

The Impact of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana on women's Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Development

Shweta Dwivedi

Research Scholar, MGAHV, Wardha, Maharashtra

Email : shwetangahv@gmail.com

I. Abstract - In India, social and economic empowerment of women is a policy priority and an essential prerequisite for sustainable development, social cohesion and inclusive economic growth. Given increasing global and national economic volatility, skills-based training is opening up new avenues for self-reliance, dignity and economic activity for women. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), as an initiative to impart practical and industry relevant skills for young people, particularly women, has been established in this context to prepare women to engage actively in employment and entrepreneurship. The purpose of this research is to explore how PMKVY has led to transformative change in the lives of women (participants) and the degree to which the PMKVY scheme empowered women's confidence, economic independence, skill and entrepreneurship. This study found that overall and women who underwent skills training experienced increased economic security and opportunities while gaining higher levels of empowerment and self-reliance in decision-making, as evidenced by the large number of women beginning self-employment and small businesses in the sectors of beauty and wellness, tailoring and Embroidery, Retail, Healthcare, IT and food processing. This program not only increased their income, but also allowed them to gain recognition and commitment within their families and community. Literature and previous research show that while PMKVY opens new options for women, they are still challenged to initiate their conditions. For example, no financial support, limited access to credit, no market information, limited digital skills, social constraints, and no family support all demonstrate barriers to women's entrepreneurship and development. Evaluations of PMKVY-2 suggested improvements to post-training support and recommendations for incentivizing market linkages. The program nevertheless serves as a baseline for developing an entrepreneurial identity and self-sustained economy, along with ambitions for women's future. Therefore, PMKVY is well positioned to seed women's empowerment. Sustaining the improvement of women's entrepreneurship and status for equal access to economic opportunity will still improve, building on quality training, industry relationships, digitization of facilities, access to loans, and mentorship.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, Skill development, Entrepreneurship promotion and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

II. Introduction - The economic and social status of women in India has changed significantly over time. In the traditional social order, women were effectively restricted to the familial roles of homemaking, household work, farm labor, and informal labor. In modern-day India, however, the landscape is constantly evolving. For instance, in contemporary India, women are starting to mark their presence in formally recognized contexts in the areas of Education, Science, Technology, Administration, Health care, leadership in social leadership, politics, formal business contexts, and Entrepreneurship to name a few. This is suggestive of a major change in the cultural context, and it is significant, not only in and of itself, but is a necessary part of the story of India's development. The digital revolution, globalization, and economic liberalization is creating new possibilities for women, and as a result working remotely, digital entrepreneurship, selling in online market spaces, engaging in E-commerce, and engaging in skills-based employment, are all domains where women are increasing numbers of women are working in the informal economy. In these changing contexts, various public policy strategies of government are of utmost importance to provide economically empowering opportunities for women through skills training and provision, and through promoting entrepreneurship.

Women represent approximately half of India's population. Therefore, their engagement in the formal economy is crucial for India's development and future direction. Despite this, women's labour force participation is lower than the world's average due to socio-cultural factors and family responsibilities, the assurance of safety to work, financial resources, and lack of skills, among other reasons. In this regard, an understanding of PMKVY's relevance is very important. The PMKVY programme started in 2015 under the Skill India Mission. As the flagship programme under the Skill India Mission, the PMKVY programme has a goal of upscaling young people (especially women) in industry relevant skills, education, training, and skills, and will facilitate opportunities around both employment and self-employment. The PMKVY training program operates under the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), offering short-term training, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and industry models. This means that the training is connected to formal learning and labor market needs.

Under the PMKVY scheme, numerous women have developed skills in sectors based on beauty and wellness, apparel, retail, health, information technology, food processing, and handloom, hospitality and farming. Skills development for their employment and for women for confidence, independence, and entrepreneurship. With this training, women are now starting micro-businesses, service-based ventures, and home-based businesses. Their family income has increased, and furthermore, their identity and influence in their communities have been strengthened. Digital platforms have also helped advance this process with women now selling products online, delivering service-based skills, and digitally managing their finances. In this way, PMKVY provides women's economic opportunity, as well as strives to promote social change and women's leadership.

