

Prerequisites and Strategies for Women Empowerment in India through Vocational Skill Training

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Abstract

Large pool of skilled women workers is indispensable for attracting local, national and international industrial investment. Skilled women have tremendous potential in guaranteeing sustainable women empowerment. This study demonstrates efforts and explains prerequisites and strategies for women empowerment in India through vocational skill training. The article uses empirical methods, extensive literature review and follows an international case-based approach to assess the elements of strategic interventions required to attain women empowerment. Findings reveal that vocational skill training is a unique form of overall women development and women empowerment. skill training has enormous capacities to support improved employ- ability, entrepreneurship development. skill training encourages women’s empower- ment development culture in a growing number in India.

Keywords: Women empowerment, vocational skill development, financial independence, micro-entrepreneurship

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1. Introduction

Women makes half of the Indian population but shows meger role in strengthening the economic growth of India. An important attribute of success is to be yourself. Never hide what makes you, you. by Indra Nooyi, is the truth, that all women need to understand. Works in informal sectors are often seasonal, have inadequate wages, and provide no security of wages or tenure. Focus on the skill training of women is more crucial than men. To increase the participation of women in Indian formal and informal workforce, robust and adaptable strategies are required to unlock social barriers (source: Amrita et al. (2022)). A developing Indian economy needs skilled workers, despite this more than 30 percent youth between the age groups of 15-29 are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and 88.5 percent out of this are women. Government and NGOs provide more platforms to give skill training to a huge number of women who hold formal degrees but still not employed or lacks employable capacities (source: Kautish et al. (2022)). This essentially points to the fact that education alone cannot make them employable. Globally, women spend three times longer on unpaid care work than men, ranging from 1.5 times longer in North American countries to 6.7 times longer in South Asian countries (source: Ferrant andThim (2019)). The time spent by women in performing unpaid work often keeps them outlying from entering the formal workforce. Majority of Indian Womens work goes invisible, unrecognized and unremunerated in work space. India has 397 million workers out of which 123.9 million are women. 106 million are in rural areas and 18 million are in urban areas. Only 7 percent of Indias labour force is in the organized sector and 93 percent is in unorganized, informal sector. 96 percent of women workers are in unorganized sector (source: MWCD, GOI (2006)).

2014-19, women comprised 17 percent of enrolment at Industrial Training Insti- tutes (ITI) out of which Women formed only 4.3 percent of enrolments in engineering trades vs 54.7 percent in non-engineering trades. Table 1 refers to the statistics of women’s involvement in education, vocational skills, and employment. Critical study to evidence the impact of skill training of women in social and economic dimensions on women empowerment is currently needed as feedback to design the strategies for the improvement (source: Kautish et al. (2022)).

Table 1. Statistics of women involvement in education, vocational skills and employment

| Sl no | Reports | Gender | Percent |
|-------|---|--|---------|
| 1 | 2011 census | Female literacy rate | 65.46 |
| | | Male literacy rate | 82.14 |
| | | Rural female literacy rate | 57 |
| | | rural male literacy rate | 77 |
| 2 | All-India Survey of Higher Education report 2018-2019 | Female students enrolment | 48.6 |
| 3 | International Labour Organization data 2017 | Female Labour participation rate | 27 |
| 4 | Monster Salary Survey 2016 | Indian women earn 25 percent than Global World women | |
| 5 | Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) for short-term skilling 2016-2020 | Female enrolment | 49.9 |

The intension of skilling women is to prepare women to acquire strong economic and social positions in society by raising their quality of work leading to raising their living standard. skill training will aid women's entire personality development. In technolog- ically strong country like Germany, the dual system of vocational training (DST) has traditionally been very strong. The growing significance of school-based programs is linked to the gender impact of skill training system and the gender segmentation of the German labour market, while academisation refl labour market demands for high skills. Germany strongly promoted womens integration into the labour market. Unlike India 72 percent of females participate in the labour force in Germany (source: Haasler (2020)). A systematic review is required for skill training of women and strategies to improve representation of women in work.

1.1. Objectives

To reveal the research objective, the study has utilized an empirical method. Statisti- cal data is based on open sources from various media. Vocational skill training in the German system of education is taken as the case study to understand the diff in womens involvement in workforce and a study on implementational aspects of suc- cessful strategies of the German skilling system is highlighted. The following are the objectives for determining the prerequisites and strategies for women empowerment in India through vocational skill development.

