

Vocational Training and Employment Opportunities for Women in Rural Areas of Rohtak District (Haryana)

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ABSTRACT

Present study critically explores vocational training and employment pathways for rural women in Rohtak district, Haryana, a region characterised by both developmental progress and deeply rooted patriarchal norms. Drawing on survey data from 100 respondents across five community development blocks, the study reveals significant awareness of skill development programs but limited actual participation, primarily due to mobility restrictions, cultural barriers, and infrastructure challenges. Most training is concentrated in stereotypically gendered fields, such as tailoring and beauty services, with minimal uptake in digital or non-traditional skills. Employment outcomes remain modest, with post-training job conversion hindered by inadequate market linkages and restricted financial autonomy. Family support, proximity to training centres, and targeted awareness campaigns emerged as key enabling factors. The findings underscore the need for hyper-local, socially sensitive interventions, such as home-based modules, financial incentives, and community engagement, that align vocational efforts with the realities of rural women's lives. By bridging policy intentions with ground-level needs, this research contributes to the broader discourse on gender-inclusive development and supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality.

Keywords: Employment, Vocational Training, Cultural Barriers, Patriarchal Norms.

INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is essential for inclusive development, with economic independence through vocational training playing a vital role in enhancing women's status, especially in rural India, where patriarchal norms limit public and economic participation. This study focuses on the Rohtak district, Haryana, which reflects both progress and persistent patriarchy.

Despite advancements in agriculture, education, and infrastructure, rural women in Rohtak remain primarily engaged in unpaid labour and have limited participation in the formal workforce. Barriers include low literacy, limited mobility, social restrictions, and a lack of skill-based education.

Vocational training, through programs such as PMKVY, DDU-GKY, and HSDM, can enhance employability and entrepreneurship among women. SHGs and NGOs also support this cause. However, issues like low awareness, infrastructure gaps, and weak employment linkages limit the impact of these initiatives in rural areas.

The United Nations' SDG 5 highlights vocational training as a means to achieve economic empowerment and gender equality. Studies (Cheston & Kuhn, 2002; Kabeer, 2012) demonstrate that trained women often gain confidence, increased income, and enhanced decision-making power. Yet, social acceptance and institutional support are crucial for success.

In Haryana, many women still receive training in traditional roles, such as tailoring and beauty services, which limits their potential to earn higher incomes. Moreover, without access to credit or markets, many remain stuck in a "skill trap."

