

# Strategic Typologies for Transforming ASEAN Work Life through SDG 8 Initiatives

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## ABSTRACT

**ASEAN nations** face challenges in implementing SDG 8, particularly in terms of economic growth, employment, and work-life balance. These challenges call for a more systematic approach to understanding the effectiveness of their policies in achieving SDG 8 goals. **This study** aims to develop a typology strategy matrix to classify and analyze ASEAN countries' SDG 8-related policies across four strategic categories: survival, synchronizing, stretching, and shifting. **The research** adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing archival content analysis of 576 newspapers across ASEAN nations, ensuring the inclusion of credible, representative, and relevant data sources. **The study** identifies four typologies of SDG 8 implementation strategies based on innovation levels and policy impact. **The findings** reveal diverse approaches to fostering work-life balance, economic growth, and employment opportunities across the region. Policymakers should use the typology matrix to guide future policy development and implementation. **The study** highlights the need for a holistic approach that integrates economic growth and worker well-being, recommending evidence-based strategies and lessons learned from successful regional policies.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ASEAN region is characterized by its remarkable diversity, comprising countries at various stages of economic development [1]. While some member states have made significant progress in creating a conducive work environment that promotes a healthy work-life balance and low unemployment rates, others grapple with disparities in labor market conditions and access to essential work benefits [2]. Work-life balance is a significant challenge in many regions, with long working hours and limited family time affecting the quality of life. Youth unemployment rates, particularly among the growing young population, represent a pressing concern, potentially undermining the demographic dividend [3]. Moreover, access to healthy work benefits, including healthcare coverage, parental leave, and mental health support, varies widely across member states, affecting the physical and mental well-being of the workforce [4].

To achieve inclusive sustainable development as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations (UN) launched Goal 8, which emphasizes the crucial aspects of decent work and economic

growth. This goal emphasizes the importance of sustained economic growth, full productive employment, and decent work for all. At the UN General Assembly in September 2015, decent work and its four main pillars, namely job creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue were made integral elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These four pillars serve as guidelines to ensure workers worldwide enjoy decent working conditions. Achieving decent work serves as a foundation for efforts to reduce poverty and improve social well-being, and is a prerequisite for achieving other goals in the SDGs. Thus, although decent work is a global commitment and a foundation for sustainable development, its implementation remains hampered in many countries. The phenomenon of decent work in developed and developing countries shows significant differences in its implementation. In developed countries, stronger employment policies and more comprehensive social security systems provide better protection for workers. For example, in Nordic countries, the implementation of decent pay, social protection, and better career opportunities tend to make workers in the formal sector more protected.

Meanwhile, in developing countries, the main obstacles to achieving decent work are the informalization of employment and limited access to social protection. Post-crisis labor market recovery is also uneven. High-income countries tend to recover more quickly due to stronger fiscal and institutional capacity, while many developing countries are held back by limited fiscal space and high levels of informality. In line with the DWCP 2020-2025 framework, one initiative demonstrating the application of decent work principles at the industry level is Better Work Indonesia. This ILO IFC partnership program has been assisting the export garment sector to improve working conditions and competitiveness since 2011, and now reaches more than 200 factories with nearly 400,000 workers, the majority of whom are women [5]. Its interventions focus on labor compliance with ILO standards covering contract management, working hour arrangements, and occupational safety and health and strengthening social dialogue between management and workers at the factory level. Evaluations over a decade have shown marked improvements in OSH practices, a reduction in excessive overtime, improvements in wage aspects, and strengthening social dialogue mechanisms for problem resolution [5]. Compliance reports also generally find no child labor in participating factories, with improvements in age verification procedures and protection of young workers. These findings confirm that the principle of decent work is increasingly internalized in the practices of the Indonesian garment supply chain industry and is in line with the DWCP policy direction [6].

Despite the considerable strides in economic growth across ASEAN, challenges persist in achieving the aims of SDG 8 within the region. Work-life balance remains an aspiration for many, with long working hours and an absence of flexible work arrangements impacting both personal and family life. Unemployment rates, especially among the youth, pose a significant threat, potentially leading to wasted human capital and social unrest. The provision of essential work benefits, including healthcare, parental leave, and mental health support, varies widely, leaving a portion of the workforce without the necessary safeguards for their well-being [7]. The relationship between SDG 8 and the three critical facets of work-life balance, unemployment, and healthy work benefits-is complex and multifaceted. Variations among member states, influenced by regional development disparities, demographic factors, and differing policy approaches, further complicate the issue [8]. The interplay between SDG 8 adoption and the concrete impact on these aspects of work life in ASEAN member states has not been extensively explored. Understanding how SDG 8 influences work-life balance, unemployment, and the provision of healthy work benefits, and identifying successful policies. This study aims to bridge the knowledge gap. It provides insights that can inform future policymaking and implementation efforts within ASEAN.

