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Vocational training on garment construction: A pathway to economic empowerment

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Abstract

Background: Women in rural India face socio-economic constraints. This may lead to limited mobility, skill development and economic participation. Capacity building through skill-based training is an effective strategy to make these women self-reliant and achieve economic stability.

Objective: The objective of this study was to assess the impact of garment construction training on gains in knowledge, perceived benefits, and adoption of entrepreneurial activity among rural women of Palwal district, Haryana.

Methodology: This study was conducted in Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mandkola. 60 scheduled caste rural women were selected purposively based on prior tailoring exposure. A five-day intensive training program was conducted which comprised of motivational lectures, demonstrations and hands-on practice on garment construction, bag making, and embellishment techniques. Data were collected using a pre-tested interview schedule, before and after six months of training.

Results: After getting training there was a significant improvement was observed across all activities in terms of technical knowledge gain. Ability to stitch pent and flared palazzo increased from 11.7% to 90%, designer suits from 3.33% to 71.7%, and jute bag making from 6.7% to 100%. Approximately 35% of women stitched garments at home to generate income. which was utilized mainly for family needs and children's education. Major constraints in entrepreneurial activity included delayed payments, market competition, and short training duration.

Conclusion: The study showed that there was an increase in knowledge of respondents regarding cutting and stitching of garments, making different designs of bags, cushion covers, and embellishment of clothes. Many women adopted tailoring as an income-generating activity.

Keywords: Rural women, women empowerment, garment construction, Knowledge and adoption

Introduction

Women play an important role in the economic and social development of any country. In India, nearly half of the population is female, but many women, especially in rural areas, continue to face challenges that limit their growth and independence (Census of India 2011). They have fewer opportunities for education, skill development, and employment compared to men. Due to cultural and social norms, their mobility outside the home is limited, which reduces their exposure and confidence to work independently (Nazir, *et. al.*, 2012) ^[9].

Most rural women spend their time doing household chores and helping in agriculture, but their work is often not recognized as productive. They lack skills that can help them earn an income and become self-reliant (Devi, U., 2014) ^[4]. Economic independence is one of the strongest tools for women's empowerment, as it improves their status within the family and community and gives them confidence to make decisions about their lives (Prema B. Patil, 2023) ^[11].

Clothes are a basic need of each individual. Tailoring is a skill which is relatively easier to learn and can be practiced within the safety and comfort of one's home. Women who

are training in garment construction can generate a regular stream of income by making it for themselves, their families and other families of the village. Such training not only provides them with a means of livelihood but also enhances their self-confidence and improves their social status (Anju, 2021) ^[1].

Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) play a major role in building skills among rural women by organising short-term vocational training programmes. These programmes focus on practical learning and motivate women to take up small enterprises for additional income (Bala, K., 2019) ^[2].

Keeping this in mind, the present study was conducted to assess the impact of garment construction training on rural women. The study aimed to find out whether their knowledge and skills improved after the training, if they adopted tailoring as a source of income, and what challenges they faced in starting their own work.

Methodology

The present study was conducted at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Mandkola, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana state. A total of 60 scheduled caste rural women respondents of Palwal district were selected

purposively, who had basic knowledge of paddling the machine. Interested women were selected and divided into two groups having 30 respondents in each group. A five-days training program was organized separately for each group at KVK, Mandkola. The knowledge of women enhanced through motivational lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on training. Training were conducted on simple and designer ladies suit, Pent and flared palazzo, Jacket, Blouse & Petticoat, Cutting & Stitching of Bag and cushion cover, embellishment of clothes and other domestic utility items in order to pursuit their own enterprise. Printed literature related to training was also provided to each participant. Impact of the training was assessed in-terms of knowledge gain, Perceived benefits and adoption of garment construction as an entrepreneurial activity. The data were collected personally before training and after six month of training by using pre-structured interview schedule.

Data analysis

The collected data were compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequency and percentage were calculated to present the distribution of responses. Gain in knowledge was calculated by comparing pre- and post-training scores. Mean scores were used to rank the usefulness of different activities as income-generating

options.

