

## Contemporary Working Women and Pink-Collarisation in Urban Areas

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### Abstract

“Women constitute half of the world’s population, do two-thirds of the world’s work, earn one tenth of the world’s income and own one hundredth of the world’s property.” Though the statistic has changed in terms of advancements in data collection, the ground situation remains dismal. The recurrent forces of modernization have heightened the complexity of the situation for the issue of pink-collarisation is rampant. Opening avenues for employment opportunities have not led to the phoenix rising from the ashes, but have manifested into comparatively latent effects of dual harassment. The patriarchal perspective has backed the evolutionary perspective to support pink-collarisation in work life. However, this has aggravated the role strain, for women shoulder a dual burden of physical and fiscal responsibilities. The present exploratory study focuses on the dual harassment of pink-collar workers and their perception about modernity. Majority of the respondents were from the domain of teaching, beauty industry, nursing, and housekeepers to diversify the target group. The target states for the study included the north Indian belt spanning across Punjab, Haryana and the Union Territory of Chandigarh. Questionnaires exploring the relationship between pink-collarisation and perception about modernity formed the core methodology. More studies can be done to examine ways to change the perception regarding modernity and curb the categorisation of jobs on superficial grounds and establish the constitutional Right to Equality.

*Keywords:* Double Harassment, Pink-Collarisation, Role Strain, Perception

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## Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goal-5 seeks to promote Gender Equality and empower all women and girls(*Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, n.d.). However, just publishing a handful of goals does not suffice for it requires commitment, which comes only when the common populace understands the graveness of the issue and works collectively to remove it from its grassroots. In the arena of women's position in the society, the issue arose with the publishing of the *Manusmriti* which further intensified in the caste-based society during the Vedic ages which promoted a parochial, patriarchal perspective by means of epics and academic discourse(Mohapatra, 2015). Women became a confined lot and their role in the society as ideal wives and ideal mothers began to be popularized over their other social roles.(*Portrayal of Women in The Hindu Epics by Lawrence Rayappan*, n.d.)

However, times have changed and continue to change with the advent of modernization, which refers to the transition of culture from conventionality to rationality((*PDF) Modernization*, n.d.). Though there have been efforts to ensure the availability of education for women, they still make up more than two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people according to the United Nations Women's statistics(*Facts & Figures | UN Women – Headquarters*, n.d.). But these issues can be addressed by integrating the global and local best practices to increase literacy amongst women.

## Pink-Collarisation

As per Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) (2022-23) the labour participation rate in India is 74.5% for men and 25.4% for women in urban areas and in rural areas it is slightly higher that is 80.2% for men and 41.5 % for women. Across the globe, women face inferior income opportunities compared with men. Women are less likely to work for a living or actively pursue employment. Women make up slightly more than half of the worldwide labour force, while men make up 80%. Women are less likely to work in formal jobs and have less prospects for business growth or career advancement. Women earn less when they work, the COVID-19 epidemic has exacerbated these gender disparities further.

A still bigger issue entails that of the complexity caused by the recurrent forces of modernization. While in some societal sections, they have increased the avenues for women employment, a social trend can be observed in the employment of women in a few sectors. These sectors where women tend to be employed the most are termed as “pink collar jobs”. The etymology of the term pink collar can be traced back to the 1970’s when Louise Kapp Howe, a writer and a social critic used the term to denote women predominantly employed as nurses, secretaries, and elementary school teachers, this trend was called pink-collarisation (Howe, n.d.). "Pink ghetto" is another identical term to pink-collarisation, usually used to refer to jobs dominated by women. The term was coined in 1983 to describe the boundaries women have in advancing their careers since these jobs are often dead-end, stressful and underpaid. *Pink ghetto* describes the placement of female managers into positions that will not lead them to the board room or decision-making positions, thus perpetuating the "glass ceiling". It refers to invisible barriers in the career advancement of high-achieving women. Though Pink-collarisation became the popular term.

Pink-collarisation in India refers to the trend where a significant number of women are concentrated in low-wage, traditionally female-dominated occupations. This phenomenon is characterized by the clustering of women in sectors such as Education, Healthcare, and Service industries, where they often perform roles that involve caregiving, support, or routine administrative tasks. One primary contributor to pink-collarisation is societal perceptions of gender roles. Deep-rooted cultural expectations often steer women towards careers deemed socially acceptable or traditionally associated with femininity. Teaching, nursing, and administrative roles are frequently seen as suitable for women, leading to a concentration of female workers in these fields.

