

GENDER INCLUSIVE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT: A STUDY ON ‘PINK MRF’ IN CHANDIGARH

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ABSTRACT

Urban India generates approximately 42 million tons of municipal solid waste annually, and with projections indicating that nearly 50 percent of the population will reside in urban areas by 2050, the challenge of effective solid waste management (SWM) is becoming increasingly urgent. The Constitution of India assigns municipal bodies the responsibility of ensuring sanitation and public cleanliness, making SWM a fundamental pillar of urban governance with direct implications for public health, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. In response to these growing challenges, cities are adopting innovative and inclusive models of waste management that align with the goals of sustainable urban development. One such initiative is the PINK Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Chandigarh, a pioneering effort that integrates gender inclusivity into waste management practices by employing and empowering women in key operational roles. This gender-responsive model not only enhances the efficiency of waste segregation and recycling but also promotes economic participation and social equity for marginalized women workers. This study explores the functioning, outcomes, and broader socio-environmental impact of the Pink MRF within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals. It highlights how SWM can contribute to more equitable, resilient, and sustainable urban environments.

KEYWORDS: Solid Waste Management, PINK MRF, Material Recovery Facility, Municipal Corporation, Waste Segregation

INTRODUCTION

Chandigarh was established as a union territory in 1966, with responsibilities for essential services such as water supply, sewerage, city roads, and solid waste management assigned to the various departments of Chandigarh's administration. In 1994, the Municipal Corporation was created, assuming the responsibility for solid waste management within the municipal area. Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), commonly referred to as trash or garbage, comprises daily items that individuals use and subsequently discard. The Chandigarh Administration actively promotes practices aimed at reducing the volume of waste requiring disposal, including waste prevention, recycling, and composting.

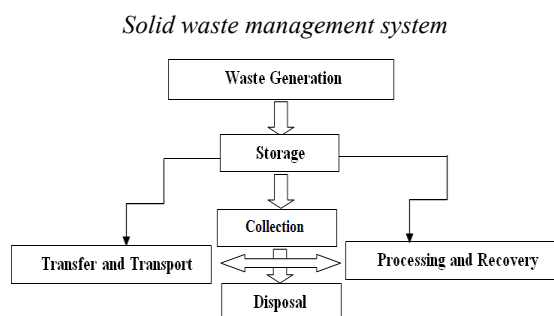
Source: secondary data (Municipal Solid Waste, Plastic Waste & Hazardous Waste : Generation and Management Techniques, 2020)

MRF (MATERIAL RECOVERY FACILITY) CENTRES IN CHANDIGARH

The Material Recovery Facility (MRF) centers in Chandigarh were established to address the increasing challenges associated with solid waste management (SWM) and to enhance the efficiency of waste segregation. These centers are designed to support the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and to advance the overall waste management practices within the city. The establishment of three transfer stations cum material recovery facilities, strategically positioned to cover the entire Chandigarh area. Based on the proposal, the Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in Chandigarh were officially inaugurated on May 11, 2022. There are three MRF centers were established by the Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh (MCC) as part of the city's initiative to enhance waste management and recycling practices.

Pink MRF

The MRF Centre, located in Chandigarh, Sector 25, referred to as the Pink MRF (Material Recovery Facility), represents a significant initiative aimed at empowering women in the waste management sector. In commemoration of Gandhi Jayanti, the



Chandigarh Municipal Corporation entrusted the operation of this Material Recovery Facility to an all-female workforce.

Chandigarh Mayor Sarbjit Kaur Dhillon formally designated the Sector 25 center as 'Pink MRF', marking it as the first facility of its kind. The workforce comprises 20 helpers, Data Entry Operators (DEOs), and security personnel. The helpers, previously engaged as rag pickers, have undergone training to efficiently segregate waste on a conveyor belt.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

The Pink MRF commenced operations on October 2, 2022, under the direction of Commissioner Anirudha Mitra, IAS. The initiative arose from the circumstances of women working as rag pickers at the Dadu Majra landfill, who collected plastic waste for their livelihoods without a stable income. Following a tragic incident at the landfill, these women collectively approached the commissioner, leading to an offer of employment from the Commissioner. Subsequently, the initial group of 20 women received a one-week training program, following which men who were previously employed as sanitation workers returned to their original roles. Presently, the workforce has expanded to 32 women, with new members receiving a week of training upon joining.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

OBJECTIVES

The study evaluates the operational framework of the segregation process at the Pink MRF in Sector 25, assesses the working conditions and occupational safety of the workforce employed at the Pink MRF, and analyses the role of the Pink

MRF in promoting women's empowerment and sustainability while connecting with the Sustainable Development Goals.

METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology outlines, the primary data was collected through both qualitative and quantitative methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one supervisor and thirty-two employees at the Pink Material Recovery Facility (MRF) located in Sector 25, Chandigarh. The interview with the supervisor utilised open-ended questions, while the interviews with the employees were based on a blend of open-ended and closed-ended questions.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Operational framework of Pink MRF

There are three MRF centers located throughout Chandigarh, specifically one is in Industrial Area Phase One, Industrial Area Phase Two and the last one is Pink MRF, Sector 25 West (notably, this is the only MRF center that commenced operations with a workforce comprised exclusively of women engaged in waste segregation).

In total, 535 door-to-door vehicles collect waste from residential areas and markets within the region. Of these, approximately 175 vehicles operate under the Pink MRF. These vehicles primarily collect four categories of waste: dry, wet, sanitary, and hazardous. The vehicles are equipped with two color-coded compartments: The blue compartment is designated for dry waste, and the green compartment is designated for wet waste.

For sanitary and hazardous waste, specific colour-coded bags are utilized: a red bag for sanitary waste and a black bag for hazardous or electronic waste. The volume of these types of waste is relatively low, leading to the provision of bags only. Daily, the Pink MRF processes approximately 80 to 85 metric tons of waste. Due to the facility's closure on Sundays, the incoming waste volume on Mondays typically ranges from 100 to 115 metric tons.

There are three weighbridges at the facility. Garbage vehicles enter the MRF through Gate no. One, where they first undergo weighing on the weighbridge no. One to determine the total weight. The dry waste is then deposited in the designated dry collection area for segregation, which is facilitated by two conveyor belts. As the dry waste moves along the conveyor belts, Pink MRF workers sort the materials into recyclable and non-recyclable categories. Recyclable materials are directed to a sorting platform for market sales, generating additional revenue. Non-recyclable waste is further processed on the conveyor belt for compaction before being transferred to the hopper for compression into capsules with a capacity of 20 cubic meters.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

The compactors are designed to interface with detachable containers or capsules, which can be exchanged for empty ones once filled. The filled waste capsules are transported by specialised vehicles known as hook loader trucks, which deliver dry waste capsules to the dry waste processing plant and wet waste capsules to the wet waste processing plant situated nearby the MRF.



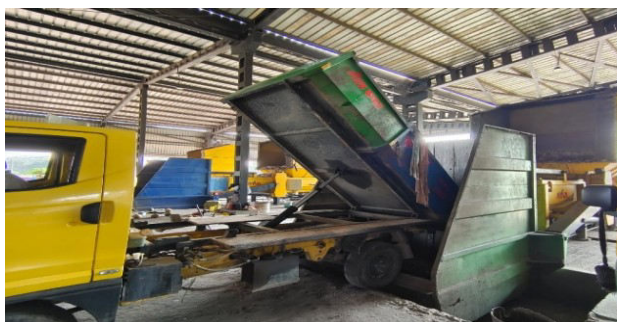
Source: Photograph taken by the first author

In the subsequent stage, vehicles containing wet waste are weighed on weighbridge no. two. Following data entry, the wet waste is deposited into a tip cart and its corresponding hoppers (two tip carts are designated for wet waste). After the respective placements of dry and wet waste, the empty vehicles are weighed on the weighbridge no. three to ascertain the net weight of the garbage before they depart for subsequent collection trips within the city.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

The dry waste processing operation produces Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF), which is utilised in cement manufacturing processes. Concurrently, the wet waste processing facility generates biogas. Post-processing, the residual waste suitable for landfilling is transported to the Daddu Majra dumping landfill.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

Both sanitary and hazardous wastes are processed by a private firm that has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Predominantly, sanitary or biomedical waste is packed in yellow compostable bags and dispatched daily to 'Alliance Enviocare Company Pvt. Ltd'. Hazardous waste is managed by the 'NIMBUA' firm, typically on a semiannual basis. The facility is equipped with eight static compactors and capsules, divided evenly amongst four for dry waste and four for wet waste. There are three hook loader trucks operational at this MRF.

