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**WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION:
CHANGES IN WORK PRACTICES AND EMERGING FORMS OF
EMPLOYMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA**

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Abstract: In today's context, digital technology has become a crucial factor in the processes of employment, the shaping of work practices, the maintenance of professional networks, and the facilitation of continuous professional development. The notion of "work" is no longer strictly tied to a specific physical space or fixed working hours, as an increasing share of tasks is carried out through digital technologies. The rapid advancement of digital tools is significantly blurring the traditional boundaries between work and leisure, as well as between professional and private life.

Given the substantial impact of digitalization on the world of work, it is of both theoretical and practical relevance to analyze the role of digital technologies in everyday practices related to employment. The primary aim of this research is to examine the influence of digital spaces not only on employment opportunities but also on the very nature of work. A survey-based study will investigate the impact of digital technologies on daily work practices, the process of job seeking, and opportunities for professional development in the Republic of Srpska. The research will primarily focus on employed users of digital technologies. Through the survey, the study

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will explore how digitalization contributes to the transformation of work practices, as well as its implications for the work–life balance.

A secondary objective of the study is to raise questions concerning the long-term implications of digitalization on the nature of work. Furthermore, the micro-level focus of this research will enable connections to broader global social and economic transformations, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of regional specificities within the context of global changes in the labor market.

Keywords: digital technology, work flexibility, Republic of Srpska, transformation of work, leisure time.

Introduction

Digital technology possesses enormous transformative potential when it comes to society. The internet, digital technology, and digital networks have already had a profound impact on society and have transformed the modalities of human relations, whereby human labour has been significantly redefined.

The very definition of the human being as a working being (*homo faber*) points to the inseparability of humans from this activity. The mistaken identification of labour as a specifically capitalist concept has led to a reductionist approach to the study of work and, ultimately, to numerous incorrect or overly narrow conceptualisations of this activity. Part of the problem lies in the fact that unpaid creative and intellectual tasks (e.g. childcare, writing poetry, house cleaning) may also be considered work (Pfeiffer, S., 2014). “A given activity may be considered work or non-work depending on the moment or the person performing it” (Freyssenet, M., 1999: 11). Nevertheless, Freyssenet, in the same place, explicitly asserts that “an activity is work only if a social relationship within which it is performed is defined” (Freyssenet, M., *ibid.*). Regardless of whether work is carried out within an employee–employer relationship, a commercial relationship, or a private one, we encounter the problem of defining the boundary between work and leisure. With the emergence of the internet and digital networks, the challenge of differentiating between these two states has become even more complex. Labour, and workers themselves, used to be tied to a specific

place (Graham, M., *et al.*, 2017), a condition that ceased to be necessary with the advent of the internet.

The development of the internet has profoundly influenced labour, employment practices, and the economy. The development and application of new technologies have affected the labour market to such an extent that the term *digital economy* has come into common use (Ragneda, M., *et al.*, 2024; Xu, H., & Jing, J., 2023). Any interruption of internet access results in considerable losses for the economy (Bugri, V., 2024). Before the expansion of the internet, information about job opportunities was obtained directly, through newspaper advertisements and personal recommendations. The development of new technologies has also transformed job-seeking practices. Since the year 2000, online job searching has become common practice (Faberman, R. J., & Kudlyak, M., 2016), at least in the United States and Western Europe. This trend later spread to Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region (Tong, D. Y. T., 2009), eventually becoming global. Initially, online job boards appeared, and later social networks began to serve as platforms for job searching (Garg, R., & Telanh, R., 2018; Broughton, A., *et al.*, 2013). The internet proved to be a more efficient method than contacting employers directly or relying on newspaper advertisements. It enabled greater information flow, accelerated the process, and reduced recruitment costs (Broughton, A., *et al.*, 2013; Fountain, C., 2005; García Galera, M.C., *et al.*, 2023; Garg, R., & Telanh, R., 2018; Gouda, N. K., *et al.*, 2024; Ostojić, B., *et al.*, 2023; Vatsa, P., *et al.*, 2022; Xu, H., & Jing, J., 2023). For example, “in Spain, in 2019, 628,000 people found employment through the internet” (Martinez-Nicolas, M., *et al.*, 2024: 3).

