

Original Paper

Digital Transformation and the Changing World of Work in Vietnam: Emerging Issues for Workers and Labour Relations

Nguyen Thi Viet Phuong^{1*}

¹ Trade Union University, Vietnam

Received: August 15, 2026 Accepted: August 31, 2026 Online Published: September 18, 2026

doi:10.22158/sshsr.v7n1p61

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sshsr.v7n1p61>

Abstract

Digital transformation is reshaping not only employment structures and skill requirements but also the organisation, control, and social relations of work. This article examines how digital transformation is transforming the world of work in Viet Nam and explores its emerging implications for workers, labour relations, and collective representation. Drawing on the sociology of work and labour process theory, the study employs a qualitative research design combining structured document analysis and secondary data analysis. Evidence from peer-reviewed research, International Labour Organization reports, official Vietnamese sources, and selected labour and trade union materials is synthesised through thematic content analysis. The findings identify four interconnected shifts: from standard employment towards increasingly diverse and digitally mediated forms of work; from direct managerial supervision towards digital and algorithmic forms of control; from relatively stable occupational skills towards digital competence and continuous adaptability; and from workplace-centred worker representation towards the need to represent an increasingly dispersed, flexible, and platform-connected workforce. Digitalisation creates opportunities for employment, flexibility, skills development, and labour-market access, but also generates risks related to employment and income insecurity, skills inequalities, work intensification, algorithmic control, data surveillance, and gaps in social protection and worker voice. The article argues that digital transformation should therefore be understood as both a technological and a relational transformation. It proposes a 5R framework: Representation, Rights and Protection, Reskilling, Reach, and Relations and Dialogue, to conceptualise how trade unions and social dialogue can adapt to the changing world of work and contribute to decent and sustainable work in Viet Nam.

Keywords

digital transformation; world of work; algorithmic management; platform work; labour relations; worker voice; trade unions; Viet Nam

1. Introduction

Digital transformation is reshaping the world of work at a pace and scale that extend well beyond the adoption of new technologies. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI), automation, data analytics, and digital platforms are transforming occupational structures, skill requirements, work organisation, and the mechanisms through which labour is allocated, monitored, and evaluated. While digitalisation can generate productivity gains and new employment opportunities, its effects are heterogeneous across occupations, sectors, and groups of workers. Recent evidence suggests that AI is more likely to transform tasks and augment human capabilities in many occupations than to produce uniform large-scale job displacement; nevertheless, the distribution of these effects raises important questions concerning job quality, inequality, and worker protection (ILO, 2025a). Digital transformation should therefore be understood not simply as a technological process, but as a broader socio-economic transformation that reconfigures both work and the social relations through which work is organised.

These transformations are increasingly visible in Viet Nam, where digitalisation has become an important component of economic development and labour-market restructuring. The diffusion of digital technologies has created new occupational opportunities while simultaneously changing the skills required in existing jobs. Digital platforms, remote working arrangements, e-commerce, and digitally mediated services have further diversified how, where, and under what arrangements people work. Earlier assessments already identified the capacity of digitalisation to create new employment while warning that the benefits would depend substantially on the ability of the Vietnamese workforce to acquire appropriate skills (Morisset, 2021). More recent evidence reinforces the need to examine the distributional consequences of this transition. An ILO assessment using Viet Nam's 2024 Labour Force Survey estimates that approximately 11.5 million workers, around one in five, are employed in occupations containing tasks potentially exposed to generative AI, although task transformation rather than complete job replacement is expected to be the more common outcome (Weidenkaff & Huynh, 2026).

