

ntuc

SINGAPORE LABOUR JOURNAL

TODAY'S HOPES, TOMORROW'S POSSIBILITIES

5th Anniversary Volume Commemorative Booklet

2026 / Volume 5 / Issue 1

Preface to the Commemorative Booklet

In 2022, as Singapore emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) published the inaugural edition of the *Singapore Labour Journal* to strengthen labour research and improve policy outcomes in Singapore and the region. As the *Journal* marks its fifth anniversary this year, this milestone edition, focused on workforce resilience and inclusive labour strategies, is published at a time when the global landscape is shifting rapidly.

The accelerated development and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Singapore's economy have begun to reshape labour markets and jobs. As we navigate this transformation, NTUC has been clear that Singapore's AI transition must be one with good jobs growth—where productivity gains translate into better jobs and stronger worker outcomes.

At the same time, geopolitical tensions, climate change, and a rapidly ageing workforce continue to exert pressure on our economic resilience and social compact. NTUC remains committed to championing workers' interests and ensuring that all workers are supported, represented, and empowered.

Since its inception, the *Journal* has examined a broad spectrum of issues relevant to Singapore's workforce. These include outlining efforts to raise lower-wage workers' wages through the Progressive Wage Model; advancing evidence on skills development through NTUC's Company Training Committees (CTCs); and evaluations of workplace practices and concepts. Through these contributions, the *Journal* has informed policy development, workplace practices, and strategic interventions that strengthen the Labour Movement.

By grounding research in data, insights, and workers' lived experiences, the *Journal* enables NTUC to anticipate change, surface emerging risks, and identify pathways for workers to adapt, reskill, and thrive. It strengthens NTUC's ability to shape policy directions and guide organisational strategy for the future of work.

This *Journal* was only possible with the dedication and support of many partners. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our Advisory Board and Editorial Board members for their valuable insights, and to our contributors, whose work has strengthened NTUC's advocacy for workers.

Looking ahead, as the impact of AI on enterprises and the workforce becomes more pronounced, it is important to build trusted market intelligence and foresight to clarify the direction ahead and enable early action. Through the Tripartite Jobs Council, we will deepen our engagement with diverse perspectives to learn from global experiences, enrich discourse, and translate research into meaningful and practical applications. These efforts are complemented by initiatives such as NTUC's AI-Ready SG, to provide training and equip workers with new skills, support job redesign, and ensure smoother transitions into new roles in AI-enabled workplaces.

Together, we will build a Singapore where every worker can look forward to better wages, welfare, and work prospects, by ensuring that the gains of growth are shared with our workers.

Fraternally yours,

Secretary-General

Mr Ng Chee Meng

Chairman of the Singapore Labour Journal's Advisory Board



From Insight to Impact: A Review of the Past 5 Years

The test of a research journal's impact resides in its ability to translate ideas into real-world policies, spark conversations, and garner international interest. As a peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary, and open-access platform, the *Journal* brings together academics, policymakers, and practitioners, including members of NTUC's Labour Alliance co-laB (LAB), to advance labour research relevant to Singapore and the region.



5 Years of Research in Service of Workers

Over the past five years, the *Journal* has collectively drawn over 30,000 views, with around 19,000 readers engaging with article abstracts and around 14,000 reading full articles, a meaningful readership for a journal in a niche area. It has proven itself as a platform where research ideas find their way into policy and public conversations. Looking ahead, it remains committed to growing its readership by producing rigorous and relevant research, strengthening its reach and impact for years to come.

Policy Influence

The *Journal* shapes change by publishing research that supports Singapore's policy development and feeds into the evidence base underpinning NTUC's strategic positions. For example, "Auditing Gig Work Platforms: Fairwork's Research, Advocacy, and Impact" (Qiu et al., 2023) surfaced transparency concerns in the gig economy for gig workers operating outside of traditional employment frameworks. This strengthened research that supported NTUC's advocacy for gig workers. These efforts contributed to passage of the Platform Workers Act of 2025, which increased Central Provident Fund contribution obligations for platforms and introduced work injury compensation coverage.

Another example involves professionalisation of skilled trades to benefit workers whose roles are essential, yet whose career pathways and wages have lagged behind other sectors. "Taking the Plunge: Professionalising the Plumbing Sector" (Tan et al., 2023) surveyed the plumbing sector and proposed a Career Progression Model to support structured skills training and clearer advancement pathways. This research was subsequently deepened with the 2024 report "Career Progression Model for the Skilled Trades". In 2025, "Career Progression Model for the Skilled Trades" (Yee & Kang, 2025) proposed concrete elements for implementation. This is an example of NTUC's sustained advocacy, which could be argued bore fruit when the Ministry of Manpower launched a pilot in 2026 to establish a structured career and skills progression ladder for skilled trades, beginning with electricians.

