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Enhancing employability of rural women under pradhan mantri kaushal vikas yojana (PMKVY)

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Abstract

Women's labor-force participation is widely acknowledged as a critical driver of inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Initiatives for skill development have become essential tools for policymakers looking to improve employability and encourage inclusive growth. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), launched under the Skill India Mission, seeks to provide industry-relevant skill training and certification to youth, including marginalized rural women. Using secondary data from government reports and skill development agencies, the paper aims to analyse the implementation pattern of PMKVY, explores participation trends & sector-wise skill preferences and identify key challenges affecting the effectiveness of the scheme. The study is primarily descriptive and analytical in nature. The findings reveal notable regional differences, with rural and tribal districts facing limitations like restricted access, low awareness, and sociocultural barriers, while urban districts exhibit superior infrastructure, a variety of courses, and higher participation rates. The study further found that women's participation across selected districts ranged approximately from 30-50% with Jaipur and Alwar demonstrating relatively stronger employability outcomes compared to tribal districts. The study concludes that While PMKVY has improved training access and fostered inclusion among disadvantaged groups, its impact is limited by systemic and operational barriers. It highlights the need for a decentralized, demand-oriented, and gender-responsive approach, supported by stronger industry linkages and effective monitoring systems, to improve rural women's employability.

Keywords: *Rural Women, Employability, PMKVY, Skill Development, Women Empowerment*

1 INTRODUCTION

Women's economic participation is a critical factor in achieving inclusive growth, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development. In India, rural women still have lower labor force participation rates than their urban counterparts, despite significant advancements in education and policy changes. Their entry into productive employment is hampered by structural barriers like limited access to formal education, insufficient opportunities for skill training,

sociocultural norms, limited mobility, unpaid care responsibilities, and weak market links. As a result, many rural women continue to work in low-wage, unorganized, and informal sectors with little social security and little opportunity for upward mobility. Therefore, enhancing employability through structured and market-aligned skill development interventions has emerged as a central policy priority. Within this policy landscape, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), launched in 2015 under the Skill India Mission. PMKVY is more than just a training program for rural women; it has the potential to be a tool for socioeconomic change.

Although PMKVY has established a solid framework for women's empowerment and entrepreneurial growth, its long-term success hinges on bolstering post-training assistance, financial access, industry connections, and mentorship (Dwivedi S. 2025). The program aims to increase employability, encourage self-employment, and improve income-generating opportunities by making certified skills in industries like clothing, beauty and wellness, healthcare, retail, food processing, and other service-oriented trades more accessible. Certification under PMKVY is intended to enhance labour market credibility, while placement assistance mechanisms aim to bridge the gap between training and employment. However, a number of contextual factors, such as district-level implementation capacity, alignment with local labor market demand, gender-sensitive outreach strategies, and post-training support systems, are necessary to translate skill acquisition into sustainable employment outcomes.

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), which trained 5,95,133 women in Rajasthan between 2015 to 2025, demonstrates the significant involvement of women in state-level skill development programs. Women make up a sizable share of the beneficiaries when compared to the total cumulative number of trained candidates (roughly 11–12 lakh) across all phases of PMKVY in Rajasthan. This shows that publicly funded vocational training frameworks are progressively incorporating gender equality. Additionally, the recent placement rate of women (~48%) suggests that employment outcomes under PMKVY in 2021–2024 will be nearly gender equal. This implies that in addition to enrolling in training programs, female trainees are effectively transferring into wage employment or other sources of income.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

In order to support and foster skill development throughout the nation, PMKVY launched by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) as a flagship scheme in 2015. By offering short-term, free skill training courses and rewarding them financially for young people earning

certifications for their skills. It is implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under the Government of India. Key components include:

- Short-Term Training (STT)- formal vocational training tied to National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF).
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) - assesses and certifies existing skills of individuals.
- Special Projects - niche or sector-specific training (e.g., digital literacy). Training includes technical, soft skills, entrepreneurship and financial/digital literacy components.