- To determine the prerequisites for skilling women.
- To surface empowerment through skill training strategies available in India.
- To bring cognizance among Indian women to get skills armed.

2. Literature review

The fi e components of women's empowerment are increasing women's sense of self- worth, giving them the freedom to choose and make decisions on issues that affect them, providing them with opportunities and resources, and giving them the au- thority to make decisions about their own lives, both inside and outside the home (source: Panneerselvam (2022)). The study done by Assunta Di Vaio, offers insights into the area of gender equality and inclusion processes addressing digital gender gap. (source: Di Vaio, Hassan, and Palladino (2022)). According to Ebrahimi, the study of women participation in education and vocational skills is effective for the empower- ment of women, especially in the economic dimension (source: Ebrahimi et al. (2022)). Suryanarayan maps the evolution of national policy initiatives for skill training and examined skill training with regard to gender. skill training is the need of the hour (source: Suryanarayan (2021)). The mobile vocational education units are developed as a model to make vocational education and training more accessible to the rural and tribal populations of India (source: Akshay et al. (2012)). The theoretical implications come from addressing the lack of representation of skill training-based employability initiatives among women from India. Practical implications come from knowledge shar- ing of innovative strategies to enhance the employability outcomes of women entering the formal and informal labour market (source: Mathew and Donald (2022)). Skilled women are a significant part of the labour market, maintaining traditional knowledge, education, and livelihoods is a day to day challenge to women (source: Dagar (2022)), . Most Indian women are looking forward to gaining new skills to advance their careers, says a survey conducted by Morning Consult, Pearson's Global Learner Survey was conducted in 2021. Mayer makes it clear that there is a close connection between sup- port programs, features and structures of the German vocational education system, on technical and industrial training occupations, and gender-based characteristics and determines the level of development assistance in this fi (source: Mayer (2001)).

3. Research design and procedures

Strategic plans to tailor skilling patterns depending on the geographical and social potentials of rural India allows improved participation and will make women fi independent. This will boost women's position in society. The strategic design of the skilling courses will help fi work and advance women's careers. If the government and banks help budding business and start-ups, women will create jobs for others and boost the economy. Policies such as increasing access to skill training 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 for easy access (source: Prabhakar and Nimesh (2022)). The quantitative study is non-experimental, in terms of the purpose of the research is an applied one. In terms of data collection is empirical research.

3.1. Prerequisites

Women empowerment in the dimensions like fi social, and psychological de- velopment assists women in gaining self esteem. skill training for women is given less importance, but there is a significant relationship between skill training and women's empowerment. India needs to nurture an environment where skilling women is given significance by soft skills acquisition and cultural changes adoption (source: Khilji and Roberts

(2022)). . Participation of women in the formal or informal workforce should be backed with support like publicizing female role models, appropriate employee benefits, job guarantee, safe and hygienic working environment. Various government schemes/NGOs give platforms for skilling women, which are effective in generating employment in urban areas but reaching out to the remotest parts of the country is still a challenge. Policymakers must formulate strategies for local and traditional skills for different level of job depending on the availability of human resource. If these issues are included in a gendered form of budget and policymaking, female labour force participation in India can become a more hopeful aspiration (source: Ratho (2020)). Limited knowledge of women's empowerment hampers the ability of government schemes/NGOs to serve women's advancement and sustainable development. Initiation of systemic change to sustain women empowerment in rural India in which they are active is absolute necessity (source: Al Hakim et al. (2022)).

Women's empowerment including granting women a voice, challenging existing power structures, the radical transformation of lives and livelihoods, and gender mainstreaming are the need of this hour. Reassessing India's affirmative actions, hand holding for skill acquisition, healthcare benefits and providing women with an equitable economic opportunity is a prerequisite (source: Singh and Singh (2020)).