Information on working condition and occupational safety of workforce

As per the current data there are a total of 32 workers employed at the facility. The work is organized into flexible divisions as follows:

- Pre-sorting (segregation): 12 workers
- Conveyor belt operations: 13 workers
- Hopper weigh management: Two workers
- Multi-task work (MTW): Four workers
- Cleaning: One worker



The newly hired workers receive one week of training relevant to their roles. If additional workers are recruited, training programs are also conducted for them. Furthermore, there are four security guards on-site, with two female guards managing the facility during the day and two male guards during the night. Mechanical operators are also employed to oversee the electronic and mechanical systems, which are managed by a designated company. Workers are provided with necessary equipment and safety gear, including a pink uniform, jackets, gloves, helmets, masks, gumboots, and tools such as 'kandi', all supplied free of charge by the Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

The working hours are from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, with supervisors maintaining a manual register of attendance. During their shifts, workers are permitted a one-hour rest and lunch break, divided into two shifts: from 12 PM to 1 PM and from 1 PM to 2 PM. A designated resting room is also available for the staff. The facility includes purified drinking water with a separate tank, washbasins, and restrooms. The workers' rest area features an attached washroom, alongside separate washrooms for male and female employees.

The workers are granted Sunday as a regular holiday, with an additional casual leave day each month. For any leave exceeding one day, written permission must be submitted to the supervisor. Employees are entitled to six months of maternity leave. In cases of un-notified leave exceeding seven days, workers are required to secure approval from the Medical Officer of Health (MoH) to resume the work.

In terms of medical provisions, each employee is entitled to an Employees' State Insurance (ESI) number, which allows access to ESI hospitals for medical benefits. Medical camps are conducted biannually at the MRF center, which includes services such as eye tests, urine tests, and blood tests. For minor injuries, first aid kits are available on-site; however, serious injuries require transport to a government multispecialty hospital situated in Sector 16. A dispensary is located approximately 500 meters away. Workers also benefit from an insurance scheme provided by Punjab National Bank and Sindh Bank, as per a memorandum of understanding, which offers coverage of INR 2.5 lakhs for accidental injuries and INR 4 lakhs in the event of death.

Regarding financial compensation, workers earn a fixed monthly salary of 21000, with uniform remuneration for similar job categories. Employees have access to a Provident Fund (PF) facility, which can be withdrawn according to individual needs. Each year, an increment in their salary is noted; previously they earned 18000 and are now compensated with 21000. There is no fixed age limit or work tenure, as employees may continue their service based on their willingness and medical fitness.

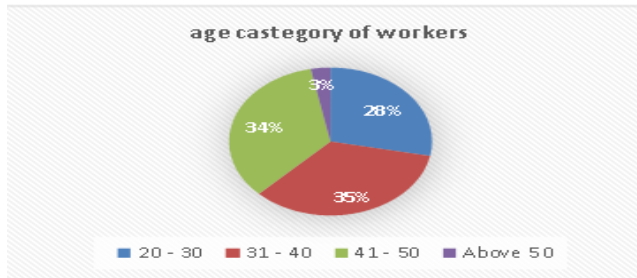
The organization also provides grocery items, including tea powder, cooking oil, and soap, on a monthly basis. Each month, a selection is made for the "Best Worker" award, which receives an award from the Minister of Urban Local Bodies during special occasions.

Demographic details: Age profile

The figure one illustrates the distribution of workers across four age categories. The age group of 20-30 comprises 28 percent of the workforce, while the 31-40 and 41-50 age groups

each account for 34 percent. Conversely, the category of individuals above the age of 50 represents only four percent.

Figure: One

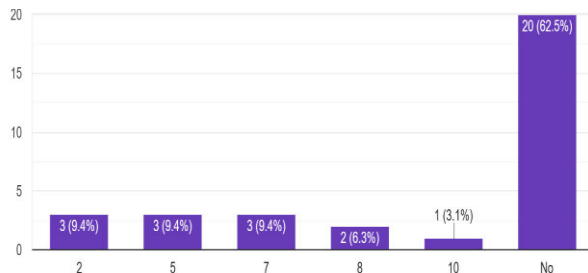


Source: primary data

This data signifies the representation of various age groups among workers in the field. Notably, there is a substantial number of workers in the 31-40 and 41-50 age categories. The representation of the 20-30 age group is also commendable. This information suggests that the workforce accommodates individuals from diverse age groups, indicating that there is no specific age limit for achieving work-related tasks.

Educational qualification

The educational qualifications of the workers predominantly fall below matriculation. Approximately 48 percent of workers possess only educational attainment at the under-matriculation level. Around 62 percent of workers have no formal educational background.



Source: primary data

This figure two indicates that more than half of the workforce (approximately 62 percent) lacks any educational experience. This situation suggests that employment opportunities were provided independent of educational qualifications. Such placements likely contribute to the ability of these workers to sustain their households.

ASSESSING THE WORKING CONDITIONS AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY OF PINK MRF WORKERS

Availability of the training programme after recruitment

In the context of the Pink MRF workers, it was determined that all employees undergo training immediately following their recruitment. The accompanying diagram illustrates that 100 percent of the workforce receives this training.

