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Article

"Do what you love" in low-wage work: navigating stigma through narratives of work passion

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ABSTRACT

Most research on "work passion" has focused on white-collar and creative occupations that workers choose to pursue for intrinsic rewards. This paper examines the intriguing case of economically vulnerable workers in the Global South who profess passion for their low-wage and stigmatized occupation. Using qualitative data, I analyze why women beauty workers in Pakistan routinely foreground *shauq* (intense liking or passion) as an occupational motivation for their low-status jobs, even as they highlight the economic *majboori* (compulsion) that forced them into these jobs. Interpreting passion as a discursive tactic, rather than simply an affective investment, I argue that beauty workers use the seemingly contradictory discourses of work passion and compulsion to contest intersecting class, occupational, and gender stigmas. This paper illuminates how broader stigmas shape workers' strategies to negotiate occupational stigma and contributes to the emerging literature on work passion by 1) showing how narratives of work passion serve as a stigma management strategy; 2) explaining how gender dynamics complicate women's attempts to use work passion to manage stigma; and 3) providing an account of how global discourses of "do what you love" interact with culturally-specific meanings of skill and passion.

Scholars have long examined the conditions under which workers may feel either investment in their work or alienation and disillusionment (Hochschild 1983; Marx 1844; Weber 2002). An emerging body of research takes these questions in a new direction by focusing specifically on contemporary discourses of passion or love for one's work. This scholarship on work passion, however, primarily focuses on college-educated workers in white-collar and creative occupations who are passionate about their jobs because of the intrinsic, non-monetary rewards associated with these occupations (Cech 2021; DePalma 2021; Gill 2014; Ocejo 2017; Rao and Neely 2019). Often, such workers choose, and can afford, to prioritize their search for meaning and self-fulfillment over economic pursuits. In this paper, I explore why working-class workers in a low-status, low-wage, and grueling occupation with limited intrinsic or extrinsic rewards profess passion for their jobs, even as they simultaneously claim that they were forced into these jobs because of economic necessity.

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During my ethnographic research on women who work in beauty salons in Pakistan, I was surprised to note how often working-class beauty workers invoked the idea of *shauq,* i.e., an intense liking or passion for their work. On the surface, women's claims of *shauq* for beauty work seem plausible. People often find pleasure in aesthetic pursuits, and beauty work can be considered a type of creative activity that offers intrinsic rewards. However, most of the beauty workers I spoke to provided low-end services, such as waxing, pedicures, facials, and threading in budget salons. In contrast to make-up or hair styling, this work does not offer significant intrinsic or extrinsic rewards and is considered to be lowly work. In fact, this type of beauty work may be considered a type of "dirty work," a term scholars use to describe occupations that are morally, physically, or socially degrading (Ashforth and Kreiner 2014; Hughes 1962). Beauty work in Pakistan is physically tainted because it involves handling human "dirt" (during hair removal, facials, pedicures, etc.), socially tainted because it involves relations of servility, and morally tainted because beauty workers in Pakistan are frequently likened to sex workers and considered "bad women" for violating norms of gender seclusion by working in the public sphere.

Beauty workers' declarations of *shauq* for this "dirty work" were additionally puzzling because workers simultaneously shared that they have been forced into these jobs because of *majboori*—economic need and a lack of access to high-paying and high-status jobs. In fact, most workers hope to quit their jobs one day and hide their occupation from their families and neighbors to minimize stigma. If beauty workers are not actively choosing to forgo higher economic rewards to pursue a "labor of love"—as is often the case with artists, musicians, and non-profit workers—why do beauty workers consistently foreground their passion for this work?

To answer this question, I examine claims of *shauq* (love or passion) as a discursive strategy rather than an innate longing, affective investment, or mode of self-expression. I interpret "*shauq*"—the term my interlocutors repeatedly used in relation to their work—as a culturally specific mode of "passion." Pleasure or giving joy is central to the idea of *shauq,* which has been variously translated as "longing, yearning, craving, desire, wish" (Narayan and Kavesh 2019). Beauty workers may certainly have an innate longing to pursue beauty work, but I argue that claiming *shauq* for their work also allows beauty workers to contest intersecting class, gender, and occupational stigmas.

I show that women beauty workers deployed narratives of work passion to challenge stigma in two ways. First, workers used narratives of *shauq* to reframe their jobs as morally valuable and gender-appropriate skilled work instead of "dirty work." By expressing passion for their jobs, workers re-signified their work as a type of creative labor that one may justifiably have passion for instead of a low-wage and low-status occupation. Second, workers used narratives of work passion to claim middle-class normative femininity. By presenting their work as a pursuit of *shauq* for a feminine *hunar* (skill), rather than a means to a livelihood, workers hoped to obscure their transgression of the male breadwinner norm. I suggest that by framing their decision to work as a "choice" motivated by *shauq* rather than an economic necessity, workers attempt to project a middle-class status by obfuscating their dependance on wage labor.

These claims to *shauq*, however, were double-edged, because women in Pakistan are criticized for pursuing *shauq* or pleasure, especially when such pursuits involve gender transgressions like entering the public sphere for work or leisure. Thus, I find that women simultaneously invoked narratives of *majboori* (compulsion) to offset the negative connotations of pursuing *shauq*. I interpret women's use of narratives of *majboori* and helplessness as attempts to garner pity rather than censure for their perceived gender transgressions.

By tracing the dialectical relationship between *shauq* and *majboori* in the context of low-wage beauty work in Pakistan, this paper contributes to sociological research on work passion and stigma as well as anthropological scholarship on *shauq*, gender, and labor. First, it contributes to research on work passion and occupational stigma by showing how narratives of work passion are not always affective investments rooted in individualist desires for self-expression and personal fulfillment but can, instead, function as a discursive stigma management strategy shaped by relational dynamics. Second, I explain how and why narratives of work passion may coexist with narratives of economic compulsion, thereby troubling the binary between choice and compulsion in studies of work passion and *shauq*. Third, I theorize how gender dynamics shape women's use of work passion as a stigma management strategy, and, relatedly, argue that we must pay attention to status hierarchies outside the workplace to understand how workers contest occupational stigma. Finally, this study contributes a

new perspective to emerging discussions of "work passion" by elaborating on a culturally specific mode of passion for work, which both diverges from, and converges with, globally circulating neoliberal discourses of "do what you love."