According to [9], SDG8 requires nations to "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". Major employers that have an impact on their own and others' employment prospects include the health and long-term care sectors as well as larger companies impacted by health policy [10]. According to estimates, the HCWF directly contributes 3.4% of all employment worldwide, with employment percentages ranging from 1% in low and middle income nations to 10% in high-income nations [11]. The concept of "decent work" is fundamental to every article that is presented, regardless of whether it is discussing workplace features or society as a whole, which aims to provide all citizens, especially vulnerable groups, a decent life through decent work, in spite of potentially oppressive laws and social structures [12]. Developed a multi-layered model known as the new Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), drawing on well-founded criticisms of overly "Western" psychological approaches that focus on the core of individual wellbeing in relation to work constructs with a focus on personal agency beliefs and volition, which has greater interpretive power for a particular segment

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of the working population. This outlines and clarifies the mechanisms, outcomes, and predicting elements of decent employment [13]. Found that psychological (such as work, career adaptability, proactive personality, social support), economic, and social (such as economic conditions, economic hurdles, marginalization) variables which were mainly disregarded in earlier WOP models are predictors of decent work [14].

People can meet their needs, achieve self-actualization at work, and be well when they have a decent job. Figure 1 depicts society as the innermost circle with four circles. For the social system as a whole to function that is, for politics, economics, law, labor, welfare, health, and education must first be established as a social construct. These cultures also have systems in place that, via advocacy and role models, encourage people to have pro-social and pro-environmental goals and practices. Over the past decade, Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) has emerged as a cornerstone of global efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all [15]. ASEAN countries have shown increasing policy interest in aligning national labor and economic strategies with SDG 8, particularly in response to labor market disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation, and climate change [16]. Previous studies found Artificial Intelligence (AI) can optimize workloads in Malaysian organizations, aiming to enhance employee well-being and productivity in alignment with SDG 8. The research discusses the potential of AI to improve efficiency while addressing challenges such as job displacement and skill gaps, emphasizing the need for reskilling and upskilling programs [17]. Moreover, another review underscores the need for context-specific research to develop effective human resource management policies that improve employee well-being and productivity. Several studies have documented ASEAN governments' efforts in either economic recovery (wage subsidies, stimulus packages) or social protection expansion (conditional cash transfers, emergency aid) in the short term [18]. Other research has focused on future of work agendas, such as skills development and green jobs, driven by regional initiatives like ASEAN Vision 2025 and SkillsFuture in Singapore [19]. However, despite this growing body of literature, significant gaps remain, particularly the lack of ASEAN-focused studies that use a typological or comparative strategic framework.

Previous research has largely provided descriptive analyses of SDG 8 implementation without systematically comparing policy responses among member states [20]. This study explicitly addresses that gap by contrasting its findings with earlier ASEAN-focused SDG 8 studies, demonstrating how the proposed typology strategy matrix contributes new theoretical and empirical insights. Specifically, the matrix introduces a structured categorization of ASEAN countries' SDG 8-related policies across four strategic types, offering a comparative understanding that advances prior scholarship [21]. This research offers practical significance for business administration and human resource management. From a broader human resource perspective, this research supports SDG 8, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive economic growth and decent work as part of sustainable development [22]. This research provides a foundation for fairer and more sustainable human resource policies and practices through the creation of decent jobs and better protection for agency workers, which can support economic growth without sacrificing work quality [23]. Human resource development strategies, such as mentoring and cross-functional training, are essential for strengthening HR practices by enhancing employee skills, adaptability, and collaboration. These strategies have been shown to influence the achievement of decent work by promoting continuous learning and improving overall job quality [24]. Thus, this research can help bridge the gap between formal policies and realities on the ground, where implementation challenges often arise. It also provides practical recommendations for developing a fair, sustainable, and productive human resource system, in line with the goals of promoting decent work and supporting the SDGs [25].

