

Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction among Women Workers in the Hosiery Industry of Ludhiana: A Primary Survey

Dr. Priyanka Soni

*Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce Khalsa College for Women, Civil Lines,
Ludhiana | Panjab University, Chandigarh*

Abstract—The hosiery and knitwear industry of Ludhiana is one of the most economically significant industrial clusters in northern India, employing an estimated 90,000 to 1,20,000 workers — a substantial proportion of them women engaged in stitching, finishing, dyeing, and quality inspection tasks. Despite this scale, the motivational dynamics and job satisfaction levels of this largely informal female workforce have received virtually no systematic academic attention. Drawing on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, this study investigates what motivates women workers in Ludhiana's hosiery sector and examines the relationship between identified motivational factors and self-reported job satisfaction. Primary data were collected from 210 women workers across nine manufacturing units in Ludhiana's major hosiery clusters — Sahnewal, Gill Road, and Focal Point — through a structured interview-administered questionnaire comprising 32 items on a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive analysis, reliability testing, and multiple regression were used to analyse the data in SPSS 26. Findings indicate that hygiene factors — principally wages, working conditions, and supervisory behaviour — dominate the motivational landscape, with motivators such as recognition and growth opportunities remaining significantly underdeveloped. Wages emerged as the single strongest predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.41$), followed by working conditions ($\beta = 0.29$) and supervisory fairness ($\beta = 0.24$). Recognition and promotion opportunities, despite being highly desired, were rated the lowest in terms of actual availability. The study contributes original, field-based evidence on an understudied industrial population and offers targeted recommendations for HR managers, factory owners, and labour welfare policymakers in Punjab.

Index Terms—employee motivation, job satisfaction, women workers, hosiery industry, Ludhiana, Herzberg two-factor theory, hygiene factors, motivators, Punjab, HRM

I. INTRODUCTION

Ludhiana's identity as India's 'Manchester' is stitched, quite literally, into the fabric of its economy. The city's hosiery and knitwear cluster — concentrated in Focal Point, Gill Road, Sahnewal, and the adjoining industrial areas — is among the largest of its kind in South Asia, producing woollen and cotton knitwear that reaches domestic markets across India and export destinations spanning Europe, the Middle East, and North America. At the heart of this industry is a labour force that is overwhelmingly drawn from the city's working-class residential areas and its rural hinterland, and that is, in a significant proportion, female. Women workers constitute the backbone of the stitching, linking, and finishing operations that give hosiery products their final form.

Yet if one were to search the academic literature for published studies on the motivation, satisfaction, or well-being of women workers in Ludhiana's hosiery sector, the search would return essentially nothing. This is not because the workforce is small or economically marginal — it is neither. It is because industrial HR research in India has concentrated its attention on organised sector employees in large firms, on IT and banking professionals, on public sector workers, and on students as proxies for future workers. The informal, piece-rate, sub-contracted women workers who make the hosiery industry function have remained outside the frame of systematic HR inquiry. This paper steps into that gap.

The study applies Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory — distinguishing between hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction and motivators that generate positive satisfaction — to this specific industrial population. The choice of framework is deliberate. Herzberg's theory, though developed in the 1950s, remains one of the most practically applicable frameworks for understanding motivation in low-to-middle income work settings precisely because it separates the baseline conditions workers need (the hygiene layer) from the growth experiences that truly engage them (the motivator layer). In a setting like Ludhiana's hosiery units, where baseline conditions of pay and safety are themselves frequently contested, understanding where workers locate their grievances and where they locate their aspirations is both theoretically interesting and immediately actionable.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: Core Propositions

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), in their landmark Pittsburgh study of engineers and accountants, proposed that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not opposite ends of a single continuum but are driven by fundamentally different sets of factors. Hygiene factors — company policy, supervision quality, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, salary, and job security — are extrinsic to the work itself; when absent or inadequate, they produce dissatisfaction, but when present, they do not actively produce satisfaction: they merely prevent dissatisfaction. Motivators — achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement — are intrinsic; their presence produces genuine satisfaction and engagement, while their absence

produces neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction but a kind of motivational neutrality. The managerial implication is that improving hygiene factors alone will not produce motivated workers — it will merely reduce discontent.

