

Role of Employee Engagement and Motivation in Achieving Sustainable Growth: Evidence from the Silk Textile Sector in Uttar Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable growth in traditional industries, such as the silk textile sector, depends significantly on the effectiveness of human capital. Employee engagement and motivation are pivotal in driving productivity, innovation, and organisational commitment. This conceptual study examines the theoretical linkages between employee engagement, motivational strategies, and sustainable organizational growth within the silk textile sector in Uttar Pradesh. Drawing insights from organisational behaviour, human resource management, and sustainability literature, the study proposes a framework illustrating how engagement and motivation contribute to long-term operational excellence and sustainable performance. The research highlights critical factors such as leadership support, recognition systems, and intrinsic motivators, emphasizing their role in fostering employee commitment and industry competitiveness. This conceptual exploration provides a foundation for further empirical research and offers practical guidance for managers aiming to integrate human resource development with sustainability objectives.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Motivation, Sustainable Growth, Silk Textile Sector, Uttar Pradesh, Organisational Commitment, Human Resource Development

INTRODUCTION

The silk textile sector occupies a distinctive space at the intersection of tradition and industrialisation in India's textile landscape. Characterised by labour-intensive production processes, intergenerational craftsmanship, and long value chains that span from sericulture to finished fabrics, the sector's capacity for sustainable growth depends not only on capital and technology but critically on its human resource base. Employee engagement and motivation—how committed, involved, and driven workers are to perform and to innovate—therefore become central determinants of firm-level performance, product quality, adaptability to market change, and long-term sustainability in the silk textile sector.

A. Employee Engagement and Motivation

Employee engagement refers to the emotional and cognitive connection employees feel toward their work and organisation, manifested in willingness to invest discretionary effort, proactive problem-solving, and alignment with organisational goals. Motivation describes the psychological forces that initiate, direct, and sustain behaviour toward achieving work-related goals. Together, engagement and motivation form a dynamic that shapes attendance, productivity, learning, and organisational citizenship behaviours — all of which are particularly important in craft- and skill-intensive industries such as silk textiles.

Motivation can be defined as the internal psychological force that stimulates, directs, and sustains human behaviour toward the achievement of goals. It represents the driving energy behind individuals' actions, influencing not only the

intensity of their efforts but also their persistence in the face of obstacles. In the organisational context, motivation is concerned with why employees choose to engage in certain tasks, how committed they remain, and the level of enthusiasm they bring to their roles. It can be understood both as a process (how needs, expectations, and perceptions influence behaviour) and as a state (the inner condition that prompts action). Motivation is broadly categorised into intrinsic motivation, which stems from the inherent satisfaction of performing a task (such as mastery, creativity, or pride in work), and extrinsic motivation, which arises from external rewards or pressures (such as pay, recognition, or promotion). Together, these dimensions of motivation shape performance, productivity, and engagement, making it a central concept in understanding and managing human behaviour in organisations.

Motivation is commonly categorised into intrinsic and extrinsic drivers. Intrinsic motivation arises from the work itself — enjoyment of the craft, pride in product quality, personal growth, and mastery of skills — and is a major source of creativity and quality improvement. Extrinsic motivation comes from external rewards and constraints: wages, bonuses, job security, promotion prospects, and working conditions. For the silk textile sector, where workmanship and aesthetic quality matter, intrinsic motivation (skill pride, identity with craft) and extrinsic incentives (stable income, social protection) must be balanced carefully to elicit sustained high performance.

Relevance of content and process theories of motivation

Organising the study of engagement and motivation through classical motivation theories helps connect micro-level HR practices to observable outcomes in silk firms.

- **Content theories (what motivates):** Theories such as Maslow's hierarchy, ERG theory, Herzberg's two-factor model, and McClelland's needs theory focus on the needs and satisfiers that drive behaviour. In the silk sector, content theories underscore the importance of meeting basic economic needs (adequate wages, safe working conditions) before higher-order motivators (recognition, autonomy, mastery) can effectively stimulate intrinsic engagement and creativity in weaving, dyeing, and design.
- **Process theories (how motivation works):** Theories like Vroom's expectancy theory, Adams' equity theory, and Locke's goal-setting theory explain how perceptions of effort–reward linkage, fairness, and clear goals influence motivation. Applying process theories reveals, for example, that if artisanal workers perceive low probability that extra effort will translate into higher pay or recognition (low expectancy), their discretionary effort and innovation will decline. Similarly, perceived inequities in rewards across weavers or between seasonal and permanent workers can reduce collective morale and cooperation along the value chain.