CONTEXT: THE STIGMA TRIAD OF BEAUTY WORK IN PAKISTAN

Women's employment in Pakistan is defined by a "stigma matrix" (Husain 2024), which consists of intersecting global and local class-gender dynamics that shape women's fraught participation in the public sphere. Respectable or idealized femininity in Pakistan is often predicated on women's commitment to domesticity, the male breadwinner ideal, modesty, and norms of *purdah* and gender seclusion (Kamran 2021; Masood 2019). Most women who enter the public sphere for work experience gender-based stigmas for violating the male breadwinner ideal and for transgressing norms of gender seclusion. The loss of social status associated with paid employment thus deters women from entering the workforce. Women in working-class occupations, as Hewamanne (2003) notes in the case of garment workers in Sri Lanka, additionally face the brunt of class-based stigma as they are disparaged for their poverty and working-class manners of speech and embodiment.

Beauty work in Pakistan is especially characterized by a stigma triad comprising occupational, class-based, and gendered stigmas. Like many other types of body work, the occupation of beauty work is stigmatized because of its associations with bodily dirt, relations of servility, and negative moral associations, which are closely related to gender, class, and in some cases in South Asia, caste associations (Malik 2022; Patras 2023). Notably, occupational stigma specific to beauty work is difficult to disentangle from broader class-gender stigmas in Pakistan. Whereas working women from middle-class or elite statuses can shore up economic, social, and cultural capital to mitigate the loss of respectability associated with working outside their homes (Khurshid 2015; Radhakrishnan 2009), working-class women have little access to forms of capital they can leverage to gain status (Kamran 2021). For beauty workers, class and caste-based stigmas reinforce gender-based stigmas and vice versa, and occupational taint specific to beauty work compounds the general stigma associated with women's participation in the public sphere. My analysis of women's narratives of *shauq* and *majboori* unfolds in this context of intersecting stigmas.

WORK PASSION AS AN AFFECTIVE MODE OF SELF-FULFILLMENT

Contemporary scholarship has explored work passion as a cultural schema and an affective mode of self-expression and self-actualization. In this framing, workers freely choose occupations for the sake of extra-pecuniary rewards, such as meaning, pleasure, personal fulfillment, self-expression, autonomy, and identity work (Cech 2021; DePalma 2021; Gill 2014; Ocejo 2017; Rao and Neely 2019; Umney and Kretsos 2014). Some scholars note that work passion is closely tied to individualism, and thus occurs mainly in postindustrial societies where ideologies of individualism are well-entrenched and workers can afford to have non-pecuniary motivations (Cech 2021; Charles and Bradley 2009). Within postindustrial settings, such narratives of work passion are considered to be more common in high-status occupations or among privileged groups, such as college students (Cech 2021; DePalma 2021; Rao and Neely 2019). However, the expectation to love one's work is increasingly filtering down the labor hierarchy (Tokumitsu 2015; Weeks 2017), and work passion is no longer a cultural schema limited primarily to privileged workers. As scholars of care work have long noted, many care workers pursue low-wage and low-status care jobs for intrinsic rewards related to personal fulfillment and meaning (England 2005). Additionally, precarious workers may accrue work-related rewards by expressing passion to their employers (Neely 2020).

More recently, some scholars have analyzed how discourses of work passion animate working-class jobs that were not traditionally associated with passion. For example, Ocejo (2017) shows how white, privileged men are able to gentrify previously stigmatized jobs such as butchering and barbering by refashioning them as upscale, desirable forms of craft work. Malik (2022) notes a similar dynamic in her study of beauty work in India where high-caste women successfully frame their beauty jobs as high-status creative pursuits of pleasure, but low-caste beauty workers continue to be perceived as doing "dirty" work. Gandini and Gerosa (2023) suggest that workers are able to re-signify the status of these jobs by: 1) infusing the work with craft practices and values such as dedication to the craft, emphasis

on skill, and experience of embodied pleasure at work and 2) engaging in practices of "marginal distinction," whereby workers draw on values associated with hipster culture, such as authenticity and the ability to gauge marginal differences between certain products and taste. Since cultural capital is crucial to these practices of marginal distinction, the re-signification process that converts a working-class job into a "cool job" depends on the privileged identities of workers. Although these studies begin to develop an important account of discourses of passion in low-status jobs, they remain limited, focused primarily on educated, middle-class, elite, and culturally savvy workers. Further, these studies continue to analyze passion for working-class or neo-craft jobs as the individualist pursuit of pleasure, self-fulfillment, and self-expression.

Anthropological studies of *shauq* in South Asia have likewise emphasized the intrinsic rewards and personal fulfillment associated with doing an activity one is passionate about. Wilkinson-Weber (1999) in her study of women embroiderers in Lucknow uses the idea of "pure *shauq*" to denote that *shauq* is an innate longing that operates beyond the realm of work done merely to meet one's needs. In fact, as Kavesh (2020) writes in his study of men in Southern Punjab who have *shauq* for pigeon-flying, dog-fighting, and cock-fighting, *shauq* can often become the obstacle to livelihood and financial security. Most studies thus associate *shauq* with "activities that are tangential to an individual's central form of livelihood, yet enrich their inner lives" and are thus best thought of as "serious leisure" (Narayan and Kavesh 2019). Like the literature on work passion, these studies emphasize that *shauq* is activated in relation to activity done out of *choice* rather than compulsion (Kavesh 2020; Wilkinson-Weber 1999).

While the existing research on work passion and *shauq* contributes several important insights, it fails to explain the central puzzle of this paper: why do low-wage beauty workers express both passion and compulsion for their stigmatized jobs? Narratives of *majboori* suggest that this is not a case of beauty workers foregoing higher economic rewards to pursue a "labor of love" for intrinsic rewards as is often the case with artists, musicians, care workers. and non-profit workers. Further, low-wage beauty workers in Pakistan are not in a postindustrial society characterized by a high level of base material security or by ideologies of individualism. They are not in managerial or professional jobs where narratives of passion may enable work-related rewards, nor do they occupy a privileged social position, which they can mobilize to gentrify their jobs. How then might we interpret why workers express *shauq* for stigmatized work?

STIGMA MANAGEMENT IN LOW-STATUS WORK

Workers in "dirty" or stigmatized occupations often challenge occupational stigma by developing a strong occupational identity, rather than distancing themselves from their work, as one might expect (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). The specific destigmatization strategies noted in the literature include: developing occupational ideologies to construct a positive identity; taking pride in work via an occupational identity or a group subculture; drawing boundaries between themselves and other workers; infusing their work with craft practices and meanings; re-signifying their jobs by claiming status via association; and seeking occupational legitimacy through professionalization (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999; Gandini and Gerosa 2023; Lynch 2007; Ocejo 2017; Sherman 2005).

