



Collaborative Intelligence: Frameworks and Applications in Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation

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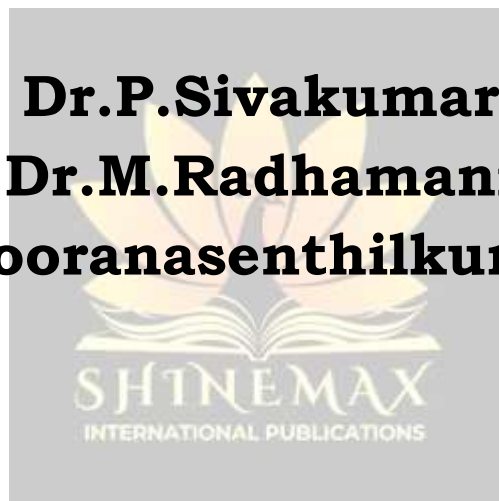
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First Edition

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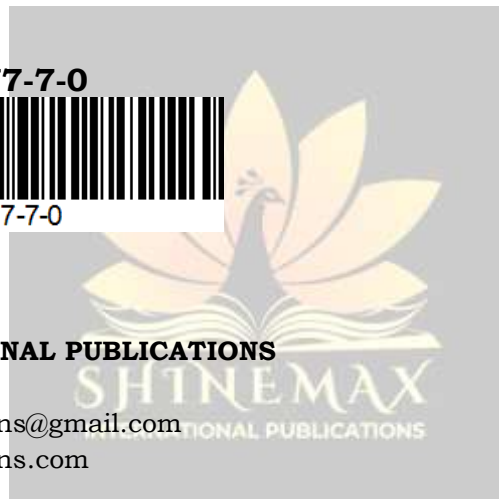
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INDEX

S.No	Title with Authors	Page No
1.	DIGITALISATION AND THE FUTURE OF WORK: IMPLICATIONS FOR DECENT EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH <i>Dr. G. Akilandeswari</i>	1
2.	COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE AND ITS ROLE IN BUSINESS DECISION-MAKING <i>Dr. S. Sambath Kumar</i>	4
3.	ROLE OF COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE IN MSMEs AND SMEs <i>P.Krishnaraj</i>	10
4.	COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE AS A TOOL FOR BUSINESS GROWTH <i>Shymili KS</i>	16
5.	AWARENESS AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES AGAINST E- BANKING FRAUDS <i>Dr.M.Nandhini</i>	22
6.	COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE IN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING:INTEGRATING HUMAN EXPERTISE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INBUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS <i>Mrs Vandhana Sabari, Dr P Chinna Sahaya Rani</i>	29
7.	COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE: FRAMEWORK AND APPLICATION IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION <i>Mr. K. Jaya Prakash, Dr. M. Rathamani</i>	35
8.	COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE-BASED NETWORK INTRUSION DETECTION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK <i>Shajila Velliyath</i>	40
9.	HEALTHCARE INNOVATION FOR ELDERLY CITIZENS USING VOICEMAILTECHNOLOGY	44
10.	MARKETING STRATEGIES AND BRANDING FOR STARTUPS <i>R.J. Kiruthika, Dr.A.Balagurusamy</i>	50
11.	COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE IN HEALTHCARE: TRANSFORMING THE MEDICAL FIELD USING AI AND DEEP LEARNING <i>Chaithra Dinesh, Dr K Pradeepa</i>	55
12.	DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE CO- CREATION IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY INNOVATION <i>Dr. Jeya Hepsipa</i>	60
13.	NFV-ENABLED FEDERATED COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE FRAMEWORK FOR PRIVACY-PRESERVING SMART HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS <i>Mrs.A.Kavitha</i>	65

DIGITALISATION AND THE FUTURE OF WORK: IMPLICATIONS FOR DECENT EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Abstract

Digitalisation has become a defining feature of contemporary economic transformation, profoundly influencing labour markets, employment structure and growth trajectories across the globe. The rapid adoption of digital technologies such as automation, artificial intelligence, digital platforms and data-driven systems has reshaped the way work is organised and performed. While digitalisation offers significant opportunities for enhancing productivity, innovation, and economic growth, it simultaneously raises concerns regarding job displacement, employment precarity, skill mismatches, and widening socio-economic inequalities. Within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), which seeks to promote decent work and inclusive economic growth, understanding the implications of digitalisation for the future of work is crucial. This chapter examines the complex relationship between digitalisation, employment transformation, and economic growth, with particular emphasis on developing economies such as India. Using a conceptual and analytical approach, the study explores emerging employment trends, skill requirements, labour market challenges and policy responses necessary to ensure that digital transformation contributes to decent work and sustainable development. The chapter argues that inclusive policies, skill development initiatives, and adaptive labour regulations are essential to harness the benefits of digitalisation while mitigating its adverse effects.

