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# Assessing Decent Work Status among Workers in the Textile Industry: A Study of Major States of India

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## Abstract

This study examines the quality of employment in India's textile sector from a multidimensional perspective. The study uses the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023–24 to construct a composite Decent Work Index (DWI) that comprises indicators related to employment status, access to opportunities, and social protection. The evaluation of nine major textile-producing states uncovers significant regional variation. No state achieves adequate levels of decent work, particularly in terms of social security provisions. Findings highlight that factors such as education, skills training, and formal employment arrangements significantly influence decent work outcomes. In contrast, informal job structures, the lack of contracts, and low technical education negatively impact decent work status. The study also provides state-specific policy suggestions based on each state's performance level. These suggestions include reforms in skilling, formalization, and targeted welfare delivery for the states seeking to enhance employment quality in one of India's most labor-intensive sectors.

## 1. Introduction

The concept of "decent work" has become a cornerstone of the global labour debate. It represents people's aspirations for safe, equitable, and meaningful employment. The Decent Work Agenda was introduced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1999. It ensures that both women and men have access to productive work under conditions of freedom, equity, security, and dignity. It has four core pillars which includes the promotion of productive employment, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue. This framework acknowledges that employment is not only about generating income, but also about ensuring dignity and quality of life for workers across the economic spectrum. The decent work framework's importance has been further enhanced by its incorporation into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, especially Goal 8: "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Singh, 2017)." In developing nations where informal and precarious employment is widespread, this goal recognizes the significance of decent employment in ending poverty, reducing inequality, and fostering inclusive growth. Thus, decent work becomes not only a goal for development but also a way to understand dynamics and composition of labour markets in rapidly transforming economies such as India. India presents both opportunities and challenges for assessing decent work, given its large and diverse labour market. Despite robust GDP growth over the past decades, the quality of employment has not kept pace with economic expansion (Ghosh and Chandrasekhar, 2007). Over 90% of India's workforce is estimated to work in the informal sector, which is characterised by low pay, long hours, unfavourable working conditions, and a lack of social security (NCEUS, 2007). This has resulted in "precarious employment growth" or "jobless growth," where the number of jobs increases without an improvement in the quality of those jobs. The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS, 2007, 2009) documented the deteriorating quality of employment in India. Its reports emphasised that the difference between wage employment and self-employment has become blurred, with the rise of home-based work, particularly among women in the manufacturing sector. The Commission noted that informal workers are not just casual or contract labourers. They also include informal regular workers and unpaid family workers, who are often ignored in policy. Across these jobs, working conditions are tough. Workers face long hours, unsafe conditions, irregular pay, no social security, and little voice or representation. This reflects a global trend called flexibilisation. Permanent jobs are replaced with temporary or contract work, often without benefits or security. In India, this has created a fragmented labour market. Many workers are stuck in low-paid, low-productivity jobs without formal recognition or support. Textile industry offers a clear example of this. It is the second-largest employer in India after agriculture, directly employing around 45 million workers and many more indirectly (Government of India, Ministry of Textiles, 2025). The sector includes spinning, weaving, knitting, dyeing, printing, and garment making. It ranges from small informal units and home-based looms to large export factories. The industry contributes about 13% of industrial production, 2.3% of GDP, and 12% of exports (Ministry of Commerce & Industry, 2025). Yet, working conditions are often poor, and informal work is widespread (NCEUS, 2007). In handloom and powerloom clusters and home-based garment work, most workers have no written contracts, minimum wage protections, or social security. Long hours, piece-rate pay, health risks, and limited bargaining power are common. Studies, such as those by Raju and Rao (2014), observed how these conditions disproportionately affect workers in the informal textile economy, trapping them in cycles of low productivity, insecure livelihoods, and limited upward mobility. The ILO's approach to decent work presents a structured but flexible framework that enables such a multidimensional assessment. It promotes the use of both composite indicators and detailed, disaggregated data to uncover not only overall trends but also regional differences in work conditions and employment quality. This study addresses this gap by applying the ILO framework to the Indian context, with a focus on the textile sector. It aims to identify measurable indicators of decent work and analyse determinants that influence them. This paper undertakes a multidimensional assessment of decent work in India's textile sector using the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, which provides detailed worker-level variables. The paper conducts assessment of employment conditions in the textile workers. This study aims to understand the quality of work of textile workers by constructing composite indices of decent work dimensions and identifying their determinants. The central research questions driving this study are: To what extent do textile workers in India experience decent work across different dimensions? How do decent work conditions vary across different states in textile industry? What are the main determinants that influence the realisation of decent work in the textile sector? By addressing these questions, the study contributes to the growing literature on labour informality, sectoral disparities, and decent work in

