

Research Article

Bridging the Gap between Local Freelancers and Job Opportunities in Malaysia: The Case of Hi Freelancer System

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Abstract: In recent years, the freelance industry has witnessed substantial expansion and development, offering individuals flexible work arrangements and greater control over their careers. However, freelancers face various challenges, including income uncertainty, client acquisition, and payment issues. To address these challenges, the Hi Freelancer System was developed as a centralized platform that connects freelancers and clients in an efficient manner. The system focuses on services such as photography, graphic design, copywriting, translation, videography, and web design, providing freelancers with a platform to showcase their skills, attract clients, and secure projects. The project aims to facilitate effective freelancer searches, cater to the needs of local freelancers (particularly recent graduates), and create opportunities for individuals who struggle in the traditional labor market. The development of the Hi Freelancer System follows the System Development Life Cycle (SDLC), encompassing planning, analysis, design, implementation, and maintenance phases. The system's interface design is carefully crafted to enhance user experience and optimize usability. The Hi Freelancer System has significant impacts, offering numerous job prospects for recent graduates and unemployed individuals, empowering freelancers to showcase their skills, find clients, and secure projects, contributing to economic growth and reducing unemployment rates. In terms of commercialization potential, the Hi Freelancer System addresses the gap in the Malaysian freelancing market and provides a comprehensive platform for remote professional services. With further development, promotion, and expansion, the system has the potential to attract a wide user base, generate revenue through service fees or subscriptions, and expand to other regions. Overall, the Hi Freelancer System serves as a solution to freelancers' challenges, improves the efficiency of freelance business operations, and has the potential to stimulate economic growth and job creation.

Keywords: Freelancer system; Freelancer; Bridging the Gap.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The freelance industry has grown significantly in recent years due to the emergence of the gig economy and advancements in digital technology. This situation has led to the development of a new

model of employment in the labor market, which has also affected employment and labor laws (Kadnichanskaya & Galkina, 2020). The shift in employment has created new opportunities for individuals seeking flexible work arrangements and more control over their careers.

In addition, this working style enables freelancers to successfully manage their personal and professional obligations, resulting in a work-life balance (Alvarez, Cecchinato, Rooksby & Newbold, 2023). From another perspective, the freelance industry offers the unemployed the opportunity to use their talents and knowledge to generate income to sustain their standard of living. This can be the first step towards their survival, which could enable them to grow into a powerful business and eventually create work possibilities for others.

However, freelancers face various difficulties in their pursuit of independent work. One of the primary challenges is the uncertainty of income and job stability. Unlike traditional employees with fixed salaries, freelancers often experience fluctuations in their earnings. Additionally, freelancers must continually seek and secure new clients and projects, which requires ongoing marketing efforts and networking. It takes a lot of effort and time to constantly promote oneself and keep up a good reputation. Another risk freelancers face is the potential for non-payment or late payment from clients, which can disrupt their cash flow and financial stability.

According to the findings of a study in which 40 managers were interviewed, the use of software is useful enough to assist business processes (Alsulami, 2022). This applies to the freelance business as well, where the use of software or information systems is considered a powerful tool for improving and optimizing business operations. Information systems can help a business become more efficient and competitive by managing information from both its internal and external environments (Triantafyllou, 2022). The e-marketplace is a great and effective solution that facilitates closer interaction between buyers and sellers (Martins, Brandão, Alvelos & Silva, 2020) however, the software development stage needs to be carefully planned to meet the needs of both parties.