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using archival content analysis, which is particularly suited for exploring policy narratives and strategic responses across multiple ASEAN countries [26]. To enhance methodological rigor, several procedures were implemented. First, sampling reliability was ensured through the inclusion of 576 news sources across seven ASEAN nations, selected based on publication credibility, national representativeness, and thematic relevance to SDG 8. Second, data coding followed an iterative content analysis process involving dual independent coders, where inter-coder agreement was assessed to minimize bias and strengthen reliability [27]. Third, data validity was supported by triangulating multiple media types (newspapers, business magazines, and online portals) to ensure comprehensive coverage of ASEAN work-life transformation policies. This multi-layered approach strengthens the transparency and consistency

of qualitative interpretation, reinforcing the robustness of the typology matrix proposed in this study [28].

Data sources can be accessed by public and have nationwide and regional wide scope of data. The procedures of this research were choosing the research topic; selecting and locating data sources, content analysis of each data source; inter-judge reliability checking; theme identification; and result presentation [29]. The selection of media as data sources is divided into three groups, regional-national daily newspaper, business magazine and reputable online media. The timeframe for data collection shows how the ASEAN business struggled between pre and post implementation of large-scale social restrictions. Publication time is ranging from February 2022-April 2025 [30].

Table 1. Data Source

| No                         | Type                                | Publication                       | Number Relevant News |    |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----|
| 1.                         | Indonesia National Daily Newspaper  | The Jakarta Post                  | 61                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Jakarta Globe                     | 39                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Antara News                       | 31                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Tempo.co                          | 56                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Kompas.co                         | 47                   |    |
| 2.                         | Malaysia Daily Newspaper            | The Star                          | 46                   |    |
|                            |                                     | New Strait Times                  | 27                   |    |
|                            |                                     | The Sun                           | 13                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Free Malaysia Today               | 12                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Daily Express Malaysia            | 11                   |    |
| 3.                         | Philippine National Daily Newspaper | The Manila Times                  | 26                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Philstar.com                      | 21                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Rappler.com                       | 17                   |    |
| 4.                         | Thailand National Daily Newspaper   | Bangkok Post                      | 20                   |    |
| 5.                         | Singapore National Daily Newspaper  | The Strait Times                  | 93                   |    |
|                            |                                     | Vietnam National Daily Newspaper  | Vietnam News         | 30 |
|                            |                                     | Cambodia National Daily Newspaper | Phnom Penh Post      | 26 |
| <b>Total Relevant News</b> |                                     |                                   | <b>576</b>           |    |

In the first stage, data was collected by selecting news based on media sources, time span, industry type, institution and strategy category [31]. The second stage, the news is sorted based on the type of strategy carried out to compile a business typology that will be the findings of this study. Selected data sources are presented in Table 1. News chosen as data is news that tells how a company carries out a business strategy in a new normal situation [32]. Overall, there are 576 news articles that discussed transforming work life balance to create decent work and economic growth. It shows that flexibility is one of the essential options to implementation of decent work. where action shows important capabilities in their actions, such as responsive, versatile, resilient, dexterous, and compromising. Furthermore, the four strategies show strong associations with the strategic flexibility concept, proactive and reactive strategic steps to change, either internally or externally by utilizing a set of core values, culture, core competencies, strategic assets, and strategic positions [33]. More specifically, the four strategies are closely related with ten connotations of flexibility: agility, customize, adaptiveness, compromise, responsiveness, contingency, adjustment, resilience, variability, and localness. The steps to formulate a strategic typology that we have taken are based on the consideration of strategic flexibility as per steps for developing a typology for identifying strategic steps, determination of attributes for each strategic steps, define key theme assignments for each attributes and strategy typology development [34].

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on archival content analysis of 576 news items, four strategic typologies emerged ASEAN region, comprising ten diverse nations, is experiencing rapid economic development, technological adoption, and social transformation [35]. As these countries work toward sustainable and inclusive growth, SDG 8 which promotes decent work and economic growth has become central to reshaping the region's work life. This transformation not only influences employment opportunities but also addresses the growing need for work-life balance and improved well-being among workers. SDG 8 emphasizes promoting sustained, inclusive, and

sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all [36]. In ASEAN, the goal is particularly critical due to the region's youthful population, rising urbanization, and expanding digital economy. Countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines have seen significant economic growth, but disparities remain in terms of job quality, labor rights, and income equality. SDG 8 pushes for improvements in labor standards, support for entrepreneurship, and measures to reduce unemployment, particularly among youth and women [37].

