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# Vocational Skill Development Imperative for Women Empowerment in India

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**Abstract:** *This study focuses on identifying inherent skills in women and the need for women to develop vocational skills. Awareness of various government schemes and the benefits of being a skilled woman is highlighted. An empirical study has been made to collect information and statistical data. A strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis is carried out. The findings are promising. Skill development teaches women about power from within, decision-making power, control over financial, physical, and knowledge-based assets, and power with ability. Homemakers will soon become breadwinners, and vice versa, depending on suitability and necessity. These days are not far. A skill-armed woman is a home to a self-sustaining life. Equipping women with employable vocational skills in India can certainly lead to an “equal skill, equal pay” scenario.*

**Keywords:** *Women’s Empowerment, Skill Development, Vocational Education and Training, and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Women’s empowerment and their work force participation are their fundamental rights, which enable them to have control over their lives and, in turn, mark their influence in society. In India, the skilling of women is a far greater challenge than skilling men, owing to the nature of women’s work. In India, the majority of women work in low-skilled, low-paying jobs with no social protection or job security (source: Kumar(2022a)). Their economic contribution is all but invisible. Globally, the informal economy employs more men (63 percent) than women (58.1 percent). In India, however, a higher percentage of women workers are part of the informal economy compared to men: 94 percent of women workers are in the informal sectors, working. Statistical representation of gender difference in terms of population, literacy, and employment as



daily-wage agricultural labourers, at construction sites, as self-employed micro-entrepreneurs, or engaged in home-based work. Gender discrimination is more severe in the informal sector than in the formal sector, with women informal workers receiving less than half the male wage rate, (source: Surbhi Singh and Pillai (2020)). Women in our society have different training needs than men since they are burdened with household chores and their offspring's responsibilities, moreover, at times they contribute as subsistence farmers or low-paid labourers. Income earning opportunities also enhance their sustainable livelihood and development in the long run. The female-male wage gap has also stagnated at 50 percent (HDR, 2018). Hence, vocational skill development (SD) becomes a key to improving their household capacity, autonomy, and employability. An attempt has been made to culminate the importance of vocational SD for women to become self-sustaining and empowered.

### **Literature Reivew**

According to the 2011 Indian population census, the female population is 48.04 percent, and women's literacy is 71.5 percent (source: Vijayabhaskar et al. (2021)). Singh argues that if women are provided with appropriate SD training, they can achieve economic independence (source: Singh (2018)). Rodriguez collected annual district level data across India to estimate the effect of MGNREGA employment on women's empowerment, microfinance through self-help groups, and incidents of sexual harassment and interpersonal violence as indicators for women's empowerment (source: Rodriguez (2022)). Women's entrepreneurship sustainability depends on effective financing, accessibility, technical knowledge, and upskilling/reskilling, which allow for women's empowerment at large (source: Andriamahery and Qamruzzaman (2022)). Hariharan tries to learn about the special position of training in ability improvement and female empowerment in India. Women are regularly invisible in the improvement scenario. SD reduces gender inequalities; education empowers women to equip themselves with the skills necessary to find their place in the world (source: Hariharan (n.d.)). In India, women are now participating in various areas like education, art and culture, the service sector, sports, politics, the media, and science and technology, but the working percentage rate of women in the total labour force is not satisfying (source: Vyas (2018)). Table 1 refers to the statistical representation of gender differences in terms of population, literacy, and employment in India.

Our country, which is working towards becoming a developed country, has embarked on several ambitious projects to increase the labour ratio. There are young people in India who are just around the age of 28. Of these, 37 percent of the youth are engaged in labour work. However, there is a difference in the proportion of females (12.5 percent) and males (57.1 percent). It is regrettable that 3 out of 4 women are not engaged in identified economic activities. Percentage of India's total youth population



48.04 percent are young women. More than half of our country's youth are not in the labor force. Women's depowerment is linked to patriarchy, which subjugates women on multiple levels political, economic, social, and cultural. Patriarchy is a social and ideological construct that considers men (who are the patriarchs) as superior to women (source:Rawat (2014)).

