

Skill Development and Women's Psychological Empowerment: A Study of Self-Confidence, Problem-Solving and Personal Motivation in Visakhapatnam

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ABSTRACT

Background: Skill development has the potential to contribute to women's empowerment not only through economic opportunities but also by strengthening their psychological and personal capacities. The study aimed to examine the influence of skill development on women's self-confidence, ability to handle problems independently, motivation to pursue and achieve personal goals, and participation in household decision-making.

Methodology: A descriptive research design was adopted, and purposive sampling was used to select 41 women trainees from the Lions Women Vocational Training Center, Visakhapatnam. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using JASP.

Findings: The findings revealed that 85.37% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their self-confidence had increased following skill development. Similarly, 78.05% reported greater ability to handle problems independently, while 78.05% indicated that skill development motivated them to pursue their personal goals. The findings on household decision-making were comparatively mixed,

indicating that personal improvements associated with skill development do not necessarily translate equally into greater decision-making participation within the household.

Conclusion: The study concludes that skill development can contribute to women's psychological empowerment by strengthening self-confidence, independence, and personal motivation, while household and social factors may continue to influence decision-making outcomes.

Keywords: Skill Development, Women's Empowerment, Psychological Empowerment, Self-Confidence, Decision-Making.

1.INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is a multidimensional process through which women gain greater capacity to make meaningful choices and exercise greater control over decisions affecting their lives. It involves changes in access to resources, personal agency, capabilities, and participation in different areas of social and family life (Kabeer, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2002).

Among the different dimensions of empowerment, psychological empowerment is particularly relevant to women's personal development. Improvements in confidence, independence, motivation, and the ability to make and act upon decisions may strengthen women's capacity to participate more actively in their families, communities, and wider society. Skill development can contribute to this process by providing opportunities for women to acquire knowledge, practical competence, and experience in applying newly acquired abilities.

Skill development involves the acquisition of technical, vocational, and other practical competencies that can improve women's opportunities for employment, self-employment, and broader socioeconomic advancement. Its potential benefits, however, may extend beyond economic opportunities by helping women strengthen their capabilities, confidence, independence, and ability to apply newly acquired skills in different areas of life. Research on vocational education and training has similarly highlighted its contribution to broader dimensions of women's empowerment, including psychological and personal outcomes (Mayoux, 2001; Ebrahimi et al., 2022).

In India, the Government has promoted skill development through initiatives under the Skill India Mission, including the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS). While PMKVY provides skill training opportunities to enhance employability, JSS focuses on providing community-based vocational training, with particular priority given to women and other disadvantaged groups (Government of India, 2025). Such initiatives are important not only for improving livelihood opportunities but also for enabling women to develop new capabilities, greater independence, and confidence.

Against this background, the present study examines the psychological and personal dimensions associated with skill

development among women trainees at the Lions Women Vocational Training Center in Visakhapatnam. The study focuses specifically on changes in self-confidence, the ability to handle problems independently, motivation to pursue personal goals, and participation in household decision-making.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review examines previous research on skill development and women's empowerment, with particular attention to its psychological and personal dimensions. It includes international and national studies to provide a broader understanding of how skill development may contribute to women's empowerment beyond economic outcomes. The reviewed studies provide the conceptual and empirical context for the present study and help to situate its findings within existing research.

International Studies

Mayoux (2001) examined the relationship between gender, employment, and small-enterprise development. The study highlighted the importance of creating an enabling environment in which women can use their skills and participate more effectively in economic activities. It also emphasized that training and skill acquisition alone may not be sufficient when women continue to face barriers related to resources, markets, and wider social conditions.

Ebrahimi et al. (2022) investigated the effect of vocational education and training on rural women's empowerment. The study examined different dimensions through which vocational training could contribute to empowerment and demonstrated the importance of considering outcomes beyond employment alone. The study provides useful evidence that vocational education may contribute to broader changes in women's empowerment.

National Studies

Singh et al. (2020) examined vocational training in relation to the economic and psychological empowerment of farm women in Nainital District. Using data from selected

respondents, the study found differences in empowerment between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of vocational training. The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it explicitly considers psychological empowerment alongside economic outcomes.

Mukherjee et al. (2024) examined the relationship between digital skills training and empowerment among unemployed women in India. Using survey data from 6,989 women, the study considered both economic and psychological empowerment. The findings highlighted the importance of how acquired skills are used and experienced in shaping empowerment outcomes. This study is highly relevant to the present research because it directly connects skills training with psychological empowerment among women in the Indian context.