The scheme operates in multiple phases, PMKVY 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, and now the ongoing PMKVY 4.0, which emphasises demand-driven training and inclusion of new age skills like AI, IoT, robotics, and digital technologies. (Times of India)

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bisaria, G., Siddiqui, M. A., & Begum, B. (2026). The study on the topic “*Employability Outcomes of PMKVY Beneficiaries: An Urban–Rural Comparative Study of Lucknow and Kanpur*” examines the employability outcomes of PMKVY beneficiaries through a comparative analysis of Lucknow and Kanpur districts of Uttar Pradesh. The study assesses skill development, employment and entrepreneurial outcomes, training quality, curriculum relevance, post-training support, and the influence of institutions and media, utilizing primary survey data from 768 beneficiaries. Structured questionnaires were utilized for data collection, and the stratified random sampling method was selected as the sampling technique. One-sample proportion Z-tests and chi-square analyses were conducted. The findings show that PMKVY has greatly improved employability and skill development outcomes; however, some institutional mechanisms and curriculum relevance still need to be improved. In order to improve public skill development programs in emerging economies, the study offers policy-relevant insights.

Tiwari, P., & Malati, N. (2023) The study on “*Role of training in women empowerment: an empirical analysis: women empowerment*” examines the role of formal and informal training in women’s empowerment and identifies the constructs of women’s empowerment. 317 women in total took part in the study using a two-stage sample design that included convenience sampling after area sampling. Through exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, the study identified five constructs of women’s empowerment: economic empowerment, family health and well-being, civic empowerment, social empowerment, and educational empowerment. Additionally, the mean scores of all the women’s empowerment constructs were higher for respondents with formal training than for those with informal training; however, the study found no discernible difference between the women’s empowerment constructs of women with formal and informal training.

Nair, M., Shah, K., & Sivaraman, A. (2020) In the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 8, this study on “*Will women be a part of India’s future workforce? A quest for inclusive and sustainable growth in India*” investigates the low and declining rates of female participation in the labor force in India. With particular reference to the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), a national skilling program, primary data was analysed from three Indian districts with high, medium, and low levels of female workforce participation, respectively, in order to identify obstacles and facilitators to labor and skilling. For the purpose of gathering primary data, a survey questionnaire was created, and the answers were analysed statistically and by applying the framework of Rao-Kelleher. The study found that education doesn’t have an effect on women’s job prospects, but things like marriage,

safety while traveling, and being vulnerable to the informal/unorganized market did have an effect on women’s participation in the workforce. Household gender-biased beliefs and norms about menstruation and post-marital gender roles affect women and work. These barriers limit women’s agency and choice, so household, workplace, and societal structures make decisions for them.

Existing studies largely examine PMKVY from a general employability perspective, however district-wise analysis of rural women participation and skill preferences in Rajasthan remains limited. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap.

3 OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse district-wise course offerings and implementation patterns of PMKVY training programs for rural women.
2. To observe the participation trends and sector-wise skill preferences of rural women under PMKVY in selected districts.
3. To identify the key challenges and suggest measures to strengthen PMKVY for improving rural women’s employability.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is primarily descriptive and analytical in nature. The present analysis is based on secondary data collected from official reports of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Rajasthan Skill and Livelihoods Development Corporation (RSLDC), and various published academic studies related to PMKVY implementation from the year 2022-2025.

Table-1 To analyse district-wise course offerings and implementation patterns of PMKVY training programs for rural women:

District Name	Number of Training Centres	Types of Courses Offered	Target Group (SC/ST/OBC/Minority)	Duration of Training
Jaipur	241	Beauty & Wellness, Retail,	OBC, Minority, SC	200-320

		IT/ITES, Tailoring, Handicrafts		Hours
Udaipur	26	Handicrafts, Hospitality, Apparel Making, Tourism Services	ST, SC, Minority	180-300 Hours
Banswara	14	Handloom & Textile, Agriculture Allied Skills, Self-Employment Skills	ST (Major), SC	160- 280 Hours
Jodhpur	41	Solar Technician, Retail Sales	SC, ST, OBC	180-320 Hours
Alwar	98	Apparel Made-Ups, Healthcare Assistant, IT-ITeS Courses	Minority, SC, ST	180-350 Hours