A noteworthy advantage of the internet in the context of employment concerns its impact on improving living conditions. Considering that poverty is more prevalent in rural areas and that information flow is weaker there, the importance of the internet for obtaining information about employment opportunities and for professional development should be emphasised (Vatsa, P., *et al.*, 2022). The internet has opened up unprecedented opportunities for social networking (Grabher, G., & Koenig, J., 2017), which has had profound implications for employment, the economy, types of work, and the overall quality of life. However, global digital connectedness did not emerge suddenly with the appearance of the internet. Brubaker (Brubaker, R., 2023) finds that “digital

hyperconnectivity emerged only in the first half of the 2010s” (p. 3). According to Brubaker, this phenomenon was crucially influenced by the development of social media in combination with the advancement of mobile phones and mobile internet infrastructure. In the period that followed, social networks became arenas of interaction (Ellison, N., & Vitak, J., 2015), and thus, professional interactions in the contemporary context are closely tied to social connections (Bugri, V., 2024). The development of social networks in the previous decade has also affected the job-seeking process (Broughton, A., *et al.*, 2013; Dillahunt, T., *et al.*, 2021; Karacsony, P., *et al.*, 2020; Laukkarinen, M., 2023; Martinez-Nicolas, *et al.*, 2024; Nikolaou, I., 2014; Ollington, N., *et al.*, 2013; Rhee, K. S., *et al.*, 2018). Social networks enable faster, more efficient, and more economical information flow, offering employers a broader selection of candidates while providing jobseekers with more potential opportunities. “In 2020, the average daily time spent on social media globally was 2 hours and 24 minutes among users aged 16 to 64” (Gasparèniènè, L., *et al.*, 2021: 331). The use of social networks then intensified further, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Song, J. S., *et al.*, 2024).

Among global social networks, well-known examples include Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, X, and Xing (Gasparèniènè, L., *et al.*, 2021). Unlike the others, LinkedIn is more professionally oriented, focusing on job searching and professional correspondence (Rhee, K. S., *et al.*, 2018; Zide, J., *et al.*, 2014). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X are considered non-career-oriented (Dillahunt, T., *et al.*, 2021). Xing is a European career-focused social network primarily oriented towards the German market (Gasparèniènè, L., *et al.*, 2021).

The internet has fundamentally transformed employment practices as well as the very nature of labour itself. In this respect, workers are increasingly unable to clearly delineate the boundary between work and leisure. This has particularly been caused by changes in the nature of work itself, which, in the contemporary context, is ever more closely linked to digital technologies.

Given the aforementioned changes in the nature of work, employment practices, and the use of leisure time, the need for empirical research examining how digital transformation affects individuals’ work practices becomes evident. Accordingly, it is important to understand how and to what extent people use digital technologies, how much these technologies influence their professional lives, how significant they are for employment, and how they affect the relationship

between work and leisure. The need to research work practices and new forms of employment in the context of digital transformation is even more pronounced in the context of the Republic of Srpska, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina. For this reason, a survey was conducted in the Republic of Srpska, primarily focused on employed individuals. Although there is a large body of research on the digital transformation of labour, empirical data from the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina remain scarce. The research included three dimensions: digital habits and work platforms; the impact of digital transformation on work and leisure time; and perspectives on digital change and employment. The study focuses on how digital technologies influence work, employment, and professional development in the context of the Republic of Srpska.

Research Objective

The study of labour in the context of digital transformation in the Republic of Srpska aims to provide feedback on the use of digital technologies and networks for the purposes of employment, professional development, and work. In addition, the objective is to gain insight into the impact of digital technologies—particularly social networks—on the relationship between leisure time and work. As modern technologies increasingly become an integral part of everyday life, one of the many questions concerning the social implications of this phenomenon relates to changes in the nature of work. Online employment portals and social networks play an increasingly important role in the recruitment process (Karacsony *et al.*, 2020). Research such as that conducted by Mowbray and Hall (2020) in Scotland shows that social networks such as Facebook, X, and LinkedIn are becoming ever more popular sources of information about employment opportunities. In this context, it is important to examine the use of different channels for obtaining job-related information, as this area has not yet been researched in the Republic of Srpska.

The primary objective of the study is to determine, through a quantitative approach, the extent to which digital technologies are used in the Republic of Srpska to obtain information about employment opportunities, as well as their effectiveness in facilitating employment. Respondents' attitudes regarding employers' use of digital platforms in the Republic of Srpska will provide valuable insight into the current prevalence and application of digital technologies for employment purposes. The secondary objective of the research relates to the social implications of digital transformation, that is, the application of technology

within work processes and recruitment practices. The study will identify challenges associated with the use of digital job platforms and assess the respondents' digital skills.

The research will make it possible to assess how global changes in the sphere of labour are manifested within the Republic of Srpska. The results will provide essential information on the digital transformation of work, serving as a valuable basis for further and more detailed analyses.