The patriarchal perspective has backed the evolutionary perspective to support pink-collarisation in the work place (Dupré, 2001). Evolutionary theorists elucidate that evolution has played a major role in creating gender differences. Since hunting-gathering primitive societies, men used to perform tasks involving physical strength, thereby attaching the prefix ‘manly’ to such works. On the other hand, women were confined to those works involving nourishment and care of the young ones. Though this is an important function for the continuation of societies and civilizations, their works were demeaned. Similarly, such

theorists argue that predominance of women's involvement in a few professions can be justified through a historical lens.

Despite the increasing emphasis on gender equality, these sectors continue to witness a disproportionate representation of women, often facing challenges such as wage gaps and limited career advancement opportunities. The educational landscape further contributes to this trend, as women are encouraged to pursue certain fields over others. Limited access to vocational and technical education for women can restrict their choices, reinforcing the prevalence of pink-collar jobs. The World Bank (2020) estimates state that 88.06% of the nursing personnel in India are females showing the predominance of female employees in pink collar vocations (*Nurses by Sex (%)*, n.d.). A similar trend can be seen in other countries as well manifesting shared global concerns and global repercussions.

The issue with pink collar jobs is not just about confinement to a particular sector in the work domain but entails a larger issue that these jobs are often low-paid, increasing the economic dependency of women on the male partners. This can further reinforce patriarchy creating a vicious circle and a culture of dependency. The term pink-collarisation also underscores the undervaluation of work associated with women, as jobs in these sectors tend to be lower paying compared to industries dominated by men. Ongoing research and data collection are necessary to understand the nuances of pink-collarisation and assess the effectiveness of interventions.

### **Double Harassment and Role Strain**

Rita Wolshon, a major proponent of femonomics believes that women have unique healthcare needs that leads to higher expenditure on health (*Center for Financial Social Work / Financial Social Work*, n.d.). Simultaneously, they shoulder both physical and fiscal responsibilities. Though they have begun to work in the outside world to contribute to the household economy with the twin objectives of ensuring survival and empowering themselves. However, they continue to be the sole performers of the household chores in most societies. This creates dual strain for they have to perform two roles simultaneously which are often in conflict with each other, causing unnecessary strain. Even in the work-life, they are paid miserly creating both latent and manifest harassment at the workplace, thereby leading to a double harassment and role strain.

Role strain refers to the stress when, for any number of reasons, an individual cannot meet the demands of their social roles (Goode 1960) (Creary& Gordon, 2016). The dual harassment of women leads to unnecessary role strain(Spurlock, 1995). Adding to this role strain is the dilemma created by deep rooted societal traditions. Professor Deborah Grandfair, a professor of leadership and organizational behaviour at Stanford University, once said: “Our deep-rooted cultural traditions associate men with leadership traits, while associating women with tending traits, which make women into a dilemma, and we believe that it is women primary role to act as the tenderers. If a woman is not easy-going, she will make a negative impression and make others feel uncomfortable.”(Sandberg, C. and Scoville, N. (2014) *Step Forward Women, Work and Leadership Will A New Upgraded Collector’s Edition. CITIC Publishing House, 31. - References - Scientific Research Publishing, n.d.; Zheng & Zheng, 2018)*

This role strain leads to further health complications for women for both role quality and role quantity have debilitating effects on women. Researches have proven that this leads to women being 1.4 times more stressed from work as compared to men, showing high occupational anxiety (Sumra&Schillaci, 2015; *Women Suffer Much More Work Stress than Men, Says Psychiatrist | Health & Wellbeing | The Guardian, n.d.*).

### **Rationale of the Study**

The present exploratory study focuses on the dual harassment of pink-collar workers and their perception about modernity. Perception, here refers to the process of making inferences from the sensory stimulations and other social facts available in the social domain. Understanding the perception of the pink-collar workers regarding modernity can help to address the complex issues by first-hand information. This can aid in formulating remedial measures to change the stereotypes and prejudices attached to pink-collarisation by social actors. It will go a long way in ensuring Right to Equality to women as well by extending their employment avenues to the presently male-dominated sectors as well. The issue needs urgent attention lest a disharmonic societal system emphasized by Andre Beteille will lead to social disorganization and chaos. Thus, concerted efforts are required in this regard.

