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Article

Socio-Philosophical Foundations of Youth Employment and The Implementation of The "Decent Work" Concept in The Context of The Digital Economy

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Abstract: The article discusses theoretical and practical questions of employment of young people and the concept of "decent work" in the digital economy. It presents analysis of how digital transformation affects the labour market, with a particular focus on the impact on youth employment, using OECD, ILO, World Bank and the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan data. The study also shows how the digital economy generates new jobs but also presents its difficulties, like skills mismatch, lack of social protection systems adaptability, and digital inequality.

Keywords: Social Protection, Digital Inequality, Digital Economy, Digital Technology, Labor Market, Social Justice, Strategy

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, the implementation of the concept of "decent work" is regarded as one of the key efforts aimed at responding effectively to the challenges and demands of a globalizing world. It should be noted that the primary direction of economic development in contemporary Uzbekistan is characterized by its emphasis on innovation-driven growth. Such a development model envisages the effective utilization of intellectual resources and the creation of decent working conditions. Achieving the large-scale objectives of innovative economic development requires the effective use of the labor and intellectual potential of young people, who constitute the primary source of the renewal and replenishment of labor resources, as well as the carriers and creators of innovative ideas and professional knowledge [1].

Under conditions of the intellectualization of labor, a new professional segment, knowledge workers, has emerged in the labor market. These workers are distinguished by their ability to process information, organize work on the basis of knowledge, apply intellectual capabilities, and offer unique products and services grounded in creativity. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the Uzbekistan – 2030 Strategy places particular emphasis on the widespread promotion of innovation across all sectors, as well as on supporting scientific research and innovative initiatives [2].

Many researchers interpret the concept of "decent work" in a narrow sense, limiting it primarily to fair remuneration and the most essential guarantees of social protection.

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Such an approach indicates an insufficient understanding of the concept's broader philosophical and social dimensions. The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the issues of ensuring youth employment and implementing the concept of "decent work" within the context of the digital economy have not yet been adequately explored from a socio-philosophical perspective. This situation further highlights the theoretical and practical significance of the present research topic.[3]

2. Methodology

This The processes of youth employment and the concept of "decent work" in the framework of the digital economy have been analyzed in a systematic and comprehensive approach. The methodology used was content analysis of scientific publications and the documents of the management system, including Uzbekistan – 2030 strategy and Digital Uzbekistan – 2030 strategy. Also, comparative and statistical analysis methods were used based on the data of OECD, ILO, World Bank and the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Digital transformation, institutional transformation in the labor market, and the link between digital skills and decent work was explored using dialectical and logical analysis of the study. The results were analyzed by generalization and drawing scientific conclusions.[4]

3. Results and Discussions

The emergence and rapid development of the digital economy in the twenty-first century signify the advent of a qualitatively new paradigm of economic relations. The digital economy is characterized by the predominance of artificial intelligence, Big Data, cloud technologies, and platform-based solutions in production, distribution, and service delivery processes, thereby reshaping the institutional and functional foundations of labor relations.[5]

An analysis of data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) indicates that digital transformation has an ambivalent (dual) impact on youth employment. On the one hand, it expands employment opportunities and enhances access to the global labor market; on the other hand, institutional barriers to labor market entry, skills mismatches, and limitations in social protection systems continue to persist [6].

According to the ILO report, the global youth unemployment rate is approximately 15–16%, which is significantly higher than that of older age groups. This finding suggests that labor markets have not yet fully adapted to the needs and circumstances of young people in the context of the digital economy [7].

The changes occurring in the labor market under the influence of the digital economy are driving its structural transformation.

First, the nature of work is evolving in line with the requirements of a digitalized and knowledge-based economy. This process is characterized by the growing share of intellectual labor and the expansion of automation. As a result, disparities between highly skilled and low-skilled young workers are widening, leading to increased social stratification and economic inequality.[8]

Second, forms of employment are becoming increasingly diversified, with the rapid expansion of the gig economy, platform-based work, and remote employment. This trend contributes to the fragmentation (atomization) of labor relations and leads to a decline in the availability of stable employment opportunities.

Third, a global competitive environment is emerging. Digital technologies enable young people to participate in the international labor market; however, this development also intensifies competition within labor markets and increases the risk of economic marginalization.[9]

According to OECD data, the NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rate in member countries remains at approximately 10–12% on average. This indicator reflects the institutional disconnect between the labor market and the education system.