The *Journal* also plays a forward-looking role in response to global trends. "The Role of Labour Unions in a Just Transition: Insights From the Workers" (Chng et al., 2023) offered insights on workers' priorities amid industrial transformation. The following year, NTUC signed an MOU with Grant Thornton, a professional service firm with a global presence spanning over 170 markets. The partnership was framed around facilitating a Just Transition for workers into the green economy, reflecting how research was applied in a major institutional commitment. Rigorous, worker-centric research has power to influence change.

Media Coverage

Our research sparks public conversations in the media. For example, several articles have been featured across major news outlets: "The Role of Labour Unions in a Just Transition: Insights From the Workers" (Chng et al., 2023) was featured in an op-ed in *The Straits Times*; "Auditing Gig Work Platforms: Fairwork's Research, Advocacy and Impact" (Qiu et al., 2023) was featured in *Lianhe Zaobao*, and "Upskilling for Non-PMETs: Challenges and Opportunities in the Policy Landscape" (Osman, 2023) was featured in *Berita Harian*. The following year, "Analysis of Retrenchment Trends in Singapore" (Seah, 2024) was featured in *Lianhe Zaobao*, while research findings from "Businesses Need to Sustain Output for Four-Day Workweek to Work" (Bajaj et al., 2023) were featured in *Industrial Relations News* in 2024. In 2025, "Young Pathways: Youths Embrace Portfolio Careers and Diversified Income Streams" (Poon & Lam, 2025), "Motivations and Barriers to Lifelong Learning in Singapore: Evidence From Focus Group Discussions" (Wang et al., 2025), and "Empowering the Workforce Through the NTUC Job Security Council: Current Progress and Future Directions" (Seah, 2025) were featured in *Lianhe Zaobao*; "Motivating Training Transfer and Enhancing Work Outcomes: Does Supervisor's Training Support Matter?" (Lee, 2025) was featured in *Berita Harian*.

International Interest

International interest in the *Journal* is reflected in the range of international academics who have lent their expertise to us. These include Stephen Billett, an Australian researcher, in "Relevance of Workplace Learning in Enterprise Transformation: The Prospects for Singapore" (Billett, 2023) and Selim Raihan, a Bangladeshi researcher, in "The Impact of a Vocational Training "Plus" Programme on Employment and Income" (Shonchoy et al., 2025). Such participation underscores the *Journal's* credibility as a platform for Singapore's labour research within wider international conversations.

Our articles have also been cited in international publications. For example, "Mobilising Workers via Digital Means: Reinventing Trade Unions for the Digital Age" (Trenerry et al., 2022) has been cited in international journals, such as *Sustainability and Knowledge*, while "The Growing Scope and Impact of the Progressive Wage Model" (Ho, 2023) has been cited in *International Social Work*. "Fostering Learning Opportunities for Workers: Looking Through the Lens of a Practitioner" (Yang et al., 2023) has appeared in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, and "The Impact of Internships on Graduates' Employability: Employers' Insights" (Yeong et al., 2024) has been mentioned in *Industry and Higher Education*. Together, these studies bring Singapore-based research into conversation with scholars and practitioners worldwide.

BRIEF ABSTRACTS OF JOURNAL ARTICLES

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The *Singapore Labour Journal* features a collection of articles informed by the insights of academics and practitioners.

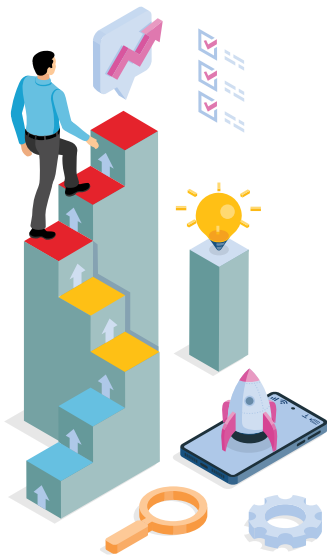
Each article in this issue embodies the theme: “Today’s Hopes, Tomorrow’s Possibilities”, grounding current worker aspirations such as fair work, skills relevance, flexibility, and job security in practical institutional and workplace responses. Together, the articles in this collection examine how skills, work design, representation, and technology are being rethought to address precarity, improve job quality, and support sustainable careers in Singapore’s evolving economy.



From Ground-Level Voices to Labour Movement Strategy: The ‘ARISE’ Framework for Adoption-Centric Skills Development in SMEs

By Vijayan Munusamy, Kang Yang Trevor Yu, Darshan Dave, and Zixuan Lian

Articulates an adoption-centric framework for skills development in SMEs, drawing on grounded analysis of employer and worker voices to identify shared CET priorities and proposes the ARISE framework as a demand-led pathway for labour movements to drive sustainable workforce transformation. The ARISE framework can be used through Company Training Committees to support an adoption-focused approach towards workforce transformation.



Overcoming Precarity in Gig Work: Digital Skills Framework for Upskilling

By Carol Soon, Han Ei Chew, and Beverly Tan

Develops a tiered digital skills framework for own-account workers in Singapore by analysing job postings and stakeholder insights, grounded in both international frameworks and local labour market data. Surfaces key behavioural barriers, including “one and done” training mindsets and upskilling inertia and paralysis. Identifies in-demand capabilities and proposes targeted interventions to overcome upskilling inertia, improve training relevance, and strengthen digital readiness in a disrupted labour market, including improving self-assessment and personalising training pathways.