Source: Compiled by author based on MSDE, NSDC and RSLDC Reports

5 ANALYSIS & DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of implementation patterns under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana indicates that the program has established a considerable training infrastructure across selected districts of Rajasthan. The initiative specifically aims to assist socially disadvantaged groups, including Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and minority communities, to foster inclusive skill development. With the greatest concentration of centres and a varied range of courses (IT/ITES, retail, beauty, and wellness), Jaipur represents a developed, market-driven ecosystem propelled by urbanization, improved infrastructure, and close proximity to industry. These circumstances improve employability prospects, but evidence indicates that, even in urban settings, skill-job mismatches and aspirational differences frequently result in a gap between training and actual job placement (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship [MSDE], 2023; National Skill Development Corporation, 2023). However, districts with a large tribal population, such as Udaipur and Banswara, show a different pattern. The majority of the courses are traditional and livelihood-focused, covering self-employment skills, handicrafts, and activities related to agriculture. This shows an effort to match training to regional cultural and economic contexts. However, the small number of training facilities, 26 in Udaipur and 14 in Banswara, indicates issues with accessibility and infrastructure.

Women's participation and skill diversification are further limited by low literacy rates, sociocultural limitations, and geographic isolation. Because of this, employment outcomes in these districts are frequently limited to the informal or low-income sectors. With 41 training facilities and technical courses like solar technician and retail sales, Jodhpur offers a transitional model. This suggests a slow transition towards new industries like renewable energy, which are motivated by environmental concerns and regional development policies. However, the district may not have fully diversified its skill offerings, which would limit broader employability prospects, as indicated by the relatively narrow course range. With 98 training facilities, Alwar exhibits a balanced approach by providing both service-oriented (IT-ITeS, healthcare) and industrial (clothing manufacturing) courses. Because of its close proximity to industrial corridors and the National Capital Region (NCR), training programs are now more job-oriented. This improves women's employment prospects, especially in formal sector positions.

These differences between districts can be explained by a number of factors. The degree of urbanization is important because urban areas gain from improved connectivity, infrastructure, and private sector involvement. The focus on inclusive and traditional skill training is influenced by social composition, especially the concentration of SC/ST populations, while the type of courses offered is determined by

economic base and industrial presence. The reach and caliber of training programs are also impacted by district-specific differences in institutional coordination and policy implementation capacity.

This pattern has both beneficial and challenging outcomes. Positively, training tailored to a particular region increases relevance and motivates rural

women to participate. Incorporating marginalized groups fosters empowerment and social justice. However, rural and tribal districts lag behind urban centres due to differences in infrastructure and course diversity. The absence of opportunities in high-paying and emerging industries acts as a barrier to upward mobility.

Table-2 To observe the participation trends and sector-wise skill preferences of rural women under PMKVY in selected districts:

District	Major skill preference chosen by rural women	Nature of local economy	Reported Women Participation Trend (%)
Jaipur	Beauty & Wellness, Retail, IT/ITES, Tailoring	Urban-industrial & service hub	45-50%
Udaipur	Tourism & Hospitality, Handicrafts, Apparel	Tourism-driven economy	35-40%
Banswara	Tailoring, Agriculture-based skills, Handicrafts	Tribal & agrarian economy	30-35%
Jodhpur	Handicrafts, Apparel, Beauty Culture, Retail	Handicraft & MSME-based economy	40-45%
Alwar	Manufacturing, Electronics, Retail, Beauty	Industrial belt (Bhiwadi region)	40-48%