### Methodology

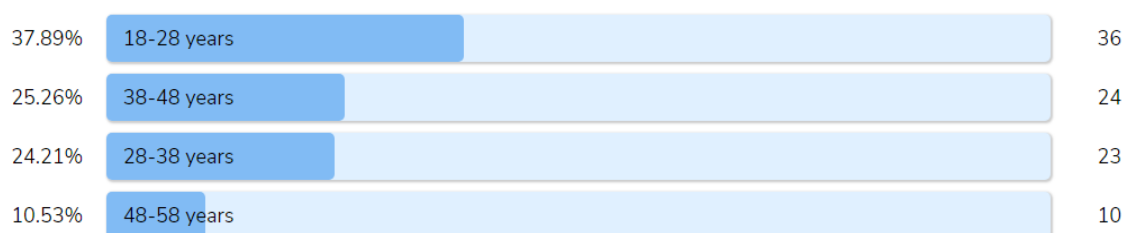
The present exploratory study focuses on the dual harassment of pink-collar workers and their perception about modernity. This study analyses data collected through questionnaires from females employed in the following four pink collar job domains: Teaching, Beauty Industry, Nursing, and Housekeeping. An applied research approach has been taken by the study to contribute to the current field of knowledge around women employed in pink collar jobs. It provides a first-hand information from the target groups about the impact of modernization on their job choices and the consequent factor of dual strain. The study took place in the year 2023. Questionnaires containing open and close ended questions were spread across North India, spanning across Punjab, Haryana, and the Union Territory of Chandigarh. The sample size of 95 was kept so that the responses could be generalized to a major chunk of women employed in such sectors.

The participants belonged to the age category from 18 to 58 years. The data was collected through questionnaires for the quantification of the exploratory research and the deduction in qualitative analysis. 25 items in the questionnaire included 5 questions related to the demographic criteria and the rest of the questions included those related to finding a link between modernization, pink-collarisation and role strain. The options were provided for ease of data analysis, but special care was taken to keep the options broad enough leaving scope for self-interpretation. The questionnaire was prepared on the Survey Heart of the google forms. Questions were reframed for the respondents who required help for interpretation and the options were selected on the basis of what they had answered.

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographics of the respondents included age, marital status, qualification, occupation, income and the occupational status.

**Figure. 1.1 Age of the Respondents**



The age of the respondents was categorized into the age groups of 18-28 years, 28-38 years, 38-48 years and 48-58 years of age. Most of the respondents were young; falling in the age category of 18-28 years, with the next majority formed by the middle-aged pink-collar workers in the age group of 38-48 years, their presence in the higher age group i.e. 48-58 was only 10.53 %. This reflects that the social trend of pink-collarisation was not only rampant in the previous decades but it also continues to hold relevance as a phenomenon even today.

**Figure.1.2 Qualification of the Respondents**

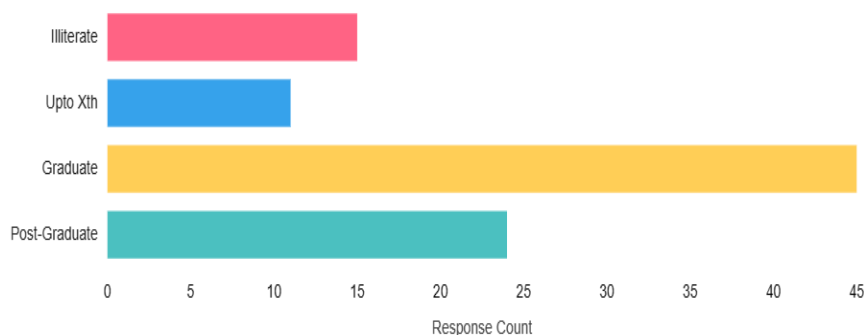
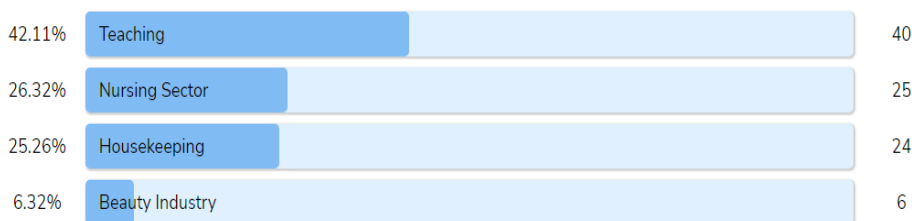


Figure 1.2 demonstrates that most of the participants (47.37%) were graduates while 25.26% belonged to the post-graduate category. 11.58% of the respondents had studied up to class Xth while 15.79% were illiterate. This reflects that even though pink-collar workers are highly educated, with some even belonging to the post-graduate category, the patriarchal societal setup has confined most of them to a handful of jobs.