A research conducted in 2013 which examined popular online freelance marketplace websites found a lack of information on the Malaysian online economy (Kazi, Yusoff, Khan & Kazi, 2014). This highlights the absence of a proper freelancing system in Malaysia compared to developed countries like the USA and the UK. While freelance websites globally provide comprehensive platforms for remote professional services, only a few local platforms in Malaysia offer job postings and profile submissions for freelancers. These platforms mainly focus on errand-related tasks, but some skilled individuals in specific fields use personal websites for self-promotion (Ramesh, Krishna Moorthy, Baharudin & Karkonasasi, 2016). This paper will explore the development of an application called Hi Freelancer System which is designed to bolster the freelance industry in Malaysia thereby creating numerous job prospects for recent graduates and individuals who are currently unemployed.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Hi Freelancer System is a centralized hub where freelancers can showcase their skills, expertise, and services to attract clients and secure projects. It facilitates an efficient and seamless collaboration between freelancers and clients, promoting opportunities for remote work and job flexibility. Initially, the system supported services such as photography, graphic design, copywriting, translation, videography, and web design. Users can select desired services and specify their preferred location, enabling them to book freelancers for services on demand.

2.1 Project Objectives

The objectives of the application is:

- i. to establish a system that facilitates effective searching for freelancers.
- ii. to introduce a system that caters to the needs of local freelancers, particularly recent graduates, based on their specific skills.
- iii. to develop a system for freelancers who may be left out by the rigidity of the conventional labor market.

2.2 Project Scope

As a starting point, the scope of the project is focusing on the community in Sabah, the second largest state in Malaysia with a variety of ethnic groups, including the Bajau, Chinese, Kadazan, Malays and more. The system features include "freelancer profiles" where freelancers can create comprehensive profiles highlighting their skills, experience and portfolio. Next, the system permits "service selection" option, allowing users the flexibility to choose from a range of services offered by freelancers on the platform. Users also have the ability to specify their preferred location through the "location preference" feature, facilitating the search for freelancers in their desired area. Following the completion of services, the system incorporates a "feedback and ratings" feature, to maintain transparency and build trust within the community. Finally, the system provides "secure payment" functionality, enabling users to confirm bookings and make payments in a secure manner.

3. METHODOLOGY

The development of Hi Freelancer System is using the System Development Life Cycle (SDLC) which comprises five phases from planning to maintenance. Figure 1 shows the overall phases in SDLC.

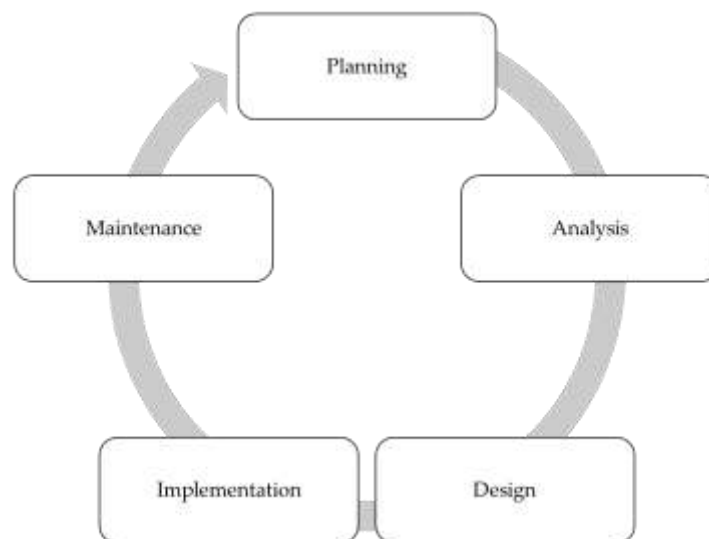


Figure 1. System Development Life Cycle (SDLC)

3.1 Planning

In the planning phase of this project, a detailed work plan was created to enhance and develop the system. This involved creating a project schedule, identifying target users, estimating expenses and more. The application's scope and objectives were clearly defined as well as methodology of the project. The next step involved identifying and evaluating system risks and defining the tools to be used in the development process. Risks associated with the project need to be identified and addressed to ensure the system's quality (Ibe Samuel, 2015).

3.2 Analysis

In the analysis phase, the current existing systems were examined. The process involved identifying system requirements, organizing them based on their relationship and identifying design alternatives (Valacich, George & Hoffer, 2004). The developer team studied the system needs through user feedback among freelancers. The existing manual and automated processes were comprehensively examined to identify areas for improvement or replacement. The team provided a recommended alternative solution as the output of this phase. The analysis phase also included justifications for the chosen system and explanations of alternative systems. A data flow diagram (DFD) was developed to illustrate the system's processes, together with the business process flows.

