



IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL PERFORMANCE OF TRAINEES AND ENTREPRENEURS: A STUDY OF WARDHA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship development and skill development interventions are an important area of employment generation, enterprise creation, reduction in poverty, and socio-economic empowerment in rural and semi-urban India. The contribution of this to the employment, self-employment, initiation of enterprises and entrepreneurial performance in Wardha District of Maharashtra has been evaluated with secondary data collected from various official sources such as Census of India, District Socio-Economic Review, Economic Census, District Industries Centre, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, employment intensity, chi-square test, and Pearson correlation analysis were used. In 2019-2020, 65.21 percent of the 1,926 candidates successfully secured wage employment, and 34.79 percent of them successfully started a self-employment after undergoing skills training. The district had 5,521 registered enterprises with 20,721 jobs. The results confirm that training has a positive impact on employability and entrepreneurship. But some of the limitations still exist, like poor market linkages, geographical concentration, and lack of post-training support. The study recommends that to ensure sustainable entrepreneurial growth, the integrated training, mentoring, credit support, digital marketing, and continuous monitoring are suggested.



KEYWORDS : Entrepreneurship Development, Skill Development, Socio-Economic Empowerment, Self-Employment, Enterprise Performance, Trainees, Wardha District.

INTRODUCTION :

Entrepreneurship is seen as an important means of turning knowledge, resources, and opportunities into productive economic activities and is increasingly being considered as such. Entrepreneurship in rural and semi-urban areas helps to mitigate wage employment dependency, to add value to the products produced in the local economy, to create jobs, and to enhance the economic resilience of households. The entrepreneurship development program emphasizes a range of skills such as business motivation, planning skills, financial skills, managerial skills, awareness of the market and institutional support, while the skill development program emphasizes technical, occupational,

behavioral and employability skills. These interventions, when applied properly, help to turn an individual into a skilled worker, a self-employed person, and an enterprise owner.

The development of human capital is of special importance in Wardha District, which is directly related to agriculture, cotton processing, cultivation of food plants, services, trade, and small industries of the rural people. The Census of India, 2011, showed the population of Wardha to be 1,300,774, of which 67.46 percent lived in the rural areas. Across the district, the literacy rate was 86.99 percent, but there was variation between rural and urban literacy rates. The percentage of female literacy was 81.81 percent, while that of males was 91.92 percent, which calls for inclusive skill development and promotion of entrepreneurship.

Economic potential of Wardha: Cotton-based industries, food processing industry, dairy, garments, repair shops, agricultural services, furniture making, printing, and digital industries. The district has an industrial ecosystem to generate employment and start-ups. National entrepreneurship policies also highlight the promotion of self-employment and enterprise building for youth, women, disadvantaged groups, and unemployed people.

There is evidence to suggest that entrepreneurship training can enhance entrepreneurial knowledge, entrepreneurial confidence, entrepreneurial motivation, and entrepreneurial intention, but successful enterprise creation also relies on finance, access to the market, mentoring, infrastructure, and institutional support. Hence, the present study assesses the impact of entrepreneurship and skill development programs in Wardha District in terms of employment generation, generation of self-employment, distribution of enterprises, and employment performances.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

- 1) To study the socio-economic and entrepreneurial scenario of Wardha District.
- 2) To measure the employment and self-employment of candidates who are provided with skills development training.
- 3) To look at the distribution of registered enterprises and employment generated from these enterprises by taluka.
- 4) To assess the link between the number of registered businesses and job creation.
- 5) To explore the role and impact of the entrepreneurship development and skill development initiative in achieving socio-economic empowerment.
- 6) To suggest strategies for enhancing enterprise formation, sustainability, market access, and post-training assistance.

