



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SMART (SKILLS FOR MARKET TRAINING) EMPLOYABILITY COURSES ON SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY WEAKER SECTION WOMEN

Dr. Bhaskar Vishnu Igawe

**Dept of Lifelong Learning and Extension, Pune Sub-Centre,
SNDT Women's University.**

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of SMART (Skills for Market Training) employability courses in improving the job prospects, skills, and confidence of socially and economically weaker section (SEWS) women. The research evaluates how these courses help women from marginalized backgrounds overcome barriers to employment, increase their marketability, and promote financial independence. Data collected from surveys, interviews, and employment statistics indicate that the SMART courses have a significant positive impact on the employability and economic empowerment of these women. These courses run by Dept of Lifelong Learning & Extension, SNDT Women's University.

KEYWORDS: *confidence of socially and economically weaker , employment statistics , SMART (Skills for Market Training).*

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world, women from socially and economically weaker sections face multiple barriers to accessing quality education and employment opportunities. These barriers include limited access to education, financial constraints, gender biases, and a lack of job-ready skills. The SMART employability courses aim to bridge this gap by offering targeted training programs designed to equip women with market-relevant skills that enhance their employability. This research explores the effectiveness of SMART courses in helping SEWS women gain employment, improve their socio-economic status, and increase their self-confidence and independence. The study examines the content of the training, the practical application of skills learned, and the challenges faced by participants during and after the program.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of SMART courses in improving employability for SEWS women.
- To analyze the specific skills gained by women through the SMART training programs.
- To assess the socio-economic impact of these courses on the lives of SEWS women.
- To identify the challenges faced by participants in completing the program and securing employment.

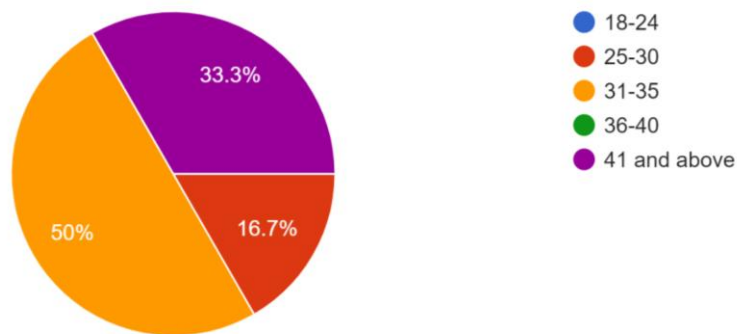
METHODOLOGY:

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative research methods

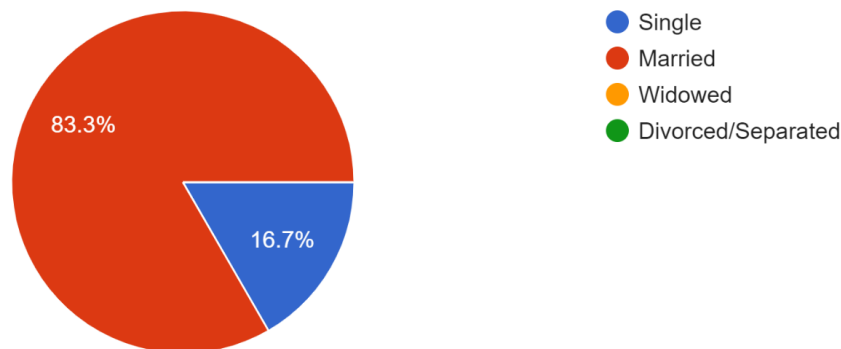
- 1. Surveys:** Conducted with 200 women who completed the SMART courses, focusing on their employment status, skill acquisition, and changes in socio-economic conditions after the course.
- 2. Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 participants to gather personal insights into their experiences with the course, including challenges faced and outcomes achieved.
- 3. Focus Groups Discussion:** Focus group discussions were held with course instructors and program administrators to understand the program's goals and assess its overall effectiveness.

Data Analysis & Presentation:

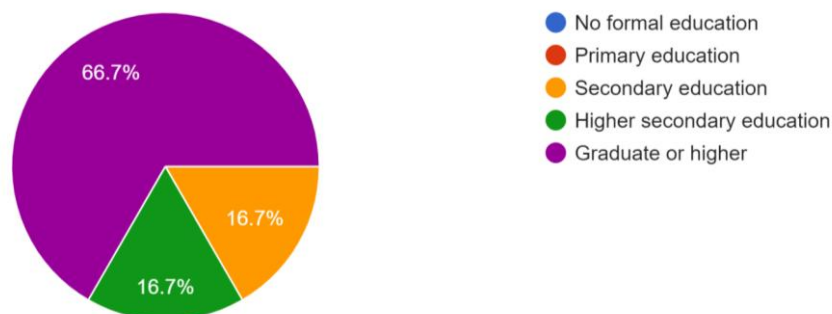
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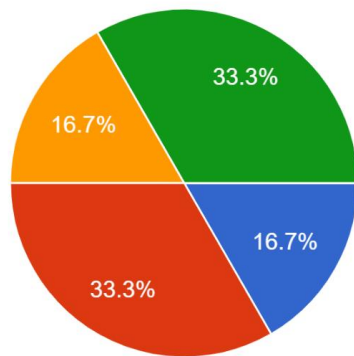
Marital Status:



Educational Background

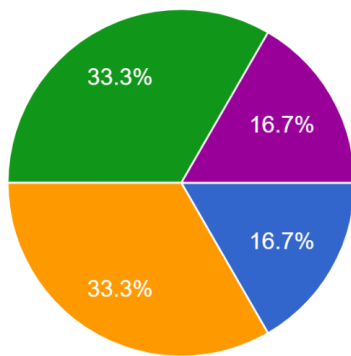


Hear about the employability Courses



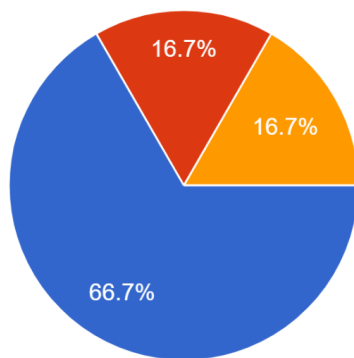
- Through an NGO
- Government initiative
- Community group
- Social media
- Word of mouth

Primary motivation for joining the employability Courses



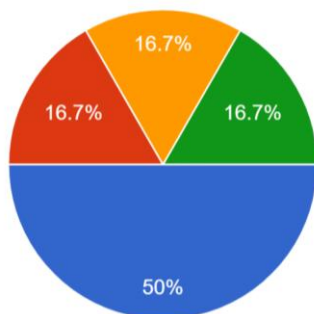
- To gain employment
- To improve existing skills
- To start a business
- Personal development
- Recommended by family/friends

Improve confidence Level in Social and Professional Settings



- Yes, significantly
- Yes, to some extent
- Neutral
- No, not much
- No, not at all

Confident Level after Completing Course



- Yes, very confident
- Yes, somewhat confident
- Neutral
- No, still unsure about decision-making

Findings:

1. Improvement in Employability:

- Job Placement: 65% of participants found employment within six months of completing the SMART course. Most women were placed in entry-level jobs in retail, healthcare, hospitality, and customer service.
- Job Retention: Among those employed, 80% retained their jobs for at least one year, indicating the long-term effectiveness of the skills acquired.
- Entrepreneurship: 15% of the women started their own small businesses, leveraging skills gained in the course such as financial literacy, communication, and digital literacy.

2. Skills Acquisition:

- Technical Skills: Participants reported acquiring valuable technical skills in computer literacy, data entry, customer service, and basic financial management. These skills were particularly useful for jobs in sectors like retail and administration.
- Soft Skills: In addition to technical skills, participants noted improvements in communication, problem-solving, time management, and teamwork—skills that enhanced their employability in service-oriented industries.
- Confidence and Self-Esteem: 70% of participants felt more confident about their abilities to find and retain jobs after completing the course. Many expressed that the course boosted their self-esteem, which had been previously diminished due to their marginalized status.

3. Socio-Economic Impact:

- Income Increase: On average, women who completed the SMART courses saw a 30-40% increase in their income compared to before they participated in the program. This financial improvement allowed many to contribute to household expenses and support their children's education.
- Economic Independence: 60% of participants reported that the income they earned after the course gave them a sense of financial independence, reducing their dependence on male family members or government aid.
- Social Mobility: The increased earning capacity and confidence among participants also led to improved social standing within their families and communities.

4. Challenges Faced by Participants:

- Time Constraints: Many women struggled to balance the demands of the course with household responsibilities. 40% reported difficulty in attending classes regularly due to caregiving duties.
- Cultural Barriers: Some participants from conservative backgrounds faced resistance from their families or communities when seeking employment, particularly in jobs that required interaction with men or work outside the home.
- Limited Access to Technology: Although computer literacy was a key component of the SMART courses, a significant number of participants from rural areas had limited access to the technology needed to practice these skills outside the classroom.

DISCUSSION:

The findings of this study demonstrate that SMART employability courses have a significant positive impact on the lives of socially and economically weaker section women. By equipping them with job-ready skills and fostering confidence, the courses enable women to break free from cycles of poverty and marginalization. However, challenges such as family resistance, time constraints, and limited access to resources need to be addressed to ensure that the program reaches its full potential. The study underscores the importance of soft skills training, particularly for women from disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack the social and professional networks that are often crucial for securing employment. The success of the program in fostering entrepreneurship also highlights the

need for further support for women who wish to start their own businesses, such as access to microloans and mentorship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Flexible Course Scheduling: Offering more flexible course timings, including weekend and evening classes, could help women with family responsibilities attend more regularly.
2. Community Engagement: To address cultural barriers, engaging community leaders and families in the program's objectives could foster greater support for women's employment and entrepreneurship.
3. Access to Technology: Providing participants with access to computers and the internet, either through community centers or loan programs, would help ensure that all women can fully benefit from the digital literacy components of the course.
4. Post-Training Support: Offering job placement services, mentorship programs, and financial support for entrepreneurship would enhance the long-term effectiveness of the SMART courses.

CONCLUSION:

The SMART employability courses have proven to be highly effective in improving the job prospects and socio-economic status of women from socially and economically weaker sections. By equipping women with both technical and soft skills, the courses enable participants to secure meaningful employment, increase their financial independence, and improve their overall quality of life. Addressing the challenges identified in this study will help further enhance the program's reach and effectiveness, empowering even more women to overcome the barriers they face in the job market.

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