

## LINKING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND COLLECTIVE ACTION: THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND SHGS IN EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AMONG RURAL TRIBAL WOMEN

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### Abstract

The current research article examined the impact of vocational training and self-help groups (SHGs) on skills development, job, and socio-economic empowerment of rural tribal women, and narrows down on the rural population. The article will aim to (1) determine the most important positive impacts of vocational training on tribal women in rural areas, (2) determine the challenges posed by the training, and (3) determine how demographics like marital status affect the perception of the participants of effective training. Convenient sample of 200 tribal women are chosen for the study. The questionnaire was conducted to collect data and analyzed using descriptive statistics, one-sample t-tests and independent t-tests. The results indicate that vocational training is effective in promoting such skills as employability, income, self-confidence, entrepreneurship, job opportunities, and community development in participants. The article also reveals that there are numerous challenges such as an insufficient literacy and educational status, socio-cultural issues, inaccessibility of training facilities, poor infrastructure, financial limitations, and post-training job shortages. The independent t-test outcomes show that the marital status is not a significant factor affecting the perception of the participants about the training factors like accessibility, quality, and competence of the trainers, family support, employment opportunities, or the teaching method. The results of these studies show the fundamental importance of vocational training in helping women in rural tribal areas become socio-economically empowered and the necessity to tackle structural, educational, and socio-cultural obstacles. The research offers effective policy insights to policymakers and training agencies and community-based organizations to develop inclusive and accessible vocational services to develop skills, foster entrepreneurship, and sustainable livelihood opportunities among the rural tribal women.

**Keywords:** Vocational training, rural tribal women, Employment generation, Skills development, Self-help groups and Socio-economic empowerment

### Introduction

Tribal communities of India usually become victims to various challenges to socio-economic development such as lack of access to education, skills training, and formal employment. Some of them include the rural community who has been identified to be traditional in their weaving, agriculture and forest-based livelihoods but is continually disadvantaged

economically. Rural Women Empowerment by training them on vocational skills and mobilizing them into collective action structures such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), could be a channel of making them job seekers as well as ensuring a sustainable livelihood. This article discusses the contribution of skills development and SHGs toward employment creation among rural tribal women. The connection between skills formation and collective action via SHGs can provide a good avenue of enabling rural tribal women. Vocational training imparts into them employable skills, and SHGs offer the support, financial resources and organization needed to transform the skills into sustainable livelihoods. Policymakers and development practitioners will be able to develop a more inclusive and economic empowered tribal workforce by managing these linkages and enhancing them.

### **Vocational Training and Skills Development**

Vocational training is an important instrument to improving the employability of women who are marginalized. Locally specific programs provide women in the rural areas with technical knowledge in tailoring, handicrafts, food processing, and digital literacy. Such skills can enhance their opportunities to acquire wage employment, as well as, they can venture in entrepreneurial activities.

### **Role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**

Among Rural women, SHGs act as platforms for savings, credit access, and collective entrepreneurship. SHGs also promote knowledge sharing and mentorship, enabling women to leverage their vocational skills effectively.

**1. Availability of Microfinance:** Availability of microfinance is a crucial factor in empowering rural tribal women as they are given access to finance that helps them to venture into income generating and entrepreneurial activities. Access to small scale banking systems and capital is a hindrance towards small business ventures or increase in livelihood activities as experienced by many women in tribal societies. Microfinance programs, commonly with the support of self-help groups (SHGs), provide small-scale loans, saving programs and financial literacy education, allowing women to invest in agriculture, handicrafts, or local trade. Microfinance also creates a sense of responsibility, decision-making power, and economic independence in participants in addition to the financial support. Daily payments and collective responsibility bring about discipline and trust which enhances social cohesion even more. Empirically, it has been observed that women who have access to microfinance are better off in terms of an improved household income, a high level of self-confidence, and more active involvement in community decision-making.

