

A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON COLLAR CLASSIFICATION IN EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

Jobs done using standard procedures have evolved over time into jobs that require different skills. In this transformation, blue and white collars were diversified with various colors. While blue and white collar works continue, various collar colors have emerged due to the nature of the works such as gray, pink, gold, green and virtual. Changes in production systems, pandemics, other factors that radically affect the ways of doing business, and the need to use scarce resources with a sustainable efficiency in response to the increasing population have revealed the situation of doing things with different skills. Jobs with different skills have brought along income differences. In this study, collar colors used in working life are discussed with their conceptual basis. In particular, the transition from blue and white collar to other colors has been revealed with its own dynamics. It has been observed that the jobs of blue-collar and white-collar employees have evolved into jobs that require gray-collar employees with the combination of both skills. With digitalization, the necessity of gold and virtual collar workers has emerged. Within the framework of sustainability, green-collar employees were needed. The existence of pink-collar employees has also been conceptually revealed in the distinction of jobs done by men and women. In addition to these collars, other types of collars that have emerged with the requirements are also included in the study.

Keywords: Blue and White Collar, Gold Collar, Gray Collar, Virtual Collar, Pink Collar, Green Collar.

INTRODUCTION

There are some turning points in human history. The transition of hunter-gatherer human societies to farming and herding was a turning point. In this period, which took place in the Middle East around 8500-7000 BC, the history of humanity had undergone an evolution (McNeil, 2007). Likewise, in the transition to the Industrial Revolution, the way of life, way of thinking and management changed and the level of welfare was shaped accordingly (Toffler, 1996). The Industrial Revolution paved the way for the construction of factories. In this period, self-employed individuals turned into the working class within the framework of production relations or individuals working for someone else's account (Koçel, 2013). In this period, various forms of employment such as the separation of business ownership and management were formed (Tüzün, 2012; Koçel, 2013). From this point of view, with the changing nature of technology and human demands, production, service and information efficiency have become important (Toffler, 1996). In the last fifty years, with the ingenuity of technology and the spread of artificial intelligence technologies, the existence of individuals equipped with both physical skills and knowledge has become necessary (Urgan, 2021). In this context, agriculture, industry and information-oriented developments have emerged as characterized by industrial revolutions. Today, there is a digital revolution associated with mobile internet, artificial intelligence and machine learning (Erdoğan et al., 2022).

In the light of all these explanations, the structure of the workforce differs, especially with technological changes. With these differences reflected in the nature of the work done, Changes in working systems, wage differences, changes in work laws have occurred, and a categorical classification has occurred in the workforce according to various collar colors such as blue-white-gold (Şahin et al., 2015). The clothes that allow the employees who do changing jobs to work comfortably were considered as a start and the concept of blue collar workers first emerged from here. Blue collar became the characteristic collar color



of the First Industrial Revolution. With the later developments, blue, white, gold, gray, pink and green collar employees have formed a part of business life (Eriş et al., 2020).

In addition to blue and white collars, the necessity of emphasizing the existence of other collar colors that are less known, but already existing with digitalization and environmental changes, emerges. In this context, the changing collar colors of the workforce are conceptually discussed in parallel with the changing nature of the jobs in this study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Blue Collar: Blue-collar workers represent the individual who works manually in the production process of goods or services and also has the ability to operate machines. Blue-collar workers are defined as individuals who work with skilled or unskilled muscle power in production facilities. The role of blue-collar workers is growing exponentially as they are the main driver of production and quality. Generally, blue-collar workers are employed in labor-intensive sectors. Therefore, some of such sectors that employ a large number of blue-collar workers include oil fields, storage, construction, firefighting, plumbing, manufacturing, technical facilities and surveillance (Mittal et al., 2019). It is an important factor for managers to use time effectively and efficiently in businesses. Managers need to be able to organize blue-collar workers in a cumulative manner within the framework of objectives by working with the power of mind. For this reason, blue-collar employees act in line with the goals of the enterprise by operating in a mobile manner by operating at the machine, at the counter, at the product line. Therefore, blue-collar workers operate in labor-intensive jobs. Blue-collar employees fulfill the given tasks by using their physical strength instead of mental power (Çetin, 2019).

Blue-collar and white-collar workers differ significantly from each other according to their job characteristics and behavior. White-collar workers have higher-level jobs, while blue-collar workers operate in lower-level jobs. It is stated that white-collar employees traditionally value the internal aspects of the job, while blue-collar employees give more importance to external aspects such as rewards or job security (Anjum and Parvez, 2013). Blue-collar workers in enterprises are mostly engaged in activities with manual labor. The skills required by blue-collar employees vary according to the activity they are in, and the activities they do are exhibited with muscle strength. In addition, blue-collar workers can be employed as skilled or low-skilled within the framework of their activities. For example, blue-collar individuals working in jobs such as electricians and plumbers are considered to be more qualified, while blue-collar individuals working in jobs such as cleaning can be employed as less skilled workers (Özsoy and Gürbüzöglü, 2019).

