

Kautilya's Arthashastra as a Ready Reckoner for Organisational Behaviour: A Conceptual Framework Linking Saptanga, Rajrishi and Danda to Work Engagement, Work Motivation and Job Crafting

Harshdeep Singh

ORCID: 0009-0004-9951-2192

Email: talwar.harsh@icloud.com

HOW TO CITE:

Harshdeep Singh (2026).
Kautilya's Arthashastra as a
Ready Reckoner for
Organisational Behaviour: A
Conceptual Framework Linking
Saptanga, Rajrishi and Danda to
Work Engagement, Work
Motivation and Job Crafting.
International Journal of Special
Education, 41(22s),506-517

ABSTRACT

Background. Kautilya's Arthashastra is a classical Indian treatise on statecraft, administration and organised human conduct. Modern scholarship increasingly reads it as a source of ethical, governance and strategic insight for management (Ara & Garg, 2023; Muniapan, 2008; Sihag, 2004), yet very few studies connect its constructs to the mainstream positive-organisational-behaviour (OB) triad of work engagement, work motivation and job crafting (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Rudolph et al., 2017).

Aim. This conceptual article re-reads the Arthashastra as a ready reckoner for present-day OB and links its core constructs — Saptanga, Rajrishi, Vijigishu, Danda and Mitra — explicitly to work engagement, work motivation and job crafting.

Method. The article synthesises the Arthashastra literature with the Job Demands–Resources model, self-determination theory and the job-crafting literature. Saptanga elements are mapped onto contemporary organisational structures and behavioural antecedents; Rajrishi and Vijigishu are interpreted as ethical–welfare-oriented and achievement-oriented leadership prototypes; Danda is treated as a proto-theory of organisational justice; and Mitra is repurposed as inter-organisational OB. Six propositions consolidate the mappings for future empirical testing with established instruments (UWES-17, WEIMS, JCS).

Results. The framework yields three integrated contributions. First, it positions the Arthashastra as a genuine multi-level OB text — individual, organisational and inter-organisational — that resonates with, but is not reducible to, ethical leadership, servant leadership, organisational justice and JD-R theory. Second, it provides an indigenous conceptual scaffolding for the positive-OB triad, linking Rajrishi and Vijigishu leader behaviour to intrinsic and identified motivation, Danda-based justice to internalised regulation, and Saptanga- and Mitra-consistent design to structural, social and challenging job-crafting behaviours. Third, six propositions offer a testable research agenda that can be

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.

Open access publication under the
terms and conditions
of the Creative Commons Attribution
(CC BY)
license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

examined with UWES, WEIMS and JCS in Indian and cross-cultural samples.

Conclusion. The Arthashastra offers a coherent, indigenous framework for understanding engagement, motivation and job crafting in contemporary organisations, extends Indian OB scholarship beyond isolated Western imports, and opens a concrete empirical agenda for HR practitioners and researchers. **Keywords:** Linguistic equity, multilingualism, NEP 2020, Indian school system, pedagogical practices

Keywords: Kautilya; Arthashastra; organisational behaviour; work engagement; work motivation; job crafting; Saptanga; ethical leadership; indigenous management

1. Introduction

1.1 Positioning the Arthashastra in contemporary organisational behaviour

Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, composed in ancient India and rediscovered in the early twentieth century, is one of the most comprehensive classical treatises on governance, administration and organised human conduct (Muniapan, 2008; Muniapan & Shaikh, 2007). Although rooted in the socio-political context of early Indian polities, the text advances an integrated view of leaders, institutions and people that invites reinterpretation in the light of contemporary organisational behaviour (OB) (Ara & Garg, 2023; Gosar & Purohit, 2024; Sihag, 2004). A growing body of scholarship now argues that classical Indian texts belong in mainstream OB and human-resource conversations rather than at their margins, particularly for research grounded in Indian workplaces (Kumar, 2020; Kumar & Verma, 2025).

1.2 The positive-OB triad: work engagement, work motivation and job crafting

Three constructs have become central to twenty-first-century OB scholarship on positive work behaviour. Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption, and is typically measured with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Work motivation, in the self-determination-theory tradition, is conceptualised as a continuum

from amotivation through extrinsic to intrinsic regulation and is captured by instruments such as the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS; Tremblay et al., 2009). Job crafting is defined as the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and, in the Job Demands–Resources tradition, as employee-initiated changes in job demands and resources aimed at fit, meaning and wellbeing (Tims et al., 2012; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The three constructs are tightly intertwined: job crafting predicts engagement through increased resources and challenging demands, and these relationships are often mediated or moderated by intrinsic and identified motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Rudolph et al., 2017).