developing economies. It also aims to inform policymakers, trade unions, and civil society organisations in designing targeted strategies to improve the working and living conditions of millions of workers employed in one of India's most critical industries. The paper is structured in the following fashion. Section 2 presents a review of the existing literature on the concept of decent work and its relevance to the Indian context. Section 3 outlines the data sources and details the methodology employed to construct the Decent Work Index and identify its determinants. Section 4 provides a multidimensional assessment of decent work within the Indian textile sector, highlighting key dimensions and regional variations. Section 5 examines the individual and sectoral-level determinants that influence decent work outcomes among textile workers. Finally, Section 6 concludes the study by summarising the main findings and policy recommendations to enhance decent work conditions in India's textile industry.

## 2. Literature review

The concept of decent work given by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), has gained importance in the context of India's rapidly evolving labour market. It is marked by increasing informality, rising job insecurity, and widening inequality. Srivastava (2012) in his macro-level analysis, shows that informalisation is no longer confined to casual work but is spreading across all forms of employment in India. He argues that this trend will pose a major challenge in achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Even in high-growth sectors such as textiles and garments, precarious working conditions persist as a troubling issue. For instance, Crane et al. (2019) observed exploitation in the South Indian garment hub of Tiruppur, despite economic expansion many workers continue to face unsafe conditions, low wages, and limited labour rights. Their study advocates for a more collaborative governance approach, such as the Vision 2030 plan, to drive genuine reform. Similarly, Damodaran (2010) examines the uneven impacts of India's participation in Global Value Chains (GVCs), particularly in the garment, leather, and auto parts sectors. While firms at the top benefit from better access to markets and finance, those at the bottom experience greater informality, harsh cost-cutting, and precarious employment, even within officially formal enterprises. Poor labour conditions are not limited to manufacturing. In fisheries, studies also find harsh working conditions. Rajeev and Nagendran (2021) create a multidimensional index to measure decent work and find that income insecurity is widespread. They show that even richer states often perform worse, highlighting regional inequalities and structural issues. Urban informal workers face similar challenges. In Surat, Kantor et al. (2006) find that women face extra barriers to decent work. Saha (2009) shows that street vendors in Mumbai deal with harassment, high-interest loans, and constant debt just to survive. Banerjee and Kundu (2020) find that in West Bengal, education alone does not improve job quality without skills training and policy support. Rural self-employed workers face particularly insecure conditions. Tesema (2023) finds similar patterns in Ethiopia, where peasants are excluded from industrial jobs due to age, illiteracy, and lack of skills. Moktan and Chakrabarti (2024) show that in India, job quality has stagnated or worsened from 2009–10 to 2022–23, with governance and policy failures slowing progress. Srujana (2025) highlights that caste, gender, education, age, and household responsibilities limit women’s access to quality jobs. These literatures observe that despite high growth in specific regions and industries, the promise of decent work remains out of reach for much of India's workforce, especially those in informal, manufacturing, and export-linked jobs. A consensus across these studies is the widespread informalisation, stark regional and gender-based disparities, the gap between education and employability, and weak institutional frameworks.

Yet, one major gap exists as there is still a lack of sector-specific and regionally detailed studies on what affects decent work, especially in the textile and apparel industry. This sector employs millions, is closely tied to global supply chains, and is marked by informal, flexible labour arrangements. While the industry's economic contributions are significant, fewer studies adopt a holistic approach to examining working conditions across multiple dimensions. Most existing research tends to focus on individual indicators, such as wages or safety, without tying them together into a comprehensive picture of employment quality. There is also limited work on the drivers of decent work outcomes, specifically on what explains differences in job quality across workers, firms, and locations, especially using nationally representative data within the textile industry.