Methods

The study involved 161 respondents. Participants were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling methods. All respondents were adults residing in the Republic of Srpska. Most of them were from the north-eastern part of the Republic of Srpska. The vast majority of respondents were employed (89.4%). The sample was stratified according to gender, age, and level of education. Women constituted the majority of the sample (60.9%). The most represented age group comprised respondents aged 36–45 (32.7%), followed by those aged 26–35 (28.4%) and 46–60 (21.6%). Respondents aged 18–25 (13.6%) and over 60 (3.7%) were considerably fewer. In terms of education, most respondents held a university degree (58.4%), followed by those with a master's or doctoral degree (13.6%), a secondary school diploma (23%), a higher school qualification (3.1%), and primary education (1.9%).

Correlations were observed between education and age, as well as between age and employment status. Younger respondents (18–25 years) were employed at a lower rate compared to other age categories. Respondents aged 36–45 and 46–60 most frequently held a university degree. Regarding gender structure, women exhibited a higher level of education than men, as well as a slightly higher employment rate. A correlation was also noted between education and employment status. The highest employment rate was recorded among respondents with higher school qualifications (100%), followed by those with a university degree. The sample can therefore be considered representative of the employed and highly educated population of the Republic of Srpska.

The survey was distributed digitally via a Google Form, yielding 141 respondents. This sample was supplemented through field surveying. Data collection took place between 24 May and 6 August 2025. The distribution of the

survey through Google Forms was used not only as a more economical method in terms of time and resources but also as a means of collecting data on respondents' willingness to engage with a digital questionnaire format. The survey, accompanied by a brief message requesting its publication, was sent to all news portals in the Republic of Srpska as well as to 61 municipal administrations. Of all the portals contacted, three published the survey: *Dobojski.info*, *Info Birač*, and *Zvornički.ba*. Among the municipalities, only the municipal administration of Vukosavlje responded to the invitation. This method of distribution provided additional insight into the (un)willingness of institutions to correspond via digital channels, i.e. by electronic mail.

The questionnaire, designed specifically for the purposes of this research, included questions aimed at collecting demographic information about the respondents, data on their digital habits, attitudes towards changes in employment, and perceptions of the role of digital technologies and platforms in work and recruitment processes. The questionnaire was an original instrument, aligned with the objectives of the study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. In designing the questionnaire, attention was paid to ensuring that the responses would offer insights into digital employment practices, potentially useful to employers as well as institutions involved in job advertising. Completing the survey took approximately five minutes. The questionnaire comprised nineteen questions divided into four thematic sections. It included a combination of closed, semi-open, and open-ended questions. Most of the questions were closed-ended, allowing respondents to select one of the predefined options. This combination of question types enabled both descriptive and interpretative analysis of the results, as well as an understanding of the qualitative dimension of respondents' answers.

The survey results were analysed using quantitative methods. Descriptive and comparative statistics were applied. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the frequencies and percentage distributions of responses. This analysis provided insight into the prevalence of responses within the overall sample and the dominant behavioural patterns among respondents. Comparative analysis identified differences in platform usage patterns. Data were compared by gender, age group, and level of education, with differences between groups expressed as percentage deviations from the total sample. Thematic analysis was applied to responses to open-ended questions. The qualitative approach to analysing open-

ended responses served to identify key themes and to understand attitudes related to the use of digital tools for job searching. No statistical software or standardised scales were used for analysis; instead, Microsoft Excel and Word were employed.