Keywords: Digitalisation, Future of Work, Decent Work, Economic Growth, SDG 8, Labour Markets

Introduction

The global economy is undergoing a profound transformation driven by rapid advances in digital technology. Digitalisation has permeated almost every sector, reshaping production processes, service delivery, and organisational structures. The world of work, in particular, has been significantly affected, as digital technologies redefine job roles, skill requirements, and employment relationships. Automation, artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and remote working technologies are altering how work is created, distributed, and valued. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) highlights the importance of sustained economic growth, productive employment, and decent work for all. Achieving this goal in the digital era presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, digitalisation has the potential to enhance productivity, stimulate entrepreneurship, and create new forms of employment. On the other hand, it poses risks of job displacement, informalisation, and

inequality, particularly for low-skilled and vulnerable workers. In developing economies such as India, digitalisation is unfolding alongside structural challenges such as a large informal sector, uneven access to technology, and skill deficits. These factors complicate the relationship between digital transformation and decent work. This chapter seeks to analyse the implications of digitalisation for the future of work, focusing on its impact on employment quality and economic growth within the SDG 8 framework.

Digitalisation and Future of Work

Digitalisation refers to the integration of digital technologies into economic and social processes, leading to fundamental changes in how activities are organised and performed. In the context of work, digitalisation includes the automation of tasks, use of digital platforms for labour matching, data-driven management systems, and the expansion of remote and flexible working arrangements. The concept of the future of work encompasses changes not only in employment levels but also in job quality, working conditions, and labour relations. Digital technologies have enabled new forms of work organisation, such as gig work and platform-based employment, which differ significantly from traditional wage employment. These developments challenge existing labour regulations and social protection systems. From the perspective of SDG 8, the future of work must be evaluated in terms of its contribution to decent work. Decent work involves fair wages, job security, social protection, and respect for workers' rights. The challenge is to ensure that digitalisation enhances these aspects rather than undermining them.

Digitalisation and Employment Transformation

Digitalisation has significantly altered employment structures across sectors. Automation has reduced demand for certain routine jobs while increasing demand for high-skilled roles in technology-intensive sectors. This shift has contributed to job polarisation, where high- and low-skilled jobs grow while middle-skilled jobs decline. The rise of digital platforms has facilitated new forms of employment, including gig and freelance work. These arrangements offer flexibility and income opportunities, especially for youth and women. However, they often lack stability, benefits, and legal protection. In India, platform-based employment has expanded rapidly, highlighting the need for regulatory frameworks that ensure fair working conditions. Digitalisation has also enabled remote work, which gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic. While remote work offers flexibility and cost savings, it raises concerns regarding work-life balance, job security, and access to opportunities for workers without digital resources.

Skills, Education and Workforce Readiness

The digital transformation of work has intensified demand for new skills. Technical skills related to digital tools, data analysis, and programming are increasingly important. Equally important are soft skills such as communication, creativity, and problem-solving. Skill gaps pose a major challenge in developing economies. While digital sectors face shortages of skilled workers, many workers lack basic digital literacy. This mismatch limits the potential benefits of

digitalisation and exacerbates inequalities. Educational institutions and training systems must adapt to address these challenges by integrating digital skills into curricula and promoting lifelong learning. Public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in aligning skill development initiatives with industry needs. Investing in human capital is essential to ensure that workers can participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

Digitalisation, Decent Work, and Economic Growth

Digitalisation has the potential to drive economic growth by enhancing productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. Digital technologies enable firms to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and access new markets. These benefits can translate into higher output and employment generation. However, economic growth driven by digitalisation does not automatically result in decent work. Without appropriate policies, digital transformation may lead to precarious employment and widening inequalities. Aligning digitalisation with SDG 8 requires deliberate efforts to promote inclusive growth, protect labour rights, and ensure access to social protection.

Policy Implications and Strategies

Effective policy responses are essential to manage the impact of digitalisation on work. Governments must update labour laws to address digital and platform-based employment. Expanding access to digital infrastructure and education is crucial to reduce inequalities. Social protection systems should be adapted to cover workers in non-standard forms of employment. Collaborative efforts among governments, industry, and educational institutions are necessary to ensure a smooth transition to the future of work.

Conclusion

Digitalisation is reshaping the future of work, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Within the SDG 8 framework, the key task is to ensure that digital transformation promotes decent work and inclusive economic growth. By adopting inclusive policies, investing in skills, and strengthening labour institutions, developing economies like India can harness digitalisation as a driver of sustainable development.

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