## 3. Data and Methodology

This study adopts a multidimensional framework to assess the status and determinants of decent work in India's textile sector. This section outlines the data source, sample selection, construction of the Decent Work Index (DWI), and the methodology used to identify its determinants.

# 3.1 Data Sources

The present study is based on unit-level data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2022–23), conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) of the Government of India. The PLFS provides rich information on employment status, wages, working conditions, enterprise characteristics, and access to social security, which allows us to assess decent work conditions in India. For this study, we extracted data on individuals employed in the textile sector, identified using the NIC Code 13 (Manufacture of Textiles) under the 2008 National Industrial

Classification (NIC). A total of 2,724 individuals were identified as textile sector workers across India (Table A.3). To ensure robustness and representativeness in state-wise analysis, we selected only those nine states where the sample size exceeded 150. These states include Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, West Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. These nine states together account for 2,098 textile workers. States with fewer than 150 observations were excluded due to concerns over statistical reliability.

To fulfil the first objective of the study, which is to measure the status of decent work, we constructed a composite Decent Work Index (DWI) based on three core dimensions inspired by the ILO's Decent Work Agenda: Employment Status, Employment Opportunity, and Social Security.

A total of 11 binary indicators were selected across these three dimensions. Each indicator was assigned a score of 1 (decent) or 0 (not decent) based on established definitions and thresholds.

<<< Table.1 >>>

Table 1
Indicator Classification and Decent Work Scoring

| Dimension | Variable | Definition of 'Decent' (Score = 1) | Not Decent (Score = 0) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Employment Status** | MPCE | Monthly Per Capita Expenditure > 50% of median | MPCE ≤ 50% of median |
| | Status of employment | Engaged in paid employment | Unpaid employment |
| | Working hours | Did not work more than 8 hours on any day of the reference week | Worked more than 8 hours on any day |
| | Number of workers | Employed in enterprises with more than 10 workers (proxy for formalisation) | Employed in enterprises with 10 or fewer workers |
| **Employment Opportunity** | Literate | Worker is literate | Worker is illiterate |
| | Technical education | Received technical education | No technical education |
| | Training received | Received training related to job or skill development | No training received |
| | Duration economic activity | Engaged in economic activity for 6 months or more during the year | Less than 6 months |
| **Social Security** | Paid leave | Entitled to paid leave | No paid leave entitlement |
| | Benefits | Covered under any social security scheme (e.g., ESI, PF, insurance) | Not covered by any social security |
| | Job contract | Possesses a written job contract | No job contract |
| **Source: Authors' Classification using PLFS data** | | | |

3.2 **Methodology**

We followed the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) approach (Alkire & Santos, 2013) for constructing the Decent Work Index (DWI). We assigned equal weight (0.33) to each of the three dimensions. Within each dimension, equal weights were distributed among its respective indicators. Employment status and employment opportunity consist of four variables which has equal weight of 0.08 whereas social security comprise of three variables which as weight 0.11.

The overall DWI for each individual was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the weighted indicators. Similarly, dimension-wise indices were also constructed using the same method.

To obtain the Decent Work Index at the state level, we computed the mean DWI score of all textile workers within each of the nine states. To categorise states based on levels of decent work, we adopted a three-tier classification. First, we identified the maximum and minimum values of the DWI across all individuals. We then calculated the range and divided it into three equal intervals to define: High Decent Work, Moderate Decent Work, and Low Decent Work. Based on this categorisation, states in the High category are West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra. Moderate states are Rajasthan, Manipur, Assam, and Gujarat. Low states are Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

To fulfil the second objective, identifying the determinants of decent work, we conducted a regression analysis with the Decent Work Index as the dependent variable.