Source: Compiled by author based on MSDE/RSLDC/NSDC Reports

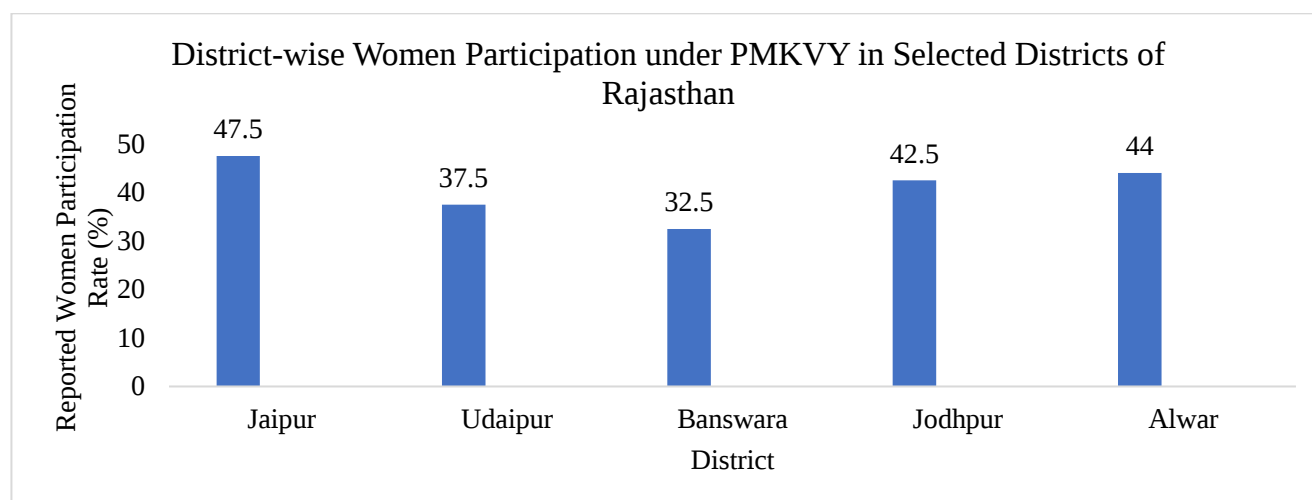


Figure 1.1 shows Approximately women participation rates based on midpoint values derived from the reported range.

Source: Compiled by the author based on PMKVY/MSDE/RSLDC Reports

The district-wise analysis of skill preferences and participation of rural women under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana reveals both regional differences and the underlying causes influencing women's decisions and results. Tailoring, handicrafts, beauty services and tourism & hospitality continue to be rural women's top training sectors, according to sector-wise preference analysis. These sectors are usually preferred because they require less training time and provide opportunities for local employment or self-employment. These industries offer chances for home-based work, which is consistent with rural social structures, and are historically recognized professions for women. The shift of rural women from unpaid or informal work to semi-formal and formal employment, which results in higher income levels and economic independence, is a major effect of PMKVY in all of the districts that were chosen. Higher participation rates and diversification into contemporary, market-oriented skills like IT/ITES, retail, and manufacturing make Jaipur and Alwar stand out as high-performing districts. These districts demonstrate PMKVY's success in bringing rural women into the formal economy through improved awareness, infrastructure, and job connections. Rural women in Jaipur show the highest participation under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, with a growing shift towards IT/ITES and retail sectors due to better training infrastructure and urban exposure. **(The Times of India)**

The strengthening of traditional livelihoods with modern skill certification is evident in Jodhpur and Udaipur. Handicrafts, clothing, and hospitality-related skills are preferred by women because they support local economic activities like tourism and handicraft industries. In addition to maintaining cultural skills, this increases revenue through increased productivity and market connectivity. Women in Jodhpur are combining traditional handicraft skills with formal training, leading to improved income and market linkages in MSME sectors. **(The Hindu)**

Banswara, on the other hand, exhibits gradual but noteworthy socioeconomic inclusion. The lower participation rate suggests enduring obstacles like low awareness and limited mobility. However, because they are simple to learn, require little financial outlay, and fit in with household duties, women favour skills related to agriculture and tailoring. All things considered, PMKVY has resulted in multifaceted empowerment, including greater self-assurance, the capacity to make decisions, and financial inclusion. The variance in skill preferences makes it evident that rural women typically select training programs that are economically feasible, culturally appropriate, and locally relevant. This highlights the significance of region-specific skill development strategies for optimizing employability outcomes.