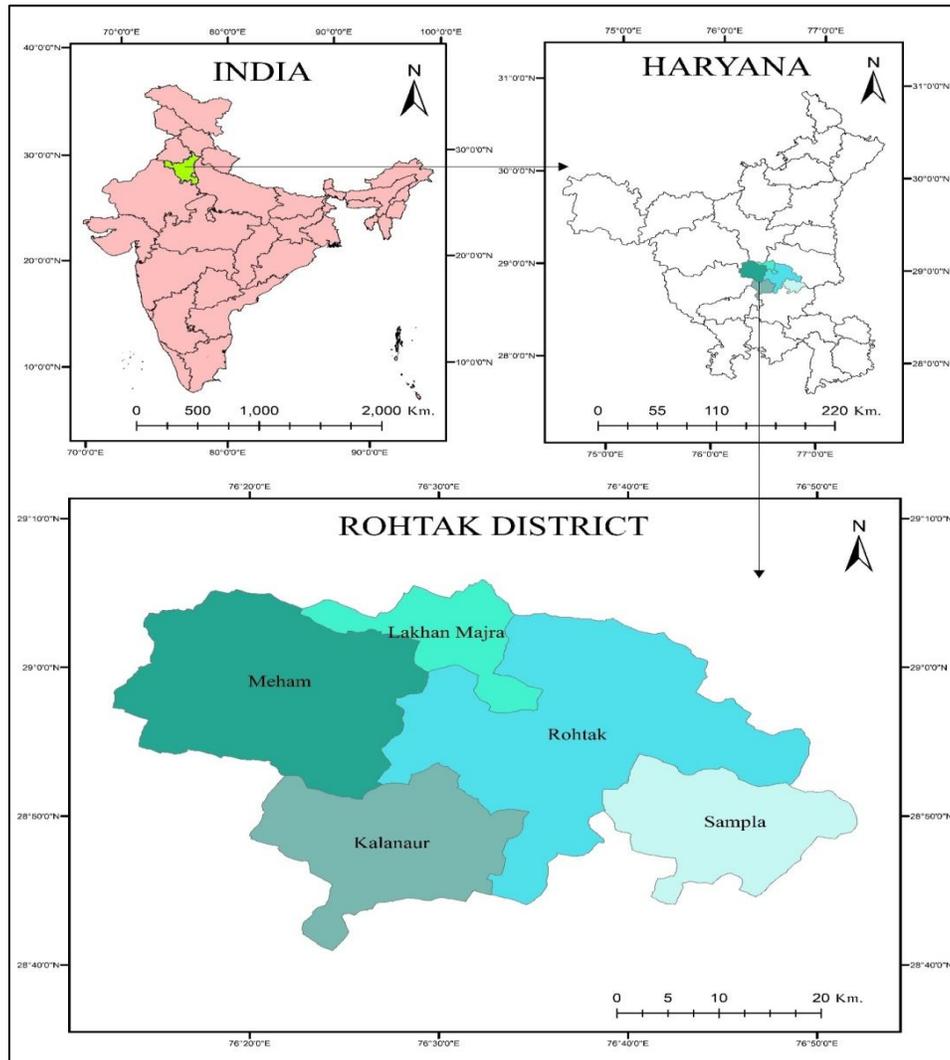
Although Rohtak has educational and industrial facilities, rural blocks like Meham and Kalanaur suffer from poor connectivity between training and employment.

While female literacy in Rohtak exceeds 70%, women’s labour force participation remains below 30%. Factors such as distance to centres, lack of hostels, security concerns, and rigid training schedules hinder rural women's access to vocational education.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Empowering rural women through vocational training is crucial for promoting inclusive growth and achieving gender equity. In Rohtak district, where traditional norms intersect with evolving economic opportunities, women face persistent barriers, including limited mobility, financial dependence, and gendered job segregation. Despite various government schemes, vocational initiatives often fall short due to limited awareness and accessibility. This study critically examines these challenges and assesses the effectiveness of skill development programs available to rural women. It provides policymakers, NGOs, and local institutions with actionable insights to design inclusive strategies that promote workforce participation and entrepreneurship. Ultimately, the research highlights economic independence as a catalyst for improving women’s status and driving community development in rural Haryana.

Map 1: Location of the Study Area



Source: Prepared by Research Scholar with the help of Arc-GIS

STUDY AREA

Rohtak district is situated in the southeastern part of Haryana and is one of the most prominent districts in the state, both economically and politically. It lies between 28°41' to 29°5' North latitude and 76°13' to 76°51' East longitude. The district shares its boundaries with Sonipat to the north, Jhajjar to the south, Bhiwani to the west, and Delhi to the east. With a total geographical area of approximately 1,745 square kilometres, Rohtak comprises five community development blocks: Rohtak, Kalanaur, Meham, Lakhana Majra, and Sampla, all of which exhibit a mix of rural and semi-urban characteristics.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following were the objectives of the present study:

- i. To review existing vocational training schemes accessible to rural women in Rohtak.
- ii. To assess the effectiveness and reach of employment-related programs for rural women.
- iii. To identify barriers that limit participation in training and employment.
- iv. To propose recommendations for improving vocational training outcomes and employment inclusivity.

