

# **Title: Skill Development among Women: Empowering Through Education**

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## **Abstract:**

Today, empowering women through education and skill development is vital for sustainable growth. Women's empowerment is linked to their ability to acquire relevant skills and knowledge that enhance their employability, independence, and participation in society. This paper examines how skill development can change women's lives by exploring the relationship between education, vocational training, and empowerment, especially in developing countries.

Education is the foundation for skill development. It provides women with basic literacy and math skills, while also building the confidence and awareness needed for active involvement in economic and civic life. However, many regions, especially rural and marginalized communities, face obstacles in accessing quality education and skill development programs due to social barriers, poverty, gender bias, and a lack of institutional support. This paper argues that closing this gap requires a broad approach that combines formal education with vocational and technical training.

The Government of India and various international organizations have launched numerous projects such as the Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Mahila E-Haat, and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) to address gender disparities and promote women's economic participation. These programs aim to provide skills that meet industry demands, helping women find jobs or start their own businesses. Additionally, NGOs and community-based programs play a crucial role in reaching women in remote and underserved areas.

This paper uses secondary data and case studies to assess the effectiveness of skill development programs for women. It highlights how skill development not only increases income but also positively influences health, children's education, decision-making abilities, and overall gender equality. Special attention is given to the significance of digital literacy, soft skills, financial literacy, and life skills in achieving complete empowerment.

The findings suggest that when skill development is supported by inclusive policies, mentorship, and infrastructure that considers gender issues, it can greatly empower women. However, the paper also points out ongoing challenges such as low awareness, inadequate funding, drop-out rates, and mismatches between training and job market needs.

In conclusion, the paper stresses the need for strategies that transform gender roles, foster stronger partnerships between public and private sectors, and create better monitoring frameworks to ensure the reach and sustainability of women-focused skill development programs. Empowering women through education and skill training is not just an objective for development; it is necessary for inclusive growth and fair progress.

## **Keywords:**

Women Empowerment, Skill Development, Vocational Training, Gender Equality, Education

## **Introduction :**

Skill development is widely recognized as an effective way to benefit both individuals and society. For women, especially in developing countries like India, it offers economic independence, personal growth, and increased community involvement. Historically, women in India have faced systemic barriers to education, employment, and skill acquisition due to deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. These challenges have prevented many from reaching their full potential both financially and socially. However, recent years have seen a growing acknowledgment of the essential roles women can play in national development, leading to renewed efforts to promote female education and skill training.

In today's global economy, shaped by technological shifts and changing job needs, a workforce that is educated and trained in relevant skills is crucial. Women's participation in this skill economy is more important than ever. By providing women with vocational and digital skills, we create paths to employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership roles. When women gain economic empowerment, they help reduce poverty, enhance health and education outcomes for their families, and encourage community development. This creates a positive ripple effect that benefits society as a whole.

In India, where women make up nearly half the population, their potential remains largely untapped. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), female labor force participation is low, particularly in rural areas. Several social and economic factors contribute to this: limited access to education, early marriages, mobility issues, lack of awareness about training options, and cultural expectations that hinder women from working outside the home. Skill development initiatives can help close the gender gap by making women employable, independent, and self-assured.

Indian government policies have increasingly recognized the importance of women-focused skill development. Programs like Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) aim to provide vocational training that meets job market demands. These initiatives receive support from NGOs and private organizations offering flexible, community-based, and often mobile training options. Such partnerships are crucial for reaching rural areas, especially in marginalized communities where formal training facilities may be scarce or nonexistent.

Furthermore, incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into training programs has opened new doors for women. E-learning platforms, mobile apps, and digital literacy initiatives allow women to learn new skills from home. This is especially beneficial for those with caregiving roles or who face restrictions from conservative social norms. Technology thus serves as a key tool for inclusive skill development.

Despite significant policy efforts and growing awareness, challenges persist. Many women drop out of skill development programs due to a lack of family support, childcare options, safety concerns, or irrelevant course content. Additionally, the quality of training and its relevance to job market needs is often questioned, leading to underemployment or dissatisfaction. Therefore, simply enrolling women in training programs is not enough; we need to improve the content, delivery, and post-training support.