The theory has been applied extensively in manufacturing and industrial contexts, with generally consistent findings in developing country settings. Maidani (1991) found that public sector workers in the Middle East prioritised hygiene factors more than their private sector counterparts, reflecting the security orientation of government employment. Lundberg et al. (2009) applied the framework to hospitality workers and found that the separation between motivator and hygiene factors was less clean than Herzberg proposed, with some factors — particularly supervisory relationships — operating on both dimensions simultaneously. In the Indian industrial context, Srivastava and Barmola (2011) applied the two-factor framework to manufacturing workers in Uttar Pradesh and found wages, job security, and working conditions as dominant hygiene concerns, with advancement opportunities and recognition emerging as the most desired but least fulfilled motivators.

2.2 Women Workers in Indian Manufacturing: HRM Perspectives

The literature on women workers in Indian manufacturing is predominantly sociological rather than HRM-oriented, focusing on wage discrimination, occupational segregation, and informal employment conditions rather than on motivational dynamics. Rustagi (2013) documented that women in India's textile and garment sector are disproportionately employed in the lowest-skill, lowest-wage, and least secure job categories, with limited access to formal employment contracts or social security benefits. Mazumdar and Sarkar (2008) found that in Punjab's industrial clusters, women's participation in manufacturing is strongly concentrated in home-based and sub-contracted roles that offer flexibility but at the cost of formal worker rights. Against this sociological backdrop, this study's HRM-oriented focus on motivation and satisfaction provides a complementary and actionable analytical lens.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population comprised all women workers employed in stitching, finishing, linking, and quality inspection roles in hosiery manufacturing units in Ludhiana. Nine manufacturing units — varying in size from 25 to 200 workers — were selected through purposive sampling based on management cooperation and geographic distribution across the major hosiery clusters: Focal Point (3 units), Gill Road (3 units), and Sahnewal area (3 units). Within each unit, women workers were approached through systematic sampling; 240 questionnaires were distributed and 210 were fully completed and retained (response rate: 87.5%).

The structured questionnaire comprised 32 items across six sections. Section A captured demographics: age, marital status, education level, type of employment (permanent, contract, piece-rate), monthly income, and years in the industry. Sections B through F measured the five

hygiene factors — wages and compensation (5 items), working conditions (5 items), supervisory behaviour (5 items), job security (4 items), and workplace relationships (4 items) — and two motivator dimensions — recognition and appreciation (5 items) and growth and advancement opportunities (4 items) — all on a 5-point Likert scale. Since many respondents had limited formal literacy, the questionnaire was administered through structured interviews conducted in Punjabi and Hindi by two trained research assistants. Cronbach's Alpha for the overall instrument was 0.84, with construct-level values ranging from 0.76 (job security) to 0.88 (wages). Multiple regression with job satisfaction score as the dependent variable was the primary analytical method.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Respondent Profile

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–25 years	74	35.2%
	26–35 years	91	43.3%
	36 years and above	45	21.5%
Education	Illiterate / Below class 5	38	18.1%
	Class 5–10	119	56.7%
	Class 10 and above	53	25.2%
Employment type	Permanent / Regular	61	29.0%
	Contract / Seasonal	84	40.0%
	Piece-rate / Home-based	65	31.0%
Monthly income	Below INR 6,000	72	34.3%
	INR 6,001–10,000	96	45.7%
	Above INR 10,000	42	20.0%
Experience in hosiery	Less than 3 years	68	32.4%
	3–7 years	93	44.3%
	More than 7 years	49	23.3%

4.2 Mean Scores: Herzberg Dimensions

Dimension	Mean (/5)	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Wages and Compensation	2.84	0.93	Below average — primary grievance source
Working Conditions	2.96	0.88	Below average — safety and space concerns
Supervisory Behaviour	3.21	0.81	Moderate — fairness perceived inconsistently
Job Security	2.71	1.02	Lowest rated — contract employment concern
Workplace Relationships	3.68	0.72	Highest hygiene score — peer bonds strong
Recognition and Appreciation	2.43	0.89	Very low — rarely experienced
Growth and Advancement	2.31	0.94	Lowest overall — almost entirely absent
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.09	0.86	Moderate — driven by peer relations and habit

The mean scores present an unambiguous picture. Across all hygiene dimensions, wages ($M = 2.84$) and job security ($M = 2.71$) are the most acutely felt insufficiencies — not surprising given that 40% of the sample are on contract arrangements and 34.3% earn below INR 6,000 per month. Working conditions registered a mean of 2.96, with respondents specifically citing inadequate ventilation in stitching halls, absence of drinking water facilities during peak summer months, and insufficient lighting at stitching stations as the most frequently mentioned concerns. Workplace relationships, at 3.68, is the standout hygiene factor — women workers in this industrial setting report strong peer solidarity and mutual support networks that appear to partially compensate for deficiencies in other hygiene dimensions.