**Table 1. Statistical representation of gender difference in terms of population, literacy, and employment**

Sl no	Comparison	Female	male	Reference
1	Percentage of population	48.04	56.96	2020 (source: Internet)
2	Literacy rate	71.5	84.4	2021 (source: Internet)
3	Rural Employment percentage	31	94	2017 (source: Internet)
4	Urban Employment percentage	24	91	
5	Percentage of unskilled labour	18.6	55.8	Periodic Labour Force Survey 2020
6	Percentage of people working in paid work	20.6	68.5	Findings of India's First Ever Time Use Survey
7	Percentage of people working in Unpaid work	93.8	48.6	
8	Informal employment percentage	23	63	Institute of Social Studies Trust report

## **Objectives**

SD teaches women about power from within, decision-making power, fi physical, and knowledge-based assets, and power with ability. The aim of vocational SD for women is to make them financially stable. The following research objectives describe concisely what the research is trying to achieve.

- a. Identification of the inherent skills of women and support
- b. Requirement of vocational SD for women.
- c. Opportunities are given by the Government and related schemes for SD of women

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The existing knowledge is empirical and primarily based on a series of statistics from secondary sources. Secondary information is acquired from a range of posted and un- published records, books, magazines, and journals, each in print and online. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis is used to evaluate a woman's position and to develop strategic planning for SD. SWOT analysis evaluates and estimates the nature of internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential (source: Karami and Agahi (2018)). SD conducts a situational assessment or situational analysis of women's empowerment.

### **Identification of women's inherent skills**

Women take care of housework and family. Women bear the lion's share of the responsibility for raising children. Women taking care of household chores and the family are not considered to be working. A woman tends to be naturally expert at skills such as problem solving, networking, and handling different tasks simultaneously, and effortlessly. Women have always been born managers, as they keep doing all their in-home tasks without even compromising on their out-of-home jobs. In-house work are not identified as formal work because they are not paid for their responsibility. Women are financially dependent on the breadwinner of the family. Every living being has its own skill; specifically, women are multi-skilled and quick learners inherently. Just like 'Kaushalyam Balam' proverb, which best describes the power of the skill. Meeting the demands of all the members of the household while staying in the kitchen is no small matter. Ironically, cooking is never considered a skill. It is not easy to cook in such a way that all the members of the household are satisfied. There is no denying the fact that a woman is born skilled. There was a time when, in a male-dominated society, women were confined to the kitchen. But the situation is different in the present scenario. SD is a potent weapon in the fight against women's substandard living conditions. By focusing on the need for SD for women, it



was felt that SD can make a big difference for many of the rural poor and women by improving household productivity, employability, and self-employment opportunities, as well as enhancing food security and sustainable development and livelihoods.

### **Requirement of vocational SD for women**

Feminism is not about making women strong. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength. Instead of seeking help from opposite gender, women themselves to make women empowerment dream a reality, (source: Babbar (2022)). Women in our society have different training needs than men since they are burdened with household chores and their children's responsibilities. Despite India's growing GDP at around 7 percent, female labour force participation is going down from 34 percent to 27 percent. Moreover, the female-male wage gap has also stagnated at 50 percent (HDR, 2018). Hence, SD becomes a key to improving their household capacity, autonomy, and employability. Income-earning opportunities also enhance their sustainable livelihood and development in the long run.

### **Identification of constraints**

Women's empowerment and their workforce participation are their fundamental rights, which enable them to have control over their lives and, in turn, mark their influence in society (source: Hariharan (n.d.)). Personal lives are harmed when people lack vocational skills and education. There are numerous barriers to women's education, including SD training institutions. The following are the constraints to women's full empowerment.

