

# Employment in the 21st Century: Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Changes

Subjects: Social Issues

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In the 21st century, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous transformations were already underway in the field of employment. However, this unprecedented global health crisis has had a profound influence on employment worldwide, yielding both positive and negative outcomes across various labor aspects. Consequently, while certain effects are anticipated to be temporary, others are likely to instigate enduring changes in employment practices.

Keywords: employment ; 21st century ; COVID-19

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COVID-19 was an unprecedented event that caused many problems on a global scale for many sectors and industries <sup>[1]</sup>. Many questions have been posed regarding the impact of COVID-19 on employment <sup>[2]</sup>. However, some of these are already answered, while others are not.

Crises in general, and more precisely COVID-19, can provoke many repercussions on financial instability and its perception, while self-employed people cite increased financial worry due to the instability of this type of employment <sup>[3][4][5]</sup>.

Society, the economy, and the environment were heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic <sup>[6]</sup>, transforming public policy since governments had to cooperate with major sectors of society <sup>[7]</sup>. An intense impact was evidenced in various sectors, including healthcare <sup>[8]</sup>, tourism <sup>[1][9][10]</sup>, and many others.

COVID-19 caused many changes in global and local labor markets; however, most of the changes were scattered irregularly and heterogeneously <sup>[11]</sup>. Unemployment increased <sup>[12]</sup>, while many changes in employment were associated with negative health-related behaviors <sup>[13]</sup>. Apart from that, people with disabilities and workers in sensitive sectors were even more exposed to dangers and economic problems <sup>[14]</sup>.

However, there is a consensus that COVID-19 broadened inequalities that already existed in the past in the working place, and that an indispensable issue has arisen from the unique possibilities of telecommuting <sup>[15]</sup>. Consequently, the pandemic increased many inequalities worldwide, such as those regarding health, because the working class had limited access <sup>[16]</sup>, and lower social groups faced more difficult conditions <sup>[17]</sup>.

More positively, with the emergence of communication technologies, the performance of several jobs outside the workplace has been made easier and more widespread <sup>[18]</sup>. As a result, during COVID-19, the Internet was an important factor in the movement of the economy <sup>[19]</sup> and working from home was extensively embraced; however, empirical evidence before the pandemic is lacking <sup>[18]</sup>. Generally, individuals with busy schedules can benefit from working in flexible conditions <sup>[18]</sup>. The economic and health sectors can be affected in the future by the development of the digital labor market; however, this favors high specialization <sup>[16]</sup>.

To confront such difficult conditions, governments and policymakers should aim to assist all individuals, with a focus on specific social groups that are more vulnerable to such harsh crises (i.e., pandemics) and on those who face the socio-economic challenges of COVID-19-like crises <sup>[20]</sup>.

The remainder of this work describes the changes that COVID-19 caused in employment, depicts the global research interest for the keyword “employment”, and finally provides a conclusion.

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