Table-3 To identify the key challenges and suggest measures to strengthen PMKVY for improving rural women's employability:

Category of Challenge	Specific Barrier	Impact on Rural women
Awareness & Outreach	Low awareness about PMKVY in rural areas	Women remain excluded from enrollment
Socio-Cultural Barriers	Early marriage, mobility restrictions, gender norms	Low participation & high dropout rates
Financial Constraints	Hidden costs (travel, materials), delayed incentive	Dropouts due to financial burden
Educational Constraints	Low literacy and digital illiteracy	Difficulty in understanding training content
Accessibility Issues	Training centres far from villages, poor transport	Women cannot travel regularly

Skill–Industry Mismatch	Courses not aligned with local job market	Low employability after training
Safety & Mobility	Concerns about safety while travelling/training	Restricts participation of young women
Placement Issues	Low placement rates (~40–45%), jobs far from home	Women unable/unwilling to migrate
Infrastructure Gaps	Lack of proper facilities, internet, equipment in rural centres	Poor quality training experience

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) implementation in Rajasthan demonstrates the intricate interplay of institutional, sociocultural, and structural issues that impede rural women's employability. Women's participation in skill-training programs is hampered at the grassroots level by low awareness and ineffective outreach strategies, especially in rural and tribal areas. Low participation and high dropout rates are also caused by sociocultural barriers like early marriage, gender norms, and mobility restrictions. Furthermore, learning is significantly hampered by low literacy and digital illiteracy, which lowers training effectiveness. Rural women are disproportionately affected by accessibility issues, such as remote training facilities and poor infrastructure, particularly in remote areas. To address these challenges, there is a need for a localized, demand-driven, and gender-sensitive approach.

Measures to Strengthen PMKVY for Improving Rural Women's Employability:-

- Conduct regular awareness campaigns at the Panchayat (village) level & Utilize SHGs and Anganwadi networks for mobilization.
- Introduce women-only training batches and organize family counselling and community sensitization programs.
- Introduce pre-skill basic literacy and numeracy programs and integrate digital literacy.
- Ensure industry certification for better employability.
- Encourage women to start micro-enterprises (tailoring, handicrafts, food processing).
- Strengthen the focus on experiential training and on-the-job learning opportunities.

- Strengthen linkages with local industries (MSMEs, handicrafts, agro-processing).
- Promote Public–Private Partnerships (PPP) for infrastructure development.
- When necessary, offer secure transportation and hostel accommodations and make sure training facilities are secure and welcoming to women.
- Establish district-level placement cells for trained rural women.
- Ensure timely and transparent Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) payments and Provide stipends and travel allowances for women trainees.

6 LIMITATIONS

The study is based on secondary data and selected districts only. Therefore, findings may not represent all regions of Rajasthan. One of the major limitations of the present study is the limited availability of comprehensive and consistent secondary data. District-wise and gender-disaggregated information on key indicators such as enrollment, certification, placement, and post-training employment was not uniformly available across all years.

7 CONCLUSION

The implementation of PMKVY training programs across selected districts of Rajasthan demonstrates significant progress in skill development among rural women, especially in traditional livelihood sectors such as tailoring, handicrafts, and beauty services. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana completion rate for rural women indicates how well skill development programs convert enrollment into successful certification. Completion rates in Rajasthan typically fall between 60% and 75%,

indicating a moderate level of trainee retention over the course of the training cycle. However, the socioeconomic and infrastructure conditions at the district level affect participation and placement results. Barriers such as limited mobility, literacy gaps, and a weaker industrial presence are relatively more prevalent in tribal districts. Enhancing digital literacy, encouraging self-employment, upgrading transportation infrastructure, and forging closer industry ties can all significantly improve rural women's employability outcomes. The results show that PMKVY has significantly increased rural women's access to skill training, especially those from marginalized groups like SC, ST, OBC, and minority communities, thereby promoting social inclusion and economic participation. The study highlights the need for a more decentralized, demand-driven, and gender-sensitive approach to skill development in light of these findings. Improving employability outcomes requires fostering industry connections, encouraging hands-on and experiential learning, and coordinating training initiatives with regional economic opportunities. Furthermore, raising awareness, guaranteeing improved infrastructure, and offering institutional and financial support can greatly boost rural women's participation and retention. Sustainable livelihood opportunities can be further created by promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship through convergence with programs like the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). These focused interventions can guarantee that skill development programs not only improve employability but also support inclusive rural development and the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

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