The following independent variables were included: Age, age square, household type, social group, religion, gender, marital status, education, Location, Enterprise type, Location Training received and MPCE, where MPCE is categorised by taking 75% more than median as rich and 75% less than median as poor. These variables are used to assess their influence on decent work outcomes through regression analysis. Additionally, we estimated determinants separately for each category of states (low, moderate, high) to capture the heterogeneity in decent work drivers across regions.

$$\mathbf{DWI} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathbf{Age} + \beta_2 \mathbf{Agesquare} + \beta_3 \mathbf{Householdtype} + \beta_4 \mathbf{Socialgroup} + \beta_5 \mathbf{Religion} + \beta_6 \mathbf{Gender} + \beta_7 \mathbf{Maritalstatus} + \beta_8 \mathbf{Education} + \beta_9 \mathbf{Location} + \beta_{10} \mathbf{Enterprise} + \beta_{11} \mathbf{Training} + \beta_{12} \mathbf{MPCE} + \epsilon_i$$

Where, DWI = Decent Work Index, Household type: Casual = 1, Regular = 2, Self-employed = 3,

Social group: General = 1, SC = 2, OBC = 3, ST = 4,

Religion: Hindu = 1, Islam = 2, Others = 3

Gender: Male = 1, Female = 2,

Marital status: Married = 1, Unmarried = 2, Widow = 3, Divorced = 4,

Education: Illiterate = 1, Read and Write = 2, Primary = 3, Secondary = 4, Higher Secondary and above = 5

Workplace Location: Rural own dwelling = 1, Rural Employer = 2, Urban Own Dwelling = 3, Urban Employer = 4

Enterprise types: Male proprietary firm = 1, Female Proprietor = 2, Public Private Company = 3, Other Enterprise = 4

Training: Received training = 1, No training = 2

Monthly per capita expenditure class: Poor = 1, Middle = 2, Rich = 3

ε = Error term

## 4. Multidimensional assessment of decent work within the Indian textile sector

This section presents the overall picture of the decent work status of workers in nine states, using the decent work index as well as its sub-dimensional indices. There may be a state that performs better overall in terms of work decency but exhibits significant deficits in a specific dimension. Therefore, it becomes essential to examine the disaggregated level of how decent work status varies across states and which dimension contributes most to overall status of decent work. This analysis will not only provide a ranking of states in terms of work decency but also help inform targeted policy interventions in different states.

<<< Table.2 >>>

Table 2
Multidimensional Decent Work Index

| States | Employment Status Index | Employment Opportunity Index | Social Security Index | Decent Work Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jammu & Kashmir | 0.220 | 0.208 | 0.002 | 0.429 |
| Rajasthan | 0.233 | 0.192 | 0.035 | 0.460 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 0.200 | 0.192 | 0.009 | 0.401 |
| Manipur | 0.229 | 0.230 | 0.000 | 0.459 |
| Assam | 0.229 | 0.222 | 0.001 | 0.452 |
| West Bengal | 0.240 | 0.218 | 0.045 | 0.503 |
| Gujrat | 0.232 | 0.179 | 0.031 | 0.443 |
| Maharashtra | 0.248 | 0.196 | 0.054 | 0.498 |
| Tamil Nadu | 0.230 | 0.199 | 0.060 | 0.495 |
| **Source: Authors' estimation** | | | | |

Table 2 presents the composite Decent Work Index (DWI) and its three constituent dimensions employment status, employment opportunity, and social security. The table reveals disparities in the quality of employment across the nine major textile-producing states in India. The overall DWI ranges from a low of 0.401 in Uttar Pradesh to a high of 0.503 in West Bengal.

The employment status dimension includes wage adequacy, paid employment, working hours, and enterprise formalisation. It reveals that Maharashtra (0.248) and West Bengal (0.240) has the highest scores. This is supported by their high share of workers with decent MPCE, at 98.91% and 98.76%, respectively (Appendix A.1), and relatively better formalisation, with 61.52% of workers in Maharashtra and 21.72% in West Bengal employed in enterprises with more than 10 workers. In contrast, Uttar Pradesh (0.200) records the lowest employment status score, driven by poor enterprise formalisation (only 11.14%) and high prevalence of unpaid labour (86.54%). Similar issues affect Manipur and Assam, which, despite very high MPCE (over 95%) and favourable working hours (above 89%), score low due to nearly 100% employment in micro-enterprises with no formal structures.