RESEARCH RESULTS

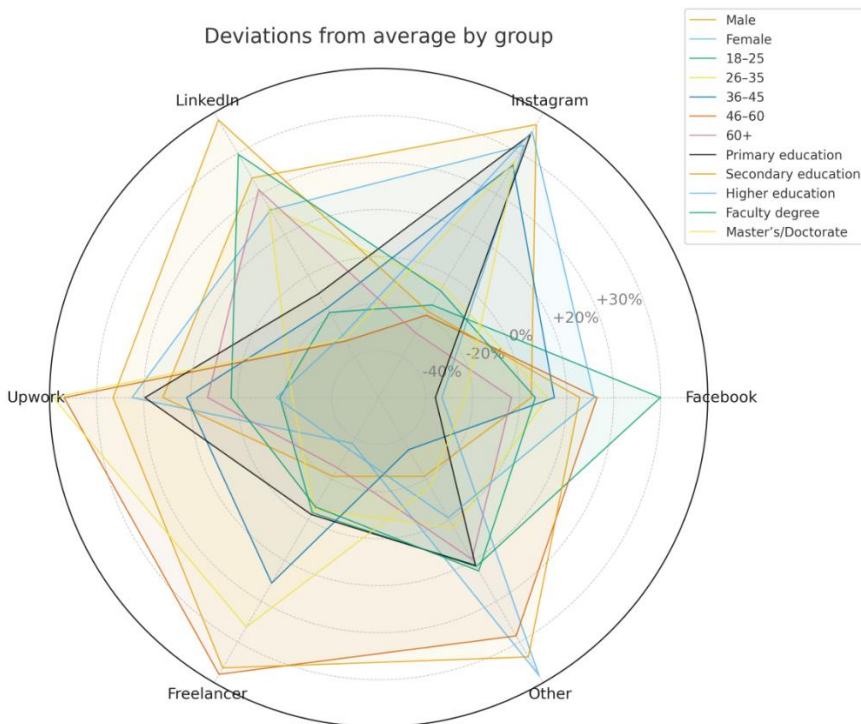
Of the total number of participants (161), the majority were women (60.9%), and the most represented age group was between 36 and 45 years (32.7%). Most respondents held a university degree (58.4%) and were employed (89.4%). In terms of educational level, respondents also included those with a master's or doctoral degree (13.6%), secondary education (23%), higher education (3.1%), and primary education (1.9%). In addition to employed individuals, the sample included unemployed persons (6.8%), students (3.1%), and pensioners (0.6%). The age categories represented in the study further comprised respondents aged 26–35 (28.4%), 46–60 (21.6%), 18–25 (13.6%), and 60+ (3.7%). The research primarily focused on the economically active population. Employed respondents with a university degree predominated among the participants.

Digital Habits and Work Platforms

In the section of the questionnaire relating to digital habits and work platforms, five questions were posed. The first question was: Which digital platforms do you use for employment or professional networking purposes? This was a semi-open question. Respondents were offered five predefined options (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Freelancer, Upwork) and an additional "Other" category, where they could specify a different platform. Multiple selections were allowed.

Facebook was the most frequently used digital platform (42.1%), followed by Instagram (34.9%), LinkedIn (13%), Upwork (1.9%), Freelancer (0.4%), and "Other" (7.7%), where the most frequently mentioned options were Google, TikTok, and Mojposao.ba. The dominance of social networks indicates that professional networking and job searching largely occur through informal social channels. LinkedIn, as the leading professional network globally, was used by only 13% of respondents, which potentially suggests that this platform is not yet sufficiently integrated into everyday employment practices in the local context.

Men used Facebook and Instagram for employment and networking purposes slightly more (41.94%) than women (33.67%). The use of LinkedIn was somewhat more prevalent among women (11.22%) compared to men (4.84%). Facebook was most commonly used by older respondents (46+), although it was present across all age categories. Instagram was most popular among younger users (18–35), while LinkedIn was primarily used by respondents aged 26–45. The use of LinkedIn and specialised professional platforms increased with higher levels of education. Social networks represented the dominant source of job-related information across all educational levels, though this trend was more pronounced among respondents with lower educational attainment. The percentage distribution of these results is shown in Graph 1, which presents the deviations of specific categories in relation to the overall results.



Graph 1: Use of digital platforms for employment or professional networking

The largest proportion of respondents (41%) believe that digital changes will bring more job opportunities in the Republic of Srpska. A somewhat smaller

share (26.1%) think that digitalisation will lead to a reduction in traditional jobs, while 20.5% of respondents do not believe it will have a significant impact on employment. The responses potentially indicate an awareness of labour market transformation and suggest that respondents recognise the likelihood of a future shift towards more flexible, digitally mediated forms of work. Conversely, a considerable number of respondents who expressed scepticism or indecision may indicate either a lack of information or scepticism towards the integration of work into the digital sphere.

A slightly higher percentage of women (37.76%) expect more job opportunities through digital platforms, while a larger share of men (22.22%) anticipate a decline in traditional jobs but an increase in new forms of employment. Higher educational levels are associated with greater optimism regarding forthcoming changes in employment and work structures. Regarding attitudes across different age groups, all categories expressed a significant degree of optimism about digital platforms. The youngest respondents (18–25 years, 45.45%) and those over sixty (60%) were the most likely to believe that digitalisation would create more employment opportunities.

For professional development, the largest number of respondents stated that they use digital platforms daily (35.4%), followed by those who use them rarely (23.6%), several times per month (20.5%), or several times per week (19.3%). The results indicate intensive use of digital platforms for career advancement and professional development. However, a substantial portion of participants reported using them rarely or only a few times per month, which may suggest that part of the population remains insufficiently engaged in this process. Across the total sample, gender-based differences were minimal. Continuous or occasional use of digital platforms was recorded in all age groups, except among respondents aged 60+, although due to the small number of participants in this category, these findings can only tentatively suggest a trend. The results point to a possible pattern of more regular and diversified use of digital platforms among those with higher levels of education, whereas respondents with lower educational attainment tend to use them less frequently or only occasionally for professional purposes.