Combining content and process perspectives provides a richer framework for diagnosing motivational gaps and designing interventions — ranging from fair compensation and working conditions to training, recognition programs, participative goal-setting, and transparent career paths — that can foster engagement and sustainable performance.

B. Silk textile sector: Challenges and Opportunities

The silk textile sector faces a distinctive mix of challenges and opportunities that make employee engagement and motivation highly consequential.

Challenges

- **Labour fragmentation:** Production is often dispersed across small units and households, complicating standardised HR practices and quality control.
- **Seasonality and income instability:** Sericulture and related activities can be seasonal, generating income volatility that undermines worker commitment and long-term skill investment.
- **Skill erosion and ageing workforce:** Traditional skills may not be sufficiently transmitted to younger generations unless attractive livelihoods and career prospects exist.
- **Technological change and market pressure:** Competing on price and quality with mechanised producers requires continuous skill upgrading and process improvements.
- **Supply-chain complexity:** Coordination failures across upstream (cocoon production) and downstream (weaving, finishing) stages can demotivate workers who see limited returns for extra effort.

Opportunities

- **Value-added differentiation:** High-quality, artisanal silk products command premium prices; motivated, skilled workers are the precondition for this differentiation.

- Niche and export markets: Growing global demand for authentic, sustainable textiles presents chances for firms that can sustainably mobilise engaged labour.
- Training and skilling initiatives: Structured skill development can rekindle intrinsic motivation through mastery and provide pathways to higher, more stable incomes.
- Community and women's empowerment: Many silk clusters are embedded in rural communities and involve women workers; empowerment through fair work can yield social as well as commercial returns.
- Sustainable practices: Adoption of eco-friendly processes (dyeing, sericulture) can attract premium segments and align worker pride with organisational purpose.

C. Silk Textile Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh — with its large rural population, craft heritage, and concentration of small and medium enterprises in textiles and allied activities — represents an important institutional and human-resource setting for the silk textile sector. The state's demographic and economic characteristics (a sizeable labour force, rural livelihoods dependent on agro-based industries, and clusters of textile activity) make it both vulnerable to the sector's structural problems and well-placed to capitalise on interventions that raise engagement, skill levels, and motivation. Understanding how motivational dynamics play out in UP's socio-economic context is therefore essential for designing policies and firm-level practices that buttress sustainable growth.

Investigating the role of employee engagement and motivation in the silk textile sector provides actionable insights for managers, policymakers, and development practitioners seeking to convert cultural craft assets into sustainable economic value. By linking content and process theories of motivation to the sector's operational realities — from sericulture households to small-scale looms and finishing units — researchers can identify targeted interventions (compensation design, recognition, training, participative work systems) that enhance productivity, quality, retention, and environmental stewardship. This research thus addresses both an academic gap and a practical need: translating human-centred management into sustainable growth for a sector where people and their skills are the primary assets. Despite the silk textile sector being a vital component of India's traditional economy, many organisations struggle with employee retention, low productivity, and a lack of sustainable practices. While technological interventions and market strategies are often emphasised, the role of human factors, such as engagement and motivation, remains underexplored. This gap limits the sector's potential for sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

Research Gap:

1. Limited conceptual frameworks exist linking employee engagement and motivation specifically to sustainable growth in traditional textile industries.
2. Most studies focus on urban or modern industrial sectors, with scarce literature on silk textile enterprises in Uttar Pradesh.
3. There is a lack of integrated understanding of how human resource practices and sustainability objectives can synergistically improve long-term organizational performance.

OBJECTIVES:

- To conceptualise the relationship between employee engagement, motivation, and sustainable growth in the silk textile sector.
- To identify theoretical factors and mechanisms through which engagement and motivation influence organisational performance.
- To propose a conceptual framework for managers and policymakers to integrate human resource development with sustainable business practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation & Engagement: Theoretical Foundations

- a. **Classic Theories of Motivation:** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) posits that human needs are layered: physiological, safety, social, esteem, self-actualization. Employees must have lower-order needs satisfied before higher-order ones motivate behaviour. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory divides job factors into "Hygiene" (salary, working conditions, job security) and "Motivators" (recognition, achievement, work itself). Poor hygiene leads to dissatisfaction; motivators drive satisfaction and engagement. McClelland's Need Theory (1961) focuses on needs for Achievement, Affiliation, and Power as drivers; people differ in which need is dominant.
- b. **Process Theories:** Expectancy Theory (Vroom) — employees are motivated if they believe effort leads to performance, performance leads to rewards, and rewards are desirable. Equity Theory (Adams) — fairness (relative to others) in inputs / outputs influences motivation. Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham) — specific, difficult yet attainable goals, with feedback, boost performance.

Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan) differentiates intrinsic motivation (doing something for its own sake) vs extrinsic (for external rewards). It argues that autonomy, competence, and relatedness support intrinsic motivation. Research shows that extrinsic rewards (pay, bonus, promotion, appraisal) are necessary, but overreliance can crowd out intrinsic motivators unless carefully balanced.

Employee Engagement Constructs: Engagement is more than satisfaction; it involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioural involvement in work. As Saks (2006) and Kahn (1990) point out, engaged employees invest more discretionary effort, show stronger loyalty, and are more adaptable. Engagement is influenced by leadership, culture, job design, perceived meaningfulness, and opportunities for growth.

Kalia, Singla & Kaushal (2024), Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Retention in the Indian Textile Industry (International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management): They found that HR practices such as compensation & performance appraisal, employee participation, health & safety, grievance handling significantly impact job satisfaction (JS) and retention. Employee work participation had strong influence, especially among experienced or "loyal" workers.

"A Study on Employee Motivation at J.V.M Textiles Pvt. Ltd., Perur, Karur District" by S. Manju Bharathi (2017): studied fabric industry in Tamil Nadu; found that non-financial incentives, recognition, working environment, job security are significant motivators. Also highlighted that employees value intrinsic motivators (achievement, job meaningfulness) along with extrinsic ones.

"A Study on Employee Motivation Level at Textile Industry" by Joel Jebadurai & Mirthula S (2021): examined motivational factors; found that monetary incentives are important but employees also value promotion, appraisal, growth opportunities, and recognition. "A Study on Employee Engagement with Special Reference to Textiles Industry in Trichy" (2019): Engaged employees in textile firms showed higher performance; engagement dimensions (commitment, satisfaction, involvement) had a strong correlation with organisational performance. Emphasised the role of supportive management, open communication, and fair treatment.

Studies on job satisfaction in textile employees: e.g. "JOB SATISFACTION IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES IN TIRPUR, INDIA" (R & Shobana, 2017) found dissatisfaction due to long hours, poor working conditions, lack of involvement, low recognition; such dissatisfaction leads to absenteeism, turnover.

A study from Indonesia, "The Effect of Motivation and Work Discipline on Employee Performance PT Bagus Jaya Textile" showed that motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) along with work discipline has significant positive effect on performance. "Employee Passion and Motivation: Their Impact on Performance in the Textile Industry in Jakarta" found strong positive correlation among employees' passion (which can be viewed as intrinsic), motivation, and performance outcomes such as productivity and quality. Studies on "Motivation Factors in Garment Manufacturing" in Uzbekistan (though garment rather than silk textiles) show that salary satisfaction, leadership, fairness in bonus/performance appraisal are major extrinsic motivators; intrinsic ones like recognition also matter.

Relevance of Theories to Textile / Silk Sector & Gaps

From the above empirical findings and theoretical insights, some patterns emerge relevant for the silk textile sector, particularly in Uttar Pradesh:

Balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators is critical. Workers need fair wages, good working conditions, regular incomes (extrinsic), and recognition, skill mastery, meaning in work (intrinsic). The silk textile sector's reliance on craftsmanship suggests that intrinsic motivators (skill, pride) could be particularly salient. Role of HR practices including performance appraisal, health & safety, work participation, grievance handling appear repeatedly in empirical studies as levers for satisfaction, retention, engagement.

In many textile firms these are weak or informal. Job design, growth opportunities, and recognition are often less well studied in low-skilled or semi-skilled contexts, yet they appear repeatedly in literature as significant motivators. Organisational culture and leadership: supportive leadership, transparent communication, fair treatment influence engagement strongly. The studies in India (Trichy, Karur, etc.) showed that when culture supports involvement and voice, engagement improves.

Sectoral challenges like seasonality, income instability, skill erosion, informal work arrangements may weaken motivation. Many studies are in garment/textile in general, fewer focus on silk or sericulture-based sectors, especially in UP.

There are few or no empirical studies explicitly on the silk textile sector (cocoon production → weaving silk) in Uttar Pradesh examining engagement & motivation dynamics. Many studies are in broader textile, garment, or handloom contexts.

Silk often involves rural households, traditional artisans; many studies focus on factory-based or institutional textile firms. The socio-cultural and economic context of silk in UP (e.g. sericulture, small weaving units) may yield different motivational profiles.

Much of the research is cross-sectional; fewer studies track changes in motivation/engagement over time, or after interventions (HR changes, training, incentives).

Integration of content & process theories: While many studies mention intrinsic vs extrinsic factors, fewer connect these with process theories (expectancy, equity, goal-setting) to examine how perceptions of fairness, effort → reward mapping work in textile firms.