3.1.1. Avenues providing vocational skill training

Development of women's vocational skills will lead to higher paying and good quality jobs, better livelihood, economic independence, and the ability to earn for their families. Women of various ages, and social and economic levels are getting the opportunity for skill training under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). Women-centric training under the Women's Vocational Training Programme (WVTP) was identified for micro entrepreneurship, self employment, wage-employment, and as trainers. The avenues providing vocational skill training are

- Industrial skill training under Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS)
- Instructor skill training under Craft Instructors Training Scheme (CITS)
- Demand-driven Short-term courses
- Special programs for training the Instructors of ITIs
- Tailor-made courses as per the industry's demand
- National Skill Training Institutes (NSTI)
- Pradhan Mantri Koushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

The 19 NSTIs(W)pan India, organize NCVT-approved skill training long-term/short-term programs under CTS and CITS in areas such as Office Management, Electronics, Secretarial Practice, Architecture, Computer, Dress Making, Cosmetology, Fruits and Vegetables Processing, Desk Top Publishing, Surface Ornamentation Techniques, Fashion Design and Technology, Catering and Hospitality, Sewing Technology, Travel and Tour, Computer Aided Embroidery and Designing, Food, and Beverages Service Assistant, Food Production (General), Draughtsman Civil and Interior Decoration and Designing, etc. Placement support by Campus Interviews, assistance for apprenticeship Training, Off Campus Short Term training programs are facilities available at NSTIs. There are many other central and state government departments and NGOs providing skill training.

3.2. Strategies

There is a critical need to scale up skill training in India, through the creation of a professional and more than 40 percent share of skilled women in the work market. This requires a new generation of educated and at the same time skilled women. Women's competitive edge will be determined by their ability to create, share, and use knowledge effectively, flexibly, and analytically for innovation and growth. Basic education to provide the foundation for learning; secondary and tertiary to provide quality education to develop core capabilities and core technical skills, and further means of achieving lifelong learning to training at all levels is the strategy to make women empowered through skill training. Redesigning the skills ecosystem to make it more inclusive and result-oriented for women is the need of this hour in the post-pandemic era. Table 2 on page 5 refers to the Strategy for improved women's participation in Vocational education.

Table 2. Strategy for improved women participation in Vocational education

| Strategy | Activities | Expected Output & indicator | Inevitably |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Awareness of skilled women's position in society. | 1. ITI Staff visits to the school, SHG groups, rural women, and school students visit ITIs. | 1. Improvement in women's enrolment in skill education and enhancement of confidence. | 1. Women's safe environment is necessary |
| 2. ITI association with schools for improvement of women enrolment in ITI. | 2. Awareness of reservations given for women & women-only training centers. | 2. They will become empowered and self-dependent | 2. Support to postpartum women to bounce back to work |
| 3. Government support for skill development of single women of all age groups | 3. Upskilling and reskilling of women. Business support | 3. Financial independent empowered confident women in society. | 3. Reduced drop-out rate |

Shared responsibility of government and corporate sectors, community associates policy makers working in the skilling and entrepreneurship space, industries, trade associates, and other stakeholders reduces skilling bottlenecks, improves job mobility, and enables the absorption of skilled workers. There are successful employers in India offering gender sensitive working environments. To name few; Infosys company achieved 40 percent gender ratio ability to hold on to people, attracting all those women who wants to bounce back to work and fostering women leadership. Lijjat Papad company gives equality among sister members irrespective of their fit and social position resulting in these women earn more than their husbands and their families respect them for it.

3.2.1. Aspects of women empowerment through skill training

Bridging the gap between informal/traditional skill training and digital literacy can provide solutions and can create larger range of opportunities. Policy makers need to integrate design models with ground realities to have focused traditional skill training of women in line with local opportunities available. Skill-building initiatives like Skill India and the New Education Policy (NEP) works toward progressive women participate in previously underserved fit To facilitate learning for all students, with special emphasis on Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), the scope of school education involving both formal and non-formal education modes by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programmes offered by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Women underrepresented groups, making up about half of all SEDGs, gets recognition under NEP, for special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social mores. Providing a quality education to girls is the best way to increase the education levels for these SEDGs, not just in the present but also in future generations. The policy thus recommends that the policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted towards girls in these SEDGs (source: MRD, GOI (2020)). Various initiatives like the digital platform DESH gives opportunity to come online to skill themselves, work on various opportunities and seek fit Important aspects of women empowerment through skill training are listed below.