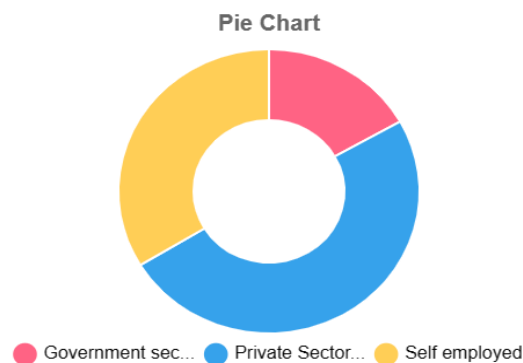
**Figure 1.3 Occupational Background of the Respondents**



Majority of the respondents (42.11%) were employed in the teaching sector; 26.32% in the nursing sector, 25.26% in the housekeeping sector while 6.32% were employed in the beauty industry. Since the google forms were circulated via social media platforms, most of the respondents were teachers as most of them belong to the most literate category. The nursing sector was further segregated based on qualification criteria as some of them were graduates while some had studied up to class tenth.

Most of the women in the housekeeping sector were illiterate, showing that lack of literacy is a major hindrance in their way of getting outside the tentacles of pink-collarisation. For their ease of answering, the items of the questionnaire were reframed in their mother tongue and scope was given for their interpretation of the phenomena in accordance with their personal lives. The beauty industry received minimum responses as most of them were self-employed and the constraint of the required social capital in getting them to answer the questions was a bottleneck.

**Figure 1.4 Occupational Status of the Respondents**



In the present study 49.37% of the respondents were employed in the private sector; 33.68% were self-employed and 16.84% of them were government sector employees.

The stark reality is that most of the private sectors cannot be called as fully organized sectors as they operate in a semi-organized or unorganized environment, leaving scope of exploitation by the employers which is manifested in lower incomes despite inflation and denial of promotion for most of them.

**Figure 1.5 Annual Income of the Respondents**

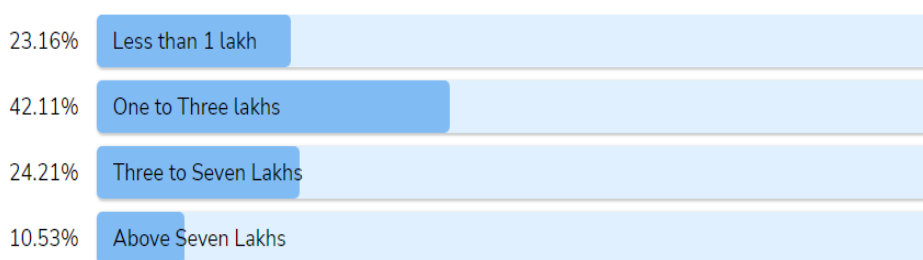
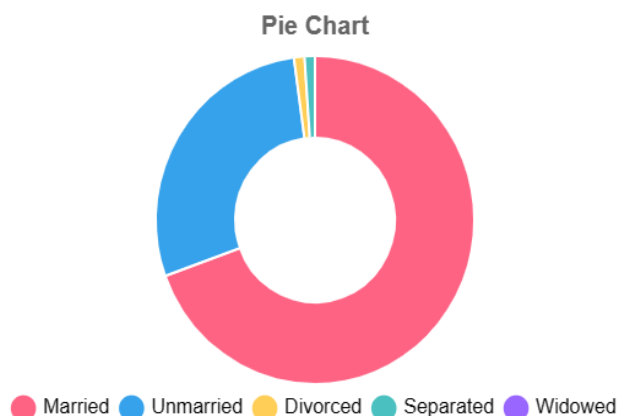




Figure 1.5 reflects that 42.11% of the respondents in the study undertaken said that they were earning one to three lakhs annually. 24.21% said that they were earning from three to seven lakhs. 23.16% said that they were earning less than one lakh annually and 10.53% reported to be earning greater than seven lakhs approximately.

This clearly shows that despite skyrocketing inflation making it difficult to make both ends meet, women continue to be employed in jobs offering lesser salary prospects. A major reason behind this was that they earn not to run the family but to contribute to the earnings of the male members. This provides them little economic independence as for the majority, monetary decision-making was beyond their avail.