Underemployment in Singapore: A Focus on Skills, Qualification, and Education Field Mismatches

By Samuel Chng, Sarah Chan, Brigid Trenerry, Rabi’ah Ghazali, and Ariel Tan

Examines underemployment in Singapore beyond time-related underemployment to include skills, qualification, and education field mismatches, offering a broader and more holistic perspective amid shifting career choices and workforce expectations. Findings reveal Singapore’s patterns in relation to OECD averages and underscore the need for lifelong skill development, flexible work options, and targeted support across career stages.

Charting our Future Together: Union–Association Partnership Within Singapore’s Healthcare Sector

By Michelle Ee Xiang Ng and Steven Tiat Yang Goh

Offers a case study of the potential of union–professional association partnerships in Singapore’s healthcare sector, showing how collaborative engagement can strengthen professional identity and advance workers’ wages, welfare, and work prospects, signalling a more integrated future for labour representation.

From Employers’ Concern to Employee Action: A Self-Assessment Checklist for Flexible Work Arrangements

By Yuan Zhi Seah, Joyce Tan, Huay Ling Tay, and Hui Shan Loh

Introduces an employee-facing checklist and productivity self-assessment to support flexible work arrangement requests, drawing on employer insights to help workers address the employer’s feasibility concerns while highlighting flexi-load arrangements as a potential lever for business competitiveness and workforce inclusion.



Employee Benefits: Trends and Emerging Issues

By Jia En Kenneth Woong and Jason Chiah Sern Chiam

Reframes employee benefits as a strategic lever for competitiveness by highlighting learning, family-friendly, and holistic well-being provisions, and offers actionable insights to help organisations align rewards design with evolving workforce needs while balancing cost and retention objectives.

Singapore's Approach to Flexible Work Arrangements: A Historical Institutional and Comparative Analysis

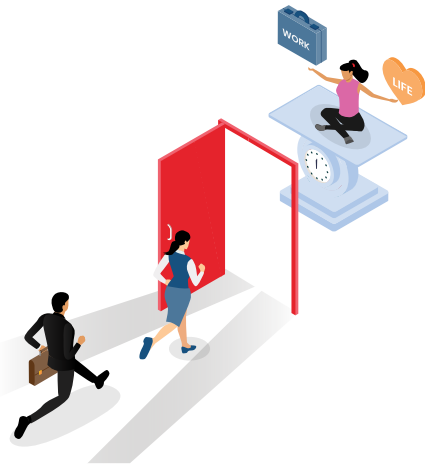
By Joel J. W. Lim

Justifies Singapore's tripartite, non-statutory approach to regulating flexible work arrangements by situating it within historical and comparative contexts, arguing that norms and competency based regulation can achieve similar policy outcomes while remaining sensitive to industry practices and business models.

Training, Business Transformation, and Job Redesign in Singapore: A Review

By Shawn Seah and Silin Yang

Synthesises a decade's worth of literature on training, skills development, job redesign, and business transformation in Singapore, highlighting progress, challenges, and opportunities for the Labour Movement to strengthen worker resilience, deepen company partnerships, and enhance participation in workforce transformation. Provides an accessible overview for researchers who need a summary of recent literature.



Shaping Rewards for Tomorrow's Workplace

By Fermin Diez and Jia En Kenneth Woong

Envisions the future of rewards by advocating a shift towards skills and career linked compensation, flexible and inclusive pay strategies, and well-being centred benefits, arguing that transparency and alignment with workforce expectations are key to building sustainable, motivating reward systems.

Recognising Contributions, Sharing Communities: Public Attitudes and Practical Considerations on Migrant Worker Integration in Singapore

By Ryan Patrick Pai

Examines public attitudes towards migrant workers in Singapore through survey and interview evidence, revealing broad recognition of their contributions alongside more cautious support when integration entails personal, residential, or economic trade-offs, with implications for community-level integration policies.

Transforming Healthcare by Leveraging NTUC Company Training Committee Transformation Initiatives and AI Innovation

By Steven Tiat Yang Goh, Krist Chengkai Liao, Don Choon Hwee Yap, Wendy Wan Peng Ng, and Bella Ting Lin

Showcases how unions in Singapore's healthcare sector act as enablers of workforce transformation, illustrating through case studies how digitalisation, AI adoption, and structured career development can enhance job quality, patient outcomes, and workforce resilience amid mounting sectoral pressures.

NTUC AI Career Coach: Redefining Career Coaching Support for Jobseekers in a Disruptive World

By Brian Tan

Details NTUC's e2i's journey in deploying AI to enhance career services, describing a phased approach that first improved coach productivity and subsequently expanded self-service support for jobseekers, all while complementing human expertise and advancing better job matching outcomes.



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**Every
Worker
Matters**