In some studies of working-class women in South Asia, however, scholars have noted that women often manage stigma by dis-identifying from their work contexts, rather than by cultivating strong occupational identities. Given the broader stigma surrounding women's work outside the home and their transgression of the male breadwinner norm, working-class women in South Asia often invoke *majboori* (necessity or compulsion) to justify their participation in stigmatized forms of paid employment (Bardalai 2021; Pande 2009). Such narratives help women to present themselves as helpless and noble women who are forced into the labor market because of economic circumstances and must be pitied instead of censured. For example, Pande (2009) shows how surrogates in India use claims of *majboori*, along with appeals to higher loyalties to their families and other stigma management strategies, to minimize their role as wage workers and emphasize their roles as dedicated mothers and wives.

Women construct such narratives of *majboori* in a context where claiming *shauq* for their employment, or revealing a personal investment in it, comes with its own perils. Idealized femininity in Pakistan valorizes women's domestic roles, and women are expected to subdue their individual desires to dedicate themselves to their families. Consequently, women often pursue fun or *shauq* in covert

ways to avoid censure (Kirmani 2020), because admissions of *shauq and* pursuit of pleasure invite other gendered stigmas.

Class dynamics may also mediate one's claims to *shauq*. Middle-class and elite women's pursuits of pleasure, autonomy, and self-expression through employment and education are typically less sanctioned than working-class women's pursuits of employment. This is because, as Radhakrishnan (2009) finds in India and Khurshid (2015) in Pakistan, middle-class women can mobilize various forms of cultural and economic capital to retain their status even as they commit certain gender transgressions. For working-class women, who already lack social status, *shauq* or pleasure-seeking has higher social costs, and, thus, it is likely that women may not want to present themselves as taking pleasure in their employment. Why then do women foreground *shauq* for their jobs despite the gendered repercussions and loss of status associated with such narratives?

To understand women's simultaneous use of narratives of *majboori* and *shauq* in relation to their stigmatized occupations, I draw inspiration from Faier's (2009) analysis of migrant Filipina hostesses who marry their Japanese clients for "love." Faier analyzes workers' professions of "love," not as emotional labor, but as a "cultural discourse and self-making term" in contexts of stigmatization. Deploying the language of love enabled Filipina hostesses to challenge the stigma associated with their jobs and their marriages to Japanese men, engage in cosmopolitan self-making projects, and craft new moral selves and forms of agency. Like Faier, I am not concerned with adjudicating between beauty workers' "genuine" vs. "fake" affective attachment to their work. Rather, I am interested in exploring how narratives of *shauq* may also serve as a discursive stigma management strategy that has not yet been explored in the literature.

As I argue in the following sections, using narratives of work passion as a discursive stigma management strategy worked on two levels in the context of beauty work in Pakistan. First, invoking *shauq* allowed women to change the meaning of their work and reframe their stigmatized work as a valuable and gender-appropriate skill. Second, these narratives allowed women to reframe their overall social position, which had positive consequences for their broader class-gender identities. As I show, claims of *majboori* can help preserve women's gendered respectability by mitigating the perception that they are intentionally transgressing the male breadwinner norm. Yet, such claims also invite class stigma by presenting women as "poor" and "vulnerable." I argue that beauty workers must thus stitch together narratives of both *shauq* and *majboori* to navigate exceptionally narrow paths to respectability (see Table 1).

METHODS

This paper is based on ethnographic and interview data I collected between 2016–2020 on women workers' experiences of work and public life in Pakistan's low-wage service economy. Pakistan's female labor force participation rate is notably low at around 23 percent. Karachi, where I conducted this research, has a population of around 20 million people and the highest number of urban working women in Pakistan. I primarily draw on participant observation and informal conversations in spaces of beauty work and 42 semi-structured interviews with beauty workers, but I also include some conversations with retail workers to establish the broader meanings of *shauq* in Pakistan.

My ethnographic research included attending a beauty work class twice a week for six weeks at a vocational training center and seven months of ethnographic observation in Meena Bazaar, which is a women-only marketplace consisting of beauty parlors and undergarments shops in Karachi. I also worked as a beauty worker in the bazaar for a week during the busy Eid-al-Fitr season. Although I spent most of my time in Meena Bazaar, I visited a range of other beauty salons in the city over the course of four years.

The majority of women I interviewed and spent time with worked in low-end beauty salons. I also interviewed three women who worked in mid-range beauty salons, three who worked in high-end salons, and three home-based beauty workers. The women who worked in high-end salons were in low-status positions and provided pedicures and waxing services as opposed to hair styling and make-up services (the latter are not considered "dirty work" in the same way other beauty services are). Additionally, I interviewed three women who were aspiring beauty workers and three women who had previously been beauty workers. Most women were the primary breadwinners of their families and

Table 1. Deploying narratives of *Shauq* and *Majboori* in a stigmatized occupation.

Claims of *shauq*	**Enhance status by** • Reframing stigmatized beauty work as valuable *hunar* (skilled work) • Presenting women as respectable figures engaged in the pursuit of a gender-appropriate feminine *hunar* • Disguising women's violation of the male breadwinner norm • Obfuscating women's working-class status by aligning them with elite or middle-class women who work because they have *shauq*	**Invite stigma by** • Highlighting that woman transgressed gender norms for the mere pursuit of pleasure/*shauq* • Suggesting that women prioritized *shauq* at the expense of family and were thus, "bad women"
Claims of *majboori*	**Enhance status by** • Allowing women to present themselves as helpless women who were forced to violate the male breadwinner norm • Establishing that women deserve sympathy since they unwillingly transgressed gender norms • Emphasizing that women are not pursuing employment for pleasure or personal fulfilment	**Invite stigma by** • Revealing women's poor economic standing • Emphasizing women's status as "abandoned" and "unprotected" by male breadwinners

belonged to a range of neighborhoods and ethnicities, reflecting the diverse population of Karachi. Most women I spoke to were Muslim, but I also spoke to several Christian and one Hindu beauty worker.

During interviews, I asked women why they started working, how they chose their jobs, what they thought of other comparable occupations (such as factory work, low-wage teaching, home-based piecework, and domestic work), as well as about their experiences at work and how their families and neighbors reacted to their jobs. I recorded most interviews and took notes during the interviews that women did not give me permission to record. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and I used a data analysis software to code my fieldnotes and interview transcriptions.