One of the most promising responses to these challenges in ASEAN is technosociopreneurship, the practice of using technology to address social problems through entrepreneurial models. This approach aligns strongly with SDG 8 by fostering inclusive and innovative employment opportunities [38]. Tech-driven social enterprises are creating jobs that are flexible, meaningful, and community-focused, often catering to marginalized groups. For example, digital platforms offering freelance work or e-commerce tools for rural entrepreneurs are enabling individuals to earn a livelihood while managing family and community responsibilities [39].

Imagine a young entrepreneur in Vietnam launching a mobile app to connect rural farmers directly with urban markets. Or a single mother in the Philippines earning an income through a flexible, home-based digital job [40]. Across ASEAN, stories like these are becoming more common and they reflect a deeper transformation in the way people work, live, and find purpose. In Southeast Asia, work life is evolving quickly. Economic growth, digital innovation, and shifting social values are all reshaping how people engage with employment. At the heart of this change is Sustainable Development Goal 8, or SDG 8, which aims to promote decent work and sustainable economic growth for all [41].

In the ASEAN region, decent work is becoming increasingly important. The rise of the gig economy, automation, and digital platforms has created both opportunities and challenges. While some jobs have disappeared, others have emerged often more flexible, more inclusive, and more aligned with the lifestyle needs of a younger, more connected generation. This research found a typology strategy matrix involves identifying dimensions or variables relevant to the theme and categorizing strategies or typologies accordingly. For the theme based on two key dimensions "Policy Orientation: Reactive vs. Proactive" and "Focus Area: Economic Growth vs. Human-Centered Development". These dimensions align well with SDG 8 goals, which emphasize sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, with a balance of macro-level (policy/economic) and micro-level (worker well-being) focus [42].

|                     | Economic Growth - Oriented  | Human - Centered Development  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Reactive Strategis  | Type 1 : Stabilization Policies   | Type 2 : Social Protection Catch-Up   |
|                     | Short-term employment programs<br>Informal sector cushioning<br>Pandemic Recovery Stimulus        | Basic income pilots<br>Ad hoc mental health support<br>Labor law adjustments under pressure                             |
| Proactive Strategis | Type 3 : Growth & Innovation Drivers  | Type 4 : Transformational Work-Life Model   |
|                     | Industry 4.0 employment policies<br>Green job creation initiatives<br>FDI with employment clauses | Flexible work legislation<br>Work-life balance integration<br>In labor codes Skills development aligned with well-being |

Figure 1. Research Process Flow

Based on Figure 1. Firstly, Type 1: Stabilization policies in times of crisis, especially during global shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN governments have leaned toward stabilization policies that prioritize economic continuity. These are largely reactive measures designed to preserve employment and stimulate short-term growth. For example, Indonesia's Pre-Employment Card Program was launched to address job losses by offering reskilling and temporary financial support. The initiative helped inject liquidity into the economy while giving workers access to training platforms. Such policies are essential but often short-lived, as they do not fundamentally restructure work-life systems or long-term labor market resilience. These strategies are short-term and reactive, often implemented during economic shocks such as pandemics, natural disasters, or global recessions. They are designed to stabilize the economy and preserve employment through financial stimulus, wage subsidies, or labor retention schemes. Another program from Thailand which Rao Mai Ting

Gun (We Do Not Leave Anyone Behind) program that aimed to stimulate consumer demand and support low-income households. These policies are essential in cushioning the immediate blow of economic disruptions but do not address structural weaknesses in labor markets or prepare for future transformations [43].

Secondly, Type 2: “social protection catch-up”, this strategy type reflects a government’s attempt to quickly plug social protection gaps that become painfully visible during crises. These reactive, human-centered strategies focus on providing immediate support to vulnerable populations. For instance, in the Philippines, the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) extended emergency cash aid to millions of families during COVID-19, helping mitigate poverty and loss of income [44]. However, these approaches are often temporary and un-systematic, highlighting the lack of pre-existing infrastructure for universal social protection in many ASEAN states. This approach focuses on urgent welfare needs such as food, housing, and income security, often rolled out under political or social pressure. The emphasis is on human needs and dignity, rather than on stimulating markets directly. Another example from Cambodia COVID-19 Cash Transfer Program Initially reactive, but led to the development of ID Poor, a social registry platform to identify vulnerable households. Such interventions point to the growing realization that safety nets must evolve from emergency handouts to institutionalized welfare systems.

