



Skilling Women to Curb Gender Gap and Facilitate Women's Employment: A Journey in the COVID-19 Period

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Abstract: *Women's participation in vocational training is less in number. India's growing economic growth would need 103 million skilled personnels between 2017 and 2022. The number of Indian teenagers (aged 15 to 29) who are not in school, the workforce, or training, however, is over 100 million, with young women accounting for over 88.5 million of this all around. For young women seeking to reach the workforce, in particular, new impediments are being created by the protracted suspension of education and skill-building services during the Covid-19 pandemic. This paper has tried to analyze the status of women in skill development sectors and further initiatives by the government to enrol women at a greater rate in the skilling fields with the help of secondary data resources.*

Keywords: *Women's Participation, Vocational Training, Workforce, Skill-Building Services.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Between 2017 and 2022, India's expanding economy would require 103 million skilled people. However, more than 100 million Indian adolescents (aged 15 to 29) are not in education, job, or training, with young women making up over 88.5 million of this total. Comparatively, men's participation in any type of vocational training increased from 14.6% to 15.7% over the past ten years, while women's participation increased from 6.8% in 2011–12 to 6.9% in 2018–19. Women are overrepresented among trainees in non-engineering, labour-intensive industries and professions. Women continued to be concentrated in traditional, "feminized" industries like beauty, apparel, and healthcare under the umbrella of Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) for temporary skill development, despite making up 49.9% of candidates enrolled over the 2016–2020 period. They were virtually exempted from advanced technology or further mechanized industries. Women made up about 17% of students enrolled in Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) between 2014 and 2019. Compared to 54.7% of non-engineering crafts, women made up only 4.3% of enrollments in engineering trades (NSDC Analysis, June 2020).

2. Objectives of Study :

- To understand the skill development status of women during the COVID-19 period.
- To know the employment opportunity of skilled women in different sectors.
- To understand the employment status of women during the COVID-19 period.
- To understand the different social, personal, interpersonal and economic barriers to women being upskilling.
- To determine the different government initiatives to upskill women during the pandemic situation.

3. Method of this Study :

The data has been collected from secondary sources like other research papers and newspaper reports.

The Degradation in Pandemic and Further Situation-Based Measures

Specifically for young women wanting to enter the workforce, new barriers are being created as a result of the protracted closures of schooling and skill-building facilities amid the Covid-19 pandemic. To further understand these obstacles, a group of colleagues conducted interviews with more than 60 stakeholders from community-based organizations (CBOs),



educational organizations, government units, women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and corporations between September 2020 and May 2021.

▪ **Declining Status of Women in Skill-Sector**

Digital gender gap

A lot of CBOs converted to virtual and WhatsApp-based instruction in several skills during Covid-19. In contrast, 41% of men and 25% of adult females in India owned smartphones in 2020. Consultations revealed that numerous adolescents and females withdrawn from training as a result of lower rate of owning a smartphone and being uninformed about phone features, high data costs, and less attention being devoted to women's skill development. One instance of this is when a Mumbai-based NGO revealed the need for phone sharing due to big family sizes. Women's enrollment in web-based skill training courses has decreased due to a combination of financial limitations that prevented them from purchasing expensive internet packages.

Work without Pay

Before COVID-19, Indian women already put in an average of five hours a day providing care for others, compared to just thirty minutes for men. Women with caregiving duties are discouraged from joining skill centres since there are no creche facilities available. Nearly 45% of women without or not paid labour is related to child-rearing. According to social group consultations, the existence of male family members and kids at residence as a result of the shutdown of industries and schools increased the number of care duties. As an example, an SHG mobilizer in Telangana highlighted that household labour prevented the female residents in her working society from attending training and SHG sessions.

Mobility limitations and commuting options

Prior to lockdown, 28.3% of women registered in ITIs mentioned the inability to commute as the reason they dropped out of skill training. Lockdown procedures hindered the operation of public transport, raised the possibility of gender-based abuse in deserted public areas, and tightened limitations on women's mobility. For example, a Manipur-based CBO reported that women were incapable to re-join training even after lockdowns were lifted and the training centres reopened because they lacked access to transportation.

Social and Family Problems

In a poll conducted before the Covid-19 conference, 58% of women participants mentioned weddings, 21% claimed family problems, and another 7.5% highlighted family perceptions that ITIs were better suited for men as the main reasons they left skill building programmes. According to interviews, families are now much less willing to let young women leave for training after the introduction of COVID-19. As for example, a Delhi-based CBO teaching females to drive cabs encountered far more opposition from families after COVID-19.

Pay disparities and low post-training employment prospects

Women had a lesser chance than men of landing a job, even after training. In comparison to 12.7% of males, 46.9% of female who got formalized vocational education was not pursued the workforce (NSSO 2019). According to an examination of data from 64 ITIs, just 25.6% of female candidates in 2018–19 obtained employment offers. In a poll of employers, 50% of MSMEs and 32% of large businesses said they were reluctant to hire women due to the necessity to ensure their security, the dangers of putting them in positions requiring heavy manual labour, and their desire to work closer to their homes. Women experience gendered wage discrepancies as well. The average pay for female casual employees in metropolitan environments between 1993 and 2018 was 63% of the average pay for men. Consultations revealed that due to recurring adverse macroeconomic conditions and working capital restrictions, gender inequalities could get worse during COVID-19, especially in small enterprises.

🌐 **Skilling Women: Government Initiatives**

- Under the Skill India Mission, the Government of India (GOI) has designated Women as an essential section. Additionally, the GOI's recent announcement to conduct tracer research is an appropriate step to comprehend the relationship between Women's employment and enhancement of skills. The project will measure the effect of PMKVY on women's engagement in the workforce.



- The GOI can consider several additional initiatives that would motivate both government and non-government training providers to carry out gender-neutral skill-building initiatives as the nation proceeds onto a medium-term strategy for economic recovery following COVID-19.
- For all courses covered by the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), the GOI might develop an incentives-based strategy with gender targets. If new training modules are developed for females, or if there is a growth in the enrollment and employment of women candidates, particularly in unconventional commerce, incentive systems could be developed that make collaborators in training qualified for further monetary assistance.
- To evaluate gender mainstreaming activities, including raising awareness, hiring female teachers, and providing counselling services to female candidates and prospective employers, a combined national and state-level rating of training agencies should be developed.
- Additionally, there is a pressing need to build infrastructure that is gender sensitive at institutions for skill building, using purchasing guidelines for private training collaborators under government programmes requiring separate restrooms, stringent protection and a gender-balanced workforce of instructors, and the availability of secured transportation. All public and private skilling institutions should adopt gender-sensitive infrastructure.

4. Conclusion :

The difficulties of getting women back to work have been made more difficult by several long-standing social obstacles, such as discrimination in the workplace, the financial impact of escalating technology and increasing household earnings, that when paired with rising not being paid labour, widening gender gaps in educational attainment, and increased movement limitations as a result of the pandemic. Therefore, the GOI should prioritize closing the gender gap in skill improvement and preparing women for post-Covid-19 industry-ready that is digitized and technology-driven.

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