**2. Collective Marketing and Social Empowerment:** Collective marketing is a collective action of groups to sell products or services together as a group instead of individually as an individual. In the case of rural tribal women, collective marketing makes them more powerful in their bargaining situations, less exploited by middlemen, and it gives them access to local and regional markets. Through their economies of scale, enhanced visibility of their products and fair prices to their products, women are able to achieve this by sharing their resources, skills and networks that include handicrafts and various products, agricultural produce inclusive. Collective marketing has social empowerment effects other than economic ones because it develops collaborative, supportive, and joint decision-making in the group. It enhances communication abilities, leadership and confidence, and women would be more involved in domestic and neighborhood affairs. Such an economic-social empowerment fosters the position of women in society, advance gender equality, and lead to sustainable development of communities.

#### **Linking Skills Development and Collective Action**

The overlap between SHG participation and vocational training produces a synergy that largely increases the results of employment. SHGs help in the implementation of skills, training gives the skills, and financial support is provided by SHGs. This connection is especially important in situations of tribes where individual women tend to have little resources or connections to sell their talents commercially.

#### **Challenges and Recommendations**

Despite the successes, several challenges hinder optimal outcomes:

**1. Poor Access to Higher Education:** Low access to higher education is a major challenge to rural tribal women in need of improving their vocational skills and employability. Although basic training programs can be offered on a local basis, more advanced courses in specialized trades, technology or entrepreneurship will be centered in urban centers, and thus accessible only because of the distance barrier, the cost barrier and also logistical barriers. The lack of this skill diversification constrains opportunities to venture higher incomes and serves as a disadvantage to women competitiveness in the local and regional market. To overcome this issue, it is necessary to use mobile training units, web-based services, and community-based advanced classes, which would meet the needs of the tribe women. Exposure to new methods, market trends, and quality standards will enable the participants to increase their economic prospects and instill confidence in the participants to play a significant role in development of the household and the community at large.

**2. Market Access Barriers:** The market access barriers hinder the attainment of the full economic potential of rural tribal women in terms of their vocation and products. The scarcity of transportation, ignorance regarding the demand patterns, the use of middlemen, and insufficient bargaining power are the reason why people tend to receive less income and are exploited. Such obstacles limit the accessibility and exposure of goods produced by tribes, such as the handicraft, agricultural produce, and artisanal products. These issues can only be solved with strategies like group marketing via self-help groups, cooperatives, attending trade fairs, and digital marketplace. Market entry barriers are overcome to provide fair prices, sustainable income and increase economic autonomy so the women can make effective use of their skills.

**3. Sustainability Concerns:** The issue of sustainability occurs when the vocational projects do not create any stable income, use the local resources prudently, or respond to the market variables. In the case of rural tribal women, the short-term training or unsustainable enterprises can lead to lack of skills in using the skills, unstable economy and loss of resources. Making the vocational programs viable and influential means integrating the environmentally friendly practices, market oriented skill development, and long term support mechanisms. Sustainability encourages resiliency, lifelong use of skills, and sustainable socio-economic empowerment, which will benefit the individual and the community at large.

### **Theoretical Background**

This theoretical basis of this article is based on the ideas of human capital theory, women empowerment theory and collective action theory. Human capital theory (Becker, 1964) is of the view that education and skill development increases productivity of the individual, which increases chances of getting employment and earning. Vocational training is a crucial instrument in changing the unskilled labour into productive human capital in the case of rural tribal women and thus enhancing socio-economic development. Women empowerment theory highlights the mechanism through which women have access to resources, decision making authority and self confidence. In addition to developing technical skills, vocational training enhances psychological and social empowerment and, therefore women are able to be more active in household and community events. The theory of collective action supports the work of self-help groups (SHGs), to which women can cooperate and exert collective pressure in order to overcome socio-economic obstacles, use microfinance, and get involved in the world of entrepreneurship. The combination of the development of skills and group action leads to individual and group empowerment, which supports the creation of sustainable

livelihoods. This unified theoretical system emphasizes the interrelations phenomenon between training, empowerment, and collective organization showing that socio-economic developments in rural tribal women hinge on the access to education, institutional assistance, and community involvement. Therefore, the article will take a multidisciplinary theoretical approach to examine the roles played by both vocational training and SHGs in developing employment as well as long-term empowerment to marginalized tribal populations.