1.3 The gap: an indigenous scaffolding for engagement, motivation and crafting

Existing scholarship frames the *Arthashastra* primarily at the level of “corporate strategy” or “governance” (Ara & Garg, 2023; Jain, 2025; Kumar, 2026; The Timeless Strategist, 2025), rather than as a framework for OB in the stricter sense of the field. OB focuses on individual, group and organisational-level behaviour: leadership, motivation, engagement, justice, communication and culture (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Even when Arthashastric concepts such as Saptanga and Rajrishi are discussed, they are rarely tied to specific, measurable OB constructs. In particular, there is almost no work that grounds work engagement, work motivation and

job crafting in an indigenous conceptual scaffolding drawn from a classical Indian text, despite the rapid expansion of Indian empirical research on these variables (Kaur & Randhawa, 2020; Mahipalan & Sheena, 2019).

1.4 Aims and contributions

This article addresses that gap. It re-reads Kautilya's *Arthashastra* as a ready reckoner for present-day OB, deliberately restricted to intra- and inter-organisational behaviour, and links its core constructs to work engagement, work motivation and job crafting. Building on the Saptanga framework, the article maps the seven elements of the state onto modern organisational structures, roles and cultures; interprets the archetypes of the Rajrishi and the Vijigishu as prototypes of ethical-welfare-oriented and achievement-oriented leadership; relates Danda to organisational justice; and reads Mitra as an inter-organisational OB construct. Building on these mappings, six theoretical propositions connect Arthashastric constructs to the JD-R, self-determination and job-crafting literatures.

The article makes three contributions. First, it advances the reading of the *Arthashastra* as a genuine OB text by connecting Saptanga, Rajrishi, Vijigishu, Danda and Mitra to established OB constructs and mechanisms. Second, it links this indigenous framework to the mainstream positive-OB triad, extending Indian OB scholarship by grounding it in a classical conceptual scaffolding. Third, it offers a testable set of propositions that connect Arthashastric constructs to specific behaviours (job crafting), motivational qualities (intrinsic and identified regulation) and outcomes (vigour, dedication and absorption), thereby opening a path for empirical work on Indian samples using validated instruments such as the JCS, WEIMS and UWES.

2. Literature background

2.1 The Arthashastra in modern management scholarship

The turn toward the *Arthashastra* in modern management can be traced to a small but influential set of studies that treat Kautilya's text as a source of ethical and organisational insight

rather than merely a historical artefact. Sihag (2004, 2007) articulated the case for value-based management drawn from the *Arthashastra*, arguing that Kautilya offered a comprehensive model integrating leadership, corporate culture, welfare policies and performance feedback within a coherent ethical framework. Muniapan (2008) extended this by interpreting the text as a treatise on organisational management that takes an "inside-out" approach, emphasising self-management before the management of others. Muniapan and Shaikh (2007) connected these ideas to corporate governance, arguing that the *Arthashastra* anticipates several contemporary principles of stakeholder value and accountability.

A more recent literature has revisited the *Arthashastra* in contemporary corporate contexts. Ara and Garg (2023) analyse its implications for leadership, structure, strategy, human resource management and ethics, and argue for its enduring relevance in dynamic environments. Jain (2025) applies the Saptanga, Shadgunya and Yogakshema principles to the corporate context, using the Tata Group as an illustrative case for environmental, social and governance performance. Kumar (2026) develops a comparative analysis of Arthashastric and modern corporate governance, arguing that the Rajarishi ideal and the fourfold duties of Raksha, Vriddhi, Palana and Yogakshema anticipate insights central to stakeholder-oriented governance. Gosar and Purohit (2024) emphasise the text's continuing relevance for organisational governance today, and Kumar and Verma (2025) analyse the Saptanga Siddhanta as a resource for start-up and business management. Emerging empirical work has begun to operationalise Arthashastric constructs; recent structural-equation-modelling research reports strong correlations between five classical dimensions and effective strategic management in corporate settings (The Timeless Strategist, 2025).