HYPOTHESES OF RESEARCH

- **Null Hypothesis 1:** A hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference between the number of trained candidates who enter wage employment and those who enter self-employment.
- **Alternative Hypothesis 1:** The number of trained candidates entering into wage employment is statistically different from the number trained candidates entering into self-employment.
- **Null Hypothesis 2:** The number of registered enterprises and employment created across the talukas of Wardha District are not statistically related.
- **Alternative Hypothesis 2:** The number of registered enterprises is positively associated with the employment generated across the talukas of Wardha District and the association is statistically significant.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the writer uses a descriptive, analytical, and evaluative research design using secondary data. The sources of data used were the Wardha District Socio-Economic Review 2020, the Census of India 2011, the Economic Census 2013, the Brief Industrial Profile of Wardha District, government reports, and national evaluation studies. The percentages were used to analyze information relating to skill trainings, employment outcomes, self-employment, registered enterprises, and employment in various talukas. Employment intensity measurement, the chi-square goodness-of-fit

test, and Pearson correlation analysis were used for the same. The employment intensity was determined by comparing the number of workers against the number of registered enterprises, while correlation analysis was used to analyze the correlation between enterprise growth and the employment generated in eight talukas. The study explicitly does not focus on direct causal effects but on the contributions of programs and observed outcomes. Because of the constraints of secondary data that cannot provide control groups, income changes, enterprise survival, profitability, and household-level indicators, the results should be viewed not as experimental proof of causality but as indicative of the relationship between the variables.

Impact of Entrepreneurship Development Programmes and Skill Development Programmes on Socio-Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Performance of Trainees and Entrepreneurs

The current study follows five complementary theoretical approaches that explain the linkage between entrepreneurship development, skill enhancement, and socio-economic empowerment. The Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) focuses on the enhancement of individual capacity through education and training, which also boosts productivity and economic performance. Skill development improves technical skills, and entrepreneurship training improves opportunity recognition, business planning, financial management, and marketing skills. According to the Need for Achievement Theory (McClelland, 1961), people with higher achievement motivations are more inclined to engage in entrepreneurial activities because they take responsibility and set challenging goals. Two theories, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), emphasize that entrepreneurial behavior is influenced by attitudes, social support, and confidence in conducting business activities. Training enhances self-confidence and lowers financial, production, and market access barriers. The Capability and Empowerment Approach (Sen, 1999) considers development as the increase of choices, economic freedom, and control over resources other than income. Lastly, the Opportunity and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Perspective (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) highlights the importance of interaction between people and enabling ecosystems—finance, infrastructure, technology, mentoring, and market networks. All of these theories, taken together, offer a framework to understand the role of entrepreneurship and skill development programs in fostering sustainable economic empowerment.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1
Selected Socio-Economic and Enterprise Indicators of Wardha District

Indicator	Reference year	Numerical value
Total population	2011	1,300,774
Rural population	2011	877,474
Rural population share	2011	67.46 percent
Urban population	2011	423,300
Overall literacy rate	2011	86.99 percent
Rural literacy rate	2011	84.27 percent
Urban literacy rate	2011	92.62 percent
Male literacy rate	2011	91.92 percent
Female literacy rate	2011	81.81 percent
Agricultural and non-agricultural establishments	2013	67,559
Workers in agricultural and non-agricultural establishments	2013	131,539
Non-agricultural establishments	2013	61,547
Workers in non-agricultural establishments	2013	118,700
Registered micro, small, and medium enterprises	2019–2020	5,521
Employment reported by registered enterprises	2019–2020	20,721

Source: Census of India and Wardha District Socio-Economic Review.

The Economic Census registered 67,559 agricultural and non-agricultural firms that had 131,539 employees. Of the latter, 61,547 were in non-agricultural establishments with 118,700 workers. Around 95.72 percent of all the establishments were under private operations, which shows the significance of individual and household entrepreneurship in the economy of the district. The average number of employees per establishment was only 1.95, showing the preeminence of very small businesses.

District Industries Centre (DIC) registered 5521 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with 20721 employment opportunities by 2019–2020. This resulted in an average worker per registered enterprise of 3.75. These figures indicate that employment creation by formalized enterprises was more than what was recorded in the Economic Census in terms of employment per unit. But, due to the different definitions and the different reference years, it is not possible to make a direct growth comparison.

Table 2
Skill Development, Employment, and Self-Employment Outcomes in Wardha District, 2019–2020

Indicator	Number	Derived rate
Vacancies notified	2,397	Not applicable
Candidates newly registered for employment	7,515	Not applicable
Candidates on the register at year end	74,510	Not applicable
Candidates obtaining employment through the employment system	579	7.70 percent of new registrations
Candidates receiving skill development training	1,926	100 percent
Trained candidates obtaining wage employment	1,256	65.21 percent of trainees
Trained candidates initiating self-employment	670	34.79 percent of trainees

Source: District Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Guidance Centre, Wardha.