- Self-Employment through Skill-Building
- Additional training and apprenticeship seats
- design of special skill delivery mechanisms for women
- Momentum of Digital India in skill development
- Augmented fit and legal literacy

3.2.2. Framework

Skill training initiative focusing on specific needs and challenges faced by growing entrepreneurs is the key to promoting self-employment among Indian women (source: Ahmad, Sinha, and Shastri (2016)). Coordinated action on skill training is required to have a paradigm shift in addressing the issues of women's relevance in skill training. There is a need to identify the gaps in terms of quantity, quality, outreach, and mobility of women for hooking formal work environments. Reaching out to the non-formal and traditional sectors and designing need-based training models. The availability of good quality trainers, and the development of trainer training programs, are critical to enhancing the quality of training imparted. The government along with industry and corporates has to play a major role in providing apprenticeships and employment to graduates of vocational education. The industry needs to be sensitive in terms of the productivity benefits of employing a skilled women workforce. It is equally essential for the Indian industry to acknowledge the skills of women and pay them a premium salary as compared to men. Basic framework of skilling women has following criteria.

- Setting levels of skill training, as required by the industry

- Awareness of multiple points of entry and exit strategy for mobility across different training levels.
- Dedicated women skill training training centers in rural areas with financing.
- Support women in terms of financial accessibility like bank loans on soft terms that are linked to their placement.
- Promoting the business of women entrepreneurs by building trust and quality assurance.
- Monitoring and assisting women trainees after taking skill training

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh from Ministry of women and child development (MWCD), GOI offers provision for financial services with backward and forward linkages for women in the unorganized sector through Intermediary Micro Finance Organizations (IMOs) and Women Self Help Groups (SHGs). Inclusivity enrolment at vocational skill training facilities can be improved by awareness, adequacy of funds, and improved access to training locally. CSR activities could mitigate these challenges to a large extent by building infrastructure locally, donating their used tools and equipment to training providers, apprentices On the Job Training (OJT) in their establishments, incubation, or providing soft loans to develop micro-entrepreneurship thus reaching skill development to the remotest corner of the country. Industries spend time and budget training their employees after recruitment because trained people do not fit into their production activities directly. The industry and academic interface for curriculum development is inevitable. Thus industry can train workers and indirectly reduce the training cost. According to the Review report 2022 of the MSDE, Women of SHGs are provided with training to access the market through e-commerce platforms, under Digital Marketing and Women Entrepreneurship scheme. Implementation of Jan Shikshan Sansthan, "My Safety, My Responsibility" program and an agreement with the Sports, Physical Education, Fitness and Laser Skills Council, has brought a sense of confidence and security among women workers. NEP focuses on 100 percent enrolment of girls in schooling and a record participation rate in higher education, decreasing gender gaps at all levels, practicing gender equity and inclusion in society, and improving the leadership capacity of girls through positive civil dialogues. NEP proposes to enhance the number of women in leading positions in the institution, including principals, teachers, wardens, physical instructors, and other staff. No change will come until and unless society is made aware of the evils of depriving girls of the attainment of education. The skill enhancement courses foregrounded in the policy must also benefit the girls from all sections of society to motivate them to educational institutions and make them economically independent. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), under MCD, GOI popularize the concept of microfinancing, enterprise development, thrift and credit, and formation and strengthening of Women-SHGs through intermediary organizations.

4. Vocational skill training of women in Germany-A Case study

During my training in Germany in May 2022, one of the important training subjects was "Introduction to DST in Germany including women in leading positions and in Apprenticeship". Conversation was done with Mrs. Astrid Kraemer, Managing Director Dektro Abel Company, Germany: The talk was about women's activities and financial participation of women in VET, Employment, setting up skill university, recommendation and observation to policy makers, blending offline and online training. Trainer, coach, and consultant. The objective was to achieve women empowerment and gender equality, define women empowerment and gender equality in India, and the Women's support system. Visit to Frauenbetriebe, Firm shopping, Germany Dated: 21/05/2022 is shown in photo represented in the figure 1 and figure 2 shows the comparative discussion and representation of Indian and German women.

Still, Germany is far away from gender equality. There is the concept of a 3-day mother and a 3-day father. Lower-level jobs are given to women who bounce back to work postpartum. One woman one skill concept is a must in Germany. 3 zone model is followed to describe the patterns in women's life style, 1. Comfort zone (autopilot mode), 2. Stretching zone and 3. Panic zone (fight, flight, and freeze). Mrs. Astrid Kraemer said women can be empowered by following

- Financial, digital, and self-defence literacy to be learned.
- Motivating women and supporting women to take up vocational skills.
- Awareness by visiting schools and villages.



Figure 1. Visit to Frauenbetriebe, Frm shopping, Germany Dated: 21/05/2022.