Thirdly, Type 3: Growth and Innovation Drivers, this typology reflects forward-thinking strategies that use economic and technological innovations to reshape the labor market. These proactive approaches focus on fostering competitiveness, digital transformation, and sustainable growth. Singapore’s Skills Future initiative, for instance, provides lifelong learning credits and encourages skill upgrades aligned with future economic needs. Similarly, Vietnam has invested in green energy and digital literacy to adapt to Industry 4.0, positioning itself as a manufacturing hub with a forward-looking workforce. These policies not only drive economic growth but also create new forms of decent work, in line with SDG 8. These policies aim to reshape labor markets before crises hit, by preparing workers and industries for Vietnam with National Digital Transformation Program technological transformation, sustainability, and global competitiveness that focus on digital literacy and reskilling of labor for new economic models like e-commerce and smart manufacturing. These strategies foster a resilient workforce that can drive productivity, innovation, and decent work in the digital and green economies. Another study also provides the importance of mental health promotion in the workplace for enhancing employee productivity in Indonesia. It highlights the need for organizations to implement mental health programs to improve employee well-being and, consequently, organizational performance, aligning with SDG 8 objectives.

Fourthly, Type 4: Transformational Work-Life Models, the most progressive strategy type, this typology emphasizes transforming the very structure of work to enhance human well-being, equity, and flexibility. Policies in this space go beyond economic growth to consider workers’ mental health, work-life balance, and long-term life satisfaction. The Philippines’ Telecommuting Act (Republic Act No. 11165) legalized remote work and set standards for flexible arrangements long before the pandemic forced such transitions globally. Malaysia has also recognized the importance of psychological well-being by integrating mental health support into occupational health policies, especially for frontline and informal workers. These models seek not only to modernize labor systems but also to build resilient, inclusive, and human-centric work environments. This typology represents the most forward-thinking strategy, focusing on systemic transformation of work environments flexibility, inclusion, well-being, and sustainability. Another example forms Thailand Labour Protection Act Amendments These policies signal a shift from traditional labor models toward a human-centered future of work, emphasizing employee autonomy, emotional well-being, and family-friendly practices. This is also in line with studies showing that work-life balance initiatives into how work-life balance initiatives, such as FWAs, can transform work life in ASEAN countries by promoting decent work and well-being in line with SDG 8.

The Figure 1 visually maps the four typologies of ASEAN strategies along two dimensions, Policy Orientation (Reactive → Proactive) and Focus Area (Economic Growth-Oriented → Human-Centered Development). Each quadrant corresponds to one of the typologies—Survival, Synchronizing, Stretching, and Shifting illustrating how national approaches evolve from short-term economic stabilization to long-term human-centered transformation. The HD version enhances the legibility of labels, axis markers, and policy examples, providing a more professional and reader-friendly visualization of the study’s core framework. These findings support previous evidence that the role of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) in enhancing employee well-being and organizational performance. It presents evidence that FWAs can lead to improved work-life balance, reduced work-family conflict, and better mental health, thereby contributing to the achievement of

## SDG 8.

Meanwhile, the traditional idea of working long hours in an office is being questioned. Across ASEAN, more people are recognizing the importance of work-life balance. They're seeking jobs that allow time for family, health, and personal growth. This shift is also tied to a growing awareness of mental health and well-being. Employers and governments are starting to respond introducing policies that support flexible work, remote options, and better labor protections. But challenges remain. Not everyone has equal access to these opportunities. Many workers still face job insecurity, low wages, and poor working conditions.