The emergence of digital platform employment (DPE) provides a particularly significant illustration of the changing boundaries of work. In 2023, Viet Nam's General Statistics Office, with technical support from the International Labour Organization, piloted a dedicated DPE module within the Labour Force Survey. The pilot, implemented in Hanoi and Phu Tho, represented an early attempt to identify forms of work mediated through digital platforms that are difficult to capture adequately through conventional labour-market classifications. The subsequent ILO research brief identified methodological challenges involving sampling, reference periods, and the potential misclassification of platform workers, while emphasising the importance of improved measurement for inclusive labour statistics and decent-work policies (ILO, 2025b). The need to develop specific statistical instruments for platform employment is itself indicative of a broader transformation: established categories of employment are increasingly being challenged by forms of work that blur conventional boundaries between employment, self-employment, and digitally mediated service provision.

For workers, these developments generate opportunities and vulnerabilities simultaneously. Digitalisation may facilitate labour-market access, flexible working arrangements, productivity improvements, new sources of income, and greater connectivity. At the same time, uneven digital skills, employment and income insecurity, gaps in social protection, work intensification, digital surveillance, and algorithmic control may reproduce or create new forms of inequality. Platform work illustrates this tension particularly clearly. It can lower barriers to labour-market participation, yet the organisation of work through ratings, data, automated allocation systems, and algorithmic decision-making can shift economic risks towards workers while limiting their ability to understand or contest managerial decisions (Cook & Rani, 2025). Consequently, analysing digital transformation requires moving beyond the question of how many jobs technologies create or displace towards examining the quality, security, autonomy, and social protection associated with changing forms of work.

This shift also brings labour relations to the centre of the analysis. Conventional employment relations generally assume an identifiable employer, an employee, and relatively recognisable mechanisms of managerial authority, workplace representation, and collective bargaining. Platform-mediated and algorithmically managed work complicates these relationships. When work is allocated, monitored, evaluated, rewarded, or access to work is restricted through digital platforms and algorithms, who effectively exercises managerial control? How can workers exercise voice when managerial authority is technologically mediated or organisationally dispersed? And how should collective representation operate when workers may be formally classified as self-employed, geographically dispersed, or connected primarily through digital infrastructures? These are no longer peripheral issues. International evidence shows increasing legal and institutional attention to collective action and collective bargaining among platform workers, although effective recognition of collective bargaining rights remains limited across much of the platform economy (Forsyth & McCrystal, 2025).

Existing research on digital transformation in Viet Nam has generated valuable knowledge concerning employment creation, labour demand, digital skills, productivity, income distribution, and workforce readiness. However, considerably less attention has been devoted to the sociological implications of digitalisation for the organisation and control of work, worker voice, collective representation, and the changing institutional architecture of labour relations. This article addresses this gap by linking five analytical domains that are often examined separately: digital transformation, changing forms of work, worker experiences and outcomes, labour relations, and trade unions/social dialogue. Rather than treating workers merely as recipients of technological change, the analysis situates them within evolving relationships of control, representation, negotiation, and institutional protection.

Accordingly, this study examines how digital transformation is reshaping the world of work in Viet Nam and identifies the emerging implications for workers, labour relations, and collective representation. It addresses three research questions: (RQ1) How is digital transformation reshaping the structure and forms of work in Viet Nam? (RQ2) What opportunities, risks, and emerging inequalities do these transformations create for workers? and (RQ3) What new challenges do digital and platform-mediated

forms of work pose for labour relations, trade unions, and social dialogue in Viet Nam? By addressing these questions, the article seeks to contribute to a more worker-centred understanding of digital transformation and to the emerging debate on how labour institutions can adapt to support decent and sustainable work in an increasingly digitalised economy.

2. Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Digital Transformation and the Changing World Of Work

Research on digital transformation and work has developed along several interconnected lines. The first examines the broader implications of digitalisation for the future of work, particularly changes in employment structures, work organisation, and job quality. A second strand focuses on automation and artificial intelligence (AI), asking how technologies substitute for, complement, or reorganise human tasks and occupations. A third addresses skills transformation, emphasising the growing importance of digital competencies, continuous learning, and workers' capacity to adapt to technological change. A fourth strand examines the expansion of digital labour platforms and other non-standard forms of employment that increasingly mediate transactions between workers, firms, and consumers.