3.3 Design

In the design stage, a working model of the software program was created after completing the first two phases of the SDLC. The design included a user interface that outlined how users interacted with the software and how it responded to input and programming. It involved not only selecting the programming language but also determining the methods and techniques for solving problems and performing tasks within the system. For the Hi Freelancer System, the design phase utilized Entity Relationship Diagrams (ERD) to illustrate the relationships between different system entities. ERD employed data modeling techniques to establish business processes and establish the basis for a relational database.

3.4 Implementation

In the implementation phase, information is put into the system and kept up-to-date. The programming code is created based on earlier steps. This phase continues until the system starts producing data that meets user requirements. The system's performance is assessed based on the goals set during the planning phase. The Hi Freelancer System development utilizes several software tools and platforms to support its functionality. These tools include Laragon, MySQL, phpMyAdmin, Sublime Text, and Visual Studio Code.

3.5 Maintenance

During this phase, the information was carefully amended and improved. The system's adjustments were made to meet the user's requirements. It was important to address any remaining flaws. Usually when the information system is fully operational, ongoing maintenance is required to ensure continuous improvement (Bydrec, 2021).

4. PROJECT INTERFACE DESIGN

The Hi Freelancer System interface design focuses on creating a user-friendly and efficient platform that enables smooth interaction between freelancers and clients. The design elements are carefully crafted to enhance usability and optimize the overall user experience. Additionally, the system incorporates simple design elements and employs soothing color schemes that are easy on the eyes.

4.1 Homepage Interface

The homepage serves as the entry point to the system, providing an overview of the platform's features, services, and benefits. It presents a visually appealing and intuitive layout to attract users. The menu bar provided includes a dashboard, find freelancer, manage booking and account menu. Figure 2 shows the homepage interface for the Hi Freelancer System.



Figure 2. Homepage Interface

4.2 Registration Interface

This interface allows new users to create an account by providing necessary details such as name, phone number, email address, region and password. It ensures a smooth and straightforward registration process, guiding users through the required steps. Figure 3 displays a simple interface for users creating new accounts and Figure 4 displays the user profile, containing basic information of the user.

Figure 3. Registration Interface

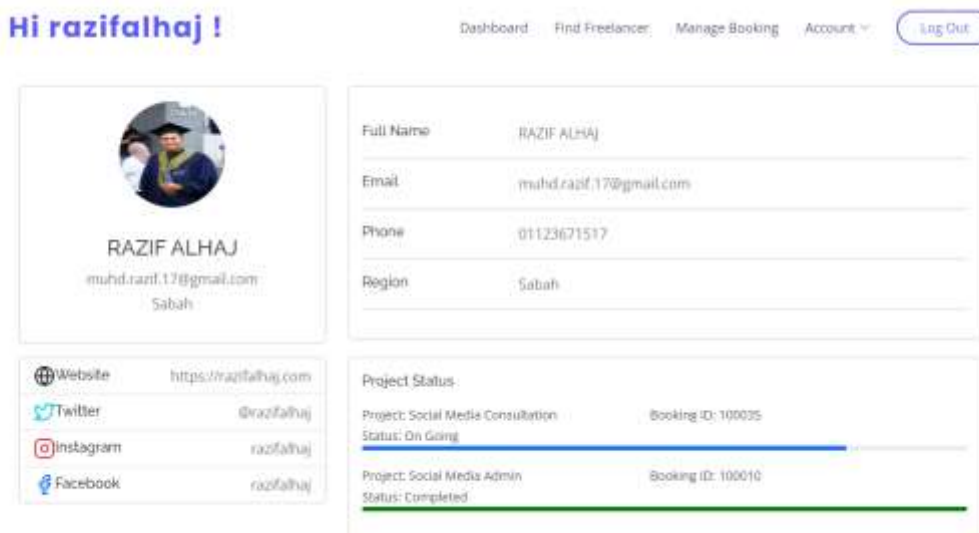


Figure 4. User Profile Interface

4.3 Find Freelancer Interface

This interface enables clients to search and browse through a database of freelancers based on service categories. Users can view freelancer profiles, detailed services, price range and the region coverage to make final decisions. Figure 5 depicts the list of freelancer service categories. As for Figure 6, it shows the suggested freelancers for the user. User may click the 'Hire Now' button to proceed with booking process.