2.2 Organisational behaviour as a multi-level field

OB is conventionally defined as the study of individual, group and organisational-level

phenomena that influence behaviour within organisations (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Contemporary OB scholarship emphasises multi-level thinking, arguing that individual attitudes and behaviours are embedded within group dynamics, leadership relations, organisational structures and broader institutional environments (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Core OB constructs include leadership styles (ethical, servant, transformational, achievement-oriented), organisational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional), motivation and wellbeing, organisational communication (verbal and non-verbal), and inter-organisational relationships in networks and ecosystems (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Colquitt et al., 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Interpreted through this multi-level lens, many themes in the *Arthashastra* can be re-read as OB constructs. Kautilya's emphasis on the self-mastery of the king (Rajrishi) reflects modern concerns with leaders' moral self-regulation and ethical behaviour; his systematic treatment of Danda anticipates procedural and distributive justice; his treatment of communication and impression management parallels contemporary work on organisational communication competence; and his account of Mitra relations resonates with inter-organisational network theory and boundary-spanning behaviour. This reading positions the *Arthashastra* as compatible with, but also distinctive from, the largely Western vocabulary that dominates OB (Kumar, 2020).

2.3 Work engagement, work motivation and job crafting

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). It is theoretically anchored in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, in which job resources (autonomy, feedback, social support, coaching) and challenging demands foster engagement, while hindering demands lead to burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Personal resources such as

self-efficacy and psychological capital also contribute directly to engagement.

Work motivation, in the self-determination-theory tradition, is conceptualised as a continuum from amotivation through external, introjected, identified and integrated regulation to intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). The WEIMS operationalises this continuum in the workplace (Tremblay et al., 2009). Intrinsic and identified regulation are consistently linked to engagement, wellbeing, learning and performance, whereas introjected, external and amotivational forms are linked to strain and turnover intentions. Self-determination theory identifies three psychological needs — autonomy, competence and relatedness — whose satisfaction underlies internalised, autonomous forms of motivation.

Job crafting is defined as the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and, in the JD-R tradition, as employee-initiated changes in job demands and resources aimed at fit, meaning and wellbeing (Tims et al., 2012). Four job-crafting behaviours are typically distinguished: increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands and decreasing hindering job demands (Tims et al., 2012). A large body of empirical and meta-analytic evidence links job crafting to engagement, performance and wellbeing, often via the intermediate pathway of enhanced work motivation and satisfied psychological needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Rudolph et al., 2017). Indian and cross-cultural research increasingly uses the JCS, WEIMS and UWES together to test integrated JD-R, SDT and job-crafting models (Kaur & Randhawa, 2020; Mahipalan & Sheena, 2019).

3. A multi-level OB reading of the *Arthashastra*

The conceptual framework of this article treats the *Arthashastra* as a multi-level OB text. At the individual level, Kautilya addresses self-control, motivation, character and leadership behaviour through the archetypes of the Rajrishi and the

Vijigishu, and through the disciplined use of sanctions captured by Danda. At the organisational level, the Saptanga framework, communication principles and welfare orientation together provide a systemic account of how structures, roles, resources, discipline and alliances shape organisational behaviour. At the inter-organisational level, Mitra offers a relational logic that translates into contemporary alliance, coopetition and boundary-spanning behaviour. This article restricts its scope to intra- and inter-organisational OB; interstate applications of the *Arthashastra* — for example, Mandala theory — are addressed elsewhere (Kumar & Verma, 2026; Roy et al., 2026).

The framework has three connected purposes. First, it re-reads Saptanga as a behavioural diagnostic that spans leader, managers, employees, systems, resources, discipline and alliances. Second, it uses the Rajrishi–Vijigishu duality and Danda to develop hypotheses about how leader behaviour and disciplinary justice shape follower motivation, engagement and self-

initiated behaviour change. Third, it links these individual- and organisational-level constructs to the JD-R, self-determination and job-crafting literatures, culminating in six propositions consolidated in Section 8.

4. Saptanga as a behavioural framework for organisations

The Saptanga framework identifies seven interdependent elements of the state: Swami (the ruler), Amatya (ministers), Janapada (territory and people), Durga (fort and infrastructure), Kosha (treasury), Danda (the rod of discipline) and Mitra (allies). Traditionally analysed as a diagnostic tool for state health, Saptanga can be read as a systemic OB model in which each element corresponds to a behavioural component of the modern organisation (Jain, 2025; Kumar & Verma, 2025). Table 1 summarises this mapping and links each element to specific antecedents of engagement, motivation and job crafting.

Table 1. Mapping Saptanga elements to organisational behaviour and to antecedents of engagement, motivation and job crafting.