White Collar: White collar employees are persons who are active in administrative and research-development works with a high technological education level compared to their physical strength. Therefore, white-collar employees perform their activities based on mind and brain power more at the desk. For this reason, white-collar workers show more mental power-based work than muscle power (Akıncı et al., 2018). It is stated that white-collar employees have higher education levels and are in a position symbolically closer to the authority. In this context, it can be stated that the group described as white-collar workers has a structure consisting of senior managers and administrators, low-level professionals, experts and technicians, and physicians, nurses, academics and other social workers in the professions related to health, welfare and education can be classified within this working group (Acar, 2020).

Today, with the development of technology day by day, information becomes an important factor. With the development of the Internet, white-collar employees have an important role in the use of information. The economy is changing in terms of competition, and white-collar employees are in an important position in terms of using information and gaining competitive advantages. White-collar workers raised by the new capitalism are also experiencing labor processes that have become flexible as a result of neoliberal strategies (Çelik, 2021). Today, white-collar employees; teachers, architects, bankers, lawyers or individuals working in other economic sectors can be cited as examples (Sevim and Kurtuluş, 2022).

Human resources gained importance in the 1980s when changes in the workforce were discussed, and there was a change in the emergence of mental labor from blue-collar workers' physical and labor-intensive jobs to white-collar workers. As a result, white-collar employees who are positioned in



7. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EVOLVING TRENDS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & PRACTICES

working life with their intellectual or mental effort differ from blue-collar employees in terms of both their motivation and management and the evaluation of their work results (Aydın and Demiral, 2019: 1979). It is stated that white-collar employees are inspired by the color of the white shirts they wear, as in blue-collar employees. White-collar workers are salaried professionals who are referred to as managers or office workers (Eriş et al., 2020).

Gold Collar: Businesses use their resources effectively and efficiently in order to continue their existence, bringing many advantages. Therefore, people constitute the most important resource of enterprises. It is an important factor for businesses to show high performance, to act cumulatively and to act in line with the target. These conditions are interrelated in order for businesses to achieve success. Learning starts from the moment a person is born and is necessary for his/her life to continue. With the use of information technology in the 21st century, gold-collar workers have become more important by learning their competencies in producing and using information (Değirmenci et al., 2022).

The rapid developments in communication and information technologies in the new era lead to the emergence of the concept of "gold collars". As the most permanent feature of information societies, organization around information is emphasized instead of coordination of workers and machines for production. Gold-collar workers, which are expressed as knowledge workers, represent employees who operate with brain power. Gold collars refer to skilled and educated employees and are individuals who perform at a high level. Therefore, gold-collars have innovative, independent, intelligent qualities. For this reason, gold collars represent a valuable group in terms of business and society. Gold collars are able to solve a problem and operate in non-routine tasks. Academics, information technology professionals, software developers, physicians, public and private sector managers, lawyers, etc. exemplifies the employees in this group (Bozbuğa and Alarçin, 2022).

With the introduction of Industry 4.0, different tasks are assigned to human resources from production to the way of doing business. Although artificial intelligence, digital twin and cyber security seem to be the main elements of this revolution with the rapid development of technology, the human resource element is at the center of this transformation process, from the planning to the control of the production process. With the widespread use of technology, it is thought that there will be a significant increase in gold-collar employees, with the decrease in blue-collar employment. In the previous business environments where technology was not available, employees used their physical strength intensively, and today this process focuses on monitoring and controlling the mentally designed processes (Asar and Esen, 2021).

Gray Collar: The development of high-tech industries has transformed the jobs that only blue-collar and white-collar workers can do, into people who have the capacity to do both in a certain balance. These employees, which Wright (2007) calls skilled technicians, perform the duties of blue-collar and white-collar employees jointly. These workers are gray-collar workers and include the highly skilled workforce with university degrees (Hutchings et al., 2009).

Gray-collar employees, who are determined as high-skilled among blue-collar and low-skilled among white-collar employees, are employees who are trained in the job and are not as skilled as white-collar employees in the use of technology. In another approach, aging workers in the workforce are called gray-collar workers (Eriş et al., 2020). Aging employees may find it difficult to keep up with technological changes. This situation is seen more clearly especially in employees over the age of 40 (Şahin et al., 2015).