Results

Table 1 shows the women's knowledge about garment construction and their entrepreneurial potential. The highest ability of tailoring was observed in stitching of pent and flared palazzo, which improved from 11.7% to 90%, followed by simple ladies suit, which increased from 10% to 86.7%. Ability to stitch a jacket increased from zero to 85%, and designer suit increased from 3.33% to 71.7%. The knowledge gain was recorded between 65% and 85%, indicating a very high level of improvement. Similarly, the knowledge score regarding cutting and stitching of bag and cushion cover before imparting training ranged between 3.33% to 15%, which improved significantly to 71.7%-100%. The highest gain in knowledge was observed in jute bag making (93.33%), followed by cotton picking bag (73.33%), multipurpose bag (70.00%), and school bag (68.33%).

Training also covered value addition of clothes, leading to significant improvements in skills such as hand embroidery (3.33% to 41.66%), sequencing (3.33% to 55%), and tie & dye (zero to 85%). Knowledge gain was improved significantly up to 85.0 percent.

Table 1: Women's Knowledge about garment construction and their entrepreneurial potential N-60

Sr.no	Knowledge Component	Pre- Exposure	Post Exposure	Gain in Knowledge
1	Garments Construction			
	Simple ladies suit	06 (10.00)	52 (86.70)	46 (76.70)
	Designer suit	02 (3.33)	43 (71.70)	35 (68.33)
	Pent and flared palazzo	07 (11.70)	54 (90.00)	47 (78.33)
	Jacket	00 (0.00)	51 (85.00)	51 (85.00)
	Blouse & Petticoat	00 (0.00)	39 (65.00)	39 (65.00)
2	Cutting & Stitching of Bag and cushion cover			
	Jute Bag	04 (6.70)	60 (100.00)	56 (93.33)
	School Bag	02 (3.33)	43 (71.66)	41 (68.33)
	Multipurpose Bag	05 (8.33)	49 (81.66)	44 (70.00)
	Cotton picking bag	00 (0.00)	42 (73.33)	42 (73.33)
	Cushion cover	09 (15.00)	60 (100.00)	40 (66.70)
3	Embellishment of clothes			
	Hand embroidery	02 (3.33)	25 (41.66)	23 (38.33)
	Sequencing	02 (3.33)	33 (55.00)	31 (51.66)
	Tie and dye	00 (0.00)	51 (85.00)	51 (85.00)

Table 2 shows the preferential choice of women regarding usefulness of garment construction. Majority of women reported that stitching of designer suit was very useful and received Rank I (MS 3.11), followed by simple ladies suit (MS 2.93). For cutting and stitching of bags, and cushion cover, multipurpose bags occupied first ranked (MS 3.33) which was followed by cushion cover (MS 3.21), jute bag

(MS 3.16), and cotton picking bag (MS 3.08). Lowest rank was allotted to School bags (MS 2.91). Non availability of raw material in village itself and high cost of material might be the reason. On the other hand sequencing got first rank with MS 3.23 followed by hand embroidery (MS 3.13) and Tie and dye is on third rank.

Table 2: Preferred choice of respondents regarding usefulness of training for learning of garment construction

Article	Choice				Weighted Mean Score	Mean Score	Rank
	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful			
Stitching of garments							
Simple ladies suit	19	21	17	03	176	2.93	II
Designer suit	22	25	11	02	187	3.11	I
Pent and flared plazo	14	25	18	03	170	2.83	III
Jacket	14	17	25	04	161	2.68	IV
Blouse & Petticoat	12	18	23	07	155	2.58	V
Cutting & Stitching of Bag and cushion cover							
Jute Bag	21	28	11	00	190	3.16	III
School Bag	23	15	16	06	175	2.91	V
Multipurpose Bag	27	26	07	00	200	3.33	I
Cotton picking bag	24	20	13	03	185	3.08	IV
Cushion cover	26	23	09	02	193	3.21	II
Embellishment of clothes							
Hand embroidery	26	21	08	05	188	3.13	II
Sequencing	29	19	09	03	194	3.23	I
Tie and dye	28	15	12	05	186	3.10	III

Results presented in Table 3 showed that majority of women perceived training helped them to enhanced knowledge about stitching of clothes (85%), acquired efficiency in drafting and cutting (81.7%), built confidence in stitching

suits without any help (76.7%), and acquired efficiency in stitching bags (71.7%). Table further shows that 65% respondents perceived that they learned new garment designs, while 43.3% found it beneficial for clearing doubts.