Saptanga element	Original meaning	OB analogue and JC/WM/WE linkage
Swami (Ruler)	Sovereign embodying authority and moral responsibility for the welfare of the people	CEO / top leadership; ethical and servant leadership; sets ethical climate; primary antecedent of trust and engagement (vigour, dedication)
Amatya (Ministers)	Advisors and administrators supporting the ruler in decisions	Top-management team and line managers; supervisor support as a social job resource that facilitates job crafting and engagement
Janapada (Territory and people)	Land and inhabitants of the state	Employees, community, customers; workforce whose engagement, need satisfaction and crafting behaviours drive organisational performance
Durga (Fort and infrastructure)	Fortification, physical security and protective systems	Physical and digital infrastructure, systems, processes; structural job resources (autonomy, feedback, task variety) that enable job crafting
Kosha (Treasury)	Financial resources of the state	Financial systems and compensation; extrinsic incentives that can support or undermine internalised motivation depending on design
Danda (Rod of discipline)	Enforcement of law and disciplined use of sanctions	Governance and disciplinary systems; organisational justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) shaping motivational quality and engagement

Mitra (Ally)	Allies and strategic partners of the state	Suppliers, partners, communities of practice; social resources through boundary-spanning that expand challenging demands and social job resources
--------------	--	---

Interpreted behaviourally, Saptanga becomes a diagnostic “ready reckoner” for the antecedents of engagement, motivation and job crafting. Under Swami, one may ask whether the leader’s conduct aligns with declared values and models ethical behaviour, since ethical leadership shapes the ethical climate that in turn predicts engagement (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Under Amatya, the question is whether managerial cadres provide supervisor support — a canonical social job resource in the JD-R model that facilitates job crafting and, through crafting, engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Tims et al., 2012). Under Janapada, the focus is on the workforce whose engagement, need satisfaction and crafting behaviours drive organisational outcomes.

Under Durga, the concern is whether formal structures and information systems function as enabling structural job resources rather than coercive controls (Adler & Borys, 1996), because structural resources such as autonomy, feedback and task variety are the principal targets of increasing structural resources as a job-crafting behaviour (Tims et al., 2012). Under Kosha, the emphasis shifts to reward and compensation design: from a self-determination-theory perspective, extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation when perceived as controlling, but support autonomous motivation when perceived as informational and fair (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Under Danda, the question is whether sanctions and disciplinary systems are perceived as procedurally and interactionally fair (Colquitt et al., 2013), as developed in Section 5.3. Under Mitra, the analysis expands to inter-organisational alliances, boundary-spanning roles and coopetition, which extend the pool of challenging demands and social resources available to employees and thereby broaden the space for job crafting.

5. Leadership psychology: Rajrishi, Vijigishu and Danda

5.1 The Rajrishi as ethical, welfare-oriented leader

The Rajrishi is portrayed in the *Arthashastra* as a sovereign who conquers the senses, cultivates the intellect through study and association with elders, uses information channels judiciously, and focuses persistently on the security, welfare and prosperity of the people. This archetype maps closely onto contemporary constructs of ethical leadership, defined as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct and its promotion to followers through communication, reinforcement and decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2006), and of servant leadership, which emphasises follower welfare, humility and stewardship (Greenleaf, 1977; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

From a JD-R and self-determination-theory perspective, Rajrishi-like leader behaviour functions as a personal–social resource that satisfies followers’ needs for competence and relatedness and thereby supports autonomous forms of work motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Empirically, ethical and servant leadership are associated with higher intrinsic and identified motivation, stronger work engagement and more frequent job-crafting behaviours (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Rajrishi-like leaders can therefore be expected to strengthen employees’ vigour, dedication and absorption, and to encourage employees to increase structural and social job resources and challenging demands rather than merely reduce hindering demands.

5.2 The Vijigishu as achievement-oriented leader

The Vijigishu, the aspiring conqueror, represents a distinct behavioural prototype centred on achievement motivation, strategic ambition and competitive drive. Read through an OB lens, the Vijigishu corresponds to constructs such as achievement motivation, strategic intent,

entrepreneurial orientation and competitive assertiveness. The *Arthashastra* does not celebrate ambition uncritically: it tempers Vijigishu behaviour with the injunction that the ruler's benefit lies in the happiness of the subjects, thereby aligning achievement drive with stakeholder welfare (Muniapan, 2008; Sihag, 2004).