These developments suggest that the implications of digital transformation cannot be adequately captured by the conventional question of whether technology “creates” or “destroys” jobs. Digital technologies also reshape what workers do, how tasks are coordinated, where and when work is performed, and how work is monitored and evaluated. The ILO (2021) demonstrates that digital labour platforms are transforming both the organisation of work and relationships among workers, businesses, and customers, while creating new opportunities alongside challenges related to earnings, working conditions, social protection, and collective labour rights. The relevant analytical shift is therefore from employment quantity alone towards the transformation of the structure, content, quality, and social relations of work.

2.2 Platform Work and Algorithmic Management

Digital platform work represents a particularly significant manifestation of this transformation. Digital labour platforms use technological infrastructures to mediate the supply and demand of labour, including both online web-based work and location-based services such as ride-hailing and delivery work (ILO, 2021). Unlike conventional employment arrangements, platform work may involve multiple actors and ambiguous organisational boundaries, producing relationships that can be represented as *Platform* → *Algorithm* → *Worker* → *Customer*.

Central to this configuration is algorithmic management: the use of data-driven systems and algorithms to allocate tasks, monitor performance, evaluate workers, determine rewards, and influence continued access to work. Kellogg et al. (2020) conceptualise algorithms as a new contested terrain of organisational control, showing how technological systems can restructure the mechanisms through which managerial authority is exercised and workers respond to it. In platform environments, ratings, automated task allocation, data collection, and performance metrics may simultaneously offer flexibility and intensify control. Consequently, worker autonomy cannot be inferred simply from contractual status or the absence

of direct supervision. A worker formally classified as independent may nevertheless be subject to substantial technologically mediated control. Research on platform work therefore directs attention towards the distribution of autonomy, risk, information, and decision-making power within digitally mediated labour processes (Berg et al., 2018; ILO, 2021).

2.3 Sociology of Work and Labour Process Theory

To interpret these transformations, this study draws primarily on the sociology of work and labour process theory. Rather than treating technology as an autonomous force that determines employment outcomes, this perspective examines how technology is embedded within organisational arrangements and relations of power. Labour process analysis is particularly concerned with how work is designed, divided, coordinated, monitored, and controlled, as well as with workers' capacity to exercise autonomy and agency within these arrangements.

The analytical sequence adopted in this study is therefore *Technology → Labour Process → Control/Autonomy → Worker Experience → Labour Relations*. Digital technologies first affect how tasks are organised and coordinated; these changes can redistribute control between workers and organisations; changing patterns of control and autonomy subsequently influence workers' experiences of security, workload, skills, income, and voice; and these experiences ultimately have implications for labour relations. From this perspective, algorithmic management is not merely a technical innovation. It can represent a reconfiguration of managerial control in which rules and managerial decisions become embedded in digital infrastructures. The sociological question is therefore not only whether digitalisation increases productivity, but also how it redistributes control, dependence, risk, and bargaining capacity within the employment relationship.

2.4 Labour Relations, Worker Voice, and Collective Representation

The transformation of the labour process has direct implications for labour relations and collective representation. Employment relations have traditionally been institutionalised through identifiable employers and employees, workplace representation, trade unions, collective bargaining, and state regulation. Digitalisation and platform-mediated work can complicate this architecture by dispersing workplaces, fragmenting employment relationships, outsourcing tasks, and creating categories of workers whose employment status may be ambiguous.

Worker voice provides an important bridge between individual experiences of digital transformation and collective labour relations. Voice concerns workers' capacity to express interests, raise concerns, influence workplace decisions, and participate in determining conditions that affect their working lives. Where work is increasingly mediated by digital systems, effective voice may require mechanisms capable of addressing not only wages and working time but also data collection, algorithmic decision-making, surveillance, performance evaluation, reskilling, and technological restructuring. Collective representation and trade unions consequently remain relevant, but their strategies and constituencies may need to adapt to increasingly fragmented and digitally mediated workplaces. Comparative employment-relations research similarly indicates that the consequences of digitalisation are shaped by institutional

arrangements and by the capacity of unions and other worker representatives to respond strategically to technological change (Doellgast & Wagner, 2022).