However, challenges remain for the successful execution of this effort. There are limited vocational training centers across rural areas, women have difficulty gaining access to capital and lending facilities and the lack of market linkages and technical assistance can pose a barrier to early entrepreneurship. There are also limitations to



women's economic advancement as a result of social norms and the lack of family support. Barriers to entry into male-dominated industries and the absence of a long-term supporting framework after training are major hurdles as well. Yet, there is no doubt that Experience has provided a meaningful contribution to women's empowerment. It has improved leadership, financial literacy, social participation, and self-confidence, and there are numerous illustrations where women's participation in Self-Help Groups (SHG), or their performance as users of E-commerce, which facilitates the SHG and the women's role model at the community level.

The objective of this research is to analyze PMKVY's contribution to women's Empowerment, studying the positive impacts, practical experiences, and existing challenges of the scheme. The findings of this research will help the government, skill development institutions, and policymakers understand how the goal of women's empowerment can be achieved more effectively and how skill development programs can be made more robust, inclusive, and useful. Thus, PMKVY is not just an employment or training program, but it is an effort to empower the women of India who have the potential to become powerful drivers of the country's progress.

III. Literature Review - In India, improving the socio-economic situation of women has been a primary concern of the government development agenda for many years. While there are several ways to empower women, the provision of skill-based training has emerged as a strong avenue, not only to improve women's economic potential but to further their self-sufficiency, confidence, and decision-making capabilities. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) was one of the first major initiatives to create new opportunities for women through skill-build training, employment generation, and enterprise opportunity development. This literature review on PMKVY and women's empowerment examines the existing literature relating to skill development, women's empowerment, government intervention, and women's skill training initiatives. Early studies on skill development and women's participation found that skill training is directly linked to women's economic independence (Kabeer, 2016). Skills not only offer technical competence, but they also establish social identity and respect, creating a thought-leadership factor among women. In India, women have traditionally participated in the economy at a poorer rate based on home responsibilities and lack of progressive social norms. Given this, the government launched skill development for gender inclusion (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2018). Research on PMKVY has demonstrated that the scheme trained millions of women, particularly in sectors known to have gendered outcomes which have traditionally attracted women, such as beauty and wellness, tailoring and embroidery, healthcare services, food processing, and retail (Sharma & Gupta, 2020). A notable number of women also went on to create self-employment and micro-enterprises following the training. Some literature had also identified external support (such as access to market, financial support, or digital skills) is a key component to sustain women's businesses after training (Patel, 2021). Studies on the impact of PMKVY in rural areas have indicated that skill training opportunities for rural women are still limited. The distance to training centers, social barriers, and lack of transportation facilities affect their participation (Singh & Verma, 2019). Despite this, where training was available, women showed a significant increase in self-esteem, social identity, and empowerment in family decision-making. An essential factor in PMKVY's success is that the program provides women, who have

traditional skills, with a pathway towards formal certification systems such as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (Pandey, 2022). Women artisans, craftswomen, women in home-based industries and women farmers are among those who have specifically gained from the program. Researchers have made several references to upskilling while also supporting digital literacy. Digital empowerment is particularly important as it becomes increasingly important to people, businesses and institutions (World Bank, 2020). Evidence suggests that women, who received digital training, have successfully transitioned into e-commerce, home-based services and marketing services through social media (Singh & Kaur, 2021). However, research on challenges indicates that the availability of financial resources is critical for sustainable enterprise development after skill training. Numerous women experience obstacles in acquiring loans and investments, which restricts the capability to establish and grow enterprises (NITI Aayog, 2021). Long-standing social norms, family backing and biases tied to gender still continue to obstruct women entrepreneurs (Das, 2022). Therefore, researchers have noted a need for improved financial support and advice, mentorship and improved market linkages, as well as training programs. The literature also reveals that skill development schemes are more effective when linked with community-based support systems. Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are the most successful example of this, where a large number of women have established successful enterprises through skill training, financial inclusion, and community support (NABARD, 2019). In the context of PMKVY, the integration of the SHG model and women's networking framework has also been recommended. The assessment indicates that PMKVY has initiated significant advancement in women's empowerment. The program has done a fantastic job of fostering confidence, self-reliance, and economic empowerment among women; however, the best prospects of long-term impact and sustainability will ultimately rely on the provision of financial grants, the involvement of industry, continued digital education, and social change. To sum it up, PMKVY has become much more than a skills-training program; it is a significant intervention for women's empowerment and social change.