METHODOLOGY

This review-based exploratory study critically examines vocational training initiatives and employment opportunities for rural women in Rohtak district, Haryana. Using a multi-stage sampling method, two villages were purposively selected from each of the district's five community development blocks-Rohtak, Meham, Sampla, Kalanaur, and Lakhana Majra based on criteria such as accessibility, demographic diversity, and the presence of vocational infrastructure. The selected villages include Singhpura and Rurki (Rohtak block), BhainiChanderpal and Ajaib (Meham), Atil and Kehrawar (Sampla), Anwal and Balab (Kalanaur), and Titoli and Nandal (Lakhana Majra). From each village, ten women were surveyed, representing varied ages, castes, marital statuses, and socio-economic backgrounds, resulting in a total sample of 100 respondents. This design enabled a nuanced block-wise analysis of awareness, access, participation, and outcomes in vocational programs. Field findings are further contextualised through policy reviews and existing literature to explore broader intersections of gender, skill development, and rural livelihood.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 provides valuable insights into the level of awareness, participation, type, accessibility, and perceived usefulness of vocational training programs among women in the rural study area. A significant 76 respondents reported being aware of vocational training programs in their area, suggesting that outreach and communication efforts, whether through government schemes, NGOs, or informal networks, have reached a majority of the population. However, 24 remain unaware, indicating the need for improved information dissemination, especially targeting marginalised or less connected households.

Despite relatively high awareness, only 16 respondents had attended a vocational training course, indicating a significant gap between awareness and participation. This disparity may be due to factors such as a lack of time, social constraints, household responsibilities, mobility issues, or a lack of confidence among women to enrol in such programs.

Among those who received training, tailoring (6) and beauty parlour courses (3) were the most common, indicating a preference for skill sets that can easily be turned into home-based or small-scale businesses. The low uptake of computer training and handicrafts shows either limited access or low demand for these fields. The "Other" category (5 respondents) suggests that a few women acquired niche or location-specific skills; however, the small number reflects the limited variety in available training options.

Accessibility varies among respondents, but 27 women had training centres within their village, which, in theory, should promote higher participation. However, since only 16 attended training (as per Question 2), this suggests that other barriers beyond distance, such as social norms or family restrictions, may also be present. Still, 35 respondents had to travel more than 5 km, with 6 travelling over 10 km, which could be a discouraging factor, especially in areas with poor transportation or safety concerns. Of the 16 women who participated in the training, 12 found it helpful, indicating a 75% satisfaction rate. This is an encouraging result, suggesting that once women engage in vocational programs, most derive value, whether through skill acquisition, employment opportunities, or increased self-confidence. However, four women did not find the training helpful, which may reflect mismatches between the training content and market demand, insufficient follow-up support, or poor training quality.

Here's a detailed interpretation and analysis of the findings:

Table 1: Vocational Training Awareness and Women's Participation in the Study Area

1. Are you aware of any vocational training programs in your area?	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Yes	76
No	24
2. Have you ever attended any vocational training courses?	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Yes	16
No	84
3. If yes, which type of training?	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Tailoring	6
Beauty Parlour	3
Handicrafts	1
Computer	1
Other	5
4. How far was the training centre from your home	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Within Village	27
<5 Km.	19
5-10 Km.	10
>10 Km.	6
5. Was the training useful	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Yes	12
No	4

Source: Computed by Research Scholar, data collected during Primary Survey

To bridge the awareness–participation gap, policy interventions should focus on:

- i. Expanding local training options,
- ii. Offering transportation support or mobile training units,
- iii. Promoting success stories,
- iv. Ensuring post-training employment linkages.

These steps can enhance rural women's economic empowerment and participation in local economic development.

Out of the 16 women who attended vocational training, 11 (about 69%) reported gaining employment or starting some form of work, which is a positive employment conversion rate. It suggests that vocational training can be a valuable tool for empowering women economically when properly aligned with market needs and individual capacities. However, 5 women (31%) did not gain employment, possibly due to a lack of local demand, continued family constraints, or insufficient post-training support.

Control over income is a key indicator of women's autonomy and empowerment. Only 6 women (37.5%) reported complete control over their earnings, which is encouraging but still a minority. Another 6 women (37.5%) share income control jointly with their husbands, reflecting a move toward more participatory decision-making. However, 4 women (25%) said their income is controlled solely by their husbands, highlighting continued patriarchal financial dependency, even when women are contributing economically.