When paired with Rajrishi-like ethical care, Vijigishu-like leaders provide the challenge and growth orientation that job-crafting research associates with increasing challenging job demands — a form of crafting particularly strongly related to engagement (Tims et al., 2012; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Read together, Rajrishi and Vijigishu operate as a dual leadership model: ethical, welfare-oriented self-mastery combined with achievement-oriented strategic ambition. Contemporary Indian conglomerates that commit publicly to trusteeship-style governance illustrate how this dual model can support both stakeholder trust and competitive performance (Jain, 2025; Kumar, 2026).

5.3 Danda as organisational justice

Kautilya devotes explicit attention to the calibration of Danda, warning that too harsh a rod breeds terror, too lenient a rod breeds contempt and the absence of Danda breeds lawlessness, while a well-considered use produces spiritual and material welfare and social order. Interpreted behaviourally, this passage articulates a proto-theory of organisational justice. Distributive justice concerns the perceived fairness of outcomes; procedural justice concerns the consistency, accuracy, voice and neutrality of the processes by which those outcomes are determined; and interactional justice concerns the interpersonal treatment people receive in the application of procedures (Colquitt et al., 2013).

From a JD-R and self-determination perspective, procedural and interactional justice function as social job resources that satisfy needs for autonomy and relatedness, support internalised forms of work motivation and thereby promote engagement (Colquitt et al., 2013; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Perceived injustice, by contrast, undermines these needs, promotes controlled

forms of motivation, and is associated with withdrawal, deviance and reduced engagement. Read this way, Danda is not a static institution of punishment but a behavioural instrument whose impact on engagement and motivation depends on how leaders and managers calibrate, communicate and apply it — with direct implications for performance-management, disciplinary and layoff practices in contemporary organisations.

6. Communication, welfare and motivation

6.1 Kautilya's principles of effective communication

Kautilya identifies six positive principles of effective writing — proper arrangement, connection, completeness, sweetness, exaltedness and lucidity — and five defects — absence of charm, contradiction, repetition, incorrect word use and confusion. These prescriptions can be read as an early codification of organisational communication competence: the positive principles map onto clarity, coherence, tone appropriateness, information completeness and stylistic engagement in modern organisational writing (Robbins & Judge, 2019), while the five defects describe common failures that reduce comprehension, trust and engagement.

Kautilya's attention to facial expressions, gestures and body language in sensitive communication anticipates contemporary work on non-verbal communication, leadership presence and impression management. Behavioural research consistently shows that non-verbal cues shape follower perceptions of trustworthiness, warmth and competence, and that leaders' non-verbal behaviour contributes to emotional contagion within teams. Well-crafted communication acts as a social resource: it clarifies job roles, provides feedback and support, satisfies needs for competence and relatedness, and thereby supports autonomous motivation and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

6.2 Welfare orientation and motivation of the workforce

One of the most quoted lines from the *Arthashastra* states that in the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king, and in their welfare his welfare (Muniapan, 2008; Sihag, 2004). Read through an OB lens, this articulates an early employee-centric model of organisational effectiveness in which the leader's success is functionally dependent on the wellbeing, engagement and commitment of the workforce. This framing anticipates the modern business case for employee wellbeing, in which practices that enhance psychological safety, engagement and satisfaction are linked to superior organisational outcomes (Robbins & Judge, 2019; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

Kautilya combines this welfare orientation with a realistic view of human motivation: people can be driven by fear, self-interest and incentives, and therefore require appropriate structures, monitoring and rewards. This dual acknowledgment of moral motivation and behavioural realism echoes self-determination theory's continuum from controlled to autonomous motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Well-designed extrinsic supports — fair compensation (Kosha), fair discipline (Danda), enabling structures (Durga) and supportive managers (Amatya) — can, together, satisfy autonomy, competence and relatedness needs, foster identified and intrinsic regulation, and, through crafting behaviours, sustain work engagement.

7. Mitra as inter-organisational OB

The seventh Saptanga element, Mitra, refers to allies of the state. Reinterpreted for present-day OB, Mitra becomes a lens on inter-organisational behaviour: relationships with suppliers, partners, regulators, professional communities and industry ecosystems within which organisations act. The *Arthashastra's* treatment of alliance formation, mutual interest and calibrated cooperation resonates with the modern OB literatures on boundary-spanning, inter-organisational trust, coopetition and network embeddedness. Boundary-spanning roles are widely recognised as sources of both challenge and support: they expose employees to novel

demands and resources, expand their identity beyond the focal organisation, and enable knowledge flows that fuel innovation (Kumar & Verma, 2025).