### **Research Gap**

The vast majority of literature that exists concerns urban or semi-urban women and does not take into consideration the socio-cultural, educational, and infrastructural peculiarities of communities represented by tribes. In addition, research work tends to discuss skill development at an individual level without taking cognizance of the collective processes, which enable community-based empowerment and sustainable livelihoods prospects, e.g., SHGs. Various researchers have touched upon vocational training and empowerment of women as well as little research has been done specifically to evaluate the effect of both on rural tribal women particularly in Indian context. Empirical evidence also does not exist to support the relation between the vocational training outcomes and creation of employment and socio-economic improvement on particular tribal categories such as the women. Moreover, the contribution of contemporary facilitator's digital marketing, policy underpinning and market-based training has not been studied fully in rural tribal settings. This study has aimed at bridging these critical gaps by addressing the interlink ages of skill development, collective action in terms of SHGs, as well as employment generation and, therefore, offers an all encompassing insight into how vocational training can help in empowering individual women as well as transforming the community among rural tribal women.

### **Importance of the Study**

The research is quite essential because it deals with the topical question of economic marginalization and unemployment of women of the tribes living in rural areas. With the emphasis on the relation between vocational training and collective action, the study highlights realistic ways of sustainable empowerment. The results offer useful information to policy makers, institutions of training, and development agencies to develop programs which are in line with the actual needs of tribal communities. Essentially, the factors that are difficult to comprehend e.g. low literacy, insufficient access to the markets, and inefficient infrastructure can be used to devise more inclusive and culturally forward-looking models of

skill development. Another aspect of SHGs that is pointed at by the study is their potential as an entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and social solidarity platform. Generally speaking, this study is relevant to the national development agendas in gender equality, rural development, and poverty. It highlights the benefits of developing skills and community involvement in tandem with each other to change socio-economic status so that rural tribal women could become self-sufficient providers of their families and communities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The marginalized rural communities such as the rural still experience systemic barriers to education, employment and economic independence especially rural tribal women. Although an impressive number of vocational programs are initiated by the government and NGOs, accreditation and results among tribal women can be quite insignificant since the literacy level is low, and socio-cultural constraints and institutional support levels are low. Most women do learn the basic skills only to fail to use them as a source of sustainable income or as a source of entrepreneurship because of absence of market access, financial support and post training support structures. In addition, the full potential of self-help group (SHG) as a tool of collective empowerment is not utilized in the process of combining vocational training and job creation. This breaks the bridge between the learning of the skills and their economic usage which defeats the vocational program. Hence, the issue is to comprehend how vocational training, with the assistance of collective action via SHGs, may be effectively utilized to improve employability, income earnings, and social empowerment in tribal women in rural areas. The need to address this issue is critical towards developing holistic approaches, which can close the divide between the training programs and actual socio-economic developments in rural tribal settings.

### **Research Objectives and methodology**

The objectives of the study are (1) to evaluate the main gains of vocational training among the tribal women that live in the rural regions, (2) to determine the obstacles experienced during the training process, and (3) to find the impact of the demographic variables, e.g., marital status, on the perceptions of the training effectiveness. The study was conducted on a convenient sample of 200 tribal women. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data and analyzed with descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and one sample t-tests. Results indicate that vocational training does a lot in developing the employability skills, earnings, self-confidence, entrepreneurship, job opportunities and development of the community among the participants.