IV. The Present status of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and women's Empowerment – The overarching purpose of PMKVY is to provide skills that are mainly geared towards employment for youth, especially for young women from disadvantaged communities, and to accredit the individuals so they are ready to access the labor market. PMKVY 4.0, the scheme being implemented in the 2022-26 cycle, goes beyond simply training individuals, placing an emphasis on 'candidate-centric' monitoring and tracking after certification; the scheme guidelines explicitly say there should be one year of follow-up with trained individuals and tracking job outcome data, which is essential for assessing effectiveness of the program.

According to government and independent reports, current indicators demonstrate that PMKVY has engaged women on a national scale, with close to 70.96 lakh women trained under PMKVY as of October 2024, which is a high percentage of the overall trained population, indicating some progress at the recruitment level in regard to gender inclusion. However, the training-to-employment transition rate is still small according to the government data and news analysis collected, suggesting that many trained women have not been able to secure permanent



employment yet. This seems to indicate that PMKVY has made progress in training but there are other supports needed to help trained women gain employment or establish successful businesses.

Public statistics and labor force surveys (PLFS/government reports) have also indicated increases in women's labor force participation in recent years, for example, substantial improvements in the FLFPR and WPR have been observed and this suggests that skills and employment policy is influencing overall female participation. A real picture of these macro changes is only possible if detailed data on occupational return from training, job stability, and the successful long-term sustainability of enterprises exists.

The PMKVY women's impact can be assessed through multiple lenses. First is mobility and access: For women in rural locations, distance, available transportation options, and safety all restrict their ability to engage regularly with training. As such, several of the state level proportions appear high only due to localized, center-specific initiatives serving urban populations. Second is the quality and relevance of training: Curriculum at many centers does not align with local market demands, meaning trained women do not have sustained market demand, even if some women are engaged in self-employment. Third is support after training. Even if women have completed course work and skills training, the lack of business planning, connection to market, mentoring, and financing access create a divide between active entrepreneurship and casual self-employment. All of these factors are also captured as improvements for PMKVY 4.0 guidelines, although their implementation on the ground continues to be unfulfilled.

From an economic inclusion viewpoint, when women with training can transition to either self-employment or an entry-level job, we see apparent benefits in household decision making, self-esteem and social status. Multiple field studies and case studies underscore that the opportunity pathways that PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana is typically referred to as PMKVY) affords women in the beauty, textile, food processing, and digital services industries, but absent any guarantees in financial inclusion (micro-loans, SHG linking), digital literacy, and access to e-marketplaces; to correlate the impact on wider planes is improbable for long-term tenure.

In summary, PMKVY has developed the important skills entry points for women's empowerment, and helped to increase skills infrastructure. However, viewing the situation factually shows: (1) access and participation rates have moved up significantly while employment rates remain a secondary and limited outcome. (2) there are disparities in the quality of training and in the post-certification support to women. (3) financial, family, and social barriers remain significant factors inhibiting women entrepreneurs. Addressing all of those issues requires policy priorities that include investment in the quality of training, provision of post-training mentorship, linkage to easy credit, as well as dedicated investments into rural digital infrastructure, at which point the impact of the PMKVY program could then have an impact on women's empowerment.

V. Analysis of the Impact of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and Entrepreneurship Development on Women's Empowerment - The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is one of the key Government initiatives in India for skill development and entrepreneurship development for women. Even though women



constitute nearly half of the Indian population, India has historically low labor force participation rates of women. The PMKVY was launched in 2015 under the Skill India Mission, to expand women's abilities to productive opportunities. The scheme has evolved from a skills training program into a movement for self-efficacy, confidence, and social change among women, especially amongst rural and semi-urban women.

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) provides a structured entry point into vocational skills for many women in training opportunities created specifically for women in beauty and wellness, handicrafts, healthcare, food processing, tailoring, and digital services. The training opportunities were deliberately created to take into consideration the social contexts of women, for example, with the provision of training centers in communities or in a flexible training schedule. Being community-based allows women to remain responsible for household duties while engaging in self-development activities. In sum, thousands of women who prior to PMKVY were confined to household spaces have entered jobs that generate income or launched small businesses. This activity has improved their economic situation significantly, but it has also transformed their identities and social standing.