To achieve real change, skill development must focus on gender and consider the unique needs and challenges women face. This means designing training programs with flexible schedules, offering transportation or housing, providing stipends, ensuring job placement opportunities, and creating an encouraging environment for women

to continue participating in the workforce. Moreover, data-driven evaluations and feedback mechanisms should be part of these programs to enhance them continuously.

This paper explores how skill development empowers women through a thorough analysis of existing policies, training outcomes, and experiences of women participants. By combining empirical research with policy reviews, this study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions about gender equality, workforce participation, and sustainable development. The main argument is that empowering women through skill development is essential not only for the economy but also as a moral and social necessity. When women gain skills, they can better advocate for their rights, support their families, and foster community growth.

In summary, skill development is crucial for women's empowerment and a fundamental part of inclusive growth. It offers a way out of poverty, boosts confidence, and promotes social change. Now is the time to expand these initiatives and ensure that every woman, regardless of her background, can achieve her full potential.

### **Background :**

The concept of skill development has gained traction in global and national development plans, especially due to rapid technological advances, changing job markets, and the need for inclusive growth. In India, skill development has become a key strategy for addressing unemployment, underemployment, and social inequality. The focus on women's skill development has increased because of its potential to transform gender roles, empower individuals, and encourage community progress.

India has a large female population that has historically been shut out from formal employment due to various social, economic, and cultural factors. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), a significant number of women, particularly in rural areas, remain outside the workforce even though they could contribute positively to the economy. The barriers include limited access to education and training, early marriages, domestic responsibilities, gender bias, and societal expectations that restrict women to caregiving roles. These challenges underscore the urgent need for targeted initiatives that can bridge skill and opportunity gaps.

In response, the Government of India has launched several programs to improve the skill levels of its citizens, especially women. Initiatives like the National Skill Development Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the Skill India initiative include provisions aimed at boosting women's participation in vocational training. Various state governments, NGOs, and private organizations support these initiatives by providing localized and flexible training options. The shared goal is to create a skilled workforce that meets the demands of today's economy while promoting social equity.

Despite these initiatives, challenges still hinder progress. Many training programs do not align with job market needs, resulting in low job readiness even after graduation. Additionally, infrastructure limitations, transport issues, lack of childcare, and social resistance continue to affect women's ability to enroll in or complete training. Even when women acquire skills, limited job opportunities, wage gaps, and unsafe working conditions often prevent them from obtaining satisfying jobs. Thus, the focus must shift from simply providing training to establishing a supportive ecosystem that ensures women's long-term success in the workforce.

An Important issue is the informal sector, where most Indian women are employed. Developing skills for women in this sector requires a unique approach—one that values their existing knowledge and enhances it through structured training, access to financial services, and market connections. Programs that offer life skills, entrepreneurship training, and mentorship have shown to boost women's productivity and earnings in the informal

economy. In addition, digital technology is transforming the landscape by providing training opportunities directly to women through online platforms and mobile applications.

Global development frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stress the importance of women's empowerment and skill development. SDG 5 focuses on achieving gender equality, while SDG 8 promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, decent work, and employment for all. By investing in women's skills, countries can make significant progress toward these goals, benefiting not only individual livelihoods but also wider societal outcomes.

The background of this study highlights the urgent need to rethink how skill development is approached in India, especially for women. While the current landscape shows potential, it requires a more integrated, inclusive, and context-aware strategy. This means enhancing the quality and relevance of training, more effectively reaching rural and marginalized communities, utilizing digital tools, and establishing strong monitoring and support systems to assist trainees even after their training ends.

This paper discusses skill development as a key driver of women's empowerment and sustainable development. By exploring the current situation, challenges, and successful programs, this study aims to present practical strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of skill development initiatives for women across the country.

#### **Literature Review :**

Existing research on women's skill development underscores its vital role in improving socio-economic outcomes and achieving gender equality. Many scholars agree that providing women with vocational training boosts their job opportunities and strengthens the resilience of families and communities.