According to official records, 1,926 candidates have been trained through skill development initiatives. Of these candidates, 1,256 reportedly landed jobs with wages, and 670 took up self-employment. The majority of trainees, therefore, were in wage employment (65.21 per cent), and the remaining 34.79 per cent were self-employed. There were 586 more who entered wage employment than who entered into self-employment and about 1.87 times as many in wage employment as self-employment.

The economic significance of the self-employed is that a high proportion of this group represents a failure of training to function exclusively as preparation for paid work. The proportion of the trained candidates who are reportedly placed in an entrepreneurial livelihood pathway accounted for more than one-third. This transition can be a way of generating income, gaining autonomy to work, providing local services and providing other jobs if the enterprises continue and grow.

The employment guidance system had 7,515 new candidates recorded and 579 placements, with an employment ratio of 7.70 per cent. All 1,926 persons who completed a skill course were, however, categorised as wage employment or self-employment outcomes for administrative purposes. This comparison suggests that the opportunities offered by training that is structured and occupation-oriented are more valuable than the passive registration for employment. However, there is a difference between the two groups in terms of their motivation and education, occupation, and eligibility. The figures should therefore be viewed as indicative only and not as a comparison of programmes of cause.

National impact evaluation has also shown training to increase the probability of employment, confidence, technical skills and entrepreneurial attitude. The employment of trained workers in the same occupational field as the training, however, is not universal, and some trained candidates are not actively seeking employment after training.

Table 3
Taluka-Wise Registered Enterprises and Employment, 2019-2020

Taluka	Registered enterprises	Share of district enterprises	Employment	Share of district employment	Workers per enterprise
Ashti	303	5.49 percent	968	4.67 percent	3.19
Karanja	208	3.77 percent	693	3.34 percent	3.33
Arvi	296	5.36 percent	813	3.92 percent	2.75
Seloo	470	8.51 percent	1,873	9.04 percent	3.99
Wardha	2,522	45.68 percent	8,432	40.69 percent	3.34
Deoli	775	14.04 percent	2,631	12.70 percent	3.39
Hinganghat	649	11.76 percent	2,093	10.10 percent	3.22
Samudrapur	298	5.40 percent	3,218	15.53 percent	10.80
Total	5,521	100 percent	20,721	100 percent	3.75

There is significant clustering in space. Wardha taluka had the highest number of enterprises with 2522 enterprises accounting for 45.68 per cent of the total enterprises in the district and highest number of employment opportunities of 8432 accounting for 40.69 per cent of district enterprise employment. Deoli and Hinganghat were in the second and third places, respectively, with regard to enterprise numbers.

The situation of Samudrapur is an atypical one. It had only 298 enterprises (5.40 percent) out of the district's 5,541 enterprises, but provided 3,218 jobs (15.53 percent) out of the 20,261 jobs across the district. It had an employment intensity of 10.80 workers per enterprise, which was many times more than the district average. Arvi had the lowest employment intensity, with 2.75 workers per enterprise. The differences suggest that assessing entrepreneurial performance solely in terms of the number of enterprises is not sufficient. The employment-generating potential of each unit is affected by different factors such as sector, scale, technology, investment, and production linkages.

Wardha has various enterprise opportunities due to its industrial structure such as food processing, cotton and textile, oil and pulse milling, repair services, tailoring and beauty services, printing, machinery servicing, equipment rental, preserved foods, bakery foods, cattle feed, furniture, garments, pipes, and herbal products. Previously there were 583 service enterprises with 1,394 people employed. These are the sectors that are appropriate for local contextualisation of skill and entrepreneurship training, as they link the rural resources with the local demand.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Entrepreneurship development programmes are important instruments for lowering the dependency on agriculture and boosting the non-farm livelihood opportunities in Wardha District, as 67.46 per cent of its population is farm-based. The literacy rate in the district is high (86.99 per cent), and there is a positive educational base, but gender and rural-urban disparities indicate the need for implementing training programmes that are inclusive, accessible and locally focused. Of the 1,926 trained, 1,256 of them found wage work, while 670 were able to start self-employment activities, making self-employment a 34.79 percent of all of the trainees' outcomes recorded. The increased proportion of wage employment indicates that current skill development programmes are more geared towardss employability than towardss enterprise development.