In employment opportunity dimension, education, skill training, and continuity of work, is highest in Manipur (0.230) and Assam (0.222). These states demonstrate high training coverage (93.74% and 85.49%, respectively), literacy rates exceeding 90%, and sustained engagement in economic activity for over six months. However, these strengths fail to translate into overall decent work improvements due to a complete absence of formal employment benefits. On the contrary, states such as Gujarat (0.179) and Rajasthan (0.192) perform poorly on this dimension, owing to limited access to training (43.35% and 62.84%, respectively) and a near absence of technical education. Despite Gujarat's relatively high formalisation (52.06% of workers in larger enterprises), the lack of worker training severely undermines its employment opportunity score.

The social security dimension, which consists of paid leave, job contracts, and access to at least one social protection scheme, is universally weak across all states. Even the best-performing states, such as Tamil Nadu (0.060) and Maharashtra (0.054), exhibit poor coverage, with only 15.49% and 19.68% of workers, respectively, having written contracts, as well as similar levels for paid leave and social protection. Most other states, such as Manipur, Assam, and Jammu & Kashmir, have scores close to zero on this dimension. This indicates that statutory employment benefits are almost completely absent. Panda and Komalavalli (2019) found that workers in Tamil Nadu's textile industry frequently face poor working conditions, with limited access to social security benefits and health insurance, whether provided by the employer or self-funded. Moktan and Chakrabarti (2024) similarly emphasise that a substantial portion of India's population remains without social security coverage, despite ILO acknowledgement that there is significant rise in India's social protection coverage from 19% in 2015 to an estimated 64.3% by 2025 (PIB, Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2025). The ground realities indicate that informal and marginalised workers have largely been left out of this advancement.

In terms of overall DWI, West Bengal (0.503) leads with a balanced performance across all three dimensions. It demonstrates decent levels of training (89.45%), literacy (88.75%), and working conditions, despite weak social security coverage (only 5.96% with job contracts). Tamil Nadu (0.495) and Maharashtra (0.498) follow closely, each supported by strong wage indicators and moderate formalisation, though again constrained by poor social protection. At the lower end, Uttar Pradesh (0.401) reflects compounded vulnerabilities: low enterprise formalisation, high unpaid labour, and dismal access to contracts or benefits (only 2.43% with job contracts). Jammu & Kashmir (0.429) faces similar issues despite strong MPCE and Training indicators.

These findings show the numerous challenges faced by textile workers in India, especially in states where jobs are predominantly informal and social protection is either weak or absent. Even in places with better education and training, decent work remains hard to achieve when strong labour laws and protections aren't in place. This highlights the need for targeted efforts at the state level, such as expanding social security and encouraging businesses to transition into the formal sector. These results align with earlier studies (Srivastava, 2012; Moktan and Chakrabarti, 2024). They suggest that improving work conditions is not only about better pay or skills, but also about strong legal and institutional support for workers.

## 5. Determinants of Decent Work

This section analyses the decent work in the textile sector across Indian states categorized as high (West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra), moderate (Rajasthan, Manipur, Assam, Gujarat), and low (Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir) performing regions, revealing dynamics in employment quality. These differences are not just statistical but reflect structural disparities, sectoral development levels, and policy effectiveness across regions. The textile industry, central to India's informal workforce, helps reveal how education, training, gender, income, and the kind of enterprise people work in affect job quality in different parts of the country.