Accordingly, this study conceptualises digital transformation as a process that operates through, rather than independently of, social and institutional relations. Its analytical framework links *Digital Transformation/AI* → *Transformation of Work* → *Worker Experiences and Outcomes* → *Transformation of Labour Relations* → *Trade Unions and Social Dialogue* → *Decent and Sustainable Work*. At the institutional level, these relationships are situated within a broader tripartite structure involving the State, Employers/Platforms, and Workers/Trade Unions. The framework therefore assumes that when technologies transform the organisation and control of work, the institutions governing worker voice, collective representation, social dialogue, and collective bargaining must also adapt. This perspective provides the analytical basis for examining the changing world of work in Viet Nam not merely as a technological transition, but as a transformation of the social relations through which work is organised, experienced, represented, and regulated.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design combining structured document analysis with secondary data analysis to examine how digital transformation is reshaping work, worker experiences, and labour relations in Viet Nam. Rather than conducting a systematic literature review, the study uses a theoretically guided and thematically structured synthesis of academic, institutional, and practice-based evidence.

The analysis draws on four categories of sources. First, peer-reviewed studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, primarily published between 2020 and 2026, provide the academic and theoretical foundation. Second, reports and working papers from the International Labour Organization (ILO) are used to examine the future of work, digital platform employment, worker protection, social dialogue, and collective bargaining. Third, official Vietnamese sources, including labour-force statistics, legislation, and policy documents, provide evidence on the national institutional and labour-market context. Fourth, selected materials from *Báo Lao Động* and *Lao động & Đoàn thể* are used as practice-based sources to identify emerging worker concerns, workplace developments, and trade union responses. These sources complement, rather than substitute for, peer-reviewed and official evidence.

Documents were selected according to their relevance to Viet Nam and to the study's core themes, with international research included where necessary for theoretical development and comparative interpretation. The principal search and selection terms included “digital transformation,” “digital labour,” “platform work,” “artificial intelligence,” “algorithmic management,” “worker voice,” “trade unions,” “collective bargaining,” and “social dialogue.”

The materials were analysed using thematic content analysis. Evidence was coded and synthesised across five analytical themes: (T1) employment transformation; (T2) skills and worker adaptability; (T3) working conditions and worker outcomes; (T4) labour relations and worker voice; and (T5) trade unions and social dialogue. This analytical structure enables the study to move beyond a descriptive review

towards an integrated interpretation of how technological change interacts with worker experiences and the institutional transformation of labour relations in Viet Nam.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Digital Transformation and the Restructuring of Work in Viet Nam

The evidence suggests that digital transformation in Viet Nam is reshaping work through a continuum rather than a single technological shift. This continuum extends from conventional employment to digitally augmented work, remote and hybrid arrangements, platform-mediated employment, and, increasingly, AI- and algorithm-mediated work. These forms coexist rather than sequentially replacing one another. Consequently, the Vietnamese labour market is becoming more heterogeneous in terms of occupations, skill requirements, workplaces, working time, contractual arrangements, and mechanisms of managerial control.

At the occupational level, digitalisation simultaneously creates new tasks and occupations while transforming existing ones. The growing use of AI is particularly illustrative. Applying the ILO global occupational exposure index to Viet Nam's 2024 Labour Force Survey, Weidenkaff and Huynh (2026) estimate that approximately 11.5 million workers, or around one in five, are employed in occupations containing tasks potentially exposed to generative AI. Importantly, the study suggests that task transformation is considerably more likely than complete job replacement, with fewer than two per cent of workers in occupations combining high AI exposure with a high potential for automation. The central issue is therefore not simply technological unemployment, but the redistribution of tasks and the associated transformation of skill requirements, job content, and occupational trajectories.