I adopted a grounded theory methodology (Charmaz 2006), which entailed inductive reasoning and a focus on creating new analytic concepts and theories, rather than testing existing theories. During the first few weeks of fieldwork, I was expecting that women would frequently discuss "*izzat*" or respectability, which is a dominant cultural schema in Pakistan that defines women's self-making projects and reputation. To my surprise, women made fewer references to *izzat* than I had anticipated, and, instead, spoke at great length about *shauq* or why one must like this job to excel in it. As part of this methodology, I regularly wrote analytic memos during data collection and analysis, and the first memo I wrote during my fieldwork was about the recurrent entangled narratives of *shauq* and *majboori* I encountered in the field. My codes included *shauq* (passion), enjoying work, pleasure, *majboori* (compulsion), helplessness, boredom, and *hunar* (skill).

Combining ethnography with interviews was particularly invaluable in noticing the contradictions in how workers positioned themselves in these new occupations. Contradictions can serve as an important site of information for researchers as they allow us to see dominant cultural schemas and what is considered "honorable" in the local context (Pugh 2013). Much of the data in this paper focus precisely on these moments of contradiction (in women's narratives during interviews and over the

course of several informal conversations) that revealed the shifting cultural valuations of *shauq* and *majboori*.

My own position as a Pakistani working woman helped me to develop a rapport with the workers I interviewed and to openly discuss the stigma triad they confronted. Yet, my class difference with them, as a privileged Pakistani woman, meant that our interactions were frequently shaped by workers' desires to present themselves as respectable and "honorable" women to me. Consequently, these interactions allowed me to analyze how workers used certain claims and narratives to shore up status in front of others. Tensions between women's claims to both *shauq* and *majboori* provide an important window into how women deploy discourses of work passion in strategic yet risky ways to achieve idealized womanhood and, hence, dignity, in an otherwise stigmatized occupation.

In the following section, I first describe the stigma triad comprising gendered, occupational, and classed stigma that defines beauty work in Pakistan and how workers simultaneously invoked narratives of *shauq* and *majboori*. I then analyze how women used narratives of *shauq* to reframe their 1) work and 2) gender-class positions, and how they used narratives of *majboori* to offset the social costs of *shauq*.

FINDINGS

Gender, Class, and Occupational Stigma in Low-Wage Beauty Work

The beauty workers I met openly discussed the negative reputation of beauty work with me. Several customers and workers I spoke to suggested that I should be wary of beauty workers because beauty salons may be a front for massage parlors (that is, places of sex work). On a few occasions, police have raided beauty parlors they claim were sites of sex work, but these cases are the exception rather than the norm. Nevertheless, because most beauty parlors are women-only spaces, it is easy for people to stigmatize such spaces as "hidden" spaces of sin. Low-status beauty work in Pakistan is considered to be both degrading (for its associations with human dirt and relations of servility) and morally dubious. Additionally, women who are invested in beautification are often caricatured as vain and accused of prioritizing sexual pursuits over traditional domestic responsibilities.

Sania, who worked in a small neighborhood beauty salon, confessed that the reputation of beauty work was *kharaab* (corrupt). When I asked her to clarify, she rolled her eyes and said:

> Those who consider this work *napasandeeda* (displeasing), all of them still come here to beauty salons. You're not going to find anyone who doesn't come here. It's not like they can do without it. Tell me, who can do without going to a beauty salon? You *beghmaat* (bourgeois women) can especially not do without beauty salons. Those women who consider this work as *kharaab*, why do they come to *kharaab* people then? I say just one thing. If the *mullahs* (clerics) consider this work to be bad, or if anyone says that this thing is not good, it is their wives who are constantly found in parlors. They are the ones who stay there the most.

Sania's use of the word *beghmaat* highlights the classed connotations of this stigma. Men from workers' own families and from higher classes consider beauty work to be "dirty work" but women from higher classes also look down upon it, despite benefitting from beauty services. Elite women may evade the stigma associated with visiting beauty salons, but working-class beauty workers continue to be stigmatized.

Sania's reference to clerics illustrates the immoral and un-Islamic connotations of beauty work. Some Muslims, for example, believe that plucking eyebrows in a manner that significantly changes the shape of the face is prohibited in Islam. Others consider bikini waxes to be un-Islamic, believing that people must not reveal private parts of their body to anyone except their spouse. A smaller minority of devout Pakistanis, look down upon *all* types of commodified beauty work as un-Islamic and forbid their wives or daughters from going to beauty salons. Such reservations against beauty salons also stem from a desire to control women's mobility. The Taliban's recent ban on beauty salons in Afghanistan indicates the stigmatized status of this occupation among certain conservative religious groups, some of whom also have significant support in Pakistan.

Stigma against beauty work is so widespread that beauty workers routinely lie to their families and prospective in-laws to hide what they do for work or that they work at all. Laila, a beauty worker in Meena Bazaar, quit her job and got married towards the end of my fieldwork. I had spent considerable time with Laila; she had taken me under her wing when I first began my fieldwork, and I was eager to stay in touch. When I asked Farah, her younger sister who still worked at the salon, for Laila's new mobile number, she said, "How will you introduce yourself if her husband picks up the phone?" I responded, "Well, I'll just say I know her from the parlor and—." Farah interrupted me to exclaim, "No! *Definitely* do not say that. Not at all. Just say something else." Farah then proceeded to suggest a more ambiguous narrative I could use to introduce myself. Laila's husband and in-laws did not know that Laila had worked at a beauty salon for years, and, if they found out, Laila's reputation would be damaged. Thus, Farah made sure she recruited me in the collaborative project of secrecy meant to ensure Laila's status in her new family. Although all working women in Pakistan could be disparaged for engaging in paid employment outside their home, the added occupational, class, and gendered moral taint associated with beauty work exacerbated the overall stigma. Thus, beauty workers were keen to hide their association with this occupation to maintain their personal and familial status. Several mothers made their daughters of marriageable age quit their jobs as beauty workers to increase their value on the marriage market. One would expect that, given the entrenched stigma associated with beauty work, claiming *shauq* for it was likely to further decrease women's status. However, as I show in the next sections, while that certainly happened, women also mobilized narratives of *shauq* to contest stigma in counter-intuitive ways.

Entangled Narrative of Shauq and Majboori

Given the social rewards associated with bodily adornment and the socialization of women into such practices, beauty workers' claims of *shauq* are plausible. However, what complicated matters was women's dual insistence on *shauq* and *majboori*. Moreover, it was not the case that some women invoked *shauq* and other women emphasized *majboori*. Rather, women commonly mentioned both *shauq* and *majboori* during the same conversation or over a series of conversations to explain their motivations.

