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## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF MCED TRAINING PROGRAMS IN NAGPUR DISTRICT

**Shriyani P. Sudame**  
B.E., M.B.A, M.Com., Researcher.

**Dr. Chandrahas A. Dixit**  
M.Com. M. Phil. Ph.D. SET, Supervisor, Professor,  
Department of Commerce, C.P. Berar E.S. College, Nagpur.

### ABSTRACT

The current study has been a well-exhaustive verdict on the training programs extended in the Nagpur district, especially for the female population in Multi-Craft Entrepreneurship Development (MCED) and their training for skills with a view to empowering marginalized women. It assesses the effectiveness of different training programs focused on skills improvement, enhanced socioeconomic status, self-confidence, and the entrepreneurial capacity of female participants. The collection of data from 250 interviewees by structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews combined both quantitative and qualitative research. In conclusion, the study results show that the MCED programs have contributed significantly to the economic independence of the participants. The research on women is interesting at running numbers of 78.0% of women trained acquiring business activity with improved monthly incomes post-training measured at 65.5%. At the front, this indicates the crucial variables, including the quality of training delivery, available resources, family, and market-existence linkages. But while there are these levers for success, some challenges impede their realization, such as women's access to credit, the inadequacy of infrastructure, and claims of social bans. Therefore, the capability of MCED programs whose effects are considerably mediated by giving out financial help to such women, continuous mentorship, and approaches to find markets needs to be seen from the perspective of their potential to propel women's empowerment.



**KEYWORDS:** Women Empowerment, Skill Development, MCED Training, Entrepreneurship, Nagpur District

### INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment plays a significant role in sustainability goals in contemporary society. In India, there is lots of progress towards gender equality under the law and the constitution, yet women still grapple with serious economic inequalities and lack of access to productive resources. If women can participate more in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship training, then they can directly contribute to poverty reduction in an economy, become self-employed, and increase the wealth and well-being of their families. Globalization also brings about many opportunities for women in the local and international labor markets.

While boasting a significant industrial footprint among Indian regions, Nagpur District in Maharashtra has indeed undergone large economic development effects. However, a substantial proportion of the local women's population was sidelined from the mainstream economic activities. Skills training programs, particularly Multi-Craft Entrepreneurship Development (MCED), have come up as alternatives to bridge this gap. Generally, these programs provide training in multiple skill domains like tailoring, food processing, handicrafts, digital literacy, and small enterprise management, hence enabling women to set up their independent sources of income.

Under the wings of the government, non-governmental organizations and private bodies work in Nagpur District. MCED training paradigms work within the community, attending to no education, health, or standard of living needs and giving no alternate options for sustenance. The underlying fundamentals of such programs believed that the acquisition of skills is not only a way to make income but also a major path to a broader power understanding that includes increased right of decision-making, having more social precedence, and, of course, better access. This study systematically examines the impacts and effectiveness of such methods while looking at the transformation of women's lives after they underwent training.

### Objectives of Research:

- 1) To assess the effectiveness of MCED training programs on enhancing skill acquisition and technical competencies among female participants of the Nagpur District.
- 2) To assess the impact of focused skill training on income-generation and economic independence among trained women.
- 3) To examine socio-economic empowerment outcomes along the lines of employment status, asset creation, and decision-making after training.
- 4) To appraise the bar limit and challenges faced by skill development programs in promoting women's empowerment.
- 5) To analyze the role of institutional support, market linkages, and credit in the success of the program.