**Figure 1.6 Marital Status of the Respondents**

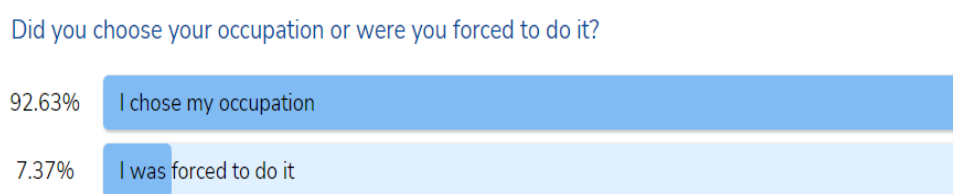


In the present study 69.47% of the respondents were married while 28.42% were unmarried. 1.05% each was divorced and separated. None of the participants was a widow. The findings clearly indicate that mostly married women are engaged in pink-collar jobs. The reasons for this trend are multifaceted, and the consequences have implications for both individuals and society. It has been observed that societal norms often dictate that married women are responsible for caregiving and domestic duties. Pink collar jobs, such as teaching or nursing, may be seen as more compatible with these expectations. Moreover, pink collar jobs are perceived to offer more predictable and flexible working hours, making them attractive to married women who often juggle family responsibilities alongside their professional commitments.

After the evaluation of the demographic profiles of the respondents they were further examined on various issues to understand their perspective .

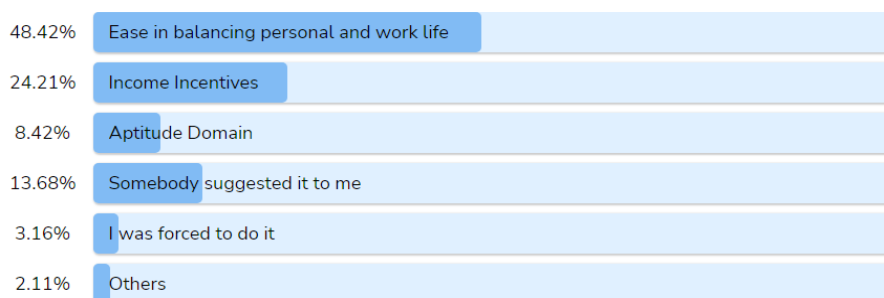
## Results

### Figure 1.7 Choice of the Occupation



Out of total respondents 92.63% of the respondents answered that they had chosen their own occupation while 7.37% said that they were forced to do it. The major reason behind this imposition for these respondents was the family. The result demonstrates that in most of the cases respondents made their own choice regarding occupation, however, despite getting this opportunity they preferred pink collar jobs. This choice is the outcome of the lifelong gender socialisation imposed on the female right from childhood where they are taught and groomed to perform expressive roles rather than instrumental roles. Parson suggested that instrumental roles provide financial support and establish family status, while expressive roles involve providing emotional support and physical care. Another reason for the emergence of this trend is that the data was collected in the urban areas of these states and hence the figures could alter if the research is carried out in rural areas.

### Figure 1.8 Factors taken into Consideration while choosing the Occupation

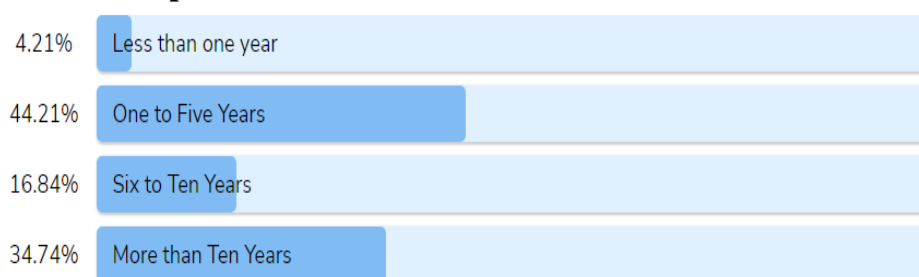


Out of total respondents 48.42% of those who had chosen their occupation said that it was due to the ease in balancing personal and work life that they preferred this occupation. 24.21% cited income incentives to be the major reason. 8.42% felt that it was due to the aptitude domain that they had chosen to stay in pink collar jobs. 13.68% said that they chose

the occupation based on somebody else's suggestion while 3.16% he said they were forced to do it. 2.11% gave other personal reasons.

Majority of the respondents citing ease in balancing personal and work life reflects the patriarchal society in which women are expected to manage household affairs. This leads to a situation of dual responsibility at home and at the workplace due to which women must choose such occupations only which demand lesser time and offer more opportunity of social conformity, minimizing any sort of negative sanction from society.