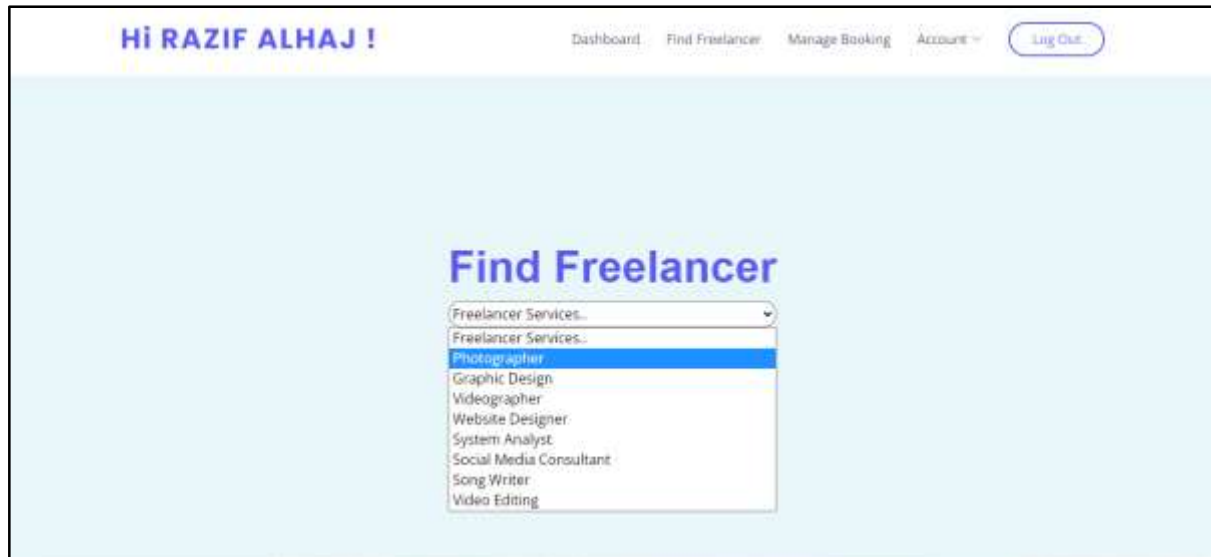


Figure 5. Find Freelancer Interface

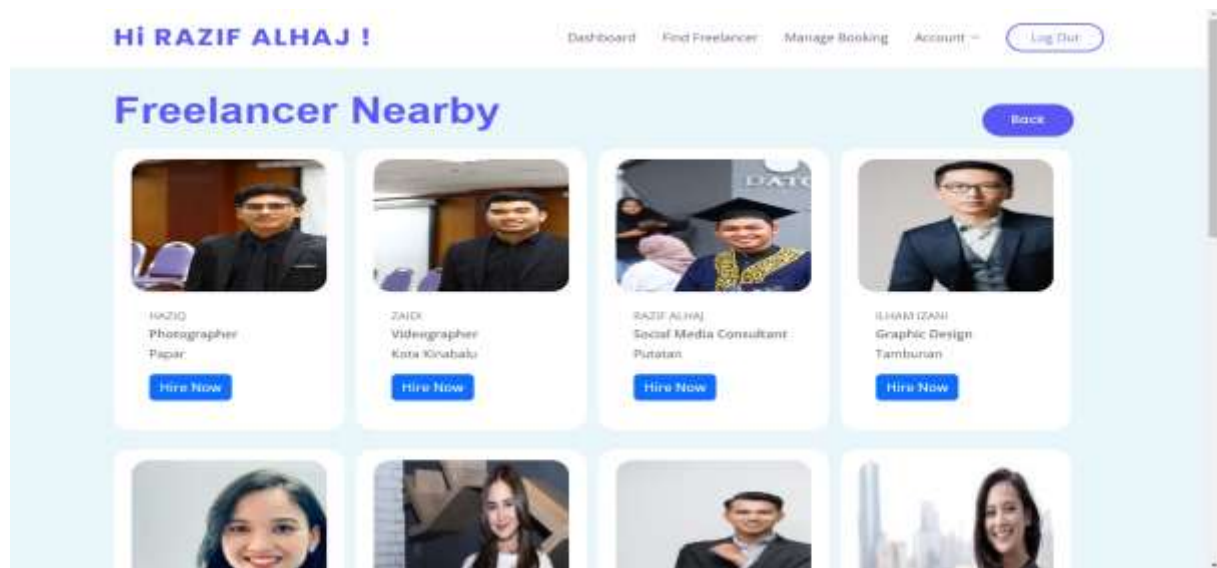


Figure 6. Manage Booking Interface

4.4 Booking Interface

The booking interface allows clients to select a freelancer, specify project details, and request their services. The clients will specify the booking date and venue. Figure 7 illustrates the booking interface of the system.