Of the total sample, 47 respondents (29.2%) had previously worked remotely. These results may indicate that remote work is not yet a widespread

form of employment. The fact that more respondents reported having worked remotely in the past than are currently doing so may suggest that such work tends to be temporary or associated with low and unsustainable income levels. The large proportion of respondents who have never worked remotely may also reflect a lack of opportunities. A somewhat higher percentage of women (31.6%) than men (25.4%) reported having worked remotely in the past, while the percentage of men currently working remotely (11.1%) was higher than that of women (1%). The prevalence of remote work experience increased with respondents' educational levels. These results suggest that remote work may represent an emerging trend in the Republic of Srpska.

The subsequent closed-ended question concerning the frequency of work via digital platforms was related to the previous one. This question referred only to participants who stated that they had worked or were currently working remotely. The largest number of such respondents reported working from digital platforms occasionally. Those who were available daily were likely professionally tied to online work or engaged in jobs oriented towards digital channels. The fact that none of the respondents reported never having worked remotely confirms the validity of the participants' responses and the sample itself. These results may indicate that digital work does not yet represent a reliable or permanent form of employment.

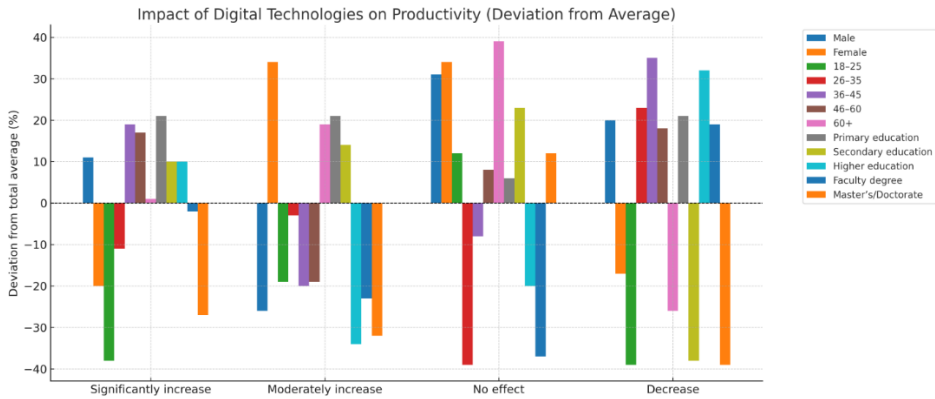
The Impact of Digital Transformation on Work and Leisure Time

In the section of the questionnaire concerning the impact of digital transformation on work and leisure, four questions were posed. The first was: How do digital technologies affect the balance between working time and leisure time? The results show that the majority of respondents (54.7%) are sometimes available for work outside of regular working hours. A smaller proportion (29.2%) are constantly available for work, while 16.1% stated that they never work outside regular hours. The findings reveal that more than half of the respondents use digital channels for work, though they are not under constant pressure to do so beyond official working time. It thus appears that digital technologies have a considerable influence on the balance between work and leisure. Fewer than one

in five respondents reported having clearly defined boundaries between their professional and private lives.

Among participants aged 18–26, the highest proportion (40.91%) reported never working outside working hours. With increasing age, the tendency to remain available for work rises. This is likely related to the fact that a number of younger respondents are still studying and some do not yet have steady income. Regarding digital skills, most respondents assessed their abilities as either good or average (74.5%). A slightly higher percentage of women (38.8%) rated their skills as good compared to men (30.2%). Women were also more likely than men to rate their skills as poor or very poor, whereas men more frequently assessed their digital skills as average. Differences by educational level were minimal. Younger respondents (aged 18–35) considered their digital skills to be good or very good more often than older participants.

On the question concerning the impact of digital technologies on work productivity, four possible responses were offered. The majority of respondents believed that digital technologies increase their productivity (78.3%)—26.1% substantially, and 52.2% moderately. The findings indicate a prevailing perception of digital technologies as useful tools that facilitate productivity gains. It can be inferred that the use of digital technologies eases the completion of many work-related tasks. Respondents with higher levels of education expressed more positive perceptions of the impact of digital technologies on productivity. Most participants with only primary education stated that digital technologies have no impact on productivity, while those with secondary education displayed mixed opinions. Respondents with a university degree were predominantly positive (56% moderate, 29% substantial effect), while among those with a master's or doctoral degree, the share of positive perceptions reached 91% (64% moderate, 27% substantial).