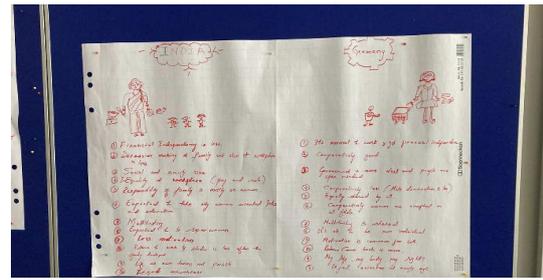


Figure 2. Comparative study and group discussion regarding women of India and women of Germany, at HLFT Germany Dated: 20/05/2022

On a professional excursion, according to Mrs. Tavernier, successful Women's Businesses Frauenbetriebe, Germany, she was DST trainee later on she completed her architectural engineering and work as an architect. Now she owns her own company with a business of designer furniture and clothing and accessories. She has five workers with her. Women have to work more to get acknowledged in society compared to men. There is no support from the government for starting the business. It's very difficult to become an entrepreneur compared to getting a job. Working hours are more and indefinite unlike being the job for any entrepreneur. Mr. Suzain Entrepreneur, Mobel Designer for furniture, is an architect, said that she became an entrepreneur woman. According to her women has to work more to get acknowledged. If we have fewer workers free time has to be sacrificed for work. No special treatment from either government or any NGO.

During professional excursion chambers of crafts, Germany, it was observed that out of 1500 students/apprentices (50 percent were women), women participation is more. There are 100 teachers (50 percent women) more women teachers. Most of the German models of VET are adopted in India like DST wherein the student typically attends the classroom as well as does an apprenticeship at a company, resulting in highly employable students in the work market. Tight integration of school, industry and government bodies resulted in a standardized curriculum, reduced dropout, and reduced skilling mismatch.

5. Research findings

Learnings from the Vocational Education Management Programme under BLP Participation of women in DST and leading position women in the workplace and success story of women entrepreneurs and female empowerment has helped to understand the struggles of women and ways to get empowered. Women Transforming India (WTI) Awards from NITI Aayog recognizes women entrepreneurs who have made their mark across different sectors by celebrating the dynamic efforts of women. Women entrepreneurs of WTI have shattered social boundaries and paved the way for an equal India. The recognition of these role models who have broken glass ceilings has created a positive impact. Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is an aggregator portal that aims to catalyse the entrepreneurial ecosystem for women and address information asymmetry (source: MECD, GOI (2021)). According to NEP 2020, the phrase 'women empowerment', which has passed into the current coin of social discourse very rapidly and extensively, is virtually meaningless without education and skill training. The findings of this study show that earning status, financial independence, and participation in financial decision-making in family can be achieved through skill development, upskilling, and reskilling. Various government schemes for women's welfare have a significant impact on women's empowerment through financial inclusion (source: Kautish et al. (2022)). The conceptual framework for a radical transformation of women towards empowerment is shown in the figure 3.

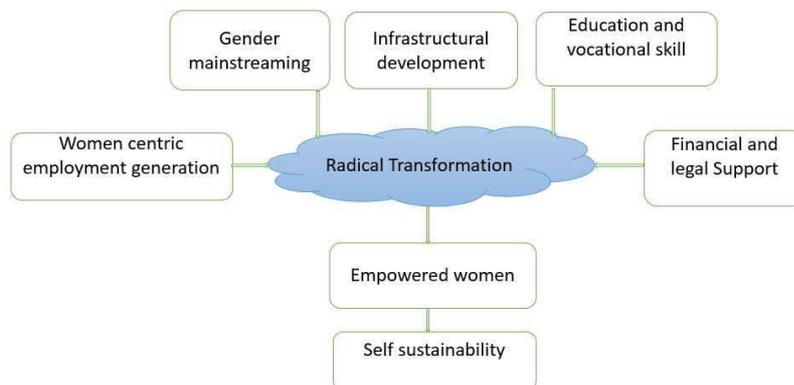


Figure 3. Conceptual framework for a radical transformation of women towards empowerment

The empowerment approach requires a radical transformation because development cannot be used as gender neutral idea, as it has a differential impact on men and women. There will be a struggle daily for women to maintain their feminine identity in a macho profession and their integrity amid gender discrimination. Male supremacy and also other social divisions such as race, class, and sexual orientation make survival difficult in the work environment.