Synthesis

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that skill development and vocational training can contribute to women's empowerment in ways that extend beyond employment and income generation. Existing studies provide evidence concerning economic, social, and psychological dimensions of empowerment. However, empowerment outcomes may vary according to the type of training, social environment, opportunities available to women, and their ability to apply acquired skills in everyday life.

The reviewed studies show that skill development can contribute to women's empowerment, including psychological empowerment, across different training contexts and populations. However, the studies reviewed focus on small-enterprise development, rural vocational education, farm women, and digital skills training among unemployed women. These studies provide important evidence on the broader relationship between skill development and empowerment, but they do not specifically examine the four psychological and personal dimensions addressed in the present study within the context of women receiving vocational training in Visakhapatnam. The

present study therefore focuses on women's self-confidence, ability to handle problems independently, motivation to pursue personal goals, and participation in household decision-making among trainees at the Lions Women's Vocational Training Center.

Need of the Study

Understanding the psychological and personal outcomes associated with skill development is important because the benefits of training may extend beyond the acquisition of vocational competencies and economic opportunities. Examining women's experiences of self-confidence, independent problem-solving, personal motivation, and participation in household decision-making can provide a broader understanding of how skill development contributes to women's empowerment. Such evidence is particularly relevant for training centres, social workers, and other stakeholders seeking to design and strengthen programmes that support women's personal development and broader empowerment.

3.METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the present study is described below, including the research design, research setting, sample and sampling technique, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1 Objectives of the Study

The article was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of skill development on women's self-confidence.
2. To assess the influence of skill development on women's ability to handle problems independently.
3. To examine whether skill development motivates women to pursue and achieve their personal goals.
4. To analyze the role of skill development in enhancing women's participation in household decision-making.

3.2 Research Design: The present study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the psychological and personal dimensions of women's empowerment through skill development. A descriptive research design was considered appropriate for systematically examining the psychological and personal outcomes reported by women who participated in skill development activities.

3.3 Research Setting: The study was conducted at the Lions Women's Vocational Training Center, Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh. The centre provides skill development opportunities for women, making it an appropriate setting for examining their empowerment experiences.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique: The study focused on women who had participated in skill development activities. A sample of 41 women beneficiaries was selected using purposive sampling. The respondents

were women who had completed or were undergoing skill development training.

3.5 Data Collection: The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from women who were undergoing or had completed skill development training through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, research articles, government reports, NGO publications, and relevant online sources. The questionnaire was pre-tested with 15 respondents before the final data collection.

3.6 Data Analysis: The data were analyzed using JASP, and the results were presented through tables and percentages and interpreted according to the objectives of the study.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The following section presents the findings of the study in accordance with its objectives. The results are presented and interpreted through tables and percentages.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Increase in Self-Confidence After Skill Training

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	21	51.22
Agree	14	34.15
Neutral	5	12.20
Disagree	1	2.44
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00
Total	41	100.00

The findings indicate a strong positive influence of skill development on women's self-confidence. More than four-fifths of the respondents (85.37%) either strongly agreed or agreed that their self-confidence increased

after skill training. Only 2.44% disagreed, while 12.20% remained neutral.

These findings suggest that participation in skill development contributed substantially to the respondents' confidence and personal empowerment.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents Based on Their Ability to Handle Problems Independently After Skill Training

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	18	43.90
Agree	14	34.15
Neutral	6	14.63
Disagree	2	4.88
Strongly Disagree	1	2.44
Total	41	100.00

The findings show that 78.05% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they had become more capable of handling problems independently after skill training. A further 14.63% were neutral,

while only 7.32% expressed disagreement. The findings therefore indicate that skill development was associated with improved problem-solving ability and greater personal independence among the respondents.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents Based on Motivation to Achieve Personal Goals After Skill Development

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	19	46.34
Agree	13	31.71
Neutral	6	14.63
Disagree	2	4.88
Strongly Disagree	1	2.44
Total	41	100.00

The findings indicate that skill development had a positive influence on respondents' motivation to pursue personal goals. A total of 78.05% either strongly agreed or agreed that skill development motivated them to pursue and achieve their personal goals. Only

7.32% expressed disagreement, while 14.63% remained neutral. This suggests that skill training was associated with greater personal motivation and a stronger orientation towards pursuing future goals.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents Based on Participation in Family Decision-Making After Skill Training

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	3	7.32
Agree	17	41.46
Neutral	20	48.78
Disagree	1	2.44
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00
Total	41	100.00

Unlike the psychological outcomes, participation in family decision-making presents a mixed outcome. While 48.78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their participation in family decision-making increased after skill training, an equally important proportion (48.78%) remained neutral. Only 2.44% disagreed. This indicates that although skill development may contribute to women's participation in household decisions, changes in decision-making may be slower or influenced by other family and social factors.