**Figure 1.9 Work Experience in the Domain**



In the present study 34.74% of the respondents were working for more than ten years in their domain. 16.84% had worked for nearly six to ten years while 44.21% had been working since one to five years. 4.21% had been working since a few months.

The results have proven that women have been working in these sectors since long and the trend has not changed despite the recurrent forces of modernization but has manifested itself in more complex ways.

**Figure 1.10 Average Daily Work Load in Hours**

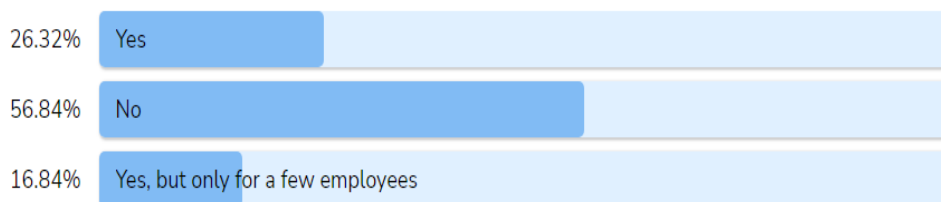


Most of the respondents (61.05%) were working for six to eight hours daily. 16.84 % reported to have been working for eight to twelve hours.3.16% said that they were working

for more than 12 hours daily. 14.74% said that they were working for three to five hours daily and 4.21% of the rest said that they were working for less than three hours daily.

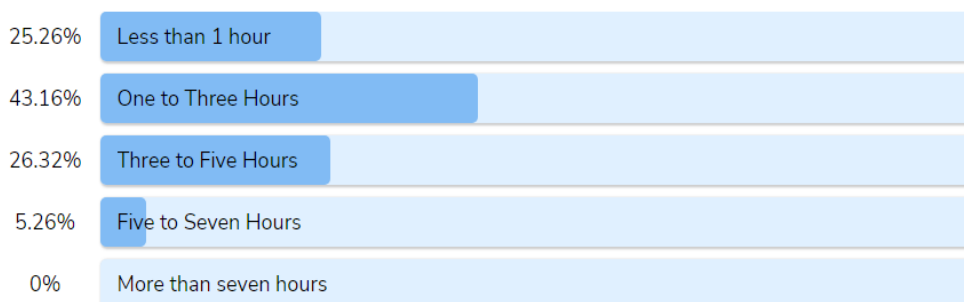
The data, when analysed, shows that most of the women have been working for 6-8 hours daily, which leaves them with time to manage both family and personal life.

**Figure 1.11 Benefits of Promotions in Work**



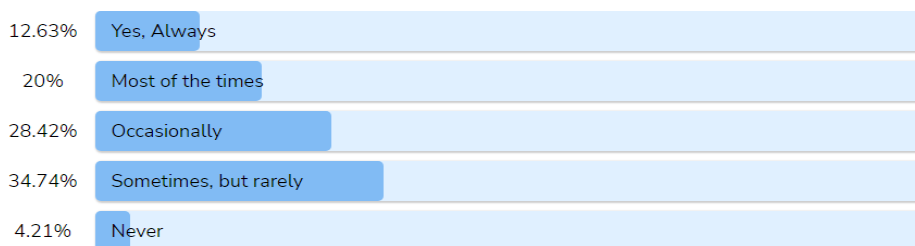
Most of the participants (56.84%) reported that they did not enjoy the benefit of promotions in work. 16.84% said that the benefit of promotion was there but only for a few employees. Only 26.32% responded in the affirmative that they had the benefit of promotion at work. Their work is not given due recognition via promotion and their household work is not even taken into account while formulating the economic GDP.

**Figure 1.12 Total Leisure Time in a Day**



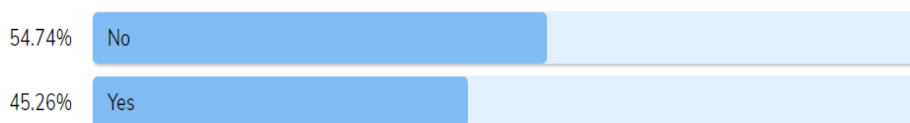
In the present study 43.16% of the respondents said that they enjoyed three to five hours leisure time in a day. 25.26% reported that their leisure time was less than one hour. 26.32% said that they could avail a leisure time of three to five hours. 5.26% said that their leisure time was from five to seven hours. No respondent reported to be enjoying leisure time of greater than seven hours. Lesser leisure time means that women, due to the dual responsibility, can afford little time for themselves.