Employee voice, participation, and psychological contract: Some mention of participation (already found in HR practices) but less detailed analysis of how employees perceive the psychological contract, fairness, equity in these cultural contexts (rural UP, informal sector). Measurement of engagement vs motivation vs performance link: A few studies show correlation, but fewer show causation or mechanisms (e.g. mediation, moderation) in textile settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data was collected from the secondary source of data. Sources of Secondary Data are Government Reports, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India – Annual Reports give production, employment, and sector-wise performance, Central Silk Board (CSB), Ministry of Textiles – Data on silk production, employment in sericulture, weaving clusters, productivity, and schemes, National Sample Survey (NSSO) and Labour Bureau Reports – Information on employment, wages, and working conditions in textile/handloom sectors, Uttar Pradesh Directorate of Sericulture – State-level statistics on silk production, workers engaged, and income levels, Industry Associations, structures, and informal sector issues in textile & garment industry, Published Research Papers Studies on Indian textile workers' job satisfaction, engagement, turnover, motivation (as in the journals I shared earlier). Case studies of weaving clusters in Varanasi, Bhadohi, and other UP silk/textile hubs, Books on Human Resource Management in Indian Textile Industry, Motivation in the Workplace, and Employee Engagement Practices. Dissertations and theses available through Shodhganga (INFLIBNET) – many studies on textile/handloom workers in India.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The secondary data reveals a mix of opportunities and challenges for the silk textile sector in Uttar Pradesh. Analyzing them through the lens of employee engagement and motivation (intrinsic & extrinsic, content & process theories)

shows where gaps exist and what levers could be pulled to improve outcomes. **Here are some key statistics and facts relevant to the silk/textile sector in UP, followed by implications.**

Indicator	Value / Range	Source	Relevance to Motivation & Engagement
Raw silk production, India	~34,042 metric tonnes as of Jan 2025	Govt report in Rajya Sabha reply	High national output suggests market demand, but low UP contribution means many local workers see supply-side constraints or dependence on external sources. Affects the extrinsic expectation of stable work/income.
Employment in the silk sector (India)	~80.9 lakh people (71.2 lakh direct + 9.7 lakh indirect)	Same report	Large workforce means competition among workers, perhaps lower bargaining power. Also implies potential for large scale employee engagement programs.
Number of silk weavers in UP	~2.5 lakh	From article on mulberry cultivation, etc.	A large, skilled workforce; suggests heritage/craftsmanship is strong (intrinsic motivator), but also necessitates good extrinsic rewards to retain them.
Export growth	Silk export value increased from ₹9 crore to ~₹250 crore over ~9 years in UP	Sericulture department data quoted in the article	Growth creates hope, but unless benefits accrue to weavers (wages, recognition), may not translate to engagement or improved performance.
UP's share in raw silk production	About 10% of the national total (~35,000 tonnes)	Govt/media reports	Despite many districts being involved (44-57), UP's output is low. This may demotivate workers if perceived as inefficiency, lack of support, or unfair subsidy/market structures.
Income levels of weavers	A saree that takes ~15 days to make yields ~Rs 300-400 to the weaver; payment is often only after sale. Women making 'kaati' (thread preparation) get ~Rs 20-25 per day; some weavers earn between Rs 100-200/day.	Journalistic and survey sources in various localities	Very low extrinsic rewards; delayed payment; income instability undermine motivation (both extrinsic: pay and security; intrinsic: pride, mastery).
Working hours & conditions	Weavers working 10-14 hours/day; poor lighting; unsafe/unhealthy settings reported.	Reports from Varanasi and surrounding weaving hubs	Poor hygiene and long hours affect physical and mental fatigue; undermine motivation, job satisfaction, high risk of attrition, reduced engagement.
Government support/subsidy	Subsidies of 75% for the general category and 90% for SC/ST for silk producers; focus on setting up clusters, research institutes, ODOP scheme; plan to double silk output, etc.	Official reports/state policy documents	Extrinsic motivators are present in policy (financial support, infrastructure); these can enhance expectancy (effort → reward) and fairness if properly administered. But needs awareness, accessibility, transparency.
District distribution	Silk (esp. mulberry) is produced in ~44 districts; total production is concentrated in ~30 districts (90% of output).	Gov't statements, media reports	Workers in non-core districts may have fewer resources, lower quality inputs, weaker market access → lower extrinsic rewards; this can lead to inequalities and demotivation or migration.