5.1. Critical areas of concern

Women do not hold positions of responsibility and prestige; it is because most of them, do not want that and hence choose to stay out of competition for them. Women express clear preferences for their domain -the home (source: Epstein (2022)). The pandemic situation has declined the opportunities for skilling and education and created new barriers for women who wanted to enter the labour force. Critical areas of concern are listed below needs immediate attention from policy makers.

- Pandemic situation has declined the opportunity for skilling and education and created new barriers for women.
- Women lack access to digital infrastructure, like smartphone ownership, and a lower priority is given to women's skill training.
- Historical gender bias of jobs as feminine and masculine have led to biases in hiring, wage setting, and performance ratings.
- Women pursuing Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related field is enviable. There is still a vacuum in women's representation in leadership positions.

Setting up Skills University, for there would be commonality, standardization, and horizontal and vertical mobility in education and vocational skill options (source: Parveen (2021)). The certificates, diplomas, and degrees awarded by Skills university similar to formal education would eradicate the false perception that vocational education is undignified and pursued by those who are left with no other education options. To achieve improvements in terms of infrastructure availability to give need-based training, ITIs in India are upgraded in line with the requirements of the industry like PPP scheme in ITIs and UDYOGA program in Karnataka. Lack of awareness, non-converged training programs by different government agencies, multiplicity in assessment and certification, inconsistent outcomes, spattered local job opportunities, reluctance to migrate, and funds to enroll in skilling systems are the mainspring of fewer women takers of skill education.

6. Discussion

The qualitative findings from the study indicate a mismatch between the skill training requirements and the local need for skilling, upskilling, and reskilling of women and the policy objectives. The paper suggests taking a strategic planning approach to train women. Financial and social gender parity and representation of women in various fields are possible with re-skilling and upskilling of women. On the other hand, conscious efforts from organizations to create a more diverse skilled worker pool through hiring, upskilling, and retaining women employees. The industry needs to be educated on the benefits of employing and acknowledging skilled women as a workforce. It is a win-win situation for Industry and also for women. The industry will get improved productivity and efficiency on the other side it motivates unskilled women to get skilled for a higher salary and create an aspiration for vocational jobs. The National Occupation Standards (NOS) along with the qualification packs (QP) developed by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) drive the creation of curriculum, competency-based training for every job role in the industry, assessments, lateral movement across vocational education and higher education. NSDC coordinates between central ministries/departments, state governments, the Sector Skill Council (SSC), and the private sector. In 2020-21, the inclusion of Gender Budgeting has been significant gains across various levels of governance and strengthened systems for resource allocation for women and girls (source: MWCD, GOI (2022)).

6.1. Recognition of the importance of skill training for women

Findings reveal that vocational skill training is a unique form of overall women's development and women empowerment. Skill training has enormous capacities to support improved employability and entrepreneurship development. Successful implementation and awareness of the importance of skill training among the local communities drives through timely and adequate access to resources, knowledge, and skills and also pave the way toward women's empowerment, addressing peripheral issues with financial, social, cultural, and ecological facets (source: Tripathy, Paliwal, and Singh (2022)). Women working in lower-status jobs are deprived of upskilling and promotion. Good vocational skill training and financial literacy becomes a prerequisite to bridge the gap between the options women have available to them. Although government and NGO are making significant efforts to uplift the position of women in the society, involvement of women and awareness of joining hands to workforce is still a challenge.

Women need to help themselves first before seeking help from other gender.

7. Conclusion

Developing a large pool of skilled women is indispensable to enhancing the efficiency and flexibility of labor markets. One elementary way of improving women's financial independence would be to provide vocational skill training for female workers, and encouragement to emerge as entrepreneurs, even in rural areas in India. The inevitable existence of external and internal hurdles in the society and training system makes it difficult and lowers the women empowerment success rate. The paper critically examines the requirements of a sustainable environment for skilling women and strategies for the implementation of skill training for women empowerment in India, in various dimensions. The research findings of the article are promising and could be used by policymakers, strategists, and relevant stakeholders to improve women's participation in skill training and in turn achieve financial independence. Successful implementation and awareness of the importance of skill training among the local communities drive through timely and adequate access to resources, knowledge, and skills and also pave the way toward women's empowerment, addressing peripheral issues with financial, social, cultural, and ecological facets. Awareness of the aspirational value of vocational jobs among women is required to mobilize rural and urban women to take up skill training courses. Ground level implementation of various skilling activities and placements can be taken up as next course of research.

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