Achieving the goals of SDG 8 means ensuring that economic growth reaches all corners of society urban and rural, men and women, skilled and unskilled. The transformation of work in ASEAN is not just about technology or economy. It's about dignity. It's about building systems that allow people not just to survive, but to thrive. To feel valued. To have time for their families. As we look to the future, the path forward lies in innovation, inclusivity, and investment in human potential. SDG 8 offers the blueprint but it's up to governments, businesses, communities, and individuals to turn it into reality. Together, they can shape a work culture that's not only productive but also balanced, humane, and truly sustainable. Well-being is increasingly recognized as a key indicator of development, not just economic output. In the ASEAN context, well-being encompasses financial security, job satisfaction, mental health, and social inclusion. Achieving SDG 8 requires a holistic view of employment not just creating jobs, but ensuring they are decent, empowering, and sustainable. Government initiatives that provide access to social protection, fair wages, and lifelong learning are critical to supporting this vision. This study supports [45], which indicates that while hybrid work arrangements do not have a significant direct effect on employee well-being, they positively influence well-being through improvements in work-life balance and job satisfaction.

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## 4. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for managers, organizational leaders, and policy-makers across ASEAN to transition from short-term, reactive measures toward more forward-looking, human-centered strategies that align with the principles of SDG 8. Managers should place stronger emphasis on building adaptable and future-ready workforces through continuous reskilling, digital literacy enhancement, and support for innovation-driven roles. In parallel, organizations must institutionalize comprehensive well-being policies that address mental health, fair compensation, safe working conditions, and reasonable work-life balance. By doing so, employers can foster a more motivated, productive, and resilient workforce capable of navigating increasing economic volatility and rapid technological shifts. These actions not only respond to current labor market challenges but also reinforce long-term organizational sustainability by cultivating higher employee engagement and reducing turnover.

Beyond internal workforce strategies, the typology strategy matrix proposed in this research serves as a strategic instrument for managers and policymakers to evaluate the maturity of their current employment initiatives and identify critical gaps in decent work implementation. By locating their position within the matrix whether survival-oriented, synchronizing, stretching, or shifting leaders gain clearer insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their existing policies. This enables the development of more targeted interventions such as institutionalizing social protection frameworks, integrating flexible and hybrid work models, investing in digital and green job creation, and improving long-term career pathways for vulnerable groups. Ultimately,

adopting these managerial directions will not only strengthen organizational performance but also contribute to broader national efforts to achieve inclusive growth, enhance worker dignity, and support the creation of sustainable, equitable, and future-ready labor systems across the ASEAN region.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The transformation of work life in the ASEAN region is an urgent need as well as a strategic opportunity in responding to the rapid pace of global change. SDG 8 serves as a guiding framework that not only emphasizes economic growth, but also ensures that such progress leads to decent, meaningful, and sustainable employment for all. By integrating innovations such as technosociopreneurship, strengthening digital literacy, and prioritizing work–life balance along with workers’ mental well-being, the region can build a development model that harmonizes efficiency with human-centered values. This approach is essential to ensure that economic progress is not merely quantitative, but also qualitative and capable of directly enhancing human dignity.


The findings of this study contribute not only to theoretical development but also offer significant practical implications for public policy formulation across ASEAN countries. The typology strategy matrix provides an analytical instrument that enables policymakers to assess the maturity level of SDG 8 implementation, identify gaps in labor protection, regulatory quality, and innovation support, and design more targeted strategies for national development. Through the utilization of this matrix, governments can transition from reactive and short-term stabilization policies toward proactive, adaptive, and human-centered employment models. Such a shift not only strengthens labor resilience in the face of technological disruption but also enhances regional collaboration and integration in line with the broader ASEAN Vision 2025.

The evolving landscape of work in Southeast Asia reflects a complex dynamic influenced by technological advancements, shifts in social values, and the growing demand for inclusive and sustainable economic development. Within this context, SDG 8 acts as both a policy compass and a research framework that guides ASEAN nations in navigating global challenges while promoting the integration of scientific knowledge with practical implementation. Achieving goals such as decent work, increased productivity, improved work–life balance, and enhanced worker well-being requires strong collaboration among academics, policymakers, private sector actors, and communities. This integration of insights and practice forms a critical foundation for building more resilient, adaptive, and equitable labor systems capable of addressing future challenges and improving overall quality of life across the ASEAN region.

## 6. DECLARATIONS


### 6.1. About Authors

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### 6.2. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: MR; Methodology: DL; Software: PD; Validation: PD and AP; Formal Analysis: MR and DL; Investigation: MR; Resources: MR; Data Curation: DL; Writing Original Draft Preparation: MR and DL; Writing Review and Editing: MR and PD; Visualization: MR; All authors, MR, DL, PD, AP, and ZA, have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

### 6.3. Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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### 6.5. Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, known competing financial interests, or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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