From a JD-R perspective, well-managed Mitra relationships expand the pool of challenging job demands (new projects, joint initiatives, cross-organisational problem-solving) and of social job resources (advice, mentoring, professional networks). Both types of resource are proximal antecedents of increasing challenging demands and increasing social job resources as job-crafting behaviours (Tims et al., 2012). Kautilya's emphasis that alliances rest on shared interest rather than permanent moral bonds is consistent with contemporary evidence that inter-organisational trust and cooperation are dynamic, negotiated and interest-sensitive. Practically, this reading turns Mitra into a diagnostic prompt for managers: which external actors currently function as sources of challenge and support for our employees, and how do our alliance practices shape opportunities for job crafting and engagement inside the organisation?

8. Propositions: linking Arthashastric constructs to engagement, motivation and crafting

Building on Sections 3–7, this section consolidates the linkages between Arthashastric constructs and the positive-OB triad into six propositions. The propositions draw on three well-established literatures: the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), self-determination theory as applied to work motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005), and the job-crafting literature (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The propositions are stated at the individual level of analysis, but their antecedents are located at leader, group and organisational levels, in keeping with the multi-level orientation of contemporary OB (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

8.1 Rajrishi-like leadership, need satisfaction and motivation

P1. Rajrishi-like ethical, welfare-oriented leader behaviour (Swami) is positively related to employees' intrinsic and identified work

motivation, and this relationship is mediated by satisfaction of the psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness.

P2. Rajrishi-like leader behaviour is positively related to work engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption), and this relationship is partially mediated by job-crafting behaviours that increase structural and social job resources.

8.2 Vijigishu-like ambition and challenging job demands

P3. Vijigishu-like achievement-oriented leader behaviour, when combined with Rajrishi-like ethical care, is positively related to the job-crafting dimension of increasing challenging job demands, and thereby to work engagement.

8.3 Danda-based justice and internalised motivation

P4. Perceived fairness of Danda — operationalised as distributive, procedural and interactional justice — is positively related to internalised (identified and intrinsic) work motivation and to work engagement, and negatively related to controlled and amotivated regulation.

8.4 Saptanga-consistent design and job crafting

P5. Saptanga-consistent design of enabling structural resources (Durga) and fair, informational reward systems (Kosha), combined with supportive line managers (Amatya), is positively related to job-crafting behaviours — particularly increasing structural and social job resources — and to work engagement.

8.5 Mitra and boundary-spanning as crafting resources

P6. Well-managed Mitra (inter-organisational alliances and boundary-spanning) is positively related to increasing challenging job demands and increasing social job resources as job-crafting behaviours, and thereby to work engagement.

8.6 Measurement notes

These propositions are testable using established instruments and standard OB designs. Work engagement can be measured with the UWES-9

or UWES-17 (Schaufeli et al., 2006); work motivation with the WEIMS (Tremblay et al., 2009); and job crafting with the Job Crafting Scale (Tims et al., 2012). Leader behaviour can be captured with existing ethical- and servant-leadership scales that operationalise Rajrishi-like constructs (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Van Dierendonck, 2011), while organisational justice can be measured using the Colquitt et al. (2013) scales. Saptanga-consistent design and Mitra strength require new indices that this article invites future research to develop.

9. Discussion

9.1 Theoretical implications

The preceding analysis positions the *Arthashastra* as an OB text that speaks directly to engagement, motivation and job crafting. Theoretically, it offers an indigenous, non-Western conceptual vocabulary that expands rather than replaces contemporary OB theory. Its combined emphasis on self-mastery (Rajrishi), systemic organisational design (Saptanga), disciplined justice (Danda), welfare orientation and inter-organisational relations (Mitra) resonates with, but is not reducible to, existing frameworks in ethical leadership, organisational justice and JD-R (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Colquitt et al., 2013). The text's explicit multi-level architecture — individual, organisational and inter-organisational — responds to calls in the field for genuinely multi-level theorising (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

9.2 Practical implications

Practically, the framework offers concrete tools for leadership development, organisational diagnostics and the design of engagement and crafting interventions. Saptanga can be used as a behavioural diagnostic to interrogate leader conduct, managerial cadres, workforce psychology, systems, financial fairness, disciplinary practices and alliance behaviour in an integrated way, connecting each element to known antecedents of engagement, motivation and job crafting. The Rajrishi–Vijigishu dual model can inform leadership development programmes that intentionally combine ethical self-mastery with strategic ambition, and Danda-

based reflection can inform the design of fair disciplinary and performance-management systems — particularly in Indian and global-South contexts where cultural expectations around authority and welfare are salient (Kumar, 2020).