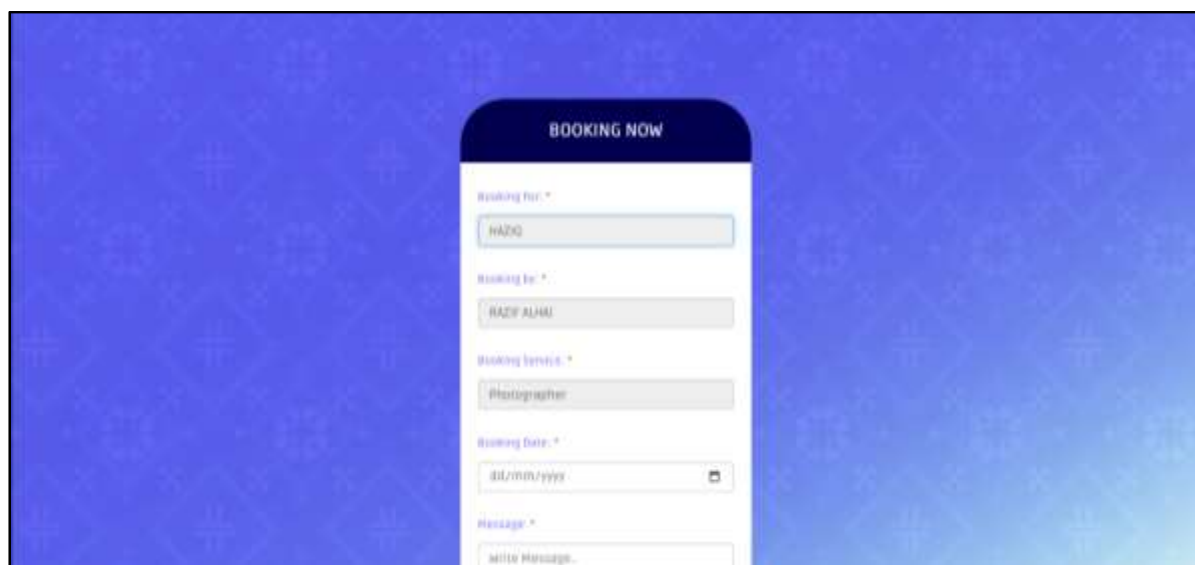


Figure 7. Booking Interface

4.5 Manage Booking Interface

This interface is designed for clients to manage their bookings. Clients can view the details of their bookings and the payment status. In Figure 8, we can see the booking details for Booking ID 00005.