- Lack of training in rural areas, public transport, primary infrastructure; sanitary facilities, overcrowded classrooms
- Early marriage, migration, childcare barriers, social stigma, and financial crises as a result of divorce, death, or separation from a spouse are all factors to consider.
- Mobility, time restrictions
- False perceptions, wage bias
- Poverty in rural India has a negative impact on the overall growth of girls.
- Limited employment possibilities, recruitment, and retention

### **Is skill training necessary for women?**

Skill is the bridge between a job and the workforce. SD is key to improving employability and income-earning opportunities for women and for enhancing sustainable rural development and livelihoods. Social outcomes are reflectors in indicators of income inequality and poverty (source: Ramakrishna and Sudhakar (2015)). The government has started training institutes dedicated to women at a time when women are deprived of skilled training and employment without social value and not only gender-based work. With the motto "One woman, at least one skill," women's empowerment should start at the elementary stage itself. It is only at a young age that women can identify their hidden skills and get supplementary education from parents and society. If there is a financial disability, skilled education can be imparted to girls with the help of the government and private organizations. "A woman's talent is like an unused reservoir in the world," says Hillary Clinton. This means that although a woman has a lot of talents, those talents are not being properly utilized or used for gender discrimination. "A skill-armed woman is home to a strong life." In the present society, women need different kinds of skills than men. Women are self-sufficient to take up the responsibilities of housekeeping and raising children. As everyone knows, a working woman returns to her workplace after completing maternity leave and is busy with her duties due



to her earlier performance. Skill enhancement, upskilling, and reskilling are imperative for postpartum women. We have examples of so many women working with their infants. Providing skill development education to women is like women's empowerment in the real sense.

### **Opportunities given by the government and related schemes for SD among women**

Several government programmes provide many training programmes and technical opportunities to encourage the empowerment of women's skills. A woman can compete on par with men and take on as much responsibility as men do. In this regard, vocational SD programmes can not only empower women financially but also lead to good leadership. A woman can be self-reliant in the industry, and if she is a skilled teacher, she can lead to the development of a strong society by teaching her skills to many young women. 10 percent of the reservations are for government facilities in rural areas, such as hostels, scholarships, the transportation system, bus passes, and educational loans, among other important government services. With these facilities, women can not only find a good way to earn their livelihood but also create a healthy environment.

The Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation has taken bold steps for the empowerment of women by launching several schemes such as Udyogini, the Self-employment training scheme for women, marketing assistant posts, Resource Center for Women Consultation, Interest Subsidy Scheme, Saviruchi, etc. Under the craftsman training scheme (CTS), the government is working to provide training in skills that complement several women in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and are in demand in industries. It has also started 22 ITIs exclusively for women across the Karnataka State and reserved 33 percent of admissions in the remaining ITIs for women. Apart from this, a total of 18 National Skill Training Institutes for Women are run by the Department of National Skill Development and Livelihoods under the aegis of the Central and State Governments in the country. Training programmes such as office management, electronics, fashion design and technology, computer-aided embroidery and design under the national apprenticeship promotion scheme (NAPS), the craftsman instructor training scheme (CITS), CTS, and the recognition of prior learning (RPL) scheme are among those that support women. Apart from this, new jobs under the "Industry 4.0" model have been merged with the employment scheme, such as artificial intelligence, 3D printing, data analytics, welding, plumbing, robotics, CNC machining, virtual simulators, and automobiles. We can see that women are actively participating in mechanics and other training. Under the government's flagship scheme of "Women @ Work" (W@W), it has planned to provide employment to nearly five lakh women by 2026. Government ITIs have adopted several training programmes for girls who have passed the 8th.

- High Skill Centers for Basic Skills and Skill Upgrading of Women, the National Skill Development Center has launched "Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana," "Seva Bharat," and "Beti Bachao-Beti Pado.""
- The Indian government has launched several schemes, including "Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kaushalya Kendra" (PMMKY), which encourages women to work as self-employed tailors, beauty therapists, customer service executives, hair stylists, and yoga instructors. Under the Support to Training and Employment for Women (STEP) scheme,
- The Central Government has organized training programmes in various financial such as horticulture, food processing, agriculture, handloom, weaving, tailoring, embroidery, etc.
- Employee-supporting schemes such as the National Women's Cell, "Kishori Shakti Yojana Yojana," "Mahila Shakti Kendra Kendra," and "National Development Agency of Norway" are infusing new energy into women's empowerment.