9.3 Empirical implications

Empirically, the framework opens a coherent agenda for research on engagement, motivation and job crafting grounded in an indigenous conceptual scaffolding. The six propositions can be tested with established instruments (JCS, WEIMS, UWES) in Indian samples using cross-sectional, longitudinal and diary designs, and can be compared with samples from other cultural contexts to test the generalisability of Saptanga-consistent organisational design. This agenda extends the emerging Indian OB literature by providing an integrated theoretical anchor rather than treating engagement, motivation and job crafting as isolated Western imports (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Rudolph et al., 2017).

9.4 Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this is a conceptual, interpretive article rather than an empirical study. Second, the article draws selectively on *Arthashastra* concepts — Saptanga, Rajrishi, Vijigishu, Danda, communication principles and Mitra — rather than presenting a comprehensive exegesis of the text; alternative selections could yield different but complementary readings. Third, the historical and cultural context of the *Arthashastra* differs from contemporary organisations in important ways, and any application of the framework must be sensitive to context and to the ethical implications of transplanting classical categories to modern settings. Fourth, the article relies on English translations and secondary literature; a more philologically grounded reading would strengthen future work. Fifth, the scope has been deliberately restricted to intra- and inter-organisational OB; interstate and diplomatic applications are addressed elsewhere and are not within the article's claims (Kumar & Verma, 2026; Roy et al., 2026).

9.5 Future research

Future research can extend this framework in several directions. Empirically, scales can be developed and validated to measure Rajrishi-like and Vijigishu-like leadership behaviours in Indian samples, and their relationships with intrinsic and identified motivation (WEIMS), job crafting (JCS) and work engagement (UWES) can be tested through mediation and moderation designs. Diary and experience-sampling studies can capture within-person dynamics linking Danda-related justice perceptions to daily engagement and crafting. Saptanga-based diagnostic instruments could be developed for organisational assessment and validated against established organisational-health and JD-R measures. Case studies of organisations that explicitly draw on *Arthashastra* principles — such as trusteeship-oriented Indian conglomerates — could clarify how Saptanga, Rajrishi and Mitra ideas are operationalised in practice (Jain, 2025; Kumar, 2026). Comparative work with Western OB theory would sharpen the distinctive contributions of the *Arthashastra* and situate it within a genuinely global conversation on engagement, motivation and job crafting.

10. Conclusion

This article has argued that Kautilya's *Arthashastra* can be read as a ready reckoner for organisational behaviour, and that its core constructs map directly onto the antecedents of work engagement, work motivation and job crafting. Through Saptanga, the text offers a systemic behavioural diagnostic that can be aligned with the JD-R model of resources and demands. Through Rajrishi and Vijigishu, it articulates a dual leadership model that supports need satisfaction, autonomous motivation and stretch-oriented job crafting. Through Danda, it anticipates modern theories of organisational justice that shape motivational quality and engagement. Through its communication principles and welfare orientation, it foreshadows contemporary work on organisational communication competence and employee-centric practice. Through Mitra, it opens a framework for inter-organisational OB in which

alliances expand the space for engagement and crafting inside the focal organisation. Consolidated as six testable propositions, this framework offers a coherent research agenda for engagement, motivation and job crafting

grounded in an indigenous conceptual scaffolding, and it invites empirical work that could reshape how OB is taught, practised and studied in Indian and cross-cultural settings.