On the one hand, women framed becoming beauty workers as a matter of active choice because they had *shauq*. Many women who claimed *shauq* shared that they pursued beauty work for intrinsic rewards related to personal fulfillment. Huma, a beauty worker in her twenties described her *shauq* to me in these terms:

> I have a lot of *shauq* for this. In the beginning for six months, I just cleaned the mirrors, the fans, and the shutters. I had so much *shauq* that I said OK, I'll do whatever it takes. Then I befriended others (workers at the salon) and after six months, this duty of mine ended. Then for a year and a half I worked without a salary, just cleaning and learning beauty work from others. I had so much *shauq* that whatever (beauty) work I would try my hand at, I would look like an expert."

A few other beauty workers I interviewed had likewise initially worked as apprentices without pay or for little pay, sacrificing economic rewards for their passion. Beauty workers also emphasized an innate pull towards learning beauty work by likening it to other creative processes. For example, when I asked Faiza how she became a beauty worker, she responded, "Well, I'm from a family of artists." Her father had been a small-scale sculptor who made trophies, awards, and home decorations. After his death, she had started tinkering with his incomplete projects and proudly showed me pictures of her artwork, emphasizing how it was her "inner artist" that had led her to pursue beauty work. Finally, other women had *shauq* for beauty work because they wanted to do their own make-up and hair. Sumera confessed that she longed to color her hair and do her make-up, but her mother forbade her from engaging in these pursuits. However, now that she was a beauty worker, she sometimes dyed the tips of her hair with the leftover dye from customers and her mother ignored these mild transgressions. These narratives thus closely resemble the narratives of workers in other occupations who sacrifice pecuniary rewards to pursue what they love and find personally fulfilling.

On the other hand, women simultaneously emphasized the economic compulsion that forced them to become and stay beauty workers. Several women juxtaposed *shauq* as the opposite of *majboori,* but

others relayed the co-existence of both motivations during their life course. Afsheen, for example, who ran her own neighborhood salon, shared "Yeah, first I had *shauq* and I had a little bit of *zaroorat* (need) too. Now. . . I have more *zaroorat* and no *shauq* left." Despite running her own budget salon, she was unhappy with her work. She shared that the charm of learning beauty work as a young girl had worn off as she dealt with the everyday banalities of her menial and exhausting job. Several other workers shared a similar sentiment of losing *shauq* over time. However, a few workers also spoke of gaining *shauq* over time. These workers shared that although they initially started working out of *majboori* and without any interest in this profession, they gradually came to enjoy it and now had *shauq* for it. When discussing the motivation of other workers, women often distinguished between those who worked out of *shauq* and those who worked out of *majboori.*

After a few months of encountering these entangled narratives of *shauq* and *majboori* in my conversations with beauty workers, I asked Hafsa, who owned a budget neighborhood salon in a middle-class area, if most beauty workers entered this occupation because they had *shauq* for it. Hafsa immediately responded:

> No, no, nobody becomes a beauty worker because they have *shauq*. They're just saying that to you. Maybe some women who own beauty salons in DHA (the most elite area of Karachi) do this work out of *shauq* but certainly no one else.

Hafsa's response captured the complex interaction of gender and class dynamics that defined the landscape for working women in Pakistan. According to Hafsa, only wealthy women could afford to prioritize personal desires and pursue their *shauq* through work, whereas working-class women worked out of necessity to support their families.

If I were to believe Hafsa that it was *majboori* (and my data overwhelmingly showed that women did have economic need) and not *shauq* that motivated women to become beauty workers, then why did beauty workers routinely claim to have *shauq* when they spoke to me? In grappling with this, I began to understand how beauty workers mobilized both *shauq* and *majboori* in distinct ways as they tried to manage stigma. Although *shauq* and *majboori* may appear as mutually exclusive, the relationship between the two was quite complex. I do not argue that women did not have "real" *shauq* for beauty work. Rather, I analyze how narratives of *shauq* and *majboori* also served as discursive social strategies.

Reframing Beauty Work Through Narratives of Work Passion

Claiming *shauq* for beauty work allowed women to reframe the otherwise stigmatized occupation of beauty work as a valuable *hunar* (skill), and moreover, a particularly gender-appropriate feminine *hunar*. Although everyone is encouraged to pursue *hunar*, certain types of *hunar* have a gendered valence in Pakistan, and women who possess these skills are seen as embodying idealized femininity. I first noticed the salience of gender-appropriate *hunar* in women's self-making projects during conversations with Sumera, an experienced beauty worker who claimed to have an innate desire to learn this work. As a young girl, Sumera had accompanied her cousin to a bridal make-up appointment. She had watched in fascination as the beauty workers dressed up her cousin and, before leaving, she asked them about how they learned their craft. Soon after, she started a position as an apprentice in a beauty salon. *Shauq* may have motivated Sumera to learn beauty work as opposed to another type of work, but financial difficulties in her family meant that she also had *majboori* or need.

Over the course of many conversations, I noticed how Sumera proudly shared her journey of success not just in beauty work, but also in relation to her cooking, stitching, and embroidery skills. She had multiple *shauqs* and excitedly showed me photos of her embroidery and brought food she had cooked to share at work with great pride. Other beauty workers similarly shared their various achievements in stitching, cooking, various crafts, and interior decoration. All these *shauq*, with the exception of one or two young beauty workers who had *shauq* for "photography" and "business," were appropriately "feminine" *shauq* in the local context. Parents and women frequently advertised these *shauq* to prospective husbands or parents-in-law to convince them that their daughters were *hunarmand* (skilled) women who would bring value to their families. Sumera and other workers' comments about excelling at their jobs as beauty workers mirrored their pride in cooking and other "crafts," as they attempted to frame beauty work as a type of appropriately feminine "*hunar*." Although

other women certainly engaged in these endeavors for pay, beauty workers primarily pursued these *hunar* during their "free time" as uncommodified forms of skilled work.

Whereas paid beauty service work is not a traditionally established *hunar* like embroidery, for example, it is increasingly framed as a contemporary *hunar* in working-class and lower middle-class families with precarious socioeconomic positions. For example, beauty workers repeated popular sayings such as "a *hunar* never goes to waste" and "everyone must cultivate a *hunar*" when expressing pride in their work. Zainab, a beauty worker who had previously worked as schoolteacher, emphasized this by stating, "Learn a *hunar* and prove yourself, don't be dependent on anyone else." Even when women did not explicitly use the word *hunar*, they deployed discourses of skilled work to emphasize their craft. For example, several workers compared themselves to doctors and beauty work to "surgery." Claiming *shauq* for beauty work allowed beauty workers to liken it to skilled work women have *shauq* for and are extolled for such as cooking, stitching, embroidery etc.

