported responses from virtual assistants, which may involve some degree of bias or inaccuracy in the data. The limited number of respondents (60 participants) also restricts the extent to which the findings can be generalized to a broader population. Furthermore, the study did not explore long-term career development or evolving work conditions, as the data reflect only a single period of observation.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, and work-related challenges experienced by gig-based virtual assistants in the Bicol Region. The findings provide meaningful insights into the dynamics and sustainability of virtual assistant work within the gig economy.

1. Virtual assistants exhibit an overall positive level of job satisfaction, primarily influenced by compensation and work-life balance. However, the moderate level of autonomy suggests that flexibility in gig work remains conditional, as control over work processes continues to be shaped by client demands and task requirements.
2. Career growth is predominantly skill-driven rather than structurally defined. While training and skill development are strongly perceived, the relatively lower rating of advancement opportunities indicates the absence of formalized career pathways, highlighting the self-directed nature of progression in gig-based employment.
3. Career advancement in virtual assistant work is non-linear and individually driven. The limited visibility of structured promotion pathways implies that progression depends largely on specialization, continuous learning, and the ability to translate competencies into higher-value opportunities.
4. Workload management remains the most significant operational challenge, followed by coordination difficulties inherent in remote work settings and inconsistencies in client expectations. These challenges underscore the complexity of managing multiple clients, navigating virtual communication environments, and adapting to diverse client demands.
5. The long-term sustainability of virtual assistant careers depends on balancing flexibility with structured work practices. While gig work offers income generation and professional development opportunities, sustained success requires effective workload management, clear communication, and continuous skill enhancement to remain competitive in a dynamic labor market.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarizes the conclusions of the findings from the data gathered.

1. **Enhancing Work Autonomy through Structured Client Management.** Virtual assistants are encouraged to strengthen their autonomy by implementing structured client management practices, including setting clear work boundaries, defining deliverables, and negotiating task expectations. Since autonomy was only moderately perceived, improving control over work processes can enhance decision-making efficiency and overall job satisfaction.
2. **Continuous Investment in Skill Development and Professional Training.** Virtual assistants should continuously engage in relevant training programs and skill development initiatives to sustain competitiveness in the gig economy. Given that training and skill development were highly perceived growth opportunities, strengthening competencies can further improve performance quality and access to higher-value work opportunities.
3. **Establishing Clear Career Direction and Specialization.** Virtual assistants are advised to define a clear career pathway by identifying areas of specialization and setting long-term professional goals. Considering that

advancement opportunities were less evident, developing niche expertise can serve as an alternative pathway for career progression and increased earning potential.

4. **Improving Workload Management and Communication Practices.** To address the most significant challenges identified, virtual assistants should adopt structured workload management strategies such as task prioritization, scheduling systems, and realistic deadline setting. In addition, enhancing communication practices, particularly in managing client expectations and clarifying instructions, can minimize misunderstandings and improve productivity in remote work environments.
5. **Promoting Sustainable Work Practices for Long-Term Career Growth.** Virtual assistants should maintain a balanced approach to workload, communication, and continuous development to ensure sustainable career growth. Since workload management, communication barriers, and client expectations significantly affect job satisfaction, consistent application of these practices is essential for long-term stability and professional success in the gig economy.

## REFERENCES

1. Fiers, F. (2024). Digital skills in the gig economy. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(5). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmae014>
2. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2021). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.) 31. 75-77. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.20258>.
3. Kässä, O., & Lehdonvirta, V. (2021). Online labour index: Measuring the online gig economy for policy and research. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 137, 241–248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2018.07.056>
4. Graham, M., & Anwar, M. A. (2021). The global gig economy: Towards a planetary labour market? *First Monday*, 24(4). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v24i4.9913>
5. George, A. S. (2024). Gig economy 2.0: Examining how smart technologies could revolutionize on-demand work. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13334926>
6. Sarmiento, A. G. (2025). The labor market transitions of young workers. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(9), 622–635. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.268>
7. Wood, A. J., Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., & Hjorth, I. (2021). Good gig, bad gig: Autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy. *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(1), 56–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018785616>
8. Heeks, R. (2021). Decent work and the digital gig economy: A developing country perspective. *Development Informatics Working Paper Series*.
9. Sutherland, W., Jarrahi, M. H., Dunn, M., & Nelson, S. B. (2020). Work precarity and gig literacies in online freelancing. *Work, Employment and Society*, 34(3), 457–475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017019886511>
10. Niebuhr, F., Borle, P., Börner-Zobel, F., & Voelter-Mahlknecht, S. (2022). Healthy and happy working from home? Effects on job satisfaction. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1122. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19031122>
11. Qiu, F., & Dauth, T. (2022). Virtual work intensity and job satisfaction. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, 36(1), 77–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2397002221998227>
12. García-Salirrosas, E. E., Rondon-Eusebio, R. F., Geraldo-Campos, L. A., & Acevedo-Duque, Á. (2023). Job satisfaction in remote work. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(11), 916. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13110916>
13. Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79–122. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027>
14. Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands–resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499–512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499>
15. Buonomo, I., De Vincenzi, C., Pansini, M., D’Anna, F., & Benevene, P. (2024). Work–life balance in remote work. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21(6), 770. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21060770>