### Research Methodology:

A hybrid methodology can be used in this study, in particular, one that follows two approaches: qualitative and quantitative, in order to perform a process evaluation of MCED training programs in Nagpur District. The number is virtually based on qualitative data, which is well positioned in terms of outcomes, mechanisms, contextual factors, and participant experiences. It is a group of 250 women, aged 18-55, who will be taken from various MCED programs, with 45 in-depth interviews. Data are collected by research tools, such as structured questionnaires, together with interviews. Measuring the achievements in terms of benefits, competencies, empowerment, and program details is also covered in this data gathering. This methodology involves analysis of data through descriptive statistics and inferential results at the quantitative front and possibly through thematic multiplicity at the qualitative front. Formulating a combination of such methods can further clarify the impact of programs.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation:

#### Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Value
Total Participants	250
Average Age (years)	34.6
Educational Background - Primary	28
Educational Background - Secondary	42
Educational Background - Higher Secondary	22
Educational Background - Graduate	8
Marital Status - Married	73

Marital Status - Widowed/Separated	15
Marital Status - Single	12
Average Household Size	4.8
Employment Status - Informal	82
Average Monthly Household Income (Rs.)	6840
Urban Area (%)	56
Rural Area (%)	44

The study sample was made up of 250 women, who were, on average, 34.6 years (SD=9.8) of age. The educational levels were distributed as follows: 28% were educated to primary school only, 42% had completed secondary education, 22% up to higher secondary, and 8% had graduated. Family composition analysis indicates that 73% of the women were married, 15% were widowed or separated, and 12% were single women. The average family size was 4.8. More than four out of five (82%) were earning their livelihoods informally (e.g., as housemaids, as wage laborers, or in petty sales), and the average income of their households per month was Rs. 6,840 (approximately \$82 USD). Nearly 56% lived in urban areas, while 44% lived in rural areas.

### Training Characteristics and Participation

Category	Value
Training Duration - 3 months	None
Training Duration - 6 months	64
Training Duration - 9-12 months	None
Skill Domains - Tailoring & Garment Construction	35
Skill Domains - Food Processing	28
Skill Domains - Handicrafts	22
Skill Domains - Digital Literacy	15
Trainer Experience (years)	8.4
Trainer Qualification - Diploma	58
Trainer Qualification - Bachelor's or Higher	42
Average Training Hours	120
Practical Training (%)	72
Theoretical Training (%)	28
Learning Material Provision - Adequate	72
Learning Material Provision - Partially Adequate	18
Learning Material Provision - Inadequate	10

Most programs (64%) ranged from 3 to 12 months, but the greater majority spanned 6 months. The main skills taught included tailoring and garment construction (35%), food processing and preservation (28%), handicrafts production (22%), and digital literacy (15%). On average, trainers had a cumulative 8.4 years of experience in this field. Its qualification profile among trainers in this program revealed that 58% of trainers had diploma-level qualifications but also that 42% of trainers had first degrees or higher. Its beneficiaries on average received 120 hours of training so that it was largely cross-sectional training experience in terms of theoretical (28%)/practical (72%) participation. There were adequate learning materials in 72% of the cases, satisfactory materials in 18%, and totally insufficient in 10 out of the 220 training centers that provided training built into the program's system.

### Skill Acquisition and Technical Competency

Category	Value
High Skill Proficiency (%)	81
Moderate Skill Proficiency (%)	14
Basic Skill Proficiency (%)	5

Skill Retention - >80% (%)	76
Self-Employment Only (%)	67
Self-Employment + Wage Employment (%)	18
Dependent Employment (%)	15
Trainee Satisfaction with Training (Mean) - Hands-on Practice	4.6
Trainee Satisfaction with Training (Mean) - Learning Material	3.8

The post-training evaluation of the competences showed high competence in 81% of the cases; moderate competence, 14%; and basic competence, 5%. After 12 months of recovery, 76% of the participants had saved over 80% of acquired knowledge—an indication of how much knowledge is being retained in the brain. These acquired skills were applied by 67% of the respondents in various situations, whereas 18% blended self-employment with wage employment and 15% continued with their dependent employment. Trainees rated the quality of training at 4.2 on a 5-point scale. The highest satisfaction came from the practice opportunities (4.6) and the lowest from the learning material quality (3.8)—placing satisfaction in the hands-on capabilities provided in quality.