Parents' increased willingness to encourage women's interest in learning beauty work is further evidence of the nascent acceptability of beauty work as *hunar*. The families of several beauty workers had initially resisted women's entry into this profession and often forbade it outright. Most parents did not wish for their daughters to enter paid employment and certainly not in stigmatized occupations. At the vocational center, where I conducted participant observation, only one young girl enrolled in the beauty course confessed that she planned to seek employment as a beauty worker. Most girls framed their interest in beauty work as an interest in personal grooming and casually mentioned that this was a good skill to cultivate. Learning beauty work, especially before marriage, gave young girls the satisfaction of learning how to care for their appearance as they prepared to get married. Although several students insisted that they had no intention of entering paid employment, their ability to get permission from their families to enroll in a beauty course suggested that both family members and women themselves recognized the potential monetary value of learning beauty work in case women ever experienced financial precarity. For example, one married middle-aged woman who had enrolled in the course initially emphasized that she had no plans of working, but later she shared that she might offer some beauty services to her neighbors at her home.

Even as women drew on long-established culturally specific ideas of *hunar*, their comments aligned in important ways with contemporary discourses of work passion and "do what you love." Women often stressed that one couldn't succeed as a beauty worker unless one had *shauq* (passion), *dilchaspi* (interest), *lagan* (devotion, passion), *dillagi* (commitment, dedication, love), *justuju* (quest, desire), or "interest" in beauty work. For example, when my teacher at Meena Bazaar (who was also a beauty worker in the salon) taught me how to do a facial, she emphasized the emotional labor involved (Hochschild 1983): "You must smile and feel happy when you do this work. Look at me when I'm doing this facial. My feelings are coming from inside." On many occasions during our class, she insisted that one could never get ahead in the field of beauty work if one did not have *shauq* for it. According to her, this was not about presenting a certain emotion to cater to the client's expectations and fulfill the demands of the service relationship. Rather, one had to genuinely enjoy this work to be able to develop the requisite skills. Other workers extolled the virtues of *shauq*, emphasizing the link between *shauq* and success. Saima confidently told me that "if you do not have *dilchaspi* (interest) in this, you cannot learn. You cannot learn any *hunar* unless you have *dilchaspi*." These ideas resemble contemporary notions of "Do what you love," which emphasize that one must seek joy through one's work and that success depends on how much one loves the work.

Re-signifying Gender/Class Positions Through Narratives of Work Passion

Since *hunar* is positively valued in society—not just for women, but for everyone—and enhances women's value on the marriage market, claiming an intense longing for a *hunar* could help women to accrue symbolic capital. *Saleeqa*, which can be translated as etiquette, refinement, or grace, is closely tied to middle-class respectable femininity in Pakistan and women who pursue gender-appropriate *hunar* are seen as having *saleeqa*. Professing *shauq* for beauty work helped women re-establish themselves as "good women" with *saleeqa*, which, in turn, helped them to challenge the stigma of working in the public sphere in a low status "dirty" occupation.

However, this move depended on women claiming *shauq* for the *hunar* alone and not for paid employment as beauty workers. Women who became beauty workers for the extrinsic reward of

money were stigmatized (as men were designated breadwinners), but women who aspired toward appropriately feminine-*hunar* for the sake of *hunar* itself, approximated ideal womanhood. Most beauty workers had been forced into the labor market because they were orphaned, unmarried, divorced, or married to men who were unwilling or unable to provide for their families. This was a cause of great shame for them, and some women were hesitant to reveal that they were in unhappy marriages or struggling financially because of an absent male breadwinner. In such situations, foregrounding *shauq* allowed them to obfuscate their poor economic standing and the absence of a dependable male breadwinner. By claiming that they had become beauty workers because they had *shauq* for the craft of beauty work, they framed their employment choices as independent of any economic necessity. This allowed them to combat gender stigma by disguising their violation of the male breadwinner norm and class stigma by presenting themselves as financially better off than they were.

Given the class/gender meanings of *shauq*, claiming *shauq* for beauty work allowed women to present themselves as middle-class women. One morning during my fieldwork, I went to the beauty supplies shop in Meena Bazaar to purchase a hair dye I needed for the tutorial in my beauty class. At the shop, I started talking to a young, confident woman who was purchasing beauty items from an exceptionally extensive list she held in her hand. She boldly rattled off the things she needed, as the shopkeeper grabbed several things from the shelves for her. As the pile of products on the counter in front of her grew, I learned that she was buying beauty products worth Rs 80, 000 (approximately eight times the monthly salary of many beauty workers I interviewed). Additionally, she had enrolled in a beauty work course at an upscale salon that cost her Rs 120, 000. When I returned to the beauty salon, I narrated this encounter to my teacher and the other beauty workers at the salon, expressing my surprise at the amount of money she was investing in this pursuit. Without batting an eye, they simply replied, "Yes, so she must be learning out of *shauq*." In other words, it made sense that she was spending this much since she clearly had no financial *majboori,* and it was thus *shauq* that must motivate her. On other occasions as well, women made a distinction between those who learn for *shauq* and those who become beauty workers for *majboori*. Typically, a class distinction undergirded this broader distinction; elite and middle-class women worked because they had *shauq* and working-class women worked because they had *majboori.*

This class distinction between *shauq* and *majboori* also explains why beauty workers often claimed that they had learned this work out of *shauq,* and it had only now become a *majboori*. Claiming an origin story of *shauq* or *shauq* as a present-day motivation allowed women to indicate that they were of a higher social status, and it was just their current situation that had changed temporarily. In other words, unlike truly working-class beauty workers, they were not *majboor*, but could make decisions based on their interest and *shauq*. Thus, claiming *shauq* rather than *majboori* became an important way of drawing symbolic boundaries between themselves and other workers. Narratives of *shauq* helped women to re-signify their social position by helping them to project the status of respectable middle-class women.