## Analysis, findings and Results

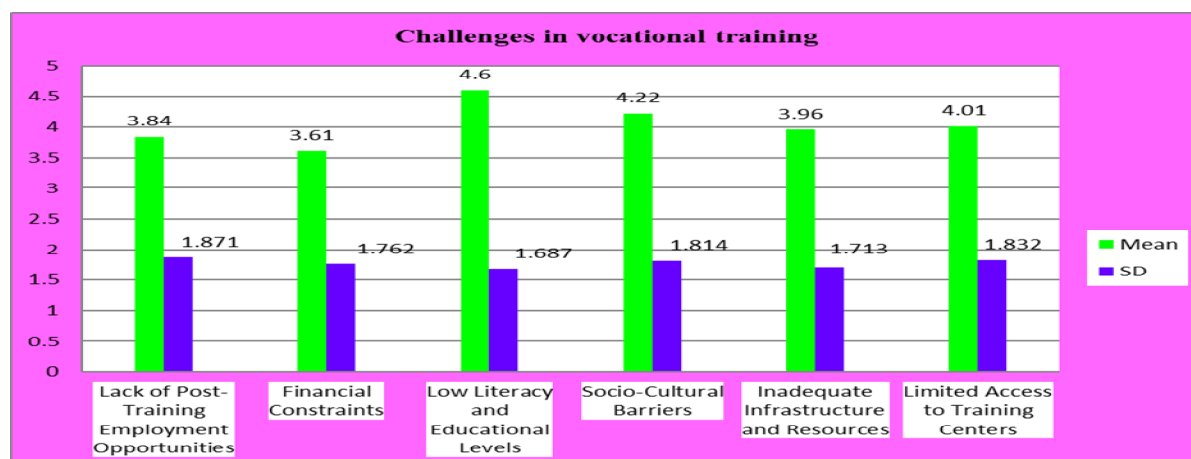
Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant impact of vocational training on the challenges faced by rural tribal women, and these challenges do not significantly affect their participation, skill development, or employment outcomes.

### Results of descriptive statistics

| Challenges in vocational training for rural tribal women | N   | Mean | SD    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-------|
| Lack of Post-Training Employment Opportunities           | 200 | 3.84 | 1.871 |
| Financial Constraints                                    | 200 | 3.61 | 1.762 |
| Low Literacy and Educational Levels                      | 200 | 4.60 | 1.687 |
| Socio-Cultural Barriers                                  | 200 | 4.22 | 1.814 |
| Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources                  | 200 | 3.96 | 1.713 |
| Limited Access to Training Centers                       | 200 | 4.01 | 1.832 |

The descriptive statistics of the issues in vocational training among the tribal women in rural areas show that there are a number of important barriers that influence their involvement and skills training. The most evident problem was low literacy and educational level ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 1.687$ ), and socio-cultural barriers ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.810$ ), and access to training centers ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.832$ ). The other significant problems are poor infrastructure and resources ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.710$ ), absence of post-training work ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 1.871$ ), and limited finances ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 1.762$ ). Such observations indicate that although vocational training programs exist, structural, educational, financial, and socio-cultural obstacles are still in the way of effective participation and realization of benefit.

Chart: 1





### Results of Independent t-test

| Factors                              | Marital Status | N   | Mean | SD    | t     | p    |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----|------|-------|-------|------|
| Accessibility and Availability       | Married        | 100 | 3.91 | .964  | .381  | .459 |
|                                      | Unmarried      | 100 | 3.20 | 1.261 |       |      |
| Quality and Relevance                | Married        | 100 | 4.06 | 1.088 | .209  | .717 |
|                                      | Unmarried      | 100 | 3.06 | 1.051 |       |      |
| Trainers' Competence                 | Married        | 100 | 2.37 | 1.219 | -.276 | .686 |
|                                      | Unmarried      | 100 | 2.55 | 1.323 |       |      |
| Support from Family and Community    | Married        | 100 | 4.05 | .874  | .362  | .753 |
|                                      | Unmarried      | 100 | 3.67 | .981  |       |      |
| Employment Opportunities and Markets | Married        | 100 | 3.82 | .808  | -.423 | .692 |
|                                      | Unmarried      | 100 | 3.02 | .899  |       |      |
| Teaching Methods                     | Married        | 100 | 3.78 | 1.305 | -.381 | .780 |
|                                      | Unmarried      | 100 | 3.11 | 1.456 |       |      |