Financially, programs like PMKVY have provided women with the room to achieve economic independence, leading them to have more say in their families. Surveys conducted in locations such as Chhindwara, Kurnool, and Gwalior indicated that trainers released women to engage in work for higher income, more confidence, and greater pride in their work. Many women have started small businesses: either home-based tailoring or home-based food-service delivery. These businesses help to build the local economy as well as being another source of inspiration in the community. Socially, one of the benefits of PMKVY has been the establishment of safe sites for women to learn and network, cultivating the capacity for women's groups to disturb intergenerational gender norms. In many cases, these sites started as training sites have become nexus points for women working together, sharing ideas, collaborating on problem-solving, and engaging in community decisions.

In spite of these difficulties, PMKVY has established a firm basis for women's empowerment by connecting the women's economic role to social change. Women who have undergone training under PMKVY report being more conscious of their entitlements, more self-assured and are more willing to challenge gender norms. The newest phase of this program, PMKVY 4.0, has added digital literacy, artificial intelligence, and e-commerce skill training to address future work needs. States such as Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu have shown robust outcomes in skill development programs in which skill centers are linked with local industries and self-help groups, using digital platforms like Amazon Saheli and Flipkart Samarth to increase employability and market access.

Ultimately, PMKVY encapsulates the idea of nation-building through women's empowerment. The consequences of such a program cannot be just shown on a higher income but can also be seen in self-confidence, social engagement and advancing together. There still needs to be considerations of things like training quality and post-training support but it still demonstrated the capabilities of skill development as a transformative tool. Women,



who were previously invisible to the economic activity, have now become leaders, entrepreneurs and agents of change; living proof that skills and women's empowerment are essential to building a more inclusive and stronger India.

VI. Conclusion - The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is bringing a new dimension of skill development based on the prevalence of the initiatives role in women's empowerment. In addition to functioning as a training agency for skills with an emphasis on employability, this programme has given women the opportunity to gain self-esteem, self-reliance, and social acceptance. In developing countries such as India, where women represent nearly half of the population, the contribution of women's economic and social capabilities is important to achieving sustainable development. For these reasons UPMKVY has concentrated its effort to support women through education, skills, and entrepreneurship. Data from previous years shows that millions have been trained under this initiative, with significant increases in participation of women. Women in both rural and urban settings delved into training in areas of tailoring, beauty care, health care, food processing, digital marketing, handloom weaving, and agricultural businesses. These sectors not only strengthened their livelihoods, but also increased their confidence and social standing. Many women are now self-employed and have created jobs in their communities through establishing their own micro-entrepreneurships. Therefore, PMKVY has given substance to the idea of women transitioning from 'job seekers' to 'job creators' through women's entrepreneurship development. However, with the benefits of the scheme, some challenges still remain. The most significant challenge is the sustainability of jobs or enterprises post-training. The findings from numerous studies have confirmed that even with training, a substantial number of women cannot secure employment or a prevailing wage suitable to their previous experience or training. Factors contributing to this inability to secure posts or wage employment include lack of access to financial resources, lack of access to loans, lack of market linkages and the socio-cultural sensitivity. In rural settings, women often contend with social barriers, transportation barriers and safety issues which limit their ability to participate in the labor force. Moreover, the quality of multiple training facilities, qualified trainers, and curriculum must be improved. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the significant and multi-faceted changes in women's lives that occurred because of participating in PMKVY. Economically the program empowered women to make independent choices and financially, socially women received respect and decision making power; and emotionally women received a boost in self-esteem, developed leadership capacity, and obtained greater self-confidence as a repercussion of the PMKVY process. This change has had a difference not only at the individual level but also at the family and community levels. When a woman is economically empowered she is better placed to support her children's education, maintain her family's health and wellbeing, and to participate in society in a greater way. The current version of PMKVY (PMKVY 4.0) is entering new areas, including digital skills, artificial intelligence, robotics, data analytics and green technologies. This presents new opportunities for women as future jobs will be based on digital and technical skills. If women receive appropriate training, resources and social support in these areas, then they will not only participate in the Indian economy, but also be competitive on a global scale.

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