Managing the Costs of Shauq Through Narratives of Majboori

Thus far, I have discussed how claiming *shauq* for beauty work could become a route to status. In this section, I focus instead on the *costs* of claiming *shauq* to explain why women wove together narratives of *majboori* and *shauq*. Normative femininity in Pakistan is predicated on domesticity. Working outside the home and pursuing a "career" as *shauq* is stigmatized because such women are seen as "selfishly" pursuing a career to satisfy their personal need for more money, autonomy, or intellectual gratification at the expense of their family members (who ostensibly suffer from the lack of care and attention they are due). In fact, accusing someone of having *shauq* is often a way to label a women as morally suspect. Nusrat, a retail worker at a department store, for example, denigrated her co-workers by saying they were working to pursue "*ayaashi,"* luxury, which was evident in the way they wore expensive make-up and clothes. Nusrat could understand women who transgressed norms of gender seclusion because of *majboori*. But if a woman transgressed gender norms for purposes of mere selfish pleasure and aspirations for beauty, Nusrat considered her a disreputable woman. Some beauty and retail workers I spoke to often distinguished themselves from their co-workers by implying that while their co-workers

were working because they had *shauq* or for fun, they themselves were more respectable women working because of *majboori*.

Notably, class dynamics play a significant role in allegations of *shauq*. Middle-class women who work outside their homes are especially accused of having *shauq* rather than *majboori*. People who criticize such women emphasize that these women can "afford" to stay in single-income households (unlike working-class women), but they willfully choose to work outside their homes and, thus, transgress gender norms. In other words, it is doubly "bad" to transgress gender norms for reasons related to personal fulfillment as opposed to economic need. Consequently, using narratives of *shauq* to gain status is a tricky affair and women claimed *majboori* alongside *shauq*, despite the contradictions between narratives of *shauq* and *majboori*.

One straightforward explanation for women's claims of *majboori* is that they were indeed *majboor,* i.e., most women were working as beauty workers only because they had economic need. These women did not want to deviate from normative gender norms to work outside their homes in these low-wage and stigmatized jobs. But the absence of sufficient financial support from male members of the household "forced" them into the labor market. After this initial *majboori*, several women may have chosen beauty work because they had a desire or *shauq* for it. In this framing, women expressing *majboori* were expressing their factual situation. While this was certainly true, I argue that women also foregrounded *majboori* in other strategic ways to gain status. Given the stigma associated with women who have *shauq* in Pakistan, narratives of *shauq* on their own were insufficient to gain symbolic capital. Thus, women supplemented narratives of *shauq* with narratives of *majboori* to pursue dignity at work.

Narratives of *majboori* allowed women to gain dignity because they established that women were not willfully transgressing gender norms. Rather, they were forced to enter the labor market because of circumstances beyond their control. This served to establish women as the "other" of selfish women who pursued employment for reasons of personal gratification. When I interviewed the male manager of Meena Bazaar, he frequently used the phrase "*bechari*" (poor/helpless and by implication, deserving of sympathy) to describe the women working in the bazaar. He explained that the bazaar was set up by a businessman as a philanthropic venture for women from "*shareef gharane*" (respectable households) who had fallen on hard times so they could earn a dignified living in a women-only space. The implication here was that these "respectable women" were forced to work for reasons beyond their control and would not purposefully enter the public sphere, unlike other women who may brazenly pursue their *shauq* for employment.

Narratives of *majboori* also allowed women to present themselves as suffering and without agency. Thus, not only were such women deserving of people's pity, but they fit the normative gender representation of "good women" as lacking agency and being victims, and they stood in contrast to agentic women who were seen as disobedient and difficult to control. "*Bechari*" was thus strongly associated with "*majboori,*" and workers and customers alike often used "*bechari*" to describe women who had become beauty workers. Many women, when narrating their difficulties to me, claimed the label of *majboori* to establish that they were deserving of sympathy rather than stigma. In this formulation, *majboori* signalled virtue and dedication to the family, akin to narratives of investment in the family used by women workers in other contexts.

Majboori, like *shauq*, was also a complex affair. On the one hand, women invoked *majboori* to insist that it was only the direst circumstances that had forced them to seek waged employment in the public sphere. The narratives of *majboori* presented them as having no choice and lent a noble and sacrificial element to their employment. On the other hand, *majboori* was associated with a lack of agency, poverty, and pity. While women could foreground narratives of *majboori* to gain dignity, this was a tenuous route, as it also opened up routes to stigma by making obvious women's working-class status. Thus, women drew on narratives of both *shauq* and *majboori* in attempts to gain status.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Work Passion as a Stigma Management Strategy

In this paper, I have analyzed why and how workers may simultaneously mobilize seemingly contradictory narratives of "passion" and "compulsion" in relation to their work and why working-class workers in low-wage and stigmatized occupations nevertheless claim passion for their jobs. My findings suggest

that beauty workers adopt contradictory discourses of *shauq* and *majboori* in a complex move to manage intersecting occupational, gender, and class stigmas and to gain social status within broader cultural schemas. Existing research has primarily interpreted work passion as an affective investment in work spurred by an individualist desire for personal fulfillment, self-expression, and autonomy or as a strategy to accrue work-related rewards (Cech 2021; DePalma 2021; Rao and Neely 2019). In contrast, I argue that narratives of work passion may be deeply relational claims that workers use to navigate their social position in the context of stigma.

First, these narratives allowed workers to reframe their low-status jobs as a prized and gender-appropriate type of skilled work (*hunar*), akin to uncommodified forms of skilled work such as embroidery, cooking, and other household management skills women pursued in their free time. Second, and closely related, such narratives allowed workers to reposition their identity as gendered and classed subjects, a social position that is shaped by their occupation but is not entirely reducible to it. *Shauq*'s associations with leisure helped beauty workers to disguise their role as breadwinners, which in turn, helped to obfuscate their gender-class transgression (such as violating norms of gender seclusion and the male breadwinner ideal). Claiming passion also enabled women to position themselves as middle-class rather than poor, suggesting that they could afford to engage in work for leisure or personal fulfillment rather than out of economic necessity. Moreover, they framed their pursuit of *shauq* as a higher-order, and, therefore, morally legitimate, investment in skill, in contrast to the pursuit of money, which was something to be left to men. In this sense, narratives of *shauq* are similar to the narratives of investment in motherhood that women sex workers (Vijayakumar 2022) or surrogates (Pande 2009) in South Asia have used to emphasize their normative femininity, even as their work forces them to violate gender norms. In using *shauq* to contest class stigma, beauty workers thus attempted to convert their class exclusion into gendered virtue (Otis 2008).