Figure: Three



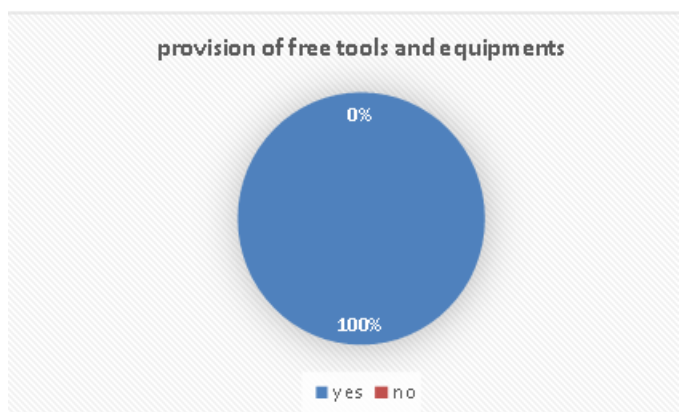
Source: primary data

This diagram indicates that all workers at Pink MRF are adequately participating in the training program. Both employees recruited at the time of the organisation's establishment and those hired more recently are receiving appropriate training. The training encompasses essential areas such as rag picking, waste segregation, and the utilization of equipment and machinery. During data collection, workers expressed that they perceive no necessity for this type of training program, as they are proficient in waste segregation through their practical experience in the waste disposal field.

Availability of free tools and equipment's to the workers

All the workers at Pink MRF receive tools and equipment at no cost. A unanimous agreement among the workers indicates that they are satisfied with the provision of free tools, which include a pink dress, jacket, helmet, gum boots, gloves, and a mask.

Figure: Four



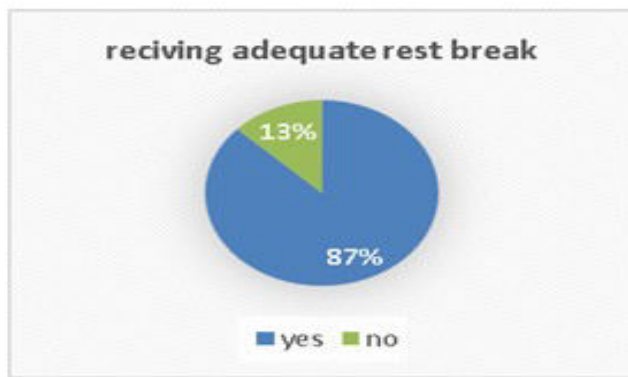
Source: primary data

Information obtained from the supervisor further confirms that the workers are provided with these tools without any associated charges. It was noted that a segment of the female workforce expressed dissatisfaction with the color of the uniforms. Initially, the uniforms were gray; however, they were later changed to pink. Despite this change, many workers remain dissatisfied with the pink color of the uniforms.

Resting facilities for the workers

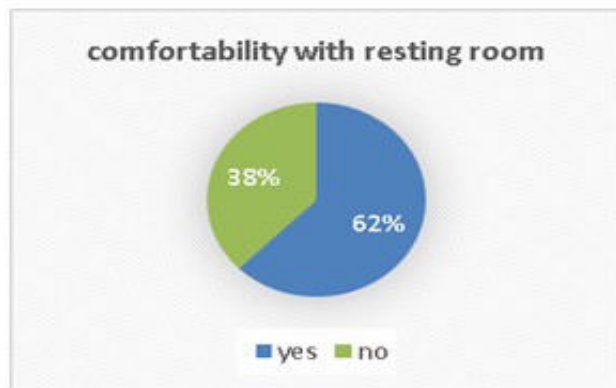
According to the data received by the researcher, 87 percent of the employees express satisfaction with the designated rest breaks, while 13 percent indicate dissatisfaction with the duration of these breaks. When evaluating the comfort level of the resting room provided for employees, 63 percent report feeling comfortable, whereas 37 percent do not find the resting room facility satisfactory.

Figure: Five



Source: primary data

Figure: Six



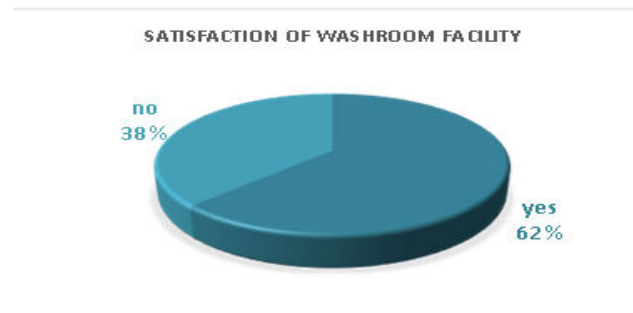
The figure five draws that a relatively small proportion of employees are dissatisfied with their break facilities, whereas the

sixth diagram reveals a significant number of employees who report discomfort with the resting room provisions. From this analysis, it is evident that there are certain issues concerning the resting room facilities that require attention.