<<< Table.3 >>>

Table 3
Determinants of Decent Work

| **Number of observations** | **High Decent Work States** | **Moderate Decent work states** | **Low Decent work states** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **640** | **962** | **379** |
| R-squared | 0.5771 | 0.5629 | 0.6516 |
| Independent Variables | | | |
| Age | 0.0003 | -0.0002 | 0.0014 |
| Age square | 0.00 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| Household type (Base: casual) | | | |
| Regular | -0.0099 | 0.0083 | 0.0226 |
| Self employed | -0.0038 | 0.0023 | 0.0208 |
| Social group | | | |
| SC | -0.0087 | 0.0033 | -0.0316** |
| OBC | -0.0087 | 0.0075*** | -0.0114 |
| ST | 0.0015 | 0.0050 | 0.0326 |
| Religion (Hindu) | | | |
| Islam | -0.0164 | -0.0020 | -0.0136 |
| others | -0.0119 | -0.0064 | |
| Gender (Male) | | | |
| female | -0.0502* | -0.0012 | -0.0088 |
| Marital status (Married) | | | |
| unmarried | -0.0291** | -0.0159* | -0.0120 |
| widow | -0.0379 | 0.0049 | 0.0035 |
| divorced | 0.0438 | 0.0042 | 0.0266 |
| Education (Illiterate) | | | |
| Read write | 0.0676* | 0.0723* | 0.0663* |
| Primary | 0.0892* | 0.0850* | 0.0895* |
| secondary | 0.0882* | 0.0979* | 0.0791* |
| Higher secondary and above | 0.1158* | 0.0984* | 0.0860* |
| Location (Rural and own dwelling) | | | |
| Rural Employer workplace | 0.0807* | 0.0495* | 0.0650* |
| urban and own dwelling | 0.0040 | -0.0049 | 0.0070 |
| urban employer workplace | 0.0937* | 0.0563* | 0.0635 |
| Enterprise (male-owned proprietary ) | | | |
| Proprietary female | 0.0842* | 0.0395* | 0.0532* |
| Public private company | 0.1815* | 0.1126* | 0.1168* |
| others | 0.1548* | 0.0292** | 0.1904* |
| **Source: Authors' calculation** | | | |
| **Note: *, ** and *** indicate significance at 1, 5 and 10% levels, respectively.** | | | |

| Number of observations | High Decent Work States | Moderate Decent work states | Low Decent work states |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **640** | **962** | **379** |
| Training | | | |
| No training | -0.0739* | -0.0770* | -0.0847* |
| MPCE class (Poor) | | | |
| middle | 0.0165 | 0.0056 | 0.0069 |
| Rich | 0.0451* | 0.0162** | 0.0149 |
| _cons | 0.3299 | 0.3368 | 0.3018 |
| **Source: Authors' calculation** | | | |
| **Note: *, ** and *** indicate significance at 1, 5 and 10% levels, respectively.** | | | |

Table 3 shows high-performing decent states, particularly Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Education remains the strong determinant of decent work in this category. The findings clearly show that as education levels rise, so do decent work outcomes. Coefficients range from 0.0676 for read-write to 0.1157 for higher secondary education, each significant at the 1% level. These results indicate that better educational attainment is associated with higher-quality employment (Shonchoy & Junankar, 2014). Enterprise type also matters in high-performing states. Public-private enterprises show a strong positive effect (0.1815). Female-owned businesses (0.0842) and other types of enterprises (0.1547) also perform better than male-owned proprietary firms. Burange (2000) demonstrates how the Tamil Nadu textile sector evolved after liberalisation. Many large-scale firms producing knitwear became part of global supply chains. This pushed them to formalise and follow labour standards. The result was better productivity and improved working conditions. Supportive state policies and strong institutions further reinforced this progress which makes these states leaders in securing decent work.

However, gender inequality remains a concern. The negative coefficient for female workers in high-performing states indicates that women continue to face challenges in accessing decent work. Despite legal provisions such as maternity leave and childcare facilities, deep-seated barriers persist. In Tamil Nadu, the Sumangali Scheme continues in new forms. Many young women are drawn in through misleading contracts, face unpaid overtime, and have limited freedom (Valan et al., 2024). Srujana (2025) observed that women workers in Hyderabad remain confined to stereotyped roles and faced discrimination on basis of gender, caste, age, education and household responsibilities which limit them to access decent work. Social norms, male-dominated management, and loopholes in labour law allow such practices to continue. Household income also plays a role. Being in the richest MPCE class increases the chances of decent work by 0.0451 (significant at the 1% level). Wealthier households often have better access to networks, capital, and education. These advantages might enable them to secure formal employment or even establish businesses within the textile industry. On the other hand, lack of training has a negative effect (-0.0739). This confirms that skills are essential for better jobs. Programs like Samarth, under the Ministry of Textiles, aim to close this gap by offering industry-relevant training. Still, more targeted and practical skilling efforts are needed to sustain progress.