Digitalisation also changes the spatial and temporal organisation of work. Remote and hybrid arrangements weaken the traditional association between employment and a fixed workplace, while digital communication enables work to extend beyond conventional working hours. Platform work goes further by reorganising labour around individual tasks or services rather than stable workplaces. These developments can increase flexibility but may also transfer responsibility for time management, equipment, skills development, and employment risks from organisations to individual workers.

The emerging pattern can therefore be represented as *Traditional work* → *Digitally augmented work* → *Remote/hybrid work* → *Platform-mediated work* → *AI/algorithm-mediated work*. This should not be interpreted as a deterministic evolutionary sequence; rather, it identifies increasingly digitally mediated forms of organising labour that coexist within the Vietnamese economy. The broader implication is that digital transformation is progressively blurring established boundaries between workplace and non-workplace, working and personal time, employee and self-employed status, and human management and technologically mediated control.

4.2 Platform Employment and the Emergence of New Labour Relations

Digital platform employment provides the clearest example of these changing boundaries. A significant development in Viet Nam was the pilot measurement of digital platform employment conducted by the

General Statistics Office with technical support from the ILO. A special module was appended to the Labour Force Survey and implemented in Hanoi and Phu Tho in December 2023 (ILO, 2024). The exercise was important not because it established a definitive national estimate of platform employment, but because it demonstrated the methodological difficulty of identifying workers whose employment is mediated through digital platforms. The subsequent ILO research brief highlighted challenges relating to sampling, reference periods, question design, and potential worker misclassification (ILO, 2025).

The measurement challenge reflects a deeper sociological problem. Platform work disrupts the conventional employer-employee model by introducing a technologically mediated configuration: *Platform* → *Algorithm* → *Worker* → *Customer*. The platform connects supply and demand, while algorithms can allocate work, establish performance metrics, process customer ratings, determine access to particular tasks, and influence workers' earnings and continued participation. Customers themselves become part of the labour-control process when their ratings are incorporated into automated performance systems.

This arrangement raises four interrelated questions: who controls the labour process, who bears economic risk, who determines the conditions and price of work, and who represents workers when conflicts arise? Algorithmic management is especially important here. Algorithms can perform functions traditionally associated with managers, including monitoring, scheduling, performance management, compensation, and, in some settings, termination or deactivation (Parent-Rochelleau & Parker, 2022). Research also demonstrates that algorithmic systems can both enable and constrain worker autonomy, depending on their design and organisational context (Meijerink et al., 2023). Thus, contractual flexibility should not automatically be equated with substantive autonomy.

The Vietnamese DPE pilot therefore has significance beyond labour statistics. The need to construct new measurement instruments indicates that conventional employment categories do not always capture emerging forms of labour dependency and control. From a sociology-of-work perspective, the critical issue is not simply whether a platform worker is formally classified as an employee or self-employed worker, but how control, dependence, risk, and bargaining power are actually distributed within the labour process.

4.3 Opportunities, Risks, and Emerging Inequalities for Workers

The findings reveal a dual structure of opportunities and risks. Digital transformation can expand employment opportunities, improve access to markets, enable flexible working arrangements, facilitate skills development, and increase productivity. For some workers, digital technologies may strengthen autonomy by providing greater choice over when, where, and how work is performed. Platform technologies may also reduce geographical barriers to labour-market participation and create income-generating opportunities outside conventional organisational settings.

However, these opportunities are unevenly distributed. Digital transformation can simultaneously produce or reinforce inequalities through differences in skills, educational attainment, occupational position, gender, employment status, and access to social protection. The ILO's analysis of GenAI

exposure in Viet Nam, for example, identifies important differences by gender, education, skill level, formal versus informal employment, income, and urban-rural location (Weidenkaff & Huynh, 2026). This indicates that technological exposure should not be interpreted uniformly across the workforce.