Washroom facility for workers

Data indicates that 62 percent of workers express satisfaction with the washroom or toilet facilities available to them. Conversely, 38 percent of workers report dissatisfaction with the washroom facilities provided at Pink MRF.

Figure: Seven



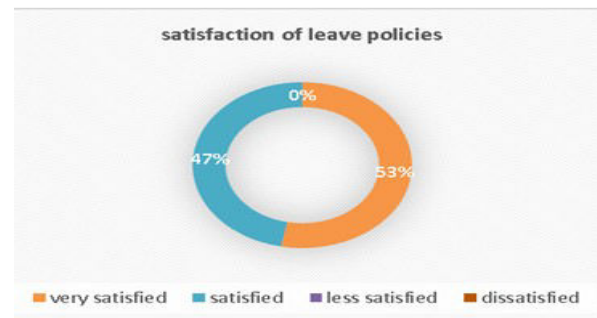
Source: primary data

The analysis derived from this data suggests that a significant portion of employees is not content with their washroom facilities, highlighting potential issues that may be affecting the overall worker experience in this respect.

Satisfaction of leave benefit to the workers

According to feedback from employees, 53 percent report being very satisfied with their leave benefits, while 47 percent indicate that they are satisfied. Notably, there were no responses indicating dissatisfaction or a lesser degree of satisfaction.

Figure: Eight

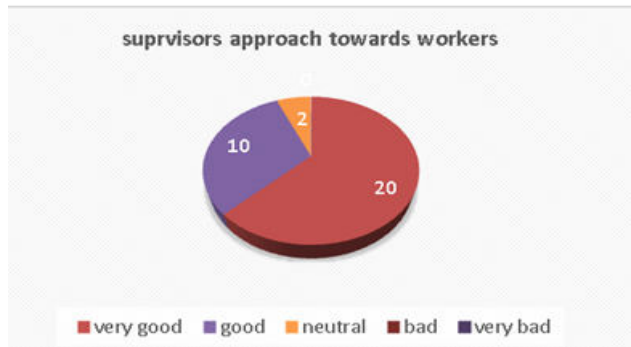


Source: primary data

This data suggests that the workforce is overall content with their leave benefits, with no indications of dissatisfaction. Additionally, employees are also entitled to maternity leave with full pay.

Attitude of the supervisors towards the workers

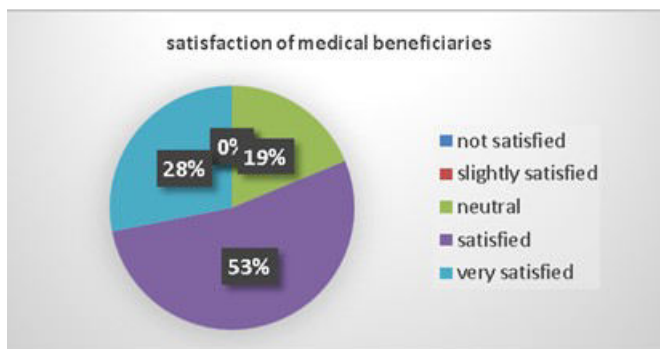
The attitude of supervisors towards workers is reflected in the survey results, which indicate that approximately 63 percent of workers rated their supervisors' behavior as excellent, while 31 percent categorized it as good. A minimal number of workers selected a neutral response, and there were no indications of negative characterizations, as no respondents classified the supervisors' behavior as poor or very poor.

Figure: Nine*Source: primary data*

From this analysis, it can be inferred that the supervisors maintain a positive and constructive approach toward their workers. This positive perception is evidenced by the high percentage of workers who rated their supervisors' attitudes as either excellent or good. Conversely, the absence of negative assessments suggests that the supervisors' effective engagement fosters a conducive work environment.