Graph 2: Attitudes towards the impact of digital technology on work productivity

In response to the question regarding the main challenges respondents face when using digital platforms for work purposes, five possible answers were offered. The question was semi-open, allowing for multiple selections. The largest share of respondents identified information overload (39.7%) as a key challenge. A significant proportion also pointed to the lack of clear boundaries between work and private life (31.2%), limited connection with colleagues (14.8%), and insufficient technical skills (12.7%) as difficulties encountered in using digital platforms. The results suggest that, alongside the previously noted erosion of boundaries between professional and personal life, information saturation on digital platforms represents one of the primary challenges associated with digital work.

Perspective on digital change and employment

The first question in this section asked: Do you think employers in the Republic of Srpska sufficiently recognise and use digital technologies in the recruitment process and in attracting the workforce? A clear majority of respondents (47.2%) believe that employers in the Republic of Srpska partially use digital technologies in the processes of recruitment and dissemination of job information. A smaller proportion (32.9%) are of the opinion that employers largely do not use digital technologies. Only 7.5% of the sample stated that employers make extensive use of modern technologies, while 12.4% reported

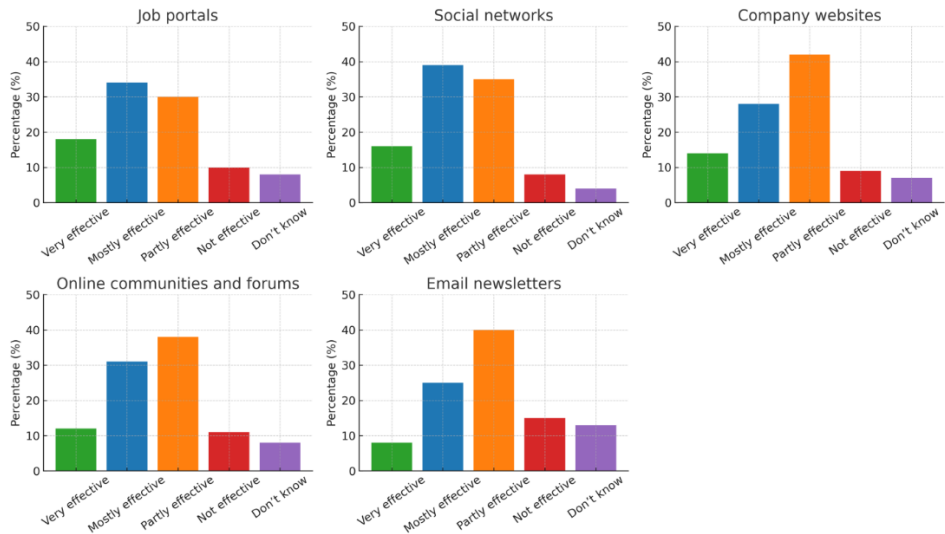
being unsure. These findings indicate that while respondents acknowledge the presence of digital tools in employers' recruitment practices, they also perceive that these technologies are not being used to their full potential.

In the subsequent question, which focused on the impact of digital channels on access to job information, the largest proportion of respondents (42.2%) believed that digital channels make a partial contribution in this regard. These results potentially point to limited visibility, accessibility, and relevance of job-related information on digital platforms in the Republic of Srpska. When assessing the effectiveness of various digital channels in job advertising and candidate attraction, respondents tended to favour platforms not primarily designed for job searching. Job portals were generally recognised as an effective channel; however, the considerable percentage of participants who rated them as partially effective suggests a degree of reservation regarding their overall efficiency. Social media networks were predominantly perceived as effective, while company websites were rated similarly to social networks. Online communities and forums were mainly viewed as partially (37.5%) or mostly effective (31.3%). Email communication was assessed as partially effective (40%) and mostly effective (23.8%).

Respondents' attitudes towards the efficiency of digital recruitment channels varied across age groups. The most distinctive generational differences are summarised below. The 18–25 age group expressed the most positive views on the effectiveness of social networks (62%), with the highest proportion within this group (28.57%) rating them as very effective. The 26–35 age group was the most critical of email communication and online communities/forums, while expressing the most positive views of job portals. Respondents aged 46–60 showed the greatest confidence in company websites; however, compared to other groups, they were more sceptical about the effectiveness of social media and job portals.