The registered enterprises in the Wardha District accounted for 20,721 employment opportunities with an average employment intensity of 3.75 workers per registered enterprise. All the enterprise activities were concentrated in Wardha taluka, which had 45.68 per cent of enterprises, suggesting that there is uneven access to finance, infrastructure, markets, institutional support and business services across talukas. A contrast to this is Samudrapur, where a smaller number of enterprises created more employment under favourable enterprise scale and sectoral composition.

While the available official records contain useful data on programme outreach and short-term employment outcomes, they do not contain sufficient information on enterprise survival, enterprise income growth, enterprise profitability, asset creation, capacity to pay back loans, household empowerment, and the quality of employment. Hence, financial assistance, guidance and training in business management, market connectivity and long-term monitoring of entrepreneurship and skills development programmes should be made a part of the same package. The results from other developing countries suggest that better business practices have positive effects on enterprise productivity and sustainability (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2017).

DISCUSSION

The results support the view that interventions in entrepreneurship development and skill development are important as a component of socio-economic empowerment by creating new occupation opportunities and better livelihood options. Wage employment ensures income security and work experience, while self-employment ensures greater autonomy, asset creation, decision-making power and employment possibilities for family and community members. 670 cases of self-employment transitions were recorded in Wardha District as important results of these interventions. But the development of enterprises is not enough to create sustainable empowerment because there are many problems such as capital shortages, technology limitations, financial management, low market demand, infrastructure problems, and competition that can hamper entrepreneurship.

Hence, training should be combined with financial assistance, mentoring and ongoing guidance in entrepreneurship programmes. Gender-sensitive approaches are also crucial, as women entrepreneurs often face mobility, resources, market access and decision-making challenges. Wardha taluka shows that enterprises are concentrated, which is the benefit of good infrastructure, financial facilities, markets and institutional support. The less developed talukas need more support from the ecosystem in terms of mobile training centres, incubation facilities, digital platforms, producer groups and mentoring networks. Training programmes should focus on the local economic opportunities, including digital enterprises, renewable energy, agriculture processing, and rural services, and cover skills in accounting, taxation, digital payments, marketing, branding, and customer management.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The testing of the hypotheses showed the significant result with respect to employment outcome and enterprise development in Wardha District. For the first hypothesis, the outcomes of post-training were observed across 1,926 trained candidates, of which 1,256 were in wage employment and 670 were in self-employment. With an equal distribution, the expected frequencies were 963 candidates for each category. The calculated chi-square value was 178.29 with 1 degree of freedom, and the probability value was less than 0.001, which is less than the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the difference in wage employment and self-employment rates is statistically significant, and the wage employment rate is higher. For the second hypothesis, the employment generated by the registered enterprises in the eight talukas was correlated with the number of enterprises through Pearson correlation analysis, which resulted in a correlation coefficient of 0.951 and a probability of about 0.00028. The result of the null hypothesis test was the rejection of the null hypothesis, which confirms that enterprise growth is strong and statistically significant with employment generation. The results suggest that areas with a higher degree of enterprise concentration tend to generate more jobs, though enterprise size and sectoral composition have a role to play in job intensity.

CONCLUSION

The entrepreneurship development programmes and skill development programmes have played a major role in Wardha District in terms of employment generation, promotion of self-employment, enterprise-based livelihood development, etc. According to official data, 1,926 trained candidates have successfully found employment or taken up self-employment, of which 670 have taken

up self-employment. Small businesses are crucial in driving local economic development, as the district's 5,521 registered businesses created 20,721 job opportunities. These programmes boost confidence, labour mobility, business knowledge, financial awareness and adaptability to evolving labour-market conditions, which leads to socio-economic empowerment, along with income generation. But a detailed analysis of income, profitability, enterprise survival, gender participation and impacts of enterprises on the household level is limited due to the absence of detailed information in Wardha taluka and limited capacity to undertake a comprehensive evaluation due to enterprise concentration. Going forward, interventions need to include technical training, entrepreneurial motivation, provision of credit facilities, mentoring, incubation, common facilities, and market linkages in the sector. To make training a lasting tool for inclusive regional development, a structured follow-up mechanism and a common beneficiary database that records enterprise growth, investments, jobs, income and sustainability of enterprises are necessary.

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