Medical facilities to the workers

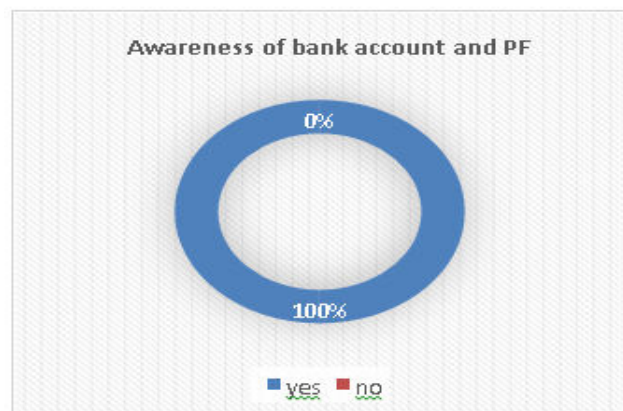
The figure 10 illustrates that 53 percent of workers expressed satisfaction, while 28 percent reported being very satisfied with the medical benefits provided by the respective authority. Additionally, 19 percent of workers categorized their feelings as neutral. Notably, there were no responses indicating 'slightly satisfied' or 'not satisfied'.

Figure: 10*Source: primary data*

Based on the findings presented in the diagram, the research indicates a significant proportion of workers feel satisfied or very satisfied with the medical facilities available to them. The absence of responses indicating dissatisfaction suggests that the medical benefits are perceived positively. However, the presence of 19 percent of workers in the neutral category signals that a portion of the workforce may not be fully benefitting from these facilities.

Financial satisfaction and awareness of the workers

The 11th diagram indicates that workers express full satisfaction with their salary amounts. The 12th diagram reveals that all workers are completely aware of their bank account details, as well as their provident fund (PF) contributions.

Figure: 11*Source: primary data**Figure: 12*

From this analysis, it can be concluded that all workers are content with their monthly salaries, which are adequate to meet their livelihood and daily living expenses. Furthermore, the data

suggests that all workers possess a thorough understanding of their respective bank account numbers and are well-informed regarding their provident fund benefits.

Workplace safety of the workers

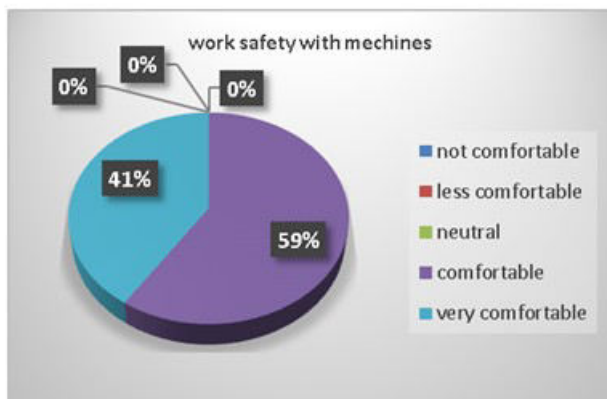
The 13th diagram illustrates that 100 percent of the workers indicated they have not experienced any form of mental or physical harassment within the workforce. Another diagram presents the satisfaction levels of employees while operating machinery, revealing that 59 percent rated their experience as comfortable, while 41 percent categorized it as very comfortable. Remarkably, no participants selected neutral, less comfortable, or not comfortable regarding their perceptions of safety while working with the machinery.

Figure: 13



Source: primary data

Figure: 14



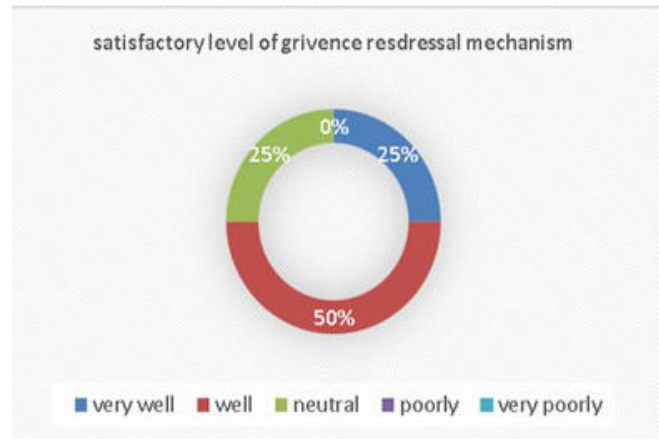
Based on this data, one can conclude that there have been no reported instances of mental or physical harassment in the workplace, indicating a safe and supportive working environment for all employees. Moreover, the positive ratings

regarding safety while using machinery further reinforce this conclusion, as all respondents reported feeling comfortable or very comfortable during their tasks. This suggests a safe operational environment when utilizing the machinery by the workforce.

Satisfaction with the complaint redressal mechanism of workers

The data indicates that 50 percent of employees express satisfaction with the complaint redressal mechanism in the workplace. Additionally, 25 percent of respondents rated their experience as either 'very good' or 'neutral,' with no individuals indicating dissatisfaction by marking 'poorly' or 'very poorly.'