In moderate-performing states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Assam, and Manipur, education is important determinant. Enterprise type also matters, with public-private, female-owned, and other businesses showing positive effects. Gujarat's Industrial and Textile Policies support SME formalisation and infrastructure development. Enterprise effects remain significant. Public-private enterprises have a coefficient of 0.1126, female-owned proprietary units have a coefficient of 0.0394, and other enterprises have a coefficient of 0.0292. It indicates that semi-formalisation is gradually influencing labour conditions in these states. Gujarat's cluster-based approach to industrial policy, as outlined in the Gujarat Industrial Policy 2020 and the Textile Policy 2024, offers incentives for SMEs, new textile parks, and infrastructure subsidies. These policy interventions may likely improve decent work indicators by formalising small and medium enterprises and enhancing their regulatory compliance. MPCE class matters more in these states than in low-performing ones. The richest class shows a 0.016% increase in decent work. Richer households typically have better access to education and are more likely to hold safer jobs or secure informal roles. Studies, such as those by Shonchoy and Junankar (2014), show that caste, poverty, and low education often trap people in low-quality work. Gender is not a significant factor here, likely because women are excluded across the board. But marital status matters. Unmarried workers face a negative effect (-0.0158), possibly due to social pressures, especially in conservative regions like Rajasthan and Assam. These findings point to the continued influence of socio-cultural factors on labour market outcomes in the textile industry, especially where customary norms dictate women's participation. Training is again a strong predictor. The absence of training shows a significant negative effect (-0.0769). While programs like Samarth exist, gaps in quality, funding, and industry relevance limit their success. To improve their effectiveness, policies should focus on aligning training with industry demand and strengthening coordination at the local level.

In low-performing states like Uttar Pradesh, where the highest share of informal enterprises (Magazine, 2024), education makes difference, but the gains are smaller. Caste plays a major role as Scheduled Castes face a significant disadvantage (-0.0315) compared to upper castes. This finding is consistent with past studies (Banerjee & Knight, 1985; Madheswaran & Attewell, 2007; Das & Dutta, 2007), which demonstrate that even after adjusting for education and experience, SC workers continue to earn less and are often confined to low-status roles. This disadvantage likely extends to self-employment as well (Deshpande & Sharma, 2016). Other social identities didn't show clear effects. Enterprise structure remains a powerful driver of decent work in these states. Public-private firms (0.1168), female-led businesses (0.0532), and other enterprises (0.1904) show strong positive effects. Even small degrees of formalisation seem to improve job quality. Training once again stands out as an important determinant. The absence of training has the strongest negative effect across all states (-0.0847). This reflects a serious need for skill development, especially in eastern UP's traditional craft hubs, such as Banarasi weaving and Zardozi. Programs like PMKVY and Samarth are available, but their reach is limited. Linking training to actual job placement and supporting artisans and informal firms could help bridge the gap. In these states, MPCE class is not a significant factor. The coefficient for rich households (0.0148) is positive but not statistically meaningful. This suggests that money alone can't overcome deeper structural issues such as weak institutions, a lack of formal jobs, and caste-based exclusion. Earlier studies (Madheswaran & Attewell, 2007; Moktan & Chakrabarti, 2024) confirm that informality and discrimination continue to trap workers in poor jobs. Gender and marital status also don't matter much in these settings, pointing to a larger failure of institutions and policy to create fair opportunities.

These findings show that education, enterprise formalisation, and training are drivers of decent work in the textile industry. In high-performing states, efforts should focus on reducing gender disparities and strengthening skilling programs for upward mobility within the textile value chain. In moderate states, the emphasis should be on scaling up formalisation through enterprise development, investing in technical infrastructure, and enhancing the effectiveness of training schemes. In low-performing states, more profound changes are necessary, such as addressing social exclusion and integrating informal workers into formal systems. These regional differences can be tackled with state-specific strategies and better national labour protection can help create a fairer and more inclusive textile sector in India.

## Conclusion

This study examines the employment quality in India's textile sector. The results indicate significant disparities in decent work across states. No state surpasses the halfway point on the overall Decent Work Index. However, West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu perform comparatively better in areas such as job stability, wages, and training opportunities. The absence of fundamental social protections, which are essential to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and include paid leave, written contracts, and access to social security, is a significant issue in every state. The study demonstrates that better working conditions are closely linked with factors such as formal employment, job training, and education. In light of these findings, it suggests that states adopt specialised strategies: middle-performing states should concentrate on skill development, formalising small businesses, and promoting cooperative models; lower-performing states, like Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, would gain from targeted labour welfare programs, community outreach, and skill hubs connected to regional textile clusters; and higher-performing states should aim to close gender-based gaps and expand social protection coverage. These state-level initiatives ought to be supported by larger national initiatives to enhance social protection delivery and strengthen gender-sensitive labour laws.