Overall Finding

Overall, the findings indicate positive psychological and personal outcomes associated with skill development, particularly in relation to self-confidence,

independent problem-solving, and motivation to achieve personal goals. Household decision-making, however, showed a more mixed pattern, suggesting that improvements in personal empowerment may not immediately translate into greater participation in household decisions.

5.DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study indicate that skill development was associated with positive psychological and personal outcomes among the women trainees. The strongest outcome was observed in relation to self-confidence, suggesting that participation in skill training may contribute to a stronger sense of personal capability. This finding is broadly consistent with Singh et al. (2020), who examined vocational

training in relation to the economic and psychological empowerment of farm women, and with Ebrahimi et al. (2022), who highlighted the broader empowerment potential of vocational education and training. Although the study settings differ, the findings similarly suggest that skill development can contribute to positive changes in women's psychological well-being and personal capabilities.

The findings also indicate improvements in the respondents' ability to handle problems independently and their motivation to pursue personal goals. These outcomes suggest that the benefits of skill development may extend beyond the acquisition of vocational competencies by strengthening women's sense of capability and personal agency. This interpretation is consistent with Kabeer's (2005) understanding of empowerment as involving increased capabilities and agency, as well as with Malhotra et al. (2002), who emphasize women's ability to exercise greater control over decisions affecting their lives. The findings also relate to Mukherjee et al. (2024), which highlighted the relationship between skills training and psychological empowerment among women in India.

However, the findings regarding household decision-making were more mixed. Compared with the stronger outcomes observed in self-confidence, independent problem-solving, and personal motivation, the more cautious pattern in decision-making suggests that personal changes may not automatically result in immediate changes in women's roles within the household. This observation is also consistent with Mayoux (2001), who emphasized that the benefits of skills and employment may be influenced by wider social and environmental conditions. Family and social contexts may therefore continue to shape the extent to which women are able to translate personal confidence and capability into greater participation in household decisions.

Overall, the findings suggest that different dimensions of empowerment may develop at different rates. Skill development appears to

have a more immediate association with personal and psychological outcomes, while changes involving family roles and decision-making may depend on wider social conditions. This reinforces the importance of viewing women's empowerment as a multidimensional process rather than assuming that improvements in one area will automatically lead to changes in all other areas.

6. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Training centres should provide continued guidance, mentoring, and follow-up support to help women sustain the confidence, motivation, and problem-solving abilities developed through skill training.
2. Skill development programmes should incorporate activities that strengthen personal and psychological capacities, including self-confidence, problem-solving, motivation, communication, and decision-making skills.
3. Awareness and family-oriented programmes should encourage greater support for women's participation in household decision-making, particularly because this dimension showed a more mixed outcome than the other psychological outcomes.
4. Training centres should strengthen linkages with employment opportunities, markets, financial institutions, and relevant support services to help women apply their acquired skills and pursue broader personal and livelihood opportunities.
5. Social workers should provide counselling, motivation, follow-up, and linkages to relevant government schemes and support services to help sustain the personal and empowerment outcomes associated with skill development.

7. Social Work Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for social work practice in

promoting women's psychological and personal empowerment through skill development. The positive outcomes observed in self-confidence, independent problem-solving, and motivation suggest that social workers can support women not only in accessing skill training but also in strengthening the personal capacities developed through such programmes. Social workers can provide counselling, motivation, follow-up support, and referrals to relevant employment opportunities, government schemes, and community resources. Given the mixed outcome in household decision-making, social work interventions can also promote family awareness and supportive environments that encourage women's greater participation in household and community decisions.

8. Limitations

The study was limited to 41 women trainees at the Lions Women's Vocational Training Center in Visakhapatnam; therefore, the findings may not be generalised to women participating in skill development programmes in other settings. In addition, the study relied on self-reported responses, which may have influenced the way participants described their experiences and perceived outcomes. Despite these limitations, the study provides useful insights into the psychological and personal outcomes associated with skill development among women trainees.

9. CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that skill development was associated with positive psychological and personal outcomes among the women trainees. The findings particularly indicate improvements in self-confidence, the ability to handle problems independently, and motivation to pursue personal goals. However, participation in household decision-making showed a more mixed pattern, suggesting that improvements in personal confidence and capability may not automatically lead to immediate changes in women's roles within the household.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of viewing skill development not only as a means of improving vocational abilities and livelihood opportunities but also as a potential pathway for strengthening women's confidence, independence, motivation, and broader personal empowerment. The findings further suggest that continued support and supportive family and social environments may be important in helping women translate these personal gains into wider participation and empowerment.

Declaration by Authors

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