Table 1. Opportunities and Risks Associated with the Digital Transformation of Work

Dimension	Potential opportunities	Emerging risks
Employment	New occupations and work opportunities	Displacement of routine tasks and occupational restructuring
Skills	Digital upskilling and continuous learning	Digital skills gaps and skill obsolescence
Working time	Greater flexibility	Work intensification and blurred work-life boundaries
Income	Access to wider markets and income sources	Income volatility and risk transfer
Autonomy	Greater discretion over aspects of work	Algorithmic control and information asymmetry
Social protection	New pathways into employment	Coverage gaps in non-standard employment
Data	More efficient and personalised work allocation	Surveillance, privacy, and data-governance risks
Social opportunity	Wider labour-market access	Digital and socio-economic inequality

These tensions caution against both technological optimism and technological determinism. Algorithmic management, for example, may improve coordination and provide workers with information or flexibility while simultaneously increasing monitoring and reducing discretion (Meijerink et al., 2023). Similarly, flexible employment can facilitate labour-market participation while shifting costs and risks to workers. The relevant question is therefore not whether digitalisation is inherently beneficial or harmful, but under what institutional and organisational conditions its benefits and risks are distributed.

This interpretation also moves the debate from digital inequality as a question of access to technology towards inequality in outcomes. Workers with stronger skills, greater bargaining resources, stable employment, and access to training may be better positioned to capture productivity gains, whereas workers in less secure or informal arrangements may bear a disproportionate share of adjustment costs. Digital transformation is therefore also a question of distributive outcomes within the labour market.

4.4 From Changing Work to Changing Labour Relations

The transformation of work has corresponding implications for labour relations. In the conventional model, the employment relationship is organised around a relatively identifiable employer and employee, a contractual relationship, a workplace, managerial authority, working time, remuneration, and institutional mechanisms of representation. Digital and platform-mediated work can fragment these elements. Managerial functions may be distributed among platform companies, software systems, customers, subcontractors, and other actors.

This shift is particularly important when viewed through labour process theory. Kellogg et al. (2020) conceptualise algorithms as a new “contested terrain” of organisational control. Digitalisation can embed managerial rules in technological systems, making decisions about task allocation, monitoring, evaluation, and rewards appear technical even though they have direct consequences for workers. In this sense, the digitalisation of the labour process may also entail the digitalisation of workplace power relations.

The implications extend to worker voice. Traditional voice mechanisms are typically built around a recognisable workplace and employment relationship. Workers can raise grievances with supervisors, participate in workplace consultation, or act collectively through representative organisations. These mechanisms become more difficult where workers are geographically dispersed, classified as independent contractors, or primarily interact with a platform through an application. Algorithmic decision-making adds another layer: workers may experience the consequences of a decision without having access to the criteria, data, or human decision-maker responsible for it.

This changes the central sociological question. Rather than asking only whether AI will replace workers, analysis should examine how AI and algorithms redistribute control, autonomy, information, and voice. The employment relationship remains social even when important managerial functions are technologically mediated. Consequently, the institutions governing labour relations must increasingly address questions of algorithmic transparency, worker data, digital surveillance, reskilling, and worker participation in technological change alongside traditional issues such as wages and working time.

4.5 The Changing Role of Trade Unions and Social Partnership in the Digital World of Work

These transformations create a distinction between two related but analytically different processes: the digitalisation of trade unions and the role of trade unions in a digitalised world of work. The former concerns how unions themselves use digital technologies to improve administration, communication, membership services, and internal governance. The latter concerns the more fundamental question of how collective representation should respond when the workforce, labour process, and sources of managerial control are being transformed.

Both processes are emerging in Viet Nam. The Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour approved a digital transformation programme in November 2024 that emphasises four dimensions: people, processes, technology, data, and envisages digital systems for connecting with union members, gathering worker feedback, providing legal support, and monitoring the effects of digital transformation on workers’

legitimate rights and interests. Practice-based evidence also indicates experimentation with digital surveys and platforms to strengthen communication between workplace unions and employees. These developments suggest a shift from digitalisation as administrative modernisation towards its potential use as an infrastructure for worker representation.