An analysis of ILO data reveals the following trends:

a. Young people constitute a high-risk group in terms of labor market entry;
b. Skills required by the digital economy remain insufficient;
c. New forms of employment have not yet been fully integrated into social protection systems.

These findings suggest that the institutional transformation of the labor market in the context of the digital economy remains incomplete.

The impact of digital economy development on the unemployment rate in the Republic of Uzbekistan became increasingly evident from 2017 onward. According to data from the Statistics Agency, the unemployment rate in the country stood at 9.3% in 2017. In subsequent years, as a result of labor market reforms and the introduction of digital technologies, notable changes were observed in this indicator. In particular, by the end of 2024, the unemployment rate had declined to 8.9%, while the share of digital services and remote forms of employment within the overall employment structure had increased.[10]

Employment indicators in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are of particular importance in assessing the impact of digital economy development on unemployment. According to data from the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the number of people employed in the ICT sector increased by nearly 1.5 times between 2019 and 2024. At the same time, new jobs were created in the fields of e-commerce, digital finance, and online services, thereby expanding opportunities for integrating unemployed individuals into the labor market [11].

The expansion of employment through digital platforms is also exerting a significant influence on unemployment statistics. According to data from the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment, the number of individuals placed in jobs through the Unified National Labor System increased by an average of 20% annually between 2022 and 2024. This trend indicates a reduction in information asymmetry in the labor market and a simplification of the job-search process.[12]

At the same time, statistical analysis shows that the impact of digital economy development on unemployment is not uniform across all segments of the population. Unemployment rates remain relatively high among groups lacking digital skills, particularly low-skilled workers and residents of rural areas. This situation highlights the need to implement comprehensive measures aimed at vocational retraining, enhancing digital literacy, and reducing regional inequalities alongside the advancement of the digital economy.[13]

In general, statistical analysis of the impact of digital economy development on unemployment indicates that, although the risk of unemployment may increase in the short term due to the decline of certain occupations, digital technologies create new employment opportunities and enhance labor market flexibility in the medium and long term. Therefore, the impact of the digital economy on unemployment should be addressed through state-coordinated employment policies.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the development of digital skills has been legally and institutionally established as one of the key priorities of employment policy. The Digital Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy, approved by Presidential Decree No. DP–6079 of October 5, 2020, identifies the development of digital competencies among the population, the enhancement of digital literacy, and the alignment of the labor market with modern professions as priority objectives [14]. The strategy places particular emphasis on mechanisms for increasing employment and reducing unemployment through the development of digital skills.

One of the key mechanisms for developing digital skills is the adaptation of vocational retraining and professional development systems to the needs of the digital

economy. Since 2019, Uzbekistan has introduced short-term training programs aimed at preparing the population for modern professions, including those related to information technology, digital services, and e-commerce. According to data from the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment, a significant proportion of individuals trained under these programs have successfully secured employment upon completion of their training.

Another important mechanism for increasing employment through the development of digital skills is the extensive use of distance education and online learning platforms. Digital learning technologies enable individuals to acquire labor market-relevant skills within a relatively short period and at comparatively low cost. According to World Bank analyses, individuals who acquire digital skills through online education demonstrate higher employment rates than those who rely solely on traditional forms of education. This finding underscores the effectiveness of digital education in promoting employment.

The results of the statistical analysis indicate that, in the context of digital economy development, the unemployment rate is determined not so much by the level of digitalization itself as by policies aimed at developing digital skills, promoting vocational retraining, and ensuring flexible labor market regulation. When properly managed, digitalization does not act as a factor that increases unemployment; rather, it contributes to its structural reduction. The findings of the statistical analysis demonstrate that the impact of digital economy development on unemployment is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. These findings underscore the need to consider not only aggregate unemployment indicators but also the structural composition of employment, regional disparities, and skill levels when assessing this process.[15]

4. Conclusion

The conclusion is that the digital economy is fundamentally changing the nature of labour relations and youth employment with its rapid development. The results of this research show that digital transformation, on one hand, creates new opportunities for jobs, remote working, and involvement in the global labour market, on the other hand, it has negative consequences like skills gaps, inability of social protection systems to respond, and digital inequalities. The digital economy, the ICT sector, and digital platforms have positively affected the employment indicators in Uzbekistan. But the scope of the term decent work should not be confined to wages and social guarantees, it should be taken more broadly and cover human capital development, career advancement, freedom of work and social justice. As such, decent work in the digital economy will depend on the development of young people's digital skills, the enhancement of vocational training systems, better linking education and the labor market and the regular application of an active employment policy.

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