Table 3: Perception of rural women regarding benefits of training N-60

Sr no.	Perceived Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
1	Enhanced Knowledge about stitching of clothes	51	85.00
2	Acquired efficiency in drafting and cutting	49	81.70
3	Build confidence in stitching of suits without any help	46	76.70
4	Learned new designing of garments	39	65.00
5	Clarification of doubts	26	43.33
6	Build confidence in establishment of own boutique/ tailoring shop	41	68.33
7	Build confidence in embellishment of clothes	35	58.33
8	Acquired efficiency in bag making	43	71.70

*Multiple responses

Table 4 shows that after training, 35% of respondents adopted stitching for household purpose, 31.7% stitched bags and ladies suits for commercial purposes at home, and 21.6% ran their own tailoring shop in their village. However, 11.7% did not adopt tailoring due to lack of family cooperation and credit facilities.

Table 4: Adoption status of respondents after training N-60

Sr no.	Adoption status	Frequency	Percentage
1	To run tailoring shop in village	13	21.6
2	Stitching bag and ladies suit at home as commercial purpose	19	31.7
3	Adopted stitching for household purpose	21	35.0
4	Not adopted	07	11.7

Table 5 shows that 100% of respondents felt that the training duration was very short. Other constraints included less time for household activities (90.6%), not getting the right price (87.5%), tough market competition (78.1%), hard work (81.2%), availability of high-quality readymade garments (84.3%), and irregular work availability (84.3%).

Table 5: Constraints faced by respondents after starting tailoring for income generation N-32

Sr. no.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	Not getting stitching charges in time	18	56.2
2	Tough competition in market	25	78.1
3	Less time left for household activities	29	90.6
4	Short training duration	32	100.0
5	Not getting right price	28	87.5
6	Hard work	26	81.2
7	High quality readymade garments available in market	27	84.3
8	Not getting regular work	27	84.3

*multiple choice

Discussion

The findings of this study show that garment construction training significantly improved the technical knowledge and skills of rural women. The gain in knowledge and skills due to vocational training show that short-term trainings can empower women by equipping them with essential skills. After exposure to the trainings, women developed a better understanding and were able to stitch different types of garments and bags.

The results of our study are in line with the study by Purohit *et al.* (2016) ^[12], who reported that 88.23 percent of respondents had increased knowledge about stitching activity and 76.47 percent learned drafting and stitching of new garments such as jhabla, frock, lehenga, petticoat, salwar suit, gown, blouse, and rajputi dress during training. Similar trends were observed by Devi *et al.* (2020) ^[3], who found significant gain in knowledge of rural women regarding preparation of creative trimming, designing techniques, and surface embellishment techniques. Anju *et al.* (2021) ^[1] also reported that in their experimental group, 86.66 percent and 60.0 percent of respondents had high levels of skill in jute bag and hand bag making. These findings are further supported by studies conducted by Nazir *et al.* (2012) ^[9], Sabharwal *et al.* (2012) ^[13], and Malabasari *et al.* (2016) ^[7], who highlighted the effectiveness of skill-based training programmes in enhancing knowledge and skills among rural women.

Regarding perceived benefits, most women felt that training enhanced their knowledge about stitching clothes, improved their efficiency in drafting and cutting, and built confidence to stitch suits without any help. Many respondents also acquired efficiency in bag making and learned new designing of garments. However, despite these improvements, women faced some constraints in adopting tailoring as a full-time income-generating activity. These included short training duration, lack of time due to household responsibilities, not getting the right price for their work, tough market competition, and unavailability of regular work. Similar constraints were reported by Purohit *et al.* (2016) ^[12], who mentioned that lack of time due to sewing work and difficulty in managing household tasks were problems faced by many respondents, and that it takes time to gain credibility among customers.

Overall, the study shows that garment construction training plays an important role in empowering rural women by enhancing their skills, building confidence, and providing them with an opportunity to earn an income. Addressing the constraints identified in this study can further strengthen tailoring as a sustainable livelihood option for women and help them achieve economic independence.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above findings it could be concluded that there was increase in the knowledge of respondents on cutting and stitching of garments, different designs of bags, cushion cover and embellishment of clothes. Majority of people adopted it as income generating activity. During this journey respondents faced some problems in running their tailoring enterprise, like not getting payment in time, tough competition in the market and less time left for household activities. Despite these problems, women perceived that training was helpful in acquiring efficiency in drafting and cutting and stitching of garments. It was also helpful as they learned new designs of garments. Tailoring helped them in earning money for their better livelihood and has transformed their lives. Many women were able to setup a profitable venture.

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