An independent t-test was conducted to examine whether marital status influenced the perceptions of vocational training factors among rural tribal women. The results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between married and unmarried women across all measured factors. For accessibility and availability, married women reported a mean of 3.91 while unmarried women reported 3.20 ( $t = 0.381$ ,  $p = 0.459$ ). Similarly, quality and relevance ( $M = 4.06$  vs.  $3.06$ ,  $t = 0.209$ ,  $p = 0.717$ ), trainers' competence ( $M = 2.37$  vs.  $2.55$ ,  $t = -0.276$ ,  $p = 0.686$ ), support from family and community ( $M = 4.05$  vs.  $3.67$ ,  $t = 0.362$ ,  $p = 0.753$ ), employment opportunities and markets ( $M = 3.82$  vs.  $3.02$ ,  $t = -0.423$ ,  $p = 0.692$ ), and teaching methods ( $M = 3.78$  vs.  $3.11$ ,  $t = -0.381$ ,  $p = 0.780$ ) showed no significant differences. All p-values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, indicating that marital status does not significantly impact perceptions of vocational training among the participants. These results indicate that married and unmarried tribal women in rural settings are having common experiences and difficulties regarding the possibility to access and utilize the vocational training programs. This results in the ability to plan an intervention and support systems in order to meet the needs of all participants in a unified manner, not making a distinction



between them based on marital status, but aiming to improve the overall training quality, accessibility, and employment outcomes.

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): Vocational training does not produce a statistically significant effect on the key outcomes for participant

#### Results of a one-sample t-test

| Key Benefits of Vocational Training          | N   | Mean | SD    | t-value | p      |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|------|-------|---------|--------|
| Enhanced Employability Skills                | 200 | 3.26 | 1.036 | 7.584   | <0.001 |
| Income Generation and Financial Independence | 200 | 3.51 | 1.158 | 6.057   | <0.001 |
| Empowerment and Self-Confidence              | 200 | 3.30 | 1.201 | 9.203   | <0.001 |
| Promotion of Entrepreneurship                | 200 | 3.29 | 1.065 | 7.241   | <0.001 |
| Reduction of Unemployment                    | 200 | 3.45 | 1.017 | 6.562   | <0.001 |
| Social and Community Development             | 200 | 3.89 | 1.182 | 7.478   | <0.001 |

The t-test was one sample to test the benefit of vocational training received by tribal women in rural areas. The findings showed that the all major benefits, such as improved employability skills ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $t = 7.584$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), earnings and monetary independence ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $t = 6.057$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), empowerment and self-confidence ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $t = 9.203$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), entrepreneurial promotion ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $t = 7.241$ ). These results indicate that the impact of vocational training on rural tribal women is statistically significant and positive; thus, it has positive effects on their employability, income opportunities, self-confidence, entrepreneurial skills, employment prospects, and social and community development which further contributes to the overall socio-economic empowerment of tribal women.

#### Implications

The issues should be tackled through a multi-pronged strategy, which includes improving the literacy levels and the levels of basic education among tribal women, offering culturally sensitive and community-based training programs, improving the infrastructure and resources distribution, improving access to training facilities, and establishing connection to employment opportunities. The policymakers and training providers should also take into account financial support mechanisms and local involvement strategies to make sure that vocational training can be translated into the valuable economic empowerment and further social development of the rural tribal women.