**Figure1.13 Role Strain Caused by Multiple Roles**



It was clarified in the questionnaire that role strain refers to the stress experienced by one expected to fulfil multiple roles in life. The operationalization of the term was done to provide scope for more accurate responses and avoid misconceptions in the interpretation of the term. 34.74% of the respondents reported that they sometimes suffered from role strain but it was rare. 28.42% said that they face role strain occasionally. 20% said that they faced role strain most of the times. 12.63% said that they always face role strain. 4.21% were of the view that they never faced role strain.

**Figure1.14 Role Conflict in Life**



It was clarified in the questionnaire that role conflict refers to the situation in which there are incompatible demands placed upon a person relating to their job or position. The operationalization of the term was done to provide scope for more accurate responses and avoid misconceptions in the interpretation of the term. This simple yes-no question was answered in the affirmative by 45.26% of the respondents who felt that they had faced role conflict in life. 54.74% said that they had never faced role conflict.

**Figure 1.15 Performances of Domestic Chores**

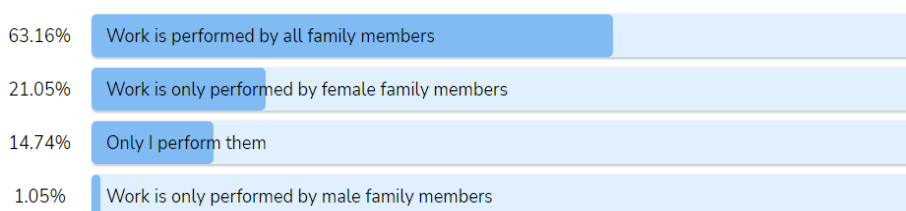
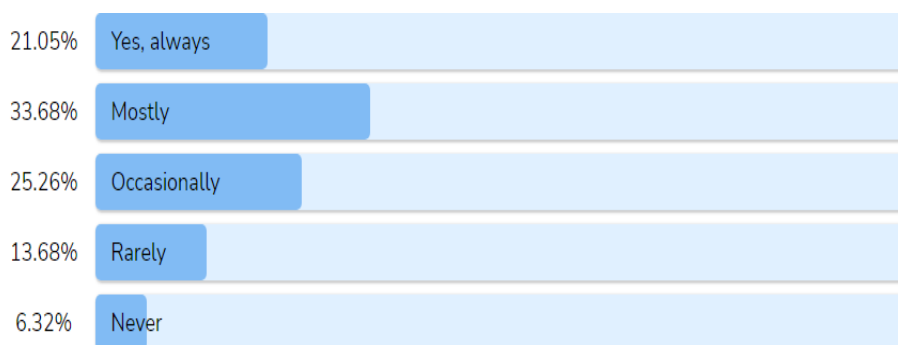


Figure 1.15 reflects that 63.16% of the respondents said that household work was performed by all the family members. 21.05% said that household work was performed only by female family members. 14.74% said that only they perform the household chores. 1.05% said that household work was performed by only male family members.

**Figure 1.16 Rewards/Appreciation by Family and Employers**

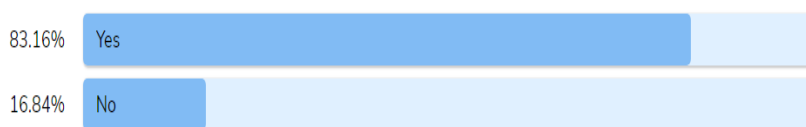


Out of total respondents 33.68% respondents said that they were mostly appreciated for their work by family and employers. 21.05% said that they were always appreciated. 25.26% said that the appreciation was occasionally given. 13.68% said that they were rarely appreciated and 6.32% of the respondents reported that they were never appreciated. Thus, they continue to work with no hope of economic/monetary and non-monetary incentives.

### **Modernization and its Advantage for Pink Collar Workers**

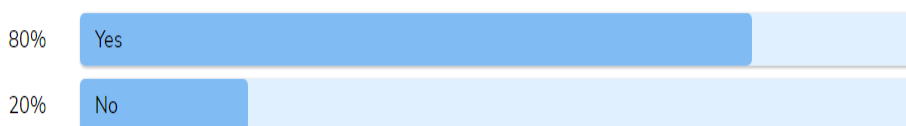
Modernization has brought about several advantages for pink collar women workers, enhancing their opportunities and improving their overall working conditions. With increased access to education, modernization has empowered women to pursue a diverse range of academic and vocational fields. This expanded education has enabled women to enter professions beyond traditional pink-collar roles, broadening their career options. Modernization has brought about technological innovations that have transformed the nature of work. Pink collar jobs, such as administrative roles, have benefited from automation and digital tools, reducing mundane tasks and allowing women to focus on more complex and fulfilling aspects of their jobs. Keeping the above mentioned views in mind the respondents of the present study were asked the advantages of modernisation for them.