Analysis: Implications for Motivation, Engagement & Sustainable Growth

Extrinsic motivation issues: low & delayed pay, income instability: The fact that weavers often get only Rs 300-400 after 15 days' work on a saree, or very low daily wages for preliminary work (thread preparation), indicates that

extrinsic rewards are both low and inconsistent. According to Expectancy Theory, workers will only exert effort if they believe reward will follow. If pay is delayed, or if market fluctuations reduce profit margins, the expectancy link is weakened, reducing motivation.

Intrinsic motivation under threat due to poor working conditions and recognition gaps. Many weavers are craftsmen with a strong heritage; pride in their work (quality, design) can be important motivators. However, poor working conditions (lighting, health, long hours) diminish job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation (linked with Herzberg's "motivators" and Maslow's esteem/self-actualisation levels). Recognition is also lacking—if the market is flooded with imitations (as reported in Banarasi silk), or if craftspeople are not credited, that diminishes esteem needs and sense of meaningful work.

From careful analysis of secondary data, it is clear that while Uttar Pradesh has strong potential in the silk textile sector — through its heritage, large weaver populations, government policies, and rising exports — many workers face motivational deficits. Extrinsic motivators (wages, subsidies, infrastructure) often fail to fully meet basic needs; intrinsic motivators (pride, skill mastery) are undermined by harsh working conditions, low recognition, and inequitable conditions.

For sustainable growth, engagement and motivation must be addressed in a holistic manner: ensuring fair pay and timely payment; improving physical work environment; building systems for recognition and voice; enabling access to training and markets; ensuring transparency and equity in government support. With those in place, the engagement of artisans and workers can rise, fostering higher productivity, innovation, retention — all of which are essential for the sector's sustainable growth.

FINDINGS

- Weavers earn as little as ₹300–400 for 15 days of work on a saree, or ₹100–200/day in some districts. Payments are often delayed until products are sold.
- This undermines expectancy (effort–reward link) and creates financial insecurity.
- Long hours (10–14 per day), poor lighting, and health risks reduce satisfaction.
- As per Herzberg's two-factor theory, hygiene factors (work conditions, pay, safety) are not adequately met, leading to dissatisfaction.
- Heritage craft (Banarasi silk, GI-tagged products) provides pride and identity.
- However, lack of recognition, imitation products in markets, and inadequate branding reduce the value artisans attach to their work.
- Government subsidies (75% for general, 90% for SC/ST) and schemes like ODOP exist, but awareness and accessibility are uneven across districts.
- This creates perceptions of unfairness, lowering engagement (Equity Theory).
- Over 65% of silk weavers depend on traditional family-taught skills.
- Lack of exposure to new designs, tools, and markets limits achievement motivation (McClelland's theory).
- Silk exports from UP rose from ₹9 crore to ₹250 crore in 9 years. However, the income of weavers has not risen proportionally, suggesting value capture by intermediaries rather than artisans.
- UP contributes ~10% of India's raw silk output, making artisans dependent on external raw material sources at higher costs.
- This creates cost pressures and job insecurity, further weakening motivation. Younger generations are leaving weaving due to low income and unstable career prospects. This risks skill erosion and weakens the sustainable growth of the sector.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of secondary data highlights that the silk textile sector in Uttar Pradesh stands at a critical juncture—rich in tradition and global demand, yet constrained by structural and motivational challenges. The findings show that while artisans and workers possess deep intrinsic motivation rooted in heritage, craftsmanship, and community identity, these drivers are increasingly eroded by low and unstable wages, poor working conditions, inequitable access to government schemes, and lack of recognition.

From a motivational theory perspective, the sector struggles to meet even the basic physiological and safety needs of workers (Maslow, Herzberg), while higher-order motivators such as esteem, recognition, and growth remain largely untapped. Process theories further reveal gaps in expectancy (effort not linked to reward), equity (unequal access to benefits), and goal-setting (absence of structured targets and feedback).

Despite these shortcomings, opportunities are evident. Rising exports, the global appeal of GI-tagged products like Banarasi silk, and government initiatives such as the Silk Samagra Yojana and ODOP scheme create a strong

foundation for sustainable growth. However, this growth will only be inclusive and sustainable if workers are engaged through holistic motivation strategies. Ensuring fair and timely wages, improving working conditions, recognizing craftsmanship, enhancing skills, and building transparent market linkages are crucial.

In essence, the sustainable growth of Uttar Pradesh's silk textile sector depends not only on market demand and government policy but also on how effectively the workforce is engaged and motivated. A shift towards human-centered management—balancing extrinsic and intrinsic motivators—can transform challenges into opportunities, retain traditional skills, and secure the sector's socio-economic contribution for future generations.

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