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Skill development programmes for women in India: current status and future perspectives

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Abstract

Skills and knowledge drive economic and social advancement for any country in the world and women are an integral part of this advancement. Improving women's access to education and training opportunities is crucial to achieving gender equality in the workplace. The government of India is running many skill development programmes for women to improve their socio-economic status and contribution to the country's economy. This also aimed at gender equality and filling the industrial and service sectors' workforce. But there are several barriers to rural women's skill development that must be removed before the government's skill development objective can be realised. Therefore, it is critical to understand rural women's challenges and find solutions that help them acquire and hone new skills. In this review article, we have discussed the role of skill development programmes in changing women's socio-economic status, confidence, and self-image and the problem and challenges in skill development training for women in India.

Keywords: Skill development programmes; Workforce; Rural women; Entrepreneurship; Socio-economic status

1. Introduction

The process of identifying the skills gap in young people and filling it with training and job opportunities is known as skill development. The skill development programs aim to assist young people and recognise their potential by providing the opportunities and encouragement they need to succeed. Everyone needs both education and talent, which go hand in hand and serve as the foundation for a nation's economic expansion and local community progress [1]. As a result, the national and state governments regularly work with their partners in the skilling industry to provide young skill development. Therefore, increased corporate earnings, better performance, enhanced accuracy and quality, improved communication, compliance with laws and regulations, improved recruiting and career prospects, and positive customer connections are all advantages of skill development [2, 3]. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) began the Skill India initiative in July 2015. Since then, it has improved the lives of over 35.36 lakh women by enabling them to get better and more stable employment via skill development. During its trial period, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) trained 19.85 lakh applicants for 375 employment positions. A merit-based program offered successful applicants the full cost of training as compensation. Around 2.53 lakh applicants have reportedly placed out of the total training candidates in whom it was noticeable that the women shared a tiny portion [4]. Women in our culture have distinct training demands from males since women are responsible for taking care of the home, raising the children, and sometimes working as low-wage labourers or subsistence farmers [5]. Despite making up over half of India's population, women's participation in the country's economy remains far below par. Women in India only comprise 31.8% of the labour force, much below the proportion of males (73.2%). They have historically been paid much less than men for doing the same job owing to a widespread lack of education and training. Also, the salary disparity between men and women has become one of the major financial constraints for starting any

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business or entrepreneurial activity. Therefore, developing their skills becomes essential to increasing their household's capacity, independence, and employability. Income-producing options also improve long-term growth and sustainable living. The introduction of vocational training programmes aims to improve the livelihood options for disadvantaged women with little exposure to technical knowledge and skills [6, 7]. Currently, India has a 3.1 million-person annual capacity for skill development, which will be raised to 15 million per year by the 11th Five-Year Plan. By 2022, India wants to have 500 million skilled employees. As a result, programmes for skill development need to increase the economy's productivity and the engagement of women in industry and the work field [4, 7]. Ayushman Bharat, Swachh Bharat Mission, Smart City Mission, and other government initiatives have joined with Skill India to tie skill development efforts to these national goals by guaranteeing a consistent supply of qualified workforce. These initiatives are also creating thousands of employment, many of which are for women [8]. The ministry's flagship initiative, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), aims to boost the involvement of women in the workforce through gender mainstreaming skills and to provide them with the necessary training. Out of the 56 lakh applicants who have benefitted from the programme, about 50% of those enrolled in and trained under PMKVY are women. The business is aware of the need for female experts and works to adjust employment profiles while considering market demand continuously. The skill India mission's programmes are designed with women in mind, teaching them the vital skills that companies are looking for while also being attentive to their needs by offering secure transportation, flexible scheduling, and childcare assistance. Even though women predominate in industries like apparel, beauty and wellness, and healthcare, there is a significant presence of women in non-traditional job fields like electronics and hardware, with 1.03 lakh women enrolling in the field technician - computing and peripherals job roles in this industry [9-10]. Women's basic rights, which give them control over their lives and further establish their influence in society, include their right to be empowered and to participate in the workforce. Women encounter prejudice and gender inequality often, but some also endure numerous forms of exclusion and discrimination because of social obstacles and low educational achievement [11, 12]. Despite India's GDP (Gross domestic product) expanding at a rate of around 7 percent, the participation of women in the labour force is declining year by year. According to research conducted by the World Bank, the percentage of working Indian women fell from 26% in 2010 to 19% in 2020. In Mumbai, economists predict that female employment will have dropped to 9% by 2022 due to the epidemic. According to the Oxfam survey, many skilled women stay out of the workforce to care for their families and comply with societal expectations [13, 14]. After a break of 15 months, skill training under centrally supported programmes was officially restarted nationwide in June 2021 as cases began to decline in the middle of that year. However, the future of skilling in India is in doubt since the training centers are again being shut down due to constraints. Most educational institutions and for-profit coaching facilities now offer their courses online. But it seems that those who want to develop their skills will have to wait for a chance before they can start working [15, 16]. Today's economy increasingly relies less on labour and capital, technology, information, and skills. In addition, women are much more likely than males to work in the unorganised sector of the economy, have less education, and earn less money overall. It has been shown that female labour force participation rises as education levels raised. India must implement both an employment revolution and skill development or educational revolution to fully realise the economic potential of women's involvement [17]. Additionally, it has been noted that the idea of technical training and skill development for women needs to go beyond the traditional objective of imparting technical and managerial competencies, playing a wider role that even includes basic literacy, numeracy, critical social and political awareness, awareness about gender, and enhancing life skills for necessary future entrepreneurial development [18]. Income-producing options also improve long-term growth and sustainable living. The epidemic demanded that we prepare ourselves with digital technologies and adapt to disruptive developments. But because of the enormous digital gap in the nation, there hasn't been an equal playing field. It indicates that access to education has been significantly hampered, and this effect intensifies when it comes to skilling that requires practical instruction for women. Therefore, the present review article is focused on the various problem and challenges faced by skill development training women with the future perspective of making a successful entrepreneur contribute to the nation's economic development.