**Figure 1.17 Modernization and its Advantage for Pink Collar Workers**



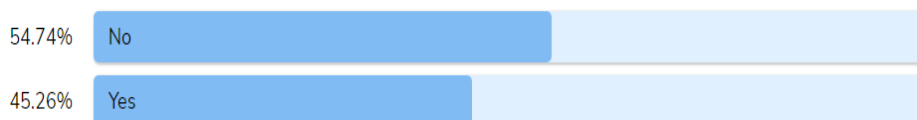
83.16% reported to have been benefited from modernization and stated that modernisation has transformed their nature of job while 16.84% felt that the recurrent forces of modernization had added little to their advantage.

**Figure 1.18 Satisfaction from Pink Collar Jobs**



Out of total respondents 80% replied in the affirmative that they were satisfied with their work while 20% flagged dissatisfaction.

**Figure 1.19 Satisfaction with the Salary from Pink Collar Jobs**



In the present study 54.74% of the respondents were not satisfied with their salary while 45.26% were satisfied with their salary. The findings reflect that despite majority of the respondents stating their satisfaction with the nature of job, only a little more than half stated their satisfaction with their salary. This reflects the wage gap disparity which is prevalent in this area and needs to be addressed to make an egalitarian society.

### Suggestions

1. Efforts to address pink-collarisation in India involve challenging gender stereotypes, promoting equal access to education, skills development, and advocating for policies that ensure fair wages and career progression for women in all sectors.

2. Policy interventions are crucial for combating pink-collarisation. Implementing and enforcing equal pay legislation, providing family-friendly policies, and creating a supportive work environment are essential steps. The Government of Indian has already taken various steps to improve women's participation in the labour force and quality of their employment. A number of protective provisions have been incorporated in the labour laws for equal opportunity and congenial work environment for women workers. The Code on Social Security, 2020 has the provisions for enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, mandatory crèche facility in the establishments having 50 or more employees, providing women workers in the night shifts with adequate safety measures, etc.
3. To enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. Further, the employment generation coupled with improving employability is the priority of the Government.
4. Moreover, initiatives that challenge gender stereotypes and promote positive role models can contribute to altering societal perceptions about suitable career paths for women. It requires a multifaceted approach to break down the barriers that contribute to the concentration of women in certain occupations.
5. Effective research and data collection can play crucial role in monitoring progress in this area. Evaluation of trends in female labour force participation, wage differentials, and career progression can help in forming operative policies in this area.
6. Collaboration between government bodies, NGOs, and private enterprises is essential to create a comprehensive strategy that addresses the multifaceted challenges contributing to the concentration of women in specific job sectors.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The present study was done in the urban areas of Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh, due to which the results might vary if carried out in other states including the rural belts and suburbs. Also, the smaller sample size and the limited universe of the study adds to the limitations. More studies can be done in this regard to investigate the further link between the existence of pink-collarisation and role strain and perceptions about modernity in other areas and on pink collar workers in different occupational statuses.



### Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that there exist sub categorizations even amongst the pink-collar workers with regard to the occupational status, which decides the outcomes. However, the major reason behind choosing this occupation for most of the respondents was ease in balancing personal and work life which shows patriarchal mindset prevalent in the society that expects women to handle both workplace and household tasks, thereby affording them with little leisure time. Coupled with this aspect, is the lesser income that is offered in these jobs and the little chances of promotion, despite which women have been working and continue to work in these sectors. Most of them suffer from role strain due to the multiplicity of roles that they perform. However, responses read in role conflict, demonstrate that it depends on other factors like family support, work environment etcetera. A shared affirmative response regarding modernization has proven that it has added to their advantage that is now manifest in different forms. However, the dual work that women perform in shouldering what fiscal and physical responsibilities is really appreciated even for some highly qualified women which shows that education has not made the tasks more noticeable in the societal domain. In a nutshell, the existence of pink-collarisation, role strain and a positive perception regarding modernity has been successfully proven by the study.

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