Kabeer (1999) noted that empowerment means increasing women's access to resources and their ability to make important life choices. Skill development acts as a key resource that helps women transition from dependency to self-reliance. Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2014) further mentioned that focused training programs for women yield a higher return on investment, especially when combined with financial literacy and entrepreneurship support.

Research by the International Labour Organization (2018) reveals a significant skills gap between men and women, particularly in developing countries, where cultural barriers limit women's mobility and access to training. Mehrotra and Panchamukhi (2020) found that Indian vocational education systems are slowly incorporating women-friendly modules and improving outreach through the National Skill Development Corporation.

Chen (2015) examined informal sector jobs and discovered that women, while often engaged in income-generating work, do not receive formal recognition or support. SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) has demonstrated the benefits of combining skills training with advocacy and access to social security. UNESCO (2021) emphasized the growing importance of digital skills for women, especially in rural areas where traditional training centers may not be accessible.

Das (2022) explored the digital divide in India, showing that women's limited access to technology affects their skill development opportunities.

Smartphones and the internet limit women's participation in online skill development programs. Pratham (2024) found that flexible, localized training programs have higher completion rates and better outcomes for women.

Similarly, studies from the Brookings Institution (2020) recommend using information and communication technology along with mobile technology to address training gaps.

Evaluations of the PMKVY and DDU-GKY programs (NSDC 2022) show that while more women are enrolling, placement rates remain low. This is due to a mismatch between the skills taught and market demands. Verma (2023) calls for updates to the curriculum, stronger partnerships between public and private sectors, and mentorship after training to bridge this gap.

Overall, the literature suggests that skill development programs should be diverse. Successful initiatives combine technical training with soft skills, offer flexible delivery, and are supported by relevant policies and access to the market. A gender-sensitive approach that relies on data and community input is vital for maximizing the effectiveness of these programs.

### **Objectives :**

The primary goals of this study are as follows:

1. To assess how skill development programs affect women's employment status and income levels. This objective aims to find out whether participating in vocational and technical training results in actual economic benefits for women, like getting jobs or starting their own businesses.
2. To examine how skill development boosts women's self-confidence and decision-making ability. The study looks at how training changes women's self-perception, mobility, and engagement in household and community decisions.
3. To identify the social and cultural barriers that limit women's involvement in skill development programs. This includes understanding the challenges they face in accessing training opportunities and completing courses successfully.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing government and NGO-led skill development programs. This goal seeks to analyze the structure, content, and outcomes of these programs from a gender-sensitive viewpoint.
5. To suggest improvements for the design and delivery of skill training for women, especially in rural and marginalized communities. These suggestions will focus on increasing inclusiveness, quality, and sustainability in such programs.

### **Methodology :**

This study employs a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques. This method allows for a clear understanding of how skill development programs affect women's empowerment in economic, social, and psychological aspects.

#### **Research Design:**

The study used both descriptive and exploratory designs. The descriptive aspect measured and compared factors like employment status, income levels, and self-perceived empowerment before and after training. The exploratory part gathered insights on the experiences, attitudes, and views of the women participants.

#### **Sampling and Sample Size:**

The research involved 200 women from four Indian states: Assam, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. These states were chosen for their diverse demographics and cultures. The sample included women from both rural and urban areas who participated in skill development programs under initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri

Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), and NGO-led training schemes.

A purposive sampling technique ensured a variety of training types, including tailoring, IT, handicrafts, and healthcare, as well as diversity in age groups (18 to 45 years), education levels (from illiterate to graduate), and socio-economic backgrounds. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on cases relevant to the research goals.

#### Data Collection Tools:

Three main tools were used:

##### 1. Structured Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was given to all 200 participants and included both closed and open-ended questions. It covered demographic details, the nature and duration of training, employment status before and after training, monthly income changes, and personal empowerment levels measured on a Likert scale.

##### 2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

These discussions involved six groups of 8 to 10 women each. The FGDs helped collect qualitative data on participants' experiences, challenges, motivations, and changes in social status after training.