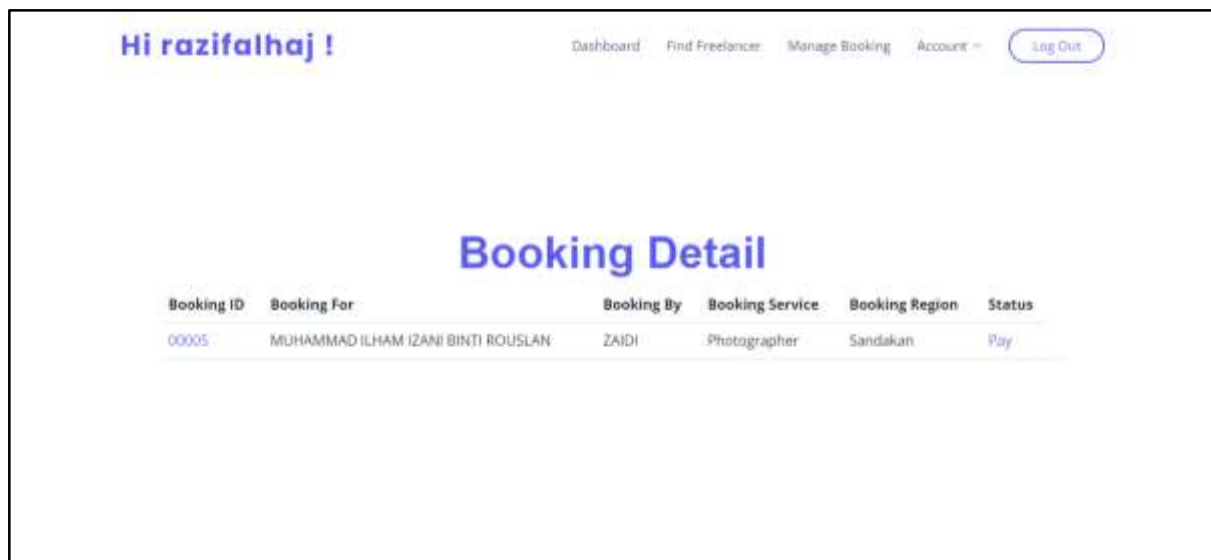


Figure 8. Manage Booking Interface

4.6 Freelancing Registration Interface

This interface is specifically designed for freelancers to create profiles and showcase their skills, experience, and portfolio. Upon the registration completion, the system enables freelancers to provide detailed information about their expertise, rates, availability, and previous work samples. The image in Figure 9 displays several data that should be presented for the purpose of registration.