Figure: 15



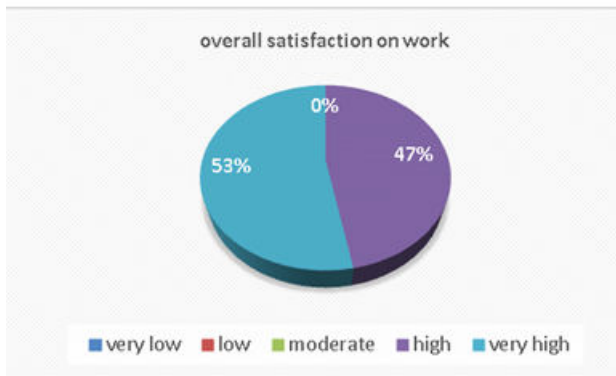
Source: primary data

The diagram illustrates that employees generally feel either satisfied or neutral regarding the complaint redressal mechanism in the workplace. However, the presence of 25 percent of workers categorizing their feelings as neutral suggests that, at times, the respective authorities may adopt a passive approach when addressing received complaints.

Overall satisfaction on working condition of the workers

The data presented in the diagram indicates that a total of 53 percent of employees express a very high level of satisfaction with their work and working conditions at Pink MRF, while an additional 47 percent report being highly satisfied. Notably, no respondents have rated their work conditions as neutral, low, or very low.

Figure: 16



Source: primary data

This information suggests a significant overall satisfaction among the workforce regarding both their roles and the environment in which they operate. The analysis further supports the conclusion that employees are generally content with their working conditions, as evidenced by the absence of any moderate, low, or very low ratings.

OBSERVATION AND FINDINGS

The findings outlined below reflect the insights gained during the study, which integrates information obtained from supervisors, responses gathered from workers, and observations made by the researcher in the field. The Pink MRF employs women across diverse age groups, with significant representation in the 31-40 (34 percent) and 41-50 (34 percent) age brackets, followed by the 20-30 age group (28 percent). Workers above 50 years account for only four percent of the workforce, indicating a preference for younger and middle-aged employees. That indicates, there is no age category for doing and stopping the job. It always depends on the medical condition or medical fitness of the workers.

The majority of workers (62 percent) lack formal education, while 48 percent have educational qualifications below matriculation. This highlights the inclusivity of the Pink MRF in offering employment opportunities to people irrespective of their educational background. It indicates that the workers are secured with a fixed-income job irrespective of their educational qualification. That would be beneficial to maintain their household. All workers at the Pink MRF undergo a mandatory training program immediately upon recruitment. Training covers essential tasks such as rag-picking, waste segregation, and equipment handling, despite workers' prior experience in these areas. Even the workers are recruited in different time periods also get the proper training in the field of segregation.

The Pink MRF provides all necessary tools and equipment free of cost, including uniforms, gloves, helmets, gumboots, and

masks. While the workforce appreciates the provision of free tools, some dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the pink uniforms, which many workers found undesirable. The researcher find out that the initial time the uniform provided in to the workers was in gray color, which was satisfied to the workers. While the shift to Pink MRF made the change to Pink color of uniform that, causes in stain rapidly, mainly in the time of periods. Apart from the researcher observed that, the workers not properly using the safety measures like helmets and masks while working.

87 percent of workers are satisfied with the designated rest breaks. However, 37 percent expressed dissatisfaction with the comfort level of the resting room, indicating room for improvement in this area. While taking with the workers, the researcher find that the resting room for the workers not much capacity to include all the women workers. The researcher also observed the capacity and less seating facility in the resting room. While 62 percent of workers are satisfied with the washroom facilities, a significant proportion (38 percent) expressed dissatisfaction, pointing to gaps in washroom infrastructure.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

The workers basically facing issues on wash base and washroom that have lack of hand wash and hand sanitation facility. Apart from, the women workers are facing the problem of lacking availability of sanitary pad in washroom or vending machine for sanitary pads.



Source: Photograph taken by the first author

Workers reported overall satisfaction with the leave benefits, including maternity leave, with no indications of dissatisfaction. All are happy with the leave benefits. Supervisors at the Pink MRF maintain a positive and supportive attitude, with 63 percent of workers rating their behavior as excellent and 31 percent as good. No workers reported negative interactions with supervisors. It indicates that the well approach of the supervisors towards the workers. There were no reported incidents of mental or physical harassment. All workers expressed confidence and comfort in operating machinery, reflecting a safe and secure work environment. It mentions that the safe working environment to the women workers in the workplace.