Regarding educational attainment, a positive correlation was observed between education level and favourable perceptions of job portal efficiency. Participants with higher education or university degrees were more likely to assess job portals as mostly or very effective compared to other educational groups, whereas those with secondary education tended to view them as ineffective or expressed uncertainty. Social networks were most positively evaluated by respondents with

secondary or higher vocational education. Gender differences were also notable. Women were more likely than men to rate portals and other digital channels as effective, particularly in the case of job portals and company websites. Specifically, 63.3% of women viewed job portals as mostly or very effective, compared to 33.9% of men.



Graph 3: Evaluation of digital channels in job advertising

Participants were next asked whether they considered digital platforms to be an effective means of connecting with employers and finding employment. Four-fifths of the respondents answered affirmatively (80.1%), 16.8% were undecided, and only 3.1% responded negatively. Hence, the majority of respondents believe that digital platforms possess significant potential for facilitating more efficient and faster job searches. This result clearly indicates that the importance of digital platforms in the recruitment process is widely recognised among the surveyed population. The highest level of agreement was recorded among highly educated respondents, particularly those with a master’s or doctoral degree (86.4%) and those with a university degree (83%). Optimism declined proportionally with lower levels of education.

The final question was open-ended, asking participants to indicate what changes they would like to see implemented on digital platforms for work and employment. Based on their responses, several areas for improvement were identified. Respondents suggested enhancing the quality and clarity of information and platform design—including clearer and more precise job descriptions, better search organisation, and the development of dedicated mobile applications. The need for greater transparency and easier access to information was also emphasised—specifically, improving the transparency of job advertisements and simplifying access to relevant and reliable information. Additionally, digital literacy was highlighted as a key area for improvement. Respondents also mentioned the importance of security and platform accountability, enhancing communication channels between candidates and employers, legal protection of workers' rights, transparency of working conditions on digital platforms, and increasing the number and diversity of job postings.

Discussion

In a 2009 study on the motivations for using social networks, only 10% of users cited access to information as a motivation, while around 70% mentioned socialisation, maintaining and establishing contacts, and similar reasons (Brantzeg & Hein, 2009, pp. 148–150). Although the primary motivation for using social networks has not historically been directly linked to employment or job seeking, the past decade has demonstrated their substantial positive influence in this area. Traditional job-search methods have increasingly shifted to the online sphere (Karaoglu *et al.*, 2022). Social networks such as Facebook and X can be used for posting recommendations and job advertisements (Koch *et al.*, 2018), as can Instagram. Social media platforms and online job portals have become nearly indispensable recruitment tools, to the extent that digital illiteracy or lack of internet access now represent serious barriers to employment (Martínez-Nicolás *et al.*, 2024). Research findings across different contexts indicate difficulty in determining whether job portals, professional (career-oriented) networks, or social (non-career-oriented) platforms are used more frequently in the job search process, as results vary by study. Some studies have found that company websites

and job portals are the most commonly used channels (e.g., Dillahunt *et al.*, 2021), while others point to a greater prevalence of social networks (e.g., Al-Amin *et al.*, 2019; Nikolaou, 2014). These discrepancies highlight the relevance of local context in shaping both the perceived effectiveness and the actual use of digital channels in recruitment.

The findings of the present study reveal that social networks are the most frequently used channels for job searching and accessing employment information. Career-oriented platforms such as LinkedIn are used to a significantly lesser extent, while the number of freelance platform users remains negligible. The transformation of work has led to the emergence of flexible, temporary, and project-based forms of employment. These findings may indicate the modest presence of the digital economy in the Republic of Srpska. The study established that respondents possess an awareness of the relevance and implications of digital change in the labour market. Among the main challenges identified by users of digital platforms were information overload and the absence of clear boundaries between professional and personal life (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Martínez-Nicolás *et al.*, 2024). These challenges were confirmed as the most prevalent in the present research. Reliance on social networks as a source of professional information and development can, among other things, lead to distraction, privacy concerns, and information saturation (Agbasiere, 2025). Given that the majority of respondents—particularly highly educated and younger participants—use social networks for professional purposes, the balance between the positive and negative consequences of such practices remains an open question. This study showed that although the use of digital recruitment channels is widespread, it is not yet intensive. A large proportion of respondents have never worked remotely, while only a small fraction are currently engaged in remote work. At the same time, most respondents expressed confidence in their digital skills, which may indicate that a certain level of digital competence exists within the broader population.

