

**Committee:** International Labour Organization (ILO)

**Subject:** Does technology help or hinder the working conditions?

**Country:** Brazil

Almost six months ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Covid-19 a pandemic. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on jobs has been worse than expected initially, and while daily COVID cases have been partially declining, new challenges are emerging. The coronavirus pandemic is responsible for the loss of 5.7 percent of working hours in Latin America and the Caribbean this second quarter of 2020, which is equivalent to 14 million full-time workers. As for Brazil, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics declared an unemployment rate of 12.9% between March and May 2020, the highest in the last two years. Indeed, the Brazilian workforce has been widely affected by the pandemic; many jobs have been affected or have disappeared, but what people tend to forget is that many others have been “hoard”, maintained, mutated, and created not only because of Covid-19, but also as a result of technology and how it has been used by employers. Before the Fourth and Fifth Technological Revolution, this wasn't something we could have expected. In fact, technology has proved to be efficient and reliable. Nonetheless, even if the technology is necessary, this doesn't mean that there won't be risks nor deficits, but we should try to adapt ourselves. With all this, in Brazil, the following question is currently of paramount importance for workers, employers as well as future graduates who are at the threshold of the labour market: does technology help or hinder the working condition?

First of all, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its innovations which correspond to robotics, artificial intelligence, augmented reality and virtual reality, have produced an increasingly important scenario in which human services often seem to be overshadowed by technology. In the case of Brazil,, the technological scene is flourishing. For instance, foreign investments in Brazilian startups have increased by more than 100% since 2013. Thanks to these, technology startups and initiatives are increasing in our country. We're talking about startups and initiatives such as Gympass, which could help the working conditions of people by enhancing a healthy lifestyle while being at work.

However, nowadays we talk about the Fifth Industrial Revolution. This revolution, unlike the previous one, connects innovation to purpose and inclusivity. Contrary to what some people think, technology isn't just taking jobs away, it's also creating lots of new ones, which has led to higher but different job demands. Although some industries and activities are in danger, others are set to become successful. Employers now look for different profiles; profiles of people with certain skills; such as logistic managers, IT Professionals, Civil and Electronics engineers. They are very demanded in Brazil, and thanks to technology and the way it is used , their working conditions have really improved.

Second of all, knowing that technology can help improve the working conditions, it would be interesting to see how it can be used by employers for the betterment of their employees' working conditions and also, how it can change them positively.

On one side, different types of technology can be used as a tool to improve working conditions. We talk about technology just as real-time data technology, safety apps, training software, or 3D visualization technology (help workers become more aware of their workplace surroundings and its risks), virtual reality (training), and drones.

On another side, technology can offer employees better working conditions; not only by improving their health and safety but also by making them happier and more productive. It can also help reduce injuries and deaths in the workplace. Furthermore, the types of technology used by employers can also increase efficiency in the performance of their jobs.

Besides these aspects, the coronavirus pandemic has made us employers see how we rely on technology. On one hand, technology has made teamwork easier; using tools like Zoom, some of us could organize vision conferences and keep in touch and others like Drive for file-sharing. On the

other hand, some Brazilian employers had the latitude to mandate apps or wear tracking devices. For instance, the Apple-Google exposure notification was integrated into the coronavirus app, in Brazil. All of this shows that in this situation, technology not only helps employers control the virus propagation in their companies or enterprises but also improves the employees' working conditions, protecting their health thanks to those apps and trackers.

To summarize, technology is a very important asset in the current labour landscape. Companies which use it appropriately experience efficiency and more productivity of more satisfied and healthier employees. Moreover, technology gives workers the required engines for adequate data collection and faster reaction times. Today, technology cannot just enable workers to be more productive, efficient and innovative; it can also keep them safe and expedite communication flow between management and workers and make them enjoy their work and workplace. However, as has been mentioned earlier, technology also brings to light some issues and challenges. As far as we know, Covid-19 pandemic has made employers take decisions, considered bad or radical by some. Trying to ensure a virus-free workplace, we had to install technological mechanisms: surveillance, Facial recognition, biometric data and Electronic logging devices (ELD). Nonetheless, the use of these tools triggers a lot of backlash in regard to user's privacy. We know that technology can help the working conditions but it can also challenge and even deteriorate them. In order to emphasize and capitalize on all the positive aspects of technology considering the actual context of COVID-19 pandemic, we need to work together for common and lasting solutions. For instance, the 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, art. 21, item XXIV, established the competence of the Union to organize, maintain and carry out labour inspection; this could be a solution to help working conditions through technology. Ultimately, as the International Labour Organization (ILO) affirmed The ILO and its constituents: Governments, workers and employers will play a crucial role in combating the outbreak caused by technology, ensuring the working conditions of individuals.