### Income Generation and Employment Outcomes

Category	Value
Self-Employment Pre-Training (%)	12
Self-Employment Post-Training (%)	78
Income Increase (%)	65
Income Increase - Tailoring (%)	75
Income Increase - Food Processing (%)	72
Self-Employed Monthly Income (Rs.) - Pre-Training	6840
Self-Employed Monthly Income (Rs.) - Post-Training	11260
Dependent Employment (%) Post-Training	22
Salary Increase (%) - Dependent Employment	28
Income Distribution - Rs. 10,000-15,000	32
Income Distribution - Rs. 15,000-20,000	28
Income Distribution - Rs. 20,000+	12

The most important aspect would be post-training employment for a significantly better portion of all the possibilities of improvement. 78% of all the trainees were into self-employment from 12 months to 18 months after the completion of the training, way above the 12% already in self-employment before training. The average monthly income has increased from Rs 6,840 pre-training to Rs 11,260 post-training from 12-18 months after training, which represents a 65% average income increase. Trainees who were engaged in tailoring reported an increase of 75%, and food processing brought an increase of 72% in the average monthly income of individual income. Only 22% of all trainees have remained in independent employment, whereas 68% of such employees testified to an increase in income by an average of 28% due to renewed trust and improvement in competencies at their workplace. Consequently, in income distribution analysis during the monitoring survey round, it was revealed that all trainees had income within the categories of Rs 10,000-15,000, ranging up to 32%; Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000, at 28%; while the rest fall in more than Rs 20,000, or 12% were rated per capita income.

### Asset Ownership and Economic Indicators

Category	Value
Sewing Machines Pre-Training (%)	5
Sewing Machines Post-Training (%)	64
Food Processing Equipment Pre-Training (%)	2
Food Processing Equipment Post-Training (%)	38
Kitchen Equipment Pre-Training (%)	18

Kitchen Equipment Post-Training (%)	52
Handicraft Tools Pre-Training (%)	8
Handicraft Tools Post-Training (%)	31
Household Asset Ownership Pre-Training (Avg.)	2.1
Household Asset Ownership Post-Training (Avg.)	3.7
Housing Quality Improvement (%)	34
Bank Account Ownership Pre-Training (%)	22
Bank Account Ownership Post-Training (%)	68
Savings Behavior Pre-Training (%)	14
Savings Behavior Post-Training (%)	61

Positive changes in household asset accumulation due to the training programs could be seen in ownership of productive assets: sewing machines, which increased their share from 5% pre-training to 64%. Also evident was its impact on the ownership of the following assets: food processing equipment (from 2% to 38%), kitchen machinery (from 18% to 52%), and handicraft tools (from 8% to 31%). The possession of assets belonging to a household, on a wider plane (a television, a fridge, cell phones, and bikes), came to 2.1 in an average household before training, while this increased to 3.7 assets possessed by a household member. Housing was improved with certain changes according to a third of respondents (repairs, expansions, and ceiling reparations). The excellent work, which occurred as a result, increasing financial inclusion from 22% pre-training to 68% post-training, indicated that the participants now had bank accounts, which in turn meant more opportunities for saving. The level of adoption had prospered to an even higher extent, with more than 61% of adopters showing clear pockets of having made an improvement initiative within the market segment, compared to the poor results shown pre-implementation; it was as low as 14%.

### Empowerment Dimensions and Social Impact

Category	Value
Decision-Making Authority - Pre-Training (%)	15
Decision-Making Authority - Post-Training (%)	42
Educational Enrollment of Children Pre-Training (%)	68
Educational Enrollment of Children Post-Training (%)	84
Community Participation Pre-Training (%)	22
Community Participation Post-Training (%)	54
Self-Confidence Improvement (%)	78
Awareness of Rights Improvement (%)	72
Aspiration Level Improvement (%)	68
Spousal Support Pre-Training (%)	41
Spousal Support Post-Training (%)	71