2. Material and Methods

Articles were culled from scholarly publications and databases, including Google scholar, Web of Science, Publons, and Research Gate. Articles were uncovered by using search terms including skill development, skill India, entrepreneurship, startup-ecosystems, agricultural, socio-economic profile, and livelihood.

3. Skill Development Programmes

The Indian Prime Minister started the "Skill India" programme, also known as the National Skills Development Mission of India. The National Skills Development Corporation of India oversees its management. The programme was introduced on October 2nd, 2016, with the following goals: Through short-term courses, provide school dropouts,

college dropouts, and young people without jobs with new skill development training, recognizes the skills that the present workforce has by certifying their abilities, encourage states to participate in the execution of the plan that will increase States' capabilities, promote uniformity in the certification process and start a method to create a register of skills, and improved infrastructure for training and alignment of training with industrial demands [4,19]. The essentials of skill development whereby the execution of such programmes alleviate social issues, accomplish economic growth, use demographic dividends, and empower underprivileged sectors on a socio-economic level. Regarding institutional mechanisms, Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship have produced notable benefits, but not the intended ones. It makes the case that skill development is a crucial prerequisite for technology adoption and women's empowerment in the nation. India has to fulfill the growing ambitions of its young as it progresses toward becoming a global knowledge economy [4, 20]. It can be partially accomplished by emphasising the development of talents pertinent to the new economic climate. The issue at hand involves the massive numeric expansion of juvenile skill training and the far more crucial goal of improving that training's quality. Hence, it prioritises youth skill development as one of its pillars, intending to create opportunity, space, and scope for developing the skills of the Indian young and enhancing their technological knowledge. This skill certification program's goal is to make it possible for many young people in India to enroll in training that is relevant to their industry and would improve their chances of finding employment. Under the Recognition of Prior Learning programme (RPL), individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be evaluated and certified [21-23]. The various major programmes and training for skill development run by the government for youth in India are given in Table 1.

Table 1 The various major programmes and training for skill development in India

Programmes and Schemes for Skill Development	Details	Websites
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)	Skill the young generation and prepare them as industry requirements through various skill certification programmes.	http://www.pmkvyofficial.org/
Capacity building Scheme (CBS)	Providing residential skill training for the youth of north-east region	https://msde.gov.in
Udaan	A consumer-to-consumer trade platform, to promote small & medium businesses in India	https://udaan.com/
India International Skill Centres (IISC)	Provides high-skilled young labour force to meet the need for global demand	https://msde.gov.in
The dual system of Training (DST)	To allow industries to partner with government and private ITIs for high-employment courses	https://msde.gov.in
Flexi-MoU	The initiative enables firms to teach applicants based on their skill sets and offers trainees an industrial environment linked with market needs and the newest technology.	https://msde.gov.in
Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT)	To protect their safety and security, PDOT provides workers training and knowledge on the customs, laws, and other aspects of the destination country	http://pdot.mea.gov.in/
Learn and Earn	The initiative intends to improve minority youth's modern/traditional skills based on their qualifications, current economic trends, and market potential, which may lead to work or self-employment	https://www.iisd.co.in/seekho-aur-kamao.php
Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)	DDU-GKY intends to train underprivileged rural youth and provide them with work with above-minimum pay.	https://www.iisd.co.in/ddu-gky-project.php
SANKALP	The Scheme strives to foster entrepreneurship via education and training, advocacy, and access to a support network and by promoting social companies for equitable growth	https://sankalp.msde.gov.in/

Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 for Divyangjan (PwD) (SIPDA)	The PwD Act 2016 preserves the independence and dignity of Persons with Disabilities by ensuring their access to education, vocational training, employment, public transit, the built environment, information, and communication. The programme offers financial assistance to such people.	https://www.iisd.org/sipda-pwd-project.php
Directorate of Training Programmes	Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) Crafts Instructor Training Scheme (CITS) Apprenticeship Training under the Apprentices Act, 1961. Advanced Vocational Training Scheme (AVTS) Vocational Training Programme for Women Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE)	https://dgt.gov.in/

4. Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Developing one's skills and encouraging entrepreneurial spirit are crucial to any nation's or states economic and social progress. Countries with greater skill levels and more rigorous requirements can weather the waves of economic uncertainty that sweep the local and global employment markets. Creativity, which results in the generation of novel ideas, is one factor that may help boost entrepreneurial endeavours, which are critical to the economy's expansion. Because of the relationships that the company and its management build with its customers, suppliers, and staff, the importance of the entrepreneur continues to grow [24]. Potential investors in the firm are also interested in how effectively the company's management team or CEO can work together in groups with other individuals, as well as how swiftly and logically they can come up with answers to any issue the company is now facing. Entrepreneurs need to be informed of the manufacturing process of the goods or services they sell, the industry and market into which they will enter, and, most crucially, their consumers and their rivals. The characteristics of an entrepreneur and an innovator are not interchangeable and the utilization of one's knowledge may contribute to developing leadership abilities [25].

The job market is shifting towards more technical advancements, and with more people looking for work, there are fewer available positions for young people. The public sector is likewise losing jobs, and the outlook for finding work is worsening daily. Job outsourcing, casualization of labour in the oil and gas sector, and rightsizing labour among large enterprises and corporations in the nation are all contributing factors to this dismal picture. India was slow to see the need for a skilled, entrepreneurial, and innovative framework, but its adoption has gained significant speed in recent years [26]. Factors that affect employment in an economy are the key to understanding and evaluating the rising need for technical skills and entrepreneurialism. Some of the numerous elements at play include the age distribution of the population, the composition of the labour force, and the organisational framework of the economy. The formal education system provides students with a systematic orientation during their schooling, as well as technical, vocational, and further education. It also assures that students get a quality education and participate in schooling overall.

On the other hand, skill development focuses on enhancing the qualifications of the current workforce, as well as the jobless (both educated and uneducated dropouts) and some individuals who are still enrolled in formal school. Developing technical knowledge and skills may expand capacity in such a way that can be satisfied, and specific domains require innovative and entrepreneurial approaches. The development of skills increases the labour force participation rate, the quality of labour, and the labor productivity, all of which contribute to the expansion of the economy as a whole [27]. As a result, it is possible to see it as a crucial economic engine that propels the economy ahead. However, it has been claimed that entrepreneurship, as well as the need to have the necessary skills for entrepreneurship, may be able to assist in the remediation of the issues mentioned above by empowering individuals to become job creators and wealth producers. The presence of entrepreneurial abilities to build new knowledge-based social businesses is crucial to tackle social and environmental concerns successfully. Our postsecondary educational institutions need to move quickly and favourably in the direction of entrepreneurial education. However, general knowledge and business skills are not believed to be adequate to transform graduates into entrepreneurs [28]. Therefore, it is impossible to emphasize the need to hone one's individual entrepreneurial talents. This is because business ownership is one of the most critical factors in forming jobs and a distinct kind of employability. It has garnered the interest of both the government and the academic community. In particular, colleges are revising both the content of their curriculum and the methods by which they do their business to increase the number of possibilities for the training of their students in applicable business and technical skills. Therefore, entrepreneurial programmes have become the principal academic field for business

education and growth of entrepreneurship in the 21st century because of the worldwide proliferation and dimension [29, 30].