At the same time, the study recognises a few limitations. It focuses only on the textile sector and excludes some states due to data limitations. Some important aspects of decent work, such as labour rights and worker voice, couldn't be captured due to the absence of relevant variables in the PLFS. Future research may apply this approach to other industries, utilise data that tracks changes over time, and incorporate workers' lived experiences to build a more comprehensive picture of what decent work looks like in India today.

## Declarations

# Author Contribution

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# Appendix

**A1. Percentage of Textile Workers Meeting Selected Decent Work Criteria by State (PLFS 2023–24)**

| State | MPCE | Literate | Training | Unpaid | working hours | Technical education | Number of workers | Job contract | Paid leave | Social security | Duration activity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assam | 95.57 | 91.43 | 85.49 | 95.74 | 94.94 | 0 | 0.77 | 0.77 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Gujrat | 99.92 | 87.8 | 43.35 | 94.72 | 46.51 | 3.08 | 52.06 | 28.08 | 3.17 | 10.28 | 96.37 |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 93.9 | 74.61 | 88.58 | 96.54 | 81.96 | 0 | 0.43 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 99.34 |
| Maharashtra | 98.91 | 87.04 | 54.71 | 100 | 54.26 | 0.88 | 61.52 | 19.68 | 20.2 | 14.76 | 97.97 |
| Manipur | 99.07 | 95.55 | 93.74 | 96.69 | 89.48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Rajasthan | 97.01 | 71.45 | 62.84 | 94.47 | 66.39 | 0 | 37.73 | 8.99 | 13.02 | 12.07 | 99.55 |
| Tamil Nadu | 100 | 88.37 | 60.43 | 83.46 | 60.08 | 7.15 | 38.77 | 15.49 | 19.82 | 16.39 | 100 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 89.33 | 82.79 | 63.6 | 86.54 | 73.44 | 0 | 11.14 | 2.43 | 2.88 | 1.84 | 99.73 |
| West Bengal | 98.76 | 88.75 | 89.45 | 91.76 | 81.8 | 0.26 | 21.72 | 5.96 | 8.1 | 9.22 | 98.67 |
| India | 97.62 | 85.38 | 64.48 | 90.9 | 67.01 | 2.45 | 34.88 | 13.21 | 10.78 | 11.46 | 98.51 |

**A2. Mean, Standard Deviation of Variables**

| Variable | Observation | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 2,724 | 37.55543 | 12.29486 | 9 | 85 |
| Age square | 2,724 | 1561.519 | 1005.442 | 81 | 7225 |
| HH type | 2,724 | 2.009912 | .9560163 | 1 | 5 |
| Social group | 2,724 | 4.748899 | 3.084217 | 1 | 9 |
| Religion | 2,724 | 1.617841 | 1.407077 | 1 | 9 |
| gender | 2,724 | 1.555066 | .4970497 | 1 | 2 |
| Marital Status | 2,724 | 1.849853 | .5003084 | 1 | 4 |
| Education | 2,724 | 6.794787 | 2.902396 | 1 | 13 |
| Location | 2,724 | 19.16153 | 6.212568 | 10 | 29 |
| Enterprise | 2,724 | 2.679148 | 2.456046 | 1 | 11 |
| Training | 2,724 | .6993392 | .4586296 | 0 | 1 |
| MPCE | 2,724 | 3161.179 | 2052.111 | 618.75 | 70600 |

**A.3 Sample size of textile workers across states**

| State | Sample | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Jammu & Kashmir | 208 | 7.64 |
| Rajasthan | 154 | 5.65 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 189 | 6.94 |
| Manipur | 385 | 14.13 |
| Assam | 169 | 6.2 |
| West Bengal | 302 | 11.09 |
| Gujrat | 300 | 11.01 |
| Maharashtra | 153 | 5.62 |
| Tamil Nadu | 238 | 8.74 |
| India | 2,724 | 100 |