Although gray-collar workers fulfill the requirements of both blue-collar and white-collar jobs, they are completely different from the two. The difference from blue collars is that they have a university education. Some of the occupations that require gray collar workforce are (Soni and Panwar, 2018):

- Police officers
- Firefighters
- Qualified traders
- Technicians



- Teachers
- School administrators
- Emergency workers
- Stenographers

The systematic of carrying out a standard business activity by bringing individuals who can do the routine work in organizations evolves into complex business processes. This process brings some demands on the employees' own rights. In addition, the motivation of the employees is shaped according to these changes (Koçel, 2003). From this point of view, different skills are needed for the work done and mixed ways of doing business emerge (Davutoğlu, 2021). In the context of employees who can do mixed work and from a management perspective, a relevant concept is the concept of personnel empowerment. Personnel empowerment can be evaluated within the concept of autonomy. Autonomy refers to the power of self-determination and independent choice in work-related behaviors and processes. It can be explained by the fact that an employee can be effective on strategic, managerial and operational outputs in business life (Karavardar, 2017). However, it can also be associated with the concepts of lean production and management. On the basis of lean production and management concepts, it is important to eliminate waste in business processes. This makes it necessary to do different jobs with fewer people and with skill (Sarı, 2018).

Gray-collar workers are those who work with flexible working styles according to the changes in working life (Eriş et al., 2020). Flexible working systems had to be widely applied, especially in the coronavirus pandemic experienced all over the world in 2019 (Urgan et al., 2021).

Other Collars: Pink and green collar workers are among the other collars mentioned in the literature (Soni and Panwar, 2018; Eriş et al., 2020). The concept of pink collar was first used by the writer Louise Kapp Howe in the late 1990s. It corresponds to the jobs mostly done by women. Those who work in these jobs, where there are not many men, are called pink-collar. However, the jobs that men and women work together can also be expressed as the jobs mostly preferred by pink-collar employees (Soni and Panwar, 2018). Regarding the pink-collar workers, it is stated that due to the fact that men had to participate in the war during the war, the existing jobs had to be continued by the women. For jobs predominantly done by women; activities related to education, health, service sector and household chores. There may also be cases where men do not demand these jobs too much (Eriş et al., 2020). Hospitality, retail sales, maintenance workers, clerks, beauty salon workers, waiters and office workers are included in the category of pink-collar workers (Gürkan, 2022).

One of the other collars is green collar jobs. Green collar jobs Dr. According to Raguel Rivera-Pinderhughes, products and services correspond to the work done by blue-collar workers working in jobs that directly increase environmental quality (Aksu and Yücebalkan, 2020). According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), activities that contribute significantly to research and development (R&D), administrative and service protection in agriculture, manufacturing, or activities that will protect environmental quality are defined as green jobs. These are jobs that are done using strategies that will increase biodiversity, reduce the use of energy, materials and water, decarbonize or minimize its use, and prevent waste and pollution (Rutkowska-Podołowska et al., 2016). These works are handled within the framework of renewable energy sources. Renewable energy sources; wind, solar (photovoltaic), solar (thermal), biomass, hydroelectric and geothermal resources. It is predicted that approximately 12 million new jobs will emerge until 2030 for green-collar jobs related to these energy sources (Sungur, 2011).

Other than the collar colors mentioned above, red collars covering all kinds of government jobs, orange collars for prison workers, virtual collars for robots that do repetitive physical and manual work, black (black) collars for those working in mining and oil businesses, and data science using technology. The terms digital collars or new collars are used for those working in jobs such as coding and computer integrated jobs (Baliç et al., 2020).



CONCLUSION

In this study, the classification of collars in employees is discussed in a general framework. It is seen that the elements that make up this framework are affected by economic, social, technological and health conditions as seen in recent years.

Historically, there has been an evolution from an employee who performs a standard job assigned to him/her with standard procedures to an employee who is expected to perform many complex tasks with maximum skill. In this evolution, the concepts of blue and white collar have been combined and gray collar has emerged. This change is especially seen in the Covid-19 pandemic. For this reason, the pandemic has necessarily changed the way they do business.

With the changing nature of business, the gap between the achievements has also widened. In particular, artificial intelligence technologies can be given as examples of jobs that require a certain physical and mental skill. There is a change in favor of gold-collar employees due to the earnings of those who do these jobs.

Although the jobs that women and men have done have been similar over time, it is seen that the necessity of male power in some jobs and the necessity of female power in some jobs continue. The concept of a pink collar corresponds to the female workforce, as is the case of taking care of a child using maternal instinct.

Another factor that draws attention in the study is the green collar workers corresponding to those who do the jobs that emerge with the necessity of a sustainable energy use. The increasing population in the world and the scarcity of consumed resources reveal the importance of the existence of sustainable and renewable energy sources. The workforce that can use these resources is also of great importance as green collar workers.

The concept of collar, which emerged as a demographic data for the researches, was examined from a general perspective with this study. Thus, the conceptual infrastructure of the collar colors that emerged with the changing works was revealed.

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7. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EVOLVING TRENDS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & PRACTICES

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