A majority of workers (81 percent) expressed satisfaction or high satisfaction with the medical benefits provided, while 19 percent remained neutral. The absence of dissatisfaction suggests an overall positive perception, though a segment of the workforce may not be fully benefiting from these facilities. All workers expressed full satisfaction with their salaries, which they found adequate for their livelihood needs. They also mentioned the complete awareness of their bank account details and provident fund (PF) facility, indicating financial literacy and awareness. The overall satisfaction level among workers was high, with 53 percent reporting very high satisfaction and 47 percent reporting high satisfaction with their roles and working conditions. Because they are early rag pickers in the field of dumping fill. Now, they are working with fully safe environment including the fixed income.

PINK MRF IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Pink Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and its connection to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particular emphasis can be placed on SDG five and SDG six. Sustainable Development Goal five pertains to gender equality, while Sustainable Development Goal six focuses on ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

- **SDG Five-Gender Equality:** This goal emphasizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for women in decent work environments. It seeks to address discrimination against women, recognize and value unpaid work within the public sphere, promote effective participation of women in decision-making processes, and ensure access to reproductive rights. Collectively, these objectives underscore the significance of gender equality in achieving sustainable development.
- **SDG Six- Clean Water and Sanitation:** Sanitation is a critical component of this goal, which advocates for access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene. Moreover, it highlights the necessity of eliminating waste dumping, minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, and encouraging community participation in enhancing sanitation management.

Consequently, the researcher can analyze how these two Sustainable Development Goals can be effectively achieved through initiatives undertaken by the Pink MRF. Such initiatives not only promote improved sanitation through waste management practices but also create employment opportunities that empower women, thereby contributing to the objectives of both SDG five and SDG six.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge was that most of the door to door vehicle workers those who are collecting the waste, they are not keeping and using the red and black bags provided for the collection of hazardous and sanitary waste. Another challenge observed by the researcher, that while the time of segregation process, the Pink MRF workers are not adequately using the mask, gloves, helmet such as provided by the respective authority considering their safety. The dissatisfaction with pink uniforms due to their tendency to stain easily, especially during menstruation, reflects the discomforts to the workers. The menstruation time working with stained cloths is very hard and difficult to them. Because pink color is light one. So, it will project, if any stain is happened in the dress. The resting room

lacks sufficient capacity to accommodate all workers simultaneously, leading to discomfort during break periods.

The absence of handwashing and sanitization facilities in the washrooms poses hygiene risks, particularly in a waste-handling environment. The unavailability of sanitary pads raises concerns about gender equity and the overall health and dignity of the women workers. This issue contradicts the goal of promoting a gender-sensitive workplace. A significant proportion of workers expressed neutrality toward the complaint redressal system. While the researcher interview with them, someone told, response not effective, and someone told as to shame or fear to address any complaint to the supervisor. While a majority of workers expressed satisfaction with the medical benefits, a portion remained neutral, indicating potential gaps in accessibility or awareness of the full range of medical facilities available to them. Mainly the challenge is situated with the facility of ESI card for the medical benefit.

SUGGESTIONS

Make mandatory provision to keep and use of red and black bags for hazardous and sanitary waste and give awareness campaigns for door-to-door waste collection staff on the importance of using red and black bags for hazardous and sanitary waste. Conduct mandatory awareness camps to stress the importance of using masks, gloves, helmets, and other safety gear during waste segregation. Provide an additional set of darker uniforms or aprons for workers to use during menstruation for their comfort and confidence. (Include the provision of the use of both Pink and Gray color uniform). So, the workers can choose base on their comfortability. Redesign resting rooms to accommodate only for Pink MRF workforce comfortably, with sufficient chairs and adequate ventilation.

Supervisors are liable for the provision of dispensers, hand sanitizers, in all wash bases and washrooms. Establish a vending machine or a provision for free sanitary pads in washrooms to address menstruation needs and uphold dignity. (If there is any facility of vending machine, try to ensure the proper maintenance and working). Introduce a confidential complaint box or hotline to allow workers to report issues without fear or shame and educate or give awareness to the workers for attaining confidence for mentioning their discomfort or complaint to the supervisors. Introduce the facility of bonus, apart from the distribution of free products and salary increments.

CONCLUSION

The Pink MRF initiative stands as a transformative program, offering women a transition from precarious rag-picking jobs to stable employment with fixed salaries in a safe and secure environment. This shift has brought about a significant improvement in their quality of life, with many

women reporting good working conditions and high levels of job satisfaction all totally. However, despite its success, the initiative faces challenges that impact its goal of promoting gender equality. One critical issue is the need to address basic requirements specific to women, such as facilities to ensure proper menstrual hygiene. While these concerns may appear minor from an external perspective, they are essential for fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment for the women workforce. Addressing these challenges will be vital for sustaining the program's impact and reinforcing its commitment to empowering women in this field.

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