However, digitalising existing union practices is not sufficient if the underlying world of work is itself changing. Platform workers, freelancers, remote workers, and other dispersed groups may not share a conventional workplace through which collective identity and representation are organised. International evidence demonstrates some development of collective action and bargaining for platform workers, particularly in delivery-related sectors, but effective recognition of collective bargaining remains limited for most platform workers globally (Forsyth & McCrystal, 2025). This creates a representational challenge: collective institutions designed predominantly around standard employment must develop mechanisms capable of reaching workers whose employment relationships are more fragmented.

Based on the synthesis of evidence, this article proposes a 5R framework for conceptualising the emerging role of trade unions in the digital world of work. The first dimension, Representation, concerns extending collective representation to increasingly heterogeneous groups of workers, including those in non-standard and digitally mediated arrangements. The second, Rights and Protection, concerns safeguarding labour rights, social protection, privacy, fair treatment, and procedural protections in digitally managed workplaces. The third, Reskilling, recognises that representation in periods of technological restructuring also involves supporting workers' capacity to adapt through access to digital skills, retraining, and lifelong learning. This dimension is particularly relevant in Viet Nam, where worker adaptation and skills development are increasingly visible concerns within trade union discussions.

The fourth dimension, Reach, concerns the capacity of unions to connect with workers beyond conventional workplaces. Digital communication, online consultation, member databases, and new organising methods can potentially reach geographically dispersed or otherwise difficult-to-organise groups. The fifth dimension, Relations and Dialogue, concerns the development of social dialogue and collective bargaining capable of addressing technological change itself. This includes consultation over the introduction of AI, workplace monitoring, algorithmic management, data use, training, occupational restructuring, and the distribution of productivity gains.

The 5R framework can therefore be expressed as *Representation* → *Rights and Protection* → *Reskilling* → *Reach* → *Relations and Dialogue*. These dimensions should not be understood as a linear sequence, but as mutually reinforcing institutional capacities that can strengthen *Worker Voice* → *Social Dialogue* → *Collective Bargaining* → *Decent Work*. The framework also clarifies why the future role of trade unions should not be reduced to adopting digital technologies internally. The more substantive challenge is to maintain and renew collective representation when technology changes who workers are, where they work, how they are controlled, and how they interact with employers and one another.

Overall, the findings indicate that digital transformation is simultaneously a technological, organisational, and relational transformation. Its consequences for workers are mediated by skills, employment

arrangements, organisational practices, and institutional protections. This makes labour relations central rather than peripheral to understanding the future of work. In the Vietnamese context, the emerging policy challenge is therefore not simply to accelerate digital adoption, but to develop labour institutions capable of ensuring that technological change is accompanied by meaningful worker voice, adaptive skills, effective representation, and social dialogue.

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1 Conclusion

This study has examined digital transformation in Viet Nam not merely as a process of technological adoption, but as a broader transformation of work and labour relations. The findings point to four interconnected shifts. First, employment is moving from predominantly standardised arrangements towards increasingly diverse forms of work, including digitally augmented, remote, hybrid, platform-mediated, and other flexible arrangements. Second, managerial control is expanding from direct human supervision towards digitally and algorithmically mediated forms of coordination, monitoring, and evaluation. Third, relatively stable occupational skill requirements are giving way to a growing need for digital competence, continuous learning, and worker adaptability. Fourth, collective representation can no longer be conceived exclusively within conventional workplaces, as parts of the workforce are becoming more geographically dispersed, organisationally fragmented, and digitally connected.

These shifts demonstrate that the consequences of digital transformation extend beyond employment creation or displacement. They also concern how work is organised, who exercises control, how risks and opportunities are distributed, and whether workers have meaningful mechanisms of voice and representation. Digital transformation should therefore be understood as both a technological and a relational process, with important implications for the institutional foundations of labour relations and decent work.