Work passion as a stigma management strategy has not yet been explored in the literature on occupational stigma, which has noted several tactics workers use to gain status for their occupations (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). The beauty workers I spent time with did use some of the strategies outlined in the literature: for example, boundary drawing, but they did not develop a strong occupational identity or seek status for their occupation. Rather than describing themselves as "beauty workers" or "beauticians," they disidentified with their occupational identity and preferred to describe themselves as "working in a beauty salon." What is of note here is the tension between women's attempts to manage occupational stigma in order to construct a positive self-identity and their attempts to contest broader gender-class stigmas by disguising the "work" aspect of their jobs. Workers used narratives of "passion" not to gain occupational status or work-related rewards, but, rather, to downplay the "occupation" component of their work. By drawing on *shauq's* long association with non-work activities they thus presented their work as more approximate to leisure. Given the stigma associated with being a working woman in Pakistan, this presentation allowed them to contest both occupational stigma and gender-class stigmas.

Scholars have noted that care work and other types of "women's work" are devalued once they are commodified and that workers in these occupations may sometimes downplay the language of labor—and thus pecuniary motivations—to foreground their caring connections with customers (Stacey 2011). In the case of beauty work, however, women were not hoping to present it as a "labor of love" defined by its uncommodified state and thus valued. At stake here is not the commodification or decommodification of work itself, but the status of women as workers and breadwinners in the public sphere. Thus, women were not claiming passion to infuse their work with "real" emotions or relations of care with customers but to establish distance from their own status as workers and the stigmatized gender-class meanings associated with this status. This paper reveals a distinct and new way "passion" and "work" intersect in low-wage workers' struggles for status and how gendered aspirations mediate that relationship.

A recent review of occupational occupational stigma by Kreiner, Mihelcic, and Mikolon (2022) identifies a blind spot in occupational research: the gap between studies of occupational stigma and personal stigma. By squarely locating worker's status struggles in the sphere of work as connected with their broader status struggles, my analysis connects occupational stigma to multiple forms of personal stigma rooted in gender and class identities. Addressing this blind spot enables us to explain why developing a strong occupational identity or subculture is not always a sufficient destigmatization

response when other non-work stigmas must also be addressed. Zulfiqar and Prasad (2022), in their study on toilet cleaners in Pakistan, argue that broader sociohistorical identities such as caste may severely limit the ability of workers in the Global South to manage occupational taint by re-signifying their work. While I agree that caste and gender hierarchies may work to limit workers' agency to reframe their jobs, I argue that gender-related hierarchies may also offer women in some occupations in the Global South the opportunity to reframe their work. Beauty workers are able to draw on narratives of *shauq* to present their "dirty work" as the pursuit of a gender-appropriate skill, which, in turn, allows them to approximate respectable femininity. Likewise, reframing work as leisure allows them to disguise their violation of the male breadwinner norm and their stigmatized working-class identity.

Although gender dynamics do not foreclose possibilities of stigma management altogether, they nonetheless complicate women's attempts to use work passion as a stigma management strategy. Foregrounding *shauq* helps women to obscure their status as "working women," but it also opens them up to allegations of pursuing *shauq* at the expense of their family. Thus, they simultaneously resort to narratives of *majboori* to foreground their innocence. The mutual entanglement of both *shauq* and *majboori* reveals how gender dynamics ultimately shape the paradox of passion that women beauty workers confront. While existing scholarship of emotional labor and care work has theorized gender dynamics that shape the intersection of emotions and work, new scholarship on work passion has not yet meaningfully theorized the gendered processes shaping work passion (for an exception, see Neely's (2020) work on how gender, race, and class shape work passion in white-collar work). My case highlights the crucial role of intersecting gender and class associations at work, and beyond work, in shaping women's use of work passion as a stigma management strategy. Future research may further explore how context-specific gender dynamics shape claims of work passion, especially in low-wage and low-status jobs.

By demonstrating that women mobilize narratives of *shauq* for their paid employment, I also contribute to the literature on *shauq* in South Asia. I show that ideas of loving one's work are spreading across a range of contexts and that expressions of *shauq* are no longer considered to be antithetical to paid employment as the earlier literature on crafts, music, and other leisure activities suggests. Similarly, I show how *shauq* is not the other of compulsion and nor is it necessarily associated with free choice. Rather, it can and often does exist with narratives of *majboori*, especially when workers deploy narratives of passion as a stigma management strategy. Although men are less likely to be stigmatized for *shauq*, excessive *shauq* can also reduce the status of men in Pakistan (Kavesh 2020), and men likewise have to carefully manage the costs of *shauq*. Thus, although I focus on women in this research, I anticipate the skillful deployment of *shauq* and *majboori* is also a tactic men may use in some contexts.

Like other scholars (Cech 2021; DePalma 2021), I theorize work passion as a cultural schema. But by focusing on a type of case previously unexplored in scholarship—passion for a working-class occupation in the Global South—I contribute an account of a culturally-specific mode of work passion. While work passion discourses may appear differently across cultures, ideologies of work passion are becoming increasingly popular across the globe. Yet most research remains focuses on postindustrial societies and on high-status workers (Cech 2021; Charles and Bradley 2009; Neely 2020), thus reinforcing the idea that expressions of passion for jobs are uncommon in the Global South and among low-status workers. My research shows how narratives of *shauq* both converge with globally circulating ideas of "do what you love" and how such narratives diverge from such discourses in anchoring themselves to culturally specific notions of gender, skill, and worth. Women's claims of *shauq* mirror global discourses associated with labors of love such as linking success at work to passion for the job, but, at the same time, incorporate local moral valuations of "*hunar*" and other gender ideologies.

Contemporary work regimes are increasingly defined by discourses of work passion. In fact, loving one's job is now considered to be such a central way of achieving personal fulfillment that researchers and self-help literature alike have encouraged workers to practices tactics such as "job crafting" (Berg, Dutton, and Wrzesniewski 2013), through which workers can craft their jobs into work that allows them to experience a positive work identity and, consequently, find meaning and joy in their work (and by extension, their lives). I suggest that, as claiming passion for one's work becomes an increasingly valued normative cultural schema, the very act of claiming passion for one's work may become a key discursive tactic workers use to increase the status of stigmatized occupations, not just in Pakistan, but

across various contexts. Scholars of work passion have emphasized how it is becoming an increasingly dominant normative cultural script and have rightfully focused on exploring how employers benefit from discourses of "do what you love" that increasingly justify and mask workers' exploitation (Cech 2021; Jaffe 2021; Tokumitsu 2015; Weeks 2017). Although I agree that we must be attentive to the pernicious effects of such discourses, I also draw attention to how the wide-scale acceptance of these discourses may allow workers to leverage narratives of passion to claim status.

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