- In order to encourage local women, the government has provided a separate provision for mobile training units, conducted afternoon classes in a safe environment, and appointed women training officers.

**Research Findings**

Several government programs offer numerous training programs and technical opportunities to promote SD for women’s empowerment. A woman can compete on par with men and get as much priority as they do. In this regard, VET programs can not only empower women financially but also lead to good leadership. A woman can be self-reliant in the industry, and if she is a skilled teacher, she can lead the development of a strong society by teaching her skills to many young women. SD for women can not only fi a good way to earn their livelihood but also create a positive mindset and a healthy society. There is a greater need for critical skill gap analysis. Figure 1 on page 6 depicts the ways for skill gap analysis, demand-based skill training design and execution, and financially the outcomes. Local SHGs shall identify women



Figure 1. Women empowerment through SD

workers with supportive families, provide relevant information, and encourage them to take up skilling. Public-private partnerships (PPP) could be the way forward for inclusive digital skilling, fi literacy, and legal literacy for women (source: Kumar (2022)).

**SWOT Analysis**

Women are more likely to be employed in the informal labour force and are over- represented in domestic work in rural areas that lack protections and living wages.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of SD women empowerment

	Strength		Weakness		opportunities		Threats
1	Sense of completeness, confidence	1	Social, economic, mental empowerment	1	Various government schemes, Self Help Groups (SHGs)	1	Patriarchy, lack of support



2	Trust, autonomy, conscientious	2	Social protection	2	Financial literacy, formal bank accounts	2	Lack of security, social stigma and financial crises for being single women or single parent
3	Sense of meaningfulness, involvement in decision making	3	Quality and decent paid work	3	Social protections like pensions, maternity protection, equal pay	3	Postpartum support and health issues
4	Sense of being effective, delivering quality service	4	Discriminatory social norms	4	Investing in women organizations and business	4	Non recognition of unpaid labor work like household duties

Women must receive equal access to education, training, new skills, new technologies, management positions, benefits, and entrepreneurship. Workplaces must also be free of sexual harassment and violence, be safe, meet health and safety standards, and promote equal pay (source: Bhattacharyya and Mukherjee (2019)). SWOT analysis helps identify women’s internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities for women and threats to their empowerment. When women have more employment and leadership opportunities, businesses are proven to grow and be more effective, (source:Rodriguez (2021)). Table 2 on page 7 refers to the SWOT analysis, and manifests SD imperative for women’s empowerment.

**Important SD Opportunities For Women In The Present Scenario**

A skilled, confident woman can build a powerful society. But what is worrying is that no matter how efficiently a woman works or works on par with men, in some negative situations, women employees may be the victims. An Indian woman devotes 25 percent of her time to her daily chores. But a man uses only 2.5 percent of his time for such activities. According to a survey, only 35 percent of Indian women can use the internet. The Central Government’s Digital Saksharata Abhiyan (DISHA) and other platforms are being developed to encourage women to use the internet and mobile phones. According to the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog report, in the coming decade, 75 million Indian women are likely to join the labour force. Therefore, there is a need for women to expand their learning at different levels and establish themselves financially. Only then can we get rid of wage discrimination, social abuse, and exploitation. Having the opportunities that accompany literacy and SD can help women get a job or become self-employed.

Skill development programmes for women will encourage female employees and in come opportunities. In the present scenario, every woman needs to have at least one professional or formal skill. Even if the primary breadwinner of the family is unemployed, a skilled woman can take the lead in managing her family. Not everyone may be able to get a government job, but a skilled woman can improve the economic condition of her family by working. By working with confidence, a self-sufficient woman can not only emerge as the financial strength of her family, but she can also set an example for the rest of the weaker women. A skilled woman can make a big contribution to achieving gender equality by working efficiently and changing not only the map of her family but also the face of the world. If women are to make good