References

- Adler, P. S., & Borys, B. (1996). Two types of bureaucracy: Enabling and coercive. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41(1), 61–89. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393986>
- Ara, Z., & Garg, S. (2023). Relevance of Kautilya's Arthashastra in modern management. *International Education and Research Journal*, 9(9). <https://ierj.in/journal/index.php/ierj/article/view/3008>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
- Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 595–616. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.004>
- Colquitt, J. A., Scott, B. A., Rodell, J. B., Long, D. M., Zapata, C. P., Conlon, D. E., & Wesson, M. J. (2013). Justice at the millennium, a decade later: A meta-analytic test of social exchange and affect-based perspectives. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98(2), 199–236. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031757>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(4), 331–362. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.322>
- Gosar, P., & Purohit, H. (2024). Relevance of Kautilya's Arthashastra in today's organizational governance. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology*. <https://ijarsct.co.in/Paper7682.pdf>
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press.
- Jain, G. (2025). Strategic thinking in Arthashastra and its corporate relevance: An exploration of ancient Indian wisdom for modern business. *Ushus Journal of Business Management*, 24(3), 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.12725/ujbm.72.4>
- Kaur, N., & Randhawa, G. (2020). Job crafting and its outcomes: An empirical study of Indian bank employees. *Management and Labour Studies*, 45(3), 268–286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0258042X20922080>
- Kozlowski, S. W. J., & Klein, K. J. (2000). A multilevel approach to theory and research in organizations: Contextual, temporal, and emergent processes. In K. J. Klein & S. W. J. Kozlowski (Eds.), *Multilevel theory, research and methods in organizations* (pp. 3–90). Jossey-Bass.
- Kumar, A. (2026). Kautilya's Arthashastra and modern corporate governance: A comparative analysis. Zenodo. <https://zenodo.org/records/20484820>
- Kumar, R. (2020). Indigenous knowledge systems and management: Toward a culturally embedded theory. *Journal of Human Values*, 26(3), 213–228.
- Kumar, S., & Verma, R. (2025). Growing with Chanakya: Analysing Kautilya Arthashastra's Saptanga Siddhanta to manage start-up and business. *Research Review Journal of Indian Knowledge Systems*, 2(2), 4–13. <https://rrjiks.co.in/index.php/RRJIKS/article/view/70>
- Kumar, S., & Verma, R. (2026). Mandala theory and global power politics: A Kautilyan framework for international relations. Zenodo. <https://zenodo.org/records/18932734>
- Mahipalan, M., & Sheena, S. (2019). Workplace spirituality, psychological well-being and mediating role of subjective stress: A case of secondary school teachers in India. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 35(4), 725–739. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-10-2018-0144>
- Muniapan, B. (2008). Kautilya's Arthashastra and perspectives on organizational management. *Asian Social Science*, 4(1), 30–34. <https://ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/view/2089>

- Muniapan, B., & Shaikh, J. M. (2007). Lessons in corporate governance from Kautilya's Arthashastra in ancient India. *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 3(1), 50–61. https://econpapers.repec.org/article/idswremsd/v_3a3_3ay_3a2007_3ai_3a1_3ap_3a50-61.htm
- Rangarajan, L. N. (1992). *Kautilya: The Arthashastra*. Penguin Books India.
- Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2019). *Organizational behavior* (18th ed.). Pearson.
- Roy, P., Datta, S. K., & Murmu, U. (2026). Kautilya's Mandala theory and the contemporary international order. *Third Sector Studies Review*. <https://tssreview.in/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/22-Prasenjit-Roy-Surya-Kanta-Datta-Uday-Murmu.pdf>
- Rudolph, C. W., Katz, I. M., Lavigne, K. N., & Zacher, H. (2017). Job crafting: A meta-analysis of relationships with individual differences, job characteristics, and work outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 102, 112–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.05.008>
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Defining and measuring work engagement: Bringing clarity to the concept. In A. B. Bakker & M. P. Leiter (Eds.), *Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research* (pp. 10–24). Psychology Press.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66(4), 701–716. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164405282471>
- Sihag, B. S. (2004). Kautilya on the scope and methodology of accounting, organizational design and the role of ethics in ancient India. *The Accounting Historians Journal*, 31(2), 125–148.
- Sihag, B. S. (2007). Kautilya on institutions, governance, knowledge, ethics and prosperity. *Humanomics*, 23(1), 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08288660710727516>
- The Timeless Strategist. (2025). Time-tested strategies: Kautilya's Arthashastra as a guide for modern management. In *Proceedings of ICIKS 2025*. Atlantis Press. <https://www.atlantispress.com/proceedings/iciks-25/126017713>
- Tims, M., Bakker, A. B., & Derks, D. (2012). Development and validation of the job crafting scale. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(1), 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.05.009>
- Tremblay, M. A., Blanchard, C. M., Taylor, S., Pelletier, L. G., & Villeneuve, M. (2009). Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale: Its value for organizational psychology research. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 41(4), 213–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015167>
- Van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1228–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310380462>
- Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 179–201. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4378011>