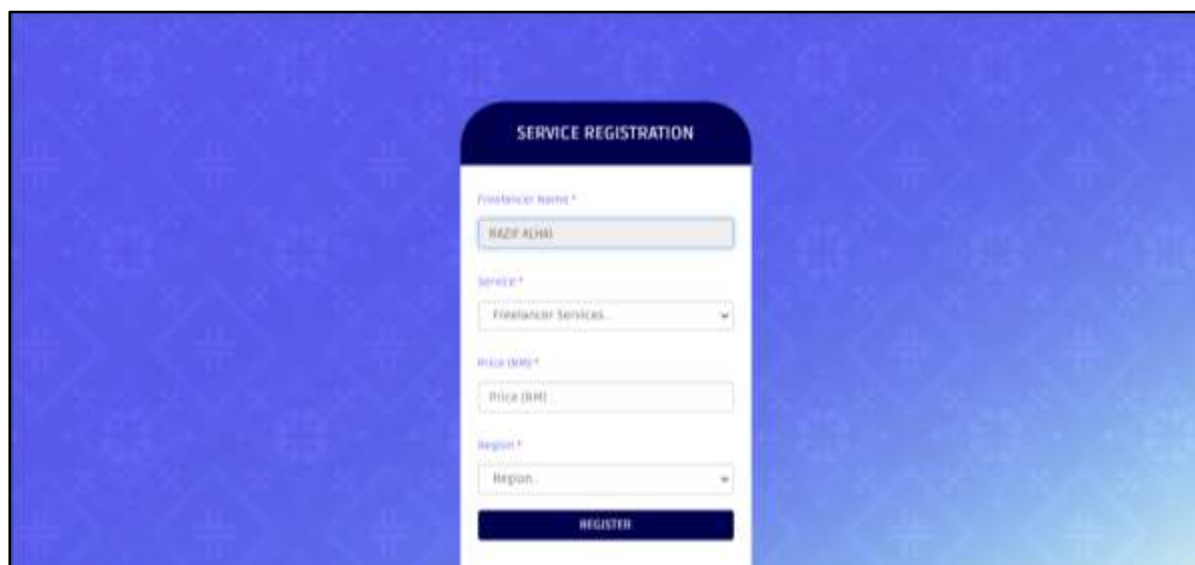


Figure 9. Freelancing Registration Interface

4.7 Administrator Interface

The administrator interface is a backend tool that allows system administrators to manage user accounts, monitor activities, and oversee the overall system operations. Figure 10 portrays the reports types and earning overviews.

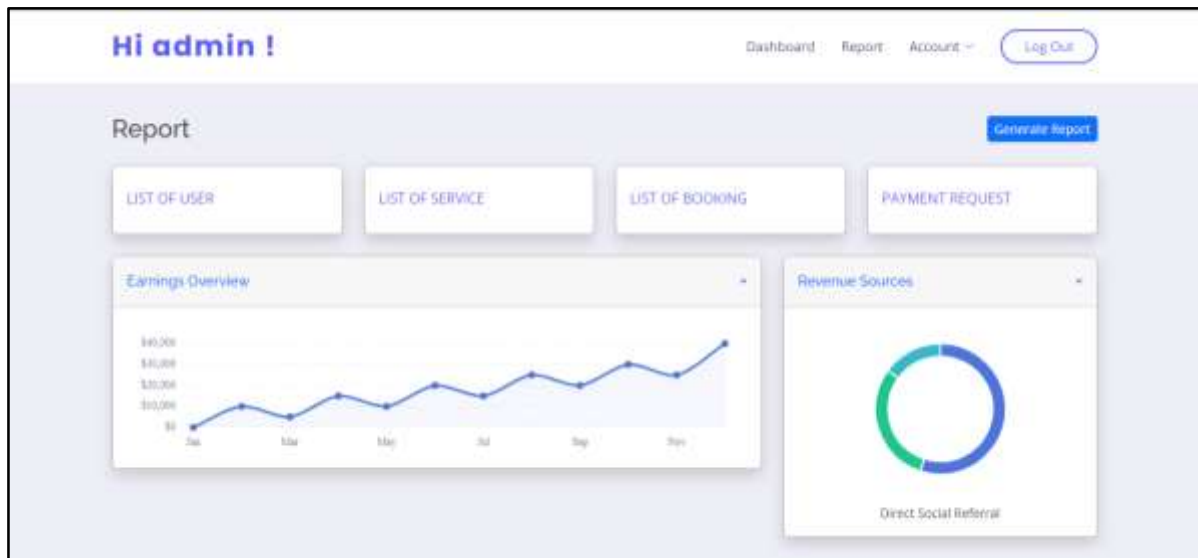


Figure 10. Administrator Interface

5. CONCLUSION

The Hi Freelancer System provides an opportunity for freelancers to showcase their skills and serve clients more conveniently and effectively. With the advancements in technology, this system is expected to attract more freelancers and clients, as it offers convenience and efficiency.

In addition, the Hi Freelancer system benefits local freelancers, especially recent graduates, by providing them with a platform to showcase their skills and gain experience. The system simplifies the clients search for freelancers by providing comprehensive information and a user-friendly interface. Clients can easily browse and select their preferred freelancer, communicate through the system's chat box, and access a wide range of services. This platform expands opportunities for freelancers and enhances the clients experience by offering convenience and a diverse selection of skilled professionals.

As part of future plans, the Hi Freelancer system aims to extend its coverage nationwide, expanding its services and user base beyond the initial focus area. This expansion will allow freelancers and clients from different regions to connect and collaborate seamlessly.

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