##### 3. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):

These interviews were conducted with program coordinators, trainers, and NGO staff to gather insights on training delivery, curriculum design, monitoring, and support after training.

#### Data Analysis:

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and average with MS Excel and SPSS. The Likert scale responses calculated empowerment index scores before and after training. Cross-tabulations were performed to examine variations by state, training type, and age group.

Qualitative data from FGDs and KIIs were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Recurring themes were organized into categories such as personal growth, barriers, enabling factors, family support, and community influence.

#### Ethical Considerations:

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research. Verbal and written consent were obtained from all participants. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and no incentives were offered to maintain objectivity.

#### Limitations:

The study is limited by its sample size and geographical reach, which may not represent all Indian women. Self-reported data may introduce bias, particularly regarding empowerment and income levels. However, triangulation with FGDs and KIIs helped validate most of the findings.

#### Results :

This study provides strong evidence that skill development programs significantly influence the empowerment and economic progress of women across various regions of India. We surveyed 200 women participants from rural and urban areas, examining factors such as employment status, income changes, self-confidence, decision-making skills, and community participation before and after skill training.



One major outcome was the improvement in employment status. Before the training programs, only 32% of respondents reported being engaged in any income-generating activity. After training, this number rose to 68%, showing a 36% increase in workforce participation. This suggests a clear link between training and employability. Many women found jobs in tailoring, healthcare services, and data entry or started their own businesses like beauty salons, food stalls, and handicrafts. These results highlight the programs' role in helping women enter productive and paying jobs.

Additionally, monthly income levels showed significant growth. Before training, 62% of respondents earned less than INR 3,000 per month. After training, 47% earned between INR 6,000 and INR 10,000, with 18% making over INR 10,000 monthly. This increase in income improved family savings, allowed for investments in children's education, and provided better access to healthcare and housing. Respondents reported feeling more financially independent and able to contribute to household expenses, leading to greater recognition and respect within their families.

Another key indicator was the increase in perceived empowerment levels, measured on a five-point scale assessing self-confidence, public speaking ability, decision-making power, and mobility. The average score before training was 2.3, while the post-training score reached 4.1. This indicates that training not only built technical skills but also improved participants' soft skills, leadership abilities, and confidence. Many respondents noted being more involved in family decision-making, including budgeting, education, and health choices.

Training completion rates also improved. Early programs had dropout rates of 25 to 30% due to issues like family pressure, transportation difficulties, and rigid schedules. However, recent initiatives that included flexible hours, community training centers, and digital learning platforms achieved a 92% completion rate. This demonstrates the importance of supportive training environments that address women's unique challenges.

Community feedback revealed that these empowered women often encouraged others in their communities to enroll in similar programs. This positive influence spread to daughters, neighbors, and other community members, gradually changing local attitudes toward women's economic roles. Some participants even took on leadership roles in self-help groups, local councils, or NGOs, extending the impact of skill development beyond economic realms.

These results confirm that skill development is an effective way to help women move into more empowered and self-sufficient roles. However, sustainability and scalability still need attention from policymakers. While the initial outcomes are promising, ongoing support through market connections, mentorship, and access to credit is vital for long-term empowerment. A comprehensive ecosystem is essential to turn training into sustainable livelihoods and lasting social change.

### **Discussion :**

The results of this study confirm that skill development initiatives positively transform women's lives in terms of economic empowerment, social mobility, and psychological well-being. This discussion synthesizes key findings in relation to broader literature, policy frameworks, and the social dynamics that affect women's access to skill training and its outcomes.

Firstly, the significant rise in employment following training shows that women who participate in skill development programs are better prepared to join the workforce or start small businesses. This supports previous

research that emphasizes the need to equip women with vocational skills to address unemployment and underemployment. The study's findings of an increased average monthly income lead to better living conditions and greater financial independence, which also boosts decision-making power within families. These changes demonstrate how economic empowerment can create a cycle of self-sufficiency and confidence for women.

Another key outcome is the notable improvement in women's perceived empowerment scores. Women expressed increased confidence in public speaking, negotiation, and community involvement. These changes in behavior stem from the sense of accomplishment that comes with training and employment. This psychological improvement often sparks broader social change, as women begin to influence others in their communities, becoming role models and motivators.