5. Skill Development for Women Entrepreneurs: Problem and Challenges

Women made up about half of the population of India. Women's involvement in formal economic and entrepreneurial activities in the manufacturing, service, and agricultural sectors can be quantified, but it is more challenging to quantify their participation in informal economic activities like caring for children and the elderly, working in the home, raising livestock, and working in the fields of agriculture [31, 32]. One of the biggest problems that need fixing is that women in India have a far lower literacy rate than males. Unschooled rural women sometimes lack even the most fundamental skills in economics, such as the ability to measure and keep accurate books. Because of this, it is assumed that rural women are either unfamiliar with or incapable of using modern technologies [33]. Researchers and educators frequently find it challenging to reach these populations and rates of enrollment at a certain level of schooling may be used as a proxy for access and persistence. The lack of educational opportunities for girls is the root cause of the world's gender inequality and discrimination problems. Social and cultural obstacles which impede girls and women from accessing the school system are not getting enough attention. Several barriers to girls' education contribute to the high rates at which they drop out of school, including poverty, inadequate sanitation, and vast distances to schools [34]. Rural women often only have access to vocational education and training in professions where women are a majority, which only reinforces their traditional roles and obligations. While this could increase their earning potential, it would prevent them from taking advantage of opportunities in emerging sectors like the information and communication technology (ICT) and renewable energy industries, as well as those in the traditionally male-dominated field of agriculture exporting [35,36]. Women in India, by the millions, are expected to sacrifice their independence for the sake of their husbands, children, extended family, and neighbors. Women have historically held the role of nurturers, tending to the needs of others living creatures and inanimate objects. It is considered a sin and lousy culture for a female to build a network with other people in business in Indian society; hence girls are trained to be excellent wives rather than successful businesswomen and entrepreneurs [37]. Despite making up slightly less than 50% of the economically active population, women's contributions to the economy fall well short of their potential. They are women, the single most significant barrier to entry for female entrepreneurs. The establishment of a social order that is patriarchal and male-dominated serves as a foundational pillar for them on their path to commercial success. The male members of the organisation see it as a very high risk to finance the businesses that women lead. There is widespread scepticism among financial institutions about the capabilities of female entrepreneurs [38]. To increase the proportion of women in various professions, the Indian government has passed several laws and regulations within the confines of the constitution. In India, the majority of women workers are now unskilled. Improving women's employment and income-generating prospects and promoting sustainable rural development and livelihoods depend heavily on skill development. Women in our culture have distinct training demands than males since women are responsible for taking care of the home, raising the children, and sometimes working as low-wage labourers or subsistence farmers; therefore, the majority of women and men living in rural and urban parts of India lack any kind of formal education or training [39].

The government is working continuously to guarantee that females enroll at more excellent rates and dropout rates keep to a minimum in elementary, secondary, and higher education; there are still many unemployed women with degrees. This illustrates the fact that successful employment of women cannot be achieved by literacy alone; other hurdles in the form of social, historical, and cultural obstacles must also be addressed. In addition, when women join the employment, conventional gender prejudices come into play, further disadvantaging them compared to males. Additionally, women's time spent doing unpaid domestic and care duties often prevents them from joining the official job [40]. Men and women in India experience highly diverse social and economic conditions; it is impossible to assume that the measures needed to equip the workforce would be the same for both genders. There are many gender inequalities, from the availability and accessibility of education and training to the administration of training programmes [41]. The technical and vocational employment training in India (TVET) is lacking in several key areas, including the large number of women who need to be trained because only 2% of the female workforce is formally trained at present, (ii) an insufficient infrastructure, an acute shortage of trained women workers, poor quality of training, a lack of mechanisms to judge and certify quality, and (iv) inequity in access to TVET for women. Training opportunities for women in the formal sector are hampered by (vi) the comparatively high opportunity cost of learning associated with training women; (vii) the absence of acknowledgment of past knowledge of possible women trainees; and (iii) the low level of education of potential women trainees [42-44]. Having access to necessary facilities is crucial for the success of skill and training development. Thus, women encounter distinct challenges in acquiring competence, requiring distinctive responses to train them in various skills and modern technologies to make them independent businesswomen and entrepreneurs [45].