use of the various related skills that are embedded in them, they should be given a variety of vocational skill trainings. In view of all the above, the government has started CITSs and NSTIs across the country under the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) board to provide vocational SD training, giving opportunities to female trainers. These trainings enable women to work at par with men and women in all financially. A woman is admitted to various such trainings on the basis of a minimum entry qualification and undergoes various types of vocational trainings to become financial empowered, increase her self-confidence, and occupy a high position in the family and society. Moreover, if the government arranges hostels for the safety of women trainees coming from rural areas, the intake of women trainers will increase day by day. The purpose of vocational SD training will be fully fulfilled by making it available not only to women but also to women in rural areas. Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) on behalf of the government, local entrepreneurs, and SHGs to promote home products, and by supporting sales, it is encouraging women to become entrepreneurs themselves globally.

### **3. DISCUSSION**

Equipping women with employable skills is a far greater challenge than skilling men, as most women in India work low-skill, low-paying jobs in the informal economy. Investing in women's economic empowerment is crucial for gender equality, poverty eradication, human development, and inclusive economic growth, yet significant gendered inequalities persist globally (Source: Hunt and Samman (2016)). Economic stability plays an important role in women's self-reliance. The possibility of SD trainings increasing women's income and employment rates is strong. Small skilled activities such as agricultural activities and household activities, medium-scale tasks such as plumbing repair, receptionist's post, or dressing arts; and a high range of skilled tasks such as web designing. She will be able to do it. Women can also get training in unconventional occupations such as security guards, plumbing repairs, soldering work, etc. Such occupations provide social and economic support to women and increase the proportion of women in the working class. Because women are always opportunists and are good at making the most of opportunities. No one can afford to miss the opportunities that come their way.

By empowering women, the rural economic production of the state will be strengthened. Women's SD/upskilling/reskilling provide an opportunity for the housewife to become a source of income for the family. If a woman is to have financial independence and become self-reliant, it is the duty of all to recognize and encourage her skills. In scenario women shoulders men in all responsibilities of family and every professional sector (ref: Vijayabhaskar et al. (2021)). It is absolutely true that, rather than male or female leaders, only "leaders" will be popular in the future. SD redefines how women manage their professional and personal lives. So the woman's move should be toward acquiring at least one skill.

Findings show that SD can make a big difference for many of the rural poor and women by improving household productivity, employability, and income-earning opportunities (source: Diwakar and Ahamad (2015)). The key recommendations from the findings are to scale up non-change work to break intergenerational thinking, support occupational and sectoral segregation, and challenge discriminatory norms. SD teaches the women about power from within, decision-making power, control over financial, physical, and knowledge-based assets, and power with ability. The days are near when homemakers will become bread earners and vice versa, depending on their suitability and necessity. A skillfully armed woman is home to a self-sustaining life.





#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Women can be truly empowered if they are provided with safety, education, healthcare, trust, vocational skills training, speaking out against violence and gender inequality, postpartum assistance for resuming work, upskilling or reskilling, societal mindset changes, and moral education for gender equality to boys in school. Vocational SD is indispensable for women's empowerment. Women's full participation in the workforce is essential to achieving gender equality and self-sustainability. Core responsibility lies with the elders of the family to break stereotypes and encourage men into care professions and women into the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and skill sectors. Skill gap analysis surveys have helped the government, PPPs and industries, and NGOs provide many opportunities for women to join the formal or informal workforce. The study's findings aid in understanding that providing women with employable vocational skills can undoubtedly lead to the "equal skill, equal pay" scenario. Gender-sensitive vocational SD training designs assist women in getting trained for jobs that are close to their traditional gender roles and empower women to be recruited and retained in better-paying jobs or as entrepreneurs. In rural India, women's empowerment by SD based on local skills in remote areas is recommended. The days are near when homemakers will become bread earners and vice versa, depending on their suitability and necessity. The study is limited to showing only opportunities in the existing system of SD in India; flaws in the existing system of SD training for women are not highlighted. A comparative analysis of the existing system of women's SD in India and the SD of women in other countries can be taken up as a further study. Realistic future improvements in the Indian system of women's empowerment through vocational skilling can be further suggested in future studies.

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