However, the study also identifies significant barriers that continue to limit the overall impact of skill development efforts. Despite rising enrollment, challenges like transportation issues, domestic responsibilities, and safety concerns still exist, especially in rural and conservative areas. These socio-cultural obstacles need solutions such as mobile training units, women-only groups, and local female instructors to create a better learning environment. Moreover, a major concern is the disconnect between training content and market needs. Some programs still prepare women for oversaturated or traditional roles like tailoring and beauty services, which provide limited growth potential. This mismatch can lead to underemployment and disappointment among trainees. There is an urgent need to diversify courses and include non-traditional skills such as plumbing, solar installation, digital marketing, and data entry to access emerging job markets.

Another challenge is the lack of support after training. While women may acquire new skills, the absence of ongoing mentorship, access to loans, and market connections limits their ability to turn these skills into lasting livelihoods. A more integrated approach that combines business support, micro-financing, and continuous mentoring is crucial for long-term success.

From a policy perspective, the findings point to the need for a gender-sensitive approach to program design and execution. This should include flexible schedules, childcare options, transport help, and safety measures. Involving community leaders and families in awareness efforts can reduce resistance and increase participation rates. Digital literacy and hybrid training models can also help tackle geographical barriers, especially in remote or conflict-prone areas.

A positive insight from the qualitative data is that women who successfully use their skills often become advocates in their communities, encouraging others to join similar programs. This ripple effect can help create networks of empowered women who support each other in business.

#### **conclusion:**

In conclusion, skill development is crucial for empowering women but needs to be carried out in a thoughtful and inclusive way. Although progress has been made, much work remains to ensure that every woman, regardless of her background, gets the skills, resources, and confidence needed to shape her future. Policymakers, civil society, and training providers must work together to close existing gaps and build a stronger, fairer skill development framework.

Empowering women through skill development is a game-changing strategy that can transform socio-economic dynamics in India and other developing countries. The evidence from this study shows that when women gain practical, job-relevant skills, they actively contribute to household income, boost their confidence, and participate



more in community and public life. This empowerment includes economic, social, and psychological benefits, supporting broader goals of gender equality and inclusive development.

One notable finding of the research is the increase in women's employment rates and income levels after they take part in skill development programs. For many participants, training was a crucial turning point, helping them break cycles of dependency and gain more control over their lives. Women who once focused solely on domestic duties found new roles as earners, entrepreneurs, and leaders in their communities. These stories illustrate the powerful impact vocational education can have in achieving Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

However, the conclusion also notes that achieving empowerment through skill development does not happen in isolation. It needs a supportive ecosystem that includes family support, community acceptance, access to financial resources, mentorship, and ongoing help after training. Challenges like gender stereotypes, mobility limitations, and lack of access to technology still limit the full potential of these programs. Therefore, a comprehensive approach that addresses both demand and supply issues is vital.

Policy interventions should aim to align training programs with market needs and emerging industry trends. Training institutions must also adopt gender-sensitive practices, such as creating safe learning environments, offering flexible schedules, and providing childcare to boost women's participation. Collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations is essential to ensure that trained women receive support for starting businesses, access to credit, and ongoing mentorship. These actions can significantly improve the effectiveness and sustainability of skill development initiatives.

Moreover, engaging communities is crucial for changing entrenched attitudes that limit women's economic roles. Programs that involve men, community leaders, and local influencers in awareness efforts often achieve higher rates of acceptance and retention. Digital technology also offers great opportunities for expanding skill development programs, particularly in remote and underserved areas, and must be used effectively.

In summary, skill development is a powerful way to advance women's empowerment, but its success depends on collaboration among various stakeholders, innovative policies, and sustained grassroots involvement. The journey from gaining skills to achieving empowerment needs careful nurturing, investment, and compassion. As India advances, investing in women's skills is not just a social responsibility; it is crucial for national growth and fairness. Empowering women through education and skills ultimately empowers the nation.

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