## Recommendations

- 1. Market-Oriented Training:** In market-oriented training, rural tribal women are provided with skills in ways that are directly relevant to the demands of the current market that make them more employable and income-generating. Compared to generic vocational training, market based training focuses on hands on methods, quality procedures, and trends that are applicable in the local and regional markets. This strategy will make the products or the services that women produce competitive, economically viable and demanded. Women acquire skills in business with the technical skills stemming through the incorporation of entrepreneurship, pricing, and consumer preferences into the training modules. This kind of training boosts confidence, innovation and enables women to delve into self-employment. Finally, the market-oriented training enhances the connection between the development of skills and the livelihood sustainability, allowing the rural tribal women to become economically independent and play a significant role in the development of the community.
- 2. Capacity Building of SHGs:** Capacity building of self-help groups (SHGs) empowers organizational, managerial, and operational capacity of the women of rural tribes. Leadership training, financial training, record-keeping training, and group coordination training give the members the power to operate in harmony and make sound decisions. Well functioning SHGs enhance access to credit, joint marketing and skill- sharing programs as well as promote social cohesion and a supportive environment. Capacity building also improves problem solving abilities and makes sure that the groups can carry out their activities on a long time basis. Through empowering SHGs, women will enjoy economic and social empowerment building a conducive atmosphere to ongoing skills application and entrepreneur development.
- 3. Digital Marketing Platforms:** Digital platforms give rural tribal women a chance to access other markets beyond the local markets. Through online marketplace, social media and e-commerce sites, women can sell handicrafts, agricultural goods as well as small businesses directly to consumers without relying on intermediaries. Women training to utilize the digital tools enhances visibility, expands customer reach and competitiveness. Also, online advertising develops finance and financial literacy, record keeping, and management skills. The use of digital resources will guarantee a sustainable source of income, empower women, and make rural populations more innovative and entrepreneurial.
- 4. Policy Support:** The policy support plays an important role in establishing an enabling environment on vocational training and women empowerment. Such government programs, monetary funds, subsidies, and regulatory systems are useful in dealing with structural,

socio-economic, and cultural obstacles among rural tribal women. Policies that favor access to training, microfinance, market connections and social protection guarantee sustainability of the program and equal participation. Also, policy interventions have the potential of supporting the partnership between training providers, SHGs, and local communities to promote the use of skills, generate income, and deepen social empowerment. Proper policy protection enhances the overall role of the vocation programs, which promotes long term financial sufficiency and village building of the tribal women in rural areas.

### **Conclusion**

The article has emphasized the importance of vocational training and self-help groups (SHGs) in the empowerment of tribal rural women, especially among the marginalized groups of the population like the rural. The results indicate that vocational training greatly improves women employability skills, income earning, self confidence, entrepreneurship and social and community development participation. Although this had good results, there are a number of challenges that remain such as low literacy levels, financial issues, socio-cultural, inadequate infrastructure and poor access to high-level training and market opportunities. Such obstacles hinder the maximum benefits of vocational programs and support the importance of specific interventions.

The findings also show that the marital status is not a serious factor affecting perceptions of vocational training, implying that both the married and the unmarried tribal women are challenged by the same factors and have the same opportunities. This observation underscores the need to have an inclusive training methodology that will meet the mutual needs of all participants. Furthermore, empowerment of SHGs has become major consideration in promoting group empowerment, economic stability and development of livelihoods.

A complex approach is mandatory to increase the long-term effectiveness of the vocational programs, which entails market-based training, SHGs capacity building, online marketing solutions, and robust policy advocacy. All these are favorable to sustainable economic growth, entrepreneurship and social inclusion. The community organizations, policymakers, and training institutions should work together to come up with culturally sensitive and need-based programs that can connect skills development with market opportunities.

Through proper facilitation by collective action and institutional support, vocational training proves to be an efficient instrument of breaking the poverty cycle, gender equality, and inclusive rural development. Skills, self help and social solidarity empowers the women in

the tribe not only to make changes to the lives of individuals but also to make the broader socio-economic development of the rural communities.

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