The sociodemographic differences identified in this research partially confirm global trends in the use of digital technologies. It was shown that younger age groups are more likely to use digital platforms for professional development, whereas such use is less common among older participants. The results correspond with those of previous studies (Chang *et al.*, 2015; Ma & Wang, 2020;

Pénard *et al.*, 2015), which established a negative correlation between age and internet usage. Furthermore, education was found to be associated with digital skills, which aligns with the findings of Ji (2015) and Green and colleagues (2012). More highly educated respondents expressed greater readiness for professional development through digital channels and made use of a wider variety of digital tools when searching for employment.

Regarding the use of digital technologies by employers in the Republic of Srpska, most respondents believe that such technologies are only partially employed. Although digital tools are present and used by employers to disseminate job information, they do not appear to be systematically integrated. Participants largely assessed the impact of digital channels in the recruitment process as positive, though they emphasised that job information on such channels remains insufficiently visible and accessible. When evaluating the efficiency of different channels, respondents rated social networks and job portals as the most effective. The findings indicate that platforms combining informational and interactive functions are the preferred choice among job seekers. Respondents predominantly regarded digital platforms as a good means of connecting with employers and finding employment, which suggests that digital channels are recognised as an important instrument in the recruitment process. However, it is important to note that digital platforms are not equally accepted across different sociodemographic groups.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital technologies are perceived as a significant tool in recruitment processes, although this practice in the Republic of Srpska remains developmental. The importance of digital channels for information dissemination is evident, albeit inconsistent. Digital job searching is characterised by a certain lack of focus, given its orientation towards non-career platforms. The results also highlight a limited level of digital literacy among the sample, which may plausibly extend to the broader population of the Republic of Srpska. It can further be concluded that digital platforms are used primarily for information purposes rather than for direct job applications. Hence, most respondents do not view digital channels as a primary recruitment mechanism, but rather as a complementary source of information. The application of digital technologies was also found to affect both work and leisure. The boundary between professional and private life is becoming increasingly fluid, as a

significant proportion of respondents reported remaining available for work outside regular working hours. Nevertheless, only a small number of participants had experience with remote work, indicating that digital and hybrid modes of employment remain marginal compared to traditional work arrangements. The digital transformation of labour in the Republic of Srpska is part of a broader global process. The results suggest that this transformation has already begun, yet it is progressing slowly and remains insufficiently institutionalised and socially recognised.

Conclusion

Initially, the internet functioned merely as an auxiliary tool for recruitment (Bartram, 2000), but over time it has become indispensable to the job-search process. The present study demonstrates that digital channels have become an essential factor in recruitment in the Republic of Srpska. The results show that social networks—primarily Facebook and Instagram—are the most frequently used digital platforms for job searching. Informal, socially oriented networks dominate over formal, career-oriented ones in the recruitment process. This may be partially related to the concept of “relational reconnection” (Ramirez *et al.*, 2017), whereby social networks are used to maintain, renew, and establish contacts that indirectly provide access to job information. This practice has been recognised globally: social network users often expand their social connections to achieve employment and career advancement (Sharone, 2014). Indeed, such aspirations have become one of the key motivations for social media use (Stopfer & Gosling, 2013). The research also found that highly educated respondents use digital channels to a greater extent than those with lower education levels, and that differences are also present across age and gender.

The findings indicate that remote and hybrid forms of work have not yet become widespread in the Republic of Srpska. Most respondents who had previously worked remotely are no longer doing so, suggesting that such work tends to take the form of temporary or freelance engagements. This points to an important distinction that should be considered in future research on the transformation of work and job-seeking processes. Peters (2001) differentiates between active and passive job seekers; it appears that for most employees, remote

work represented a supplementary engagement, an aspect worth exploring in subsequent studies. An important observation also emerged during survey distribution: of 61 municipal administrations contacted, only one responded to email correspondence, while among all job portals in the Republic of Srpska, only one replied. Two portals published the research request and cooperated without replying directly. This may indicate a low level of institutional and media openness to collaboration and digital correspondence more generally.

Digital technologies have introduced new challenges to employment and labour, such as information overload and the absence of clear boundaries between work and leisure (Fountain, 2005; Frey & Osborne, 2017), findings that were confirmed in this study. Nevertheless, respondents recognise the significance and contemporaneity of these changes and largely agree that digital platforms are important in modern recruitment processes. There is also a prevailing view that digital technologies should be applied more extensively within the local context. Employers in the Republic of Srpska have begun to recognise and use digital channels for attracting candidates. However, the findings suggest that such use remains partial and that digital tools are not yet fully integrated into recruitment systems. Overall, the results indicate that labour transformation in the Republic of Srpska is underway and that employment digitalisation is in a developmental phase. The findings of this study raise further questions and provide a foundation for future research into remote work, digital recruitment platforms, employer presence on digital channels, digital literacy, and related topics in the local context.

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