6. Suggestions and Future Recommendations for Skill Development

More than ninety percent of working women are employed in the informal sector, and the situation of women who work in the informal economy is deplorable; the vast majority of the time, they are forced to take jobs that pay extremely low wages and do not provide any job security or social security benefits. Therefore, an emphasis on developing women's talents would be essential in encouraging them to acquire life skills that would lead to better livelihoods, higher-paid and high-quality employment, financial independence, and the capacity to support their families. A sustainable skill development programme would include the worries and experiences of both men and women. These must be a crucial component of creating, executing, monitoring and assessing policies and programmes for skill development and training. The main tactic for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is to combine local institutions and policies to advance empowerment and gender equality. Social attitudes and institutional barriers make it difficult for her to thrive. Rural women's access to vocational education and training is sometimes limited to a few places where women predominate, reinforcing their traditional roles and responsibilities. Although such activity expands their employment alternatives, it reduces their chances of advancing in newer, non-traditional fields like information and communication technology. To close the gap between the possibilities accessible to women and what they have the ability and want to pursue, adequate skill training and successful awareness-raising efforts become essential for the participation rates of men and women in various industries and enterprises.

For females, which may include providing resources like transportation, housing, and financial aid, various forms of financial support to encourage female students to participate in and complete their academic programmes. Besides the possibility exists that literacy and numeracy lessons will need to be included into the training, Complex skills such as problem-solving, communication, learning, teamwork, and other related skills, talents that influence one's life, such as those related to conduct, self-esteem, and self-organization, and the ability to bargain for a job. Having trouble getting where you need to go is still a big issue for women due to the lack of adequate infrastructure. Therefore, it is essential to construct and support cutting-edge educational facilities and to ensure that these facilities are freely accessible for women via the development of appropriate infrastructures, such as safe and secure transportation routes. It is necessary to offer excellent training at a reasonable cost with the possibility to avail oneself of loans and scholarships to allow and encourage persons from low-income groups to enroll in vocational training courses. Public and private Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Industrial Training Centers (ITCs) respectively play a significant role in India's artisan's training programme (ITCs). To fill the need for skilled labour in the informal economy, institutions like ITIs and ITCs were established; nevertheless, data reveals that these organisations have failed in this regard. Building basic infrastructure, especially in outlying regions, is essential to make ITIs more accessible, especially for women, in addition to expanding access to ICTs and ITCs. The training period needs to be extended because empowering young business owners with information is essential to their success with time. There has to be a more extended internship period dedicated to teaching individuals to maximise their output.

The infrastructure and amenities of a skill centre should allow for the candidate's total development. There should be a system wherein female students and graduates of vocational training programmes may get grants and loans to help them implement their business ideas. More courses should be offered at skill institutes so that more students have the opportunity to specialise in fields that interest them. The material covered and the techniques used to teach it should be regularly revised to reflect changes in the workforce and the marketplace. Young, successful businesspeople would be a great addition to any skill-based school, where they could connect with students and inspire them to do their best. The regulatory agency responsible for overseeing the country's various skill-based institutions should conduct frequent on-site inspections to ensure the institutions' continued quality and smooth functioning. Regular feedback from instructors about their students, from students about their instructors, and employers about the graduates is essential for developing and improving training programmes. Recognition and improvement of already-possessed abilities is one strategy for increasing training uptake since it appeals to participants by building on what they already know. After recognizing women's shifting expectations and goals, it is crucial to equip them with training. Additional essential services and facilities like safe and secure transportation, restrooms, etc., would be necessary to make training sessions really accessible to women. It will also boost efficiency at the educational institution and among the instructors. In addition, it may be very effective to provide training via preexisting local governmental structures. Providing learners with work prospects upon completion of training will go a long way toward ensuring women's long-term security and economic autonomy. NSDC has successfully facilitated the placement of its trainees because it requires all grantees to employ at least 70 percent of those they train. To further assure women's involvement and mobilization, alternative training delivery methods, such as mobile training units, flexible afternoon batches, and training based on local requirements, will be implemented to develop an appropriate incentive system. Implementing targeted training programmes centering on life skills training modules and literacy training would encourage women's movement in non-traditional professions. More work has to be done in the form of awareness programmes, counselling for families to

calm their anxieties about women receiving training, and investment in women's personality development so that they can critically examine and confront discriminatory policies.

7. Conclusion

In the case of women, in particular, the goal of skill development is not only to prepare them for the workforce but also to enhance the performance of women employees by raising the quality of their work. Training and skill development will aid women's entire personality development and improve self-esteem. Exercise is also recommended to be tailored to enhance women's talents for skill growth to be more successful. However, a focus on improvement should not come at the expense of learning new talents, particularly in the case of women who would otherwise become more firmly rooted in conventional roles and skills. The courses in skill development help find work and advance one's career. If the government and banks help young business owners get started, these people will create jobs for others and boost the economy. Policies such as increasing access to skill development by providing more seats for women, gender mainstreaming of training content and delivery, and usage of digital platforms for women's empowerment should be simplified.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of research interests.

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