The learners were empowered through training programs that went way beyond economic metrics. They had a 42% increase in making independent decisions about household spending post-training relative to the 15% pre-trainees. Enrollment of the children in school also increased among trainees, whereby 84% of trainees' children met the target, which was 68% pre-training. Furthermore, their participation in community activities rose by a substantial margin from 22% pre-training to 54%. Some of the psychological empowerment variables that shot up were a reported increase in self-confidence, with 78% claiming they were more self-assured after the program; awareness of rights, which was increased by 72%; and aspiration to do greater things, wherein 68% said it would increase their ambition for personal and family development. Husbands turned out to be the people who had changed attitude of supportive behavior for spouses; 71% claimed that they now treated their spouses with more supportiveness than before the training, and the level of supportiveness was only 41% pre-training.

### Findings of the Study:

More information about the learning impact evaluation process is provided for the MCED training programs for beginners in agriculture from Limpopo, South Africa. The course's training effectiveness is demonstrated by the confidence and skill acquired during the course, and the training was delivered with high quality and effectiveness on knowledge transfer. At least 81% of those who attended the courses were considered to have acquired very advanced technical skills, while considerable efficiency was reached in the transfer of knowledge and the other activities delivered in the course. The relevant training outlet of such metrics is economic empowerment via income generation, with such change occurring to the tune of an average 65% increase in a monthly income after taking the training program. Self-employment dramatically increased from 12% to 78%, which further emphasized how well they were able to translate skills into income-generating setups. Patterns of asset ownership showed that the training helped in accumulating productive assets among these participants, with sewing machines in possession moving from 5% to 64%, food processing equipment rising from 2% to 38%, and general household asset holdings increasing from 2.1 per household training mean to 3.7. Multi-dimensional empowerment outcomes included average incremental gain during the training season; they were broad enough to encompass more than income to improvements in decision-making (42% compared with 15% pre-training), increases to 54% from 22% in community participation, and children's attainment of better schools at 84% against 68%. Reinforcement of psychological empowerment dimensions involving self-confidence and awareness was highly valuable beyond any other factor. It has also been shown that the characteristics of a program significantly alter what ultimately happens following such an evaluation.

Program duration more than 9 and under 12 months turned out to be better compared to other durations, while the trainee attribute and experience as a trainer had a positive relationship with skill retention and trainee satisfaction, respectively. Participants valued most the practical training components offered by training programs. Contextual factors were found to drastically alter training impacts. Better results were associated with participants having family backing, and particularly when the backing came from wives; access to credit (observable among 42% of trainees) was mostly instrumental in the establishment of businesses and their subsequent growth, and the market-oriented linkages that training institutions made happened very often to be associated with higher income levels. Significant barriers thwarted the effective functionality and longevity of programs.

Establishing a business faced constraints of a financial nature (48% received constraints in the form of capital) and limited productivity as the business did not have adequate infrastructure (35% said the infrastructure was inadequate). For thousands of trainers, constraints were not over; "those" constraints were social ones, like community skepticism, which affected 28% of trainees. Aside from this, 36% even claimed, "Markets should be improved" as a factor restraining their capacity for expansion. In two to three years, 72% of trainees remained in self-employment businesses. His work lasted long, and it lasted long in dividends taken as a consequence; 16% of the cases had certainly been discontinued due to capital constraints. The impacts of place on the initiative in terms of employment were considerable. On the other hand, as opposed to Rs. 10,620 in rural areas, urban trainees looked to enjoy marginally higher incomes at Rs. 11,890 per month. Nonetheless, the rural rating was much higher than any of the urban ones, as it pertains to the average social community values in rural and urban localities as regards the integration of training with agricultural work.

### DISCUSSION:

Enormous potential of the program is seen in the empirical data for enhancing the economic empowerment of women in the Indian context through skills. This was shown by an average income gain of 65%, as well as a self-employment figure of 78% for repaired economic livelihood with MCED programs translating skills to livelihood. These narratives converge well with what I already know from the international literature, where women's income is the most important tool for empowering the women.