5.2 Policy and Labour Relations Implications

Five implications follow from the analysis. First, labour statistics should continue to improve the identification and measurement of digital platform employment so that emerging forms of work become more visible in evidence-based policymaking. Second, labour and social protection systems need to respond to forms of work that may not fit neatly within conventional employment categories, with particular attention to access to social protection and effective worker protection. Third, digital skills policies should move beyond technical training to strengthen workers' broader adaptability and capacity for continuous learning.

Fourth, worker voice should become an integral component of digital workplace governance. Mechanisms for consultation and representation increasingly need to address not only wages and working time but also workplace data, digital surveillance, algorithmic decision-making, and technological restructuring. Fifth, social dialogue and collective bargaining should progressively engage with the employment consequences of AI and digitalisation, including reskilling, job transitions, data governance,

and changes in work organisation. In this context, the proposed 5R framework: Representation, Rights and Protection, Reskilling, Reach, and Relations and Dialogue, provides an analytical basis for considering how trade unions can renew collective representation in the digital world of work.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by its reliance on documentary evidence and secondary data. It therefore identifies patterns, relationships, and emerging institutional challenges but does not establish causal effects of digital transformation on worker outcomes or labour relations. Moreover, evidence on platform employment and algorithmic management in Viet Nam remains relatively limited.

Future research should consequently test these relationships using primary data from workers, employers, and trade union representatives across different sectors and employment arrangements. Particular attention should be given to how algorithmic management affects worker autonomy and voice, and to whether trade union support, social capital, and social dialogue strengthen workers' adaptability and job quality during digital transformation. Such evidence would help move the debate from identifying technological change towards understanding the social and institutional conditions under which digital transformation can contribute to decent and sustainable work in Viet Nam.

References

- Berg, J., Furrer, M., Harmon, E., Rani, U., & Silberman, M. S. (2018). *Digital labour platforms and the future of work: Towards decent work in the online world*. International Labour Office.
- Cook, S., & Rani, U. (2023). Platform work in developing economies: Can digitalisation drive structural transformation (SCIS Working Paper No. 63). *Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, University of the Witwatersrand*.
- Doellgast, V., & Wagner, I. (2022). Collective regulation and the future of work in the digital economy: Insights from comparative employment relations. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 64(3), 438-460. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221856221101165>
- Forsyth, A., & McCrystal, S. (2025). Collective bargaining and collective action in the platform economy: A 2024 update of developments in legislation, case law and collective agreements (ILO Working Paper No. 143). *International Labour Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.54394/EMDS2473>
- International Labour Organization. (2021). World employment and social outlook 2021: The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work. *International Labour Office*.
- International Labour Organization. (2025a). Artificial intelligence adoption and its impact on jobs: Paper prepared under South Africa's G20 Presidency. *International Labour Organization*.
- International Labour Organization. (2025b). Measuring digital platform employment in Viet Nam: Lessons learned from the pilot survey. *International Labour Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.54394/EOOG8972>

- Kellogg, K. C., Valentine, M. A., & Christin, A. (2020). Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control. *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1), 366-410. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0174>
- Meijerink, J., Boons, M., Keegan, A., & Marler, J. (2023). The duality of algorithmic management: Toward a research agenda on HRM algorithms, autonomy and value creation. *Human Resource Management Review*, 33(1), Article 100876. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100876>
- Morisset, J. (2021, October 8). Digital transformation in Vietnam: Skills must transform too. *World Bank*.
- Parent-Rochelleau, X., & Parker, S. K. (2022). Algorithms as work designers: How algorithmic management influences the design of jobs. *Human Resource Management Review*, 32(3), Article 100838. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100838>
- Weidenkaff, F., & Huynh, P. (2026). Generative AI and jobs in Viet Nam: Labour market exposure and policy considerations. *International Labour Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.54394/00034064>