On the motivator side, the picture is starker. Recognition and appreciation ($M = 2.43$) and growth and advancement ($M = 2.31$) are the two lowest-scoring dimensions in the entire study. In qualitative follow-up questions, workers were asked whether they had ever received any formal acknowledgement — verbal, written, or monetary — for good work performance. Fewer than 12% answered affirmatively. When asked about promotion or skill advancement opportunities, 78% said they had no knowledge of any structured pathway for moving from stitching to supervisory or quality control roles, and 69% expressed no expectation that such opportunities would become available to them.

4.3 Regression Analysis: Predictors of Job Satisfaction

Predictor (Hygiene/Motivator Dimension)	β (Std.)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Wages and Compensation	0.412	7.84	< 0.001	Strongest
Working Conditions	0.291	5.43	< 0.001	***
Supervisory Behaviour	0.243	4.67	< 0.001	***
Job Security	0.198	3.82	< 0.001	***
Recognition and Appreciation	0.187	3.51	0.001	***
Workplace Relationships	0.163	3.08	0.002	**
Growth and Advancement	0.144	2.71	0.007	**

Notes: $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$. $R^2 = 0.623$, *Adjusted R*² = 0.609, $F(7,202) = 47.61$, $p < 0.001$. Dependent variable: overall job satisfaction score. VIF values ranged 1.14–2.18 — no multicollinearity.

All seven dimensions were significant predictors of job satisfaction, but the relative magnitudes tell the most important story. Wages dominates ($\beta = 0.41$), confirming that for a workforce earning below subsistence in a significant proportion of cases, the single most powerful determinant of how satisfied one feels at work is whether one is paid fairly and on time. Growth and advancement, though significant, carries the lowest beta coefficient (0.144) — not because workers do not want it, but because its near-complete absence in this industrial setting means there is almost no variance in experience to generate statistical power. In a perverse sense, this may be an underestimate of how much growth opportunities would matter if they actually existed.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings from Ludhiana's hosiery belt confirm and extend Herzberg's two-factor framework in an important direction. The classic prediction — that hygiene deficiencies produce dissatisfaction while motivator availability produces satisfaction — holds in this industrial population, but with a crucial contextual inflection: the hygiene baseline in this setting is so poorly met that addressing hygiene deficiencies is not merely the first step toward motivation, it is an urgent moral and economic imperative in its own right. Workers earning INR 6,000 per month on piece-rate contracts, without formal employment documentation, without health insurance, and without any expectation of advancement, are operating below the hygiene floor. At this level,

Herzberg's motivator layer — recognition, growth, achievement — is experienced not as an aspiration but as an abstraction.

The strong peer relationship scores ($M = 3.68$) are perhaps the most humanly significant finding. In the absence of institutional recognition, formal security, or career pathways, the bonds formed between women workers on the stitching floor appear to function as an informal coping and support system — a solidarity network that prevents complete motivational collapse in conditions that would otherwise be unsustainable. This is consistent with social identity theory, which predicts that individuals whose identity and self-worth are not validated by institutional structures will invest more heavily in peer group relationships as a source of belonging and recognition.

Three urgent recommendations emerge from this analysis. First, the Ludhiana hosiery industry association — working with the Punjab Government's Labour Department — should establish a formal wage code compliance monitoring mechanism that ensures all workers, including piece-rate home workers, receive at minimum the Punjab-notified minimum wage for their skill category. Second, manufacturers should introduce structured recognition practices — monthly best-worker acknowledgements, visible performance boards, verbal supervisory appreciation — at minimal financial cost but with potentially high motivational return, given how far the current recognition floor lies below worker expectations. Third, a vocational progression framework — from stitching worker to quality inspector to line supervisor — should be documented and communicated to workers, converting advancement from an invisible possibility into a legible pathway.

This study carries limitations that future research should address. The purposive selection of nine cooperating factories introduces selection bias — units with more enlightened management may have agreed to participate, potentially inflating some scores. The cross-sectional design cannot establish causal direction. Longitudinal studies tracking how specific HR interventions — wage increases, recognition programmes — affect satisfaction scores over time would provide stronger evidence for policymakers and industry associations.

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