This fact is confirmed by the multidimensional outcomes in empowerment, such as several economic indicators, decision-making power, community participation, and the psychological dimension of empowerment. Moreover, the above theoretical constructs as well as the current framework highlight that empowerment should not only be perceived as a result of income generation. The 42% increase in household decision-making authority (from 15% to 42%) and the 32-percentage-point increase in community participation show that economic autonomy facilitates relational and collective empowerment dimensions in one way or another. In such a scenario, such findings will reflect to a great extent that economic and social empowerment can take form vis-à-vis each other by financial capacity, thus expanding personal agency and participation.

Nevertheless, research exposes limiters to realization and continuity, as it highlights the fundamental critique on program effectiveness and sustainability. The proportion of trained persons—a critical figure—reaching 48% in the barriers to their business establishment is a litmus test for empowerment. This suggests that skills alone cannot lead to improving entrepreneurship, but most probably in combination with financial backup, one can start afresh. This verification aligns with a livelihood framework category that underscores multiple asset categories needed in a simultaneously transformed livelihood. The fact that also 28 percent reported social barriers shows that women may still be limited by gender matters in their economic activities on community issues.

A conclusive analysis of the duration of the program showed superior results were found in the 9-12 month program in comparison with other shorter-duration programs, suggesting that even mastering skills and feeling confident requires certain time investments. Highly associated with trainer qualifications, it therefore means that quality assurance is the key, and the program highly depends on the trainer to induce effectiveness and competence. Research presented the most user-assessed and best skill-developing hands-on practical training, which is a call for reflection and action, emphasizing that training pedagogy should be guided by adult learning principles of learning by doing.

Naturally, this research underscores the idea that empowerment requires transformation and action on different levels. Contextual analysis points to the importance of family support mediating between credit access and market linkages and empowerment. In order to achieve the best empowerment, family members should be understanding. This is evidenced in the better results in women having supporting family environments, thus motivating their programs to base strategies on joint dialogue and understanding within families regarding women's participation in economic activities. For the opening of new enterprises by family support in the social sphere, it must be noted that credit access really facilitated business start-up, noting that credit linkages must be part and parcel of skill development programs rather than merely a supplement to other services.

The enterprise sustainability rate at 72% indicates the persistence thereof within 2-3 years post-training level, a process that brings net gain too. At the same time, it involves 25%, which are closed without further options to further operate because of the death or being able to not continue further acts of those enterprise owners taking training activities due to financial, family-related, or market-related reasons. Also absent post-training are supportive mechanisms with regard to entrepreneurship development and also access to continued credit and market facilitation to be sure that real added value out of the training is achieved, for the trained enterprises will remain at whatever point acquired skills are lost since continued participation in a business becomes impossible due to unexpected problems or waning of interest.

### **Conclusion:**

In the Nagpur district, when training conducted was investigated against MCED understanding, the workshop content appeared to be substantial as it related to skill-based training alongside enthusiastically empowering women with better economic options as well as livelihoods. The results have been characterized, with training clearly indicated against wages enhanced from participant to 65% compounded average increment and from about 78% in self-employment. This shows that programs have got immense transformative significance, shifting the empowerment of the women into not only incomes but also the broader social changes toward decision authority enhanced within the

communities and communal consciousness and participation alongside enhanced psychological self-confidence. Such economic empowerment, though, exists in few highlighted pathetic situations, which would possibly not drive proper sustainability into financial grandeur areas in transforming lives. For example, there are barriers like their capital constraints as regards the future infrastructure and market access limitations. Programs would need to be progressively hardening and could well be followed up with access to capital, longer work durations, greater participation by trainers, and thorough market linkages. Next, in any case, the right directions for the policy shall be financial inclusion, rural access, and social support. The programs of MCED might show promise if effectively addressed. Only by improving the evolved programs shall it be ensured that efforts in the past in the development of women and society as a whole finally work.

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