Among employed women, 12 out of 16 expressed satisfaction with their jobs, suggesting that their employment, whether through tailoring, beauty parlour work, or other forms of self-employment, meets their personal expectations and needs or offers a sense of empowerment. The 4 dissatisfied respondents may have concerns regarding low pay, inconsistent work, long hours, or lack of workplace safety or respect. Nonetheless, a 75% satisfaction rate is relatively strong and suggests a meaningful impact of vocational training.

The most common obstacle cited is family restrictions (84 respondents), reflecting deep-rooted socio-cultural barriers that limit women’s mobility, freedom to work, and decision-making. Lack of skills (72) is the second-largest challenge, underscoring the need for expanded, diversified vocational training tailored to current job-market demands.

Low wages (68) highlight the economic discouragement many women face, even if they are willing to work. Poor transport (30) further restricts access to job opportunities, especially for women in remote or poorly connected villages.

Table 2 provides a focused examination of the impact of vocational training on employment, income control, job satisfaction, and the challenges women face in securing work. Here's a detailed interpretation of the responses:

Table 2: Employment Outcomes from Vocational Training

1. Did you get a job or start work after training	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Yes	11
No	5
2. Who controls your income	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Self	6
Husband	4
Jointly	6
3. Are you satisfied with your current employment	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Yes	12
No	4
4. Difficulties faced by women in finding work?	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Family Restrictions	84
Lack of Skills	72
Poor Transport	30
Low Wages	68
Other	33

Source: Computed by Research Scholar from the data collected during Primary Survey

The “Other” category (33 respondents) likely includes issues such as:

- i. Gender discrimination in hiring,
- ii. Lack of confidence or fear of harassment,
- iii. Household responsibilities, or
- iv. Inadequate childcare support.

This data reveals the complex dynamics of women's employment outcomes in rural areas:

- i. Vocational training has a moderately high success rate in job conversion (69%), and most women who gain work feel satisfied.
- ii. However, control over income remains limited, with many women still financially dependent on or sharing authority with male family members.
- iii. Barriers to employment, family restrictions, lack of skills, low wages, and transport problems point to systemic issues that require multi-dimensional solutions.

To enhance women's participation in the workforce, there must be:

- i. Awareness campaigns to challenge patriarchal norms,
- ii. Skill development programs aligned with local job markets,
- iii. Subsidised transport solutions or mobile work/training units,
- iv. Incentives for employers to offer better wages and inclusive workspaces,
- v. Community support systems such as child-care centres.

By addressing these structural constraints, the employment outcomes of rural women can improve significantly in both quantity and quality.

Table 3 provides insight into the attitudes, preferences, and perceived enabling factors that influence rural women's participation in vocational training and employment. The data highlights both aspirations and the societal context in which decisions are made. Below is a detailed interpretation

Table 3: Perceptions and Aspirations of the Respondents

1. Do you want to join any vocational training in the future?	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Yes	42
No	58
2. What kind of skill training would you prefer	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Home-based	39
Field Work	0
Digital Skills	2
Other	1
3. Do you agree that vocational training can improve women’s status in your village	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Strongly Agree	53
Agree	22
Disagree	12
Can't Say	13
4. What types of support are helpful for rural women to engage in training/employment?	
Type of Response	No. of Respondents
Financial Aid	36
Local Centers	74
Family Support	81
Awareness Camps	31

Source: Computed by Research Scholar, data collected during Primary Survey

Only 42 respondents expressed interest in future vocational training, while a majority, 58 declined. This reflects low motivation or significant socio-cultural barriers to participation. Despite the presence of schemes and prior awareness (as seen in earlier tables), many women may still feel constrained by family expectations, limited time due to domestic duties, or doubts about the utility of such training in changing their economic condition.

An overwhelming majority (39 out of 42) of those willing to pursue training prefer home-based work, which aligns with social norms restricting women's mobility and work outside the home. The absence of any preference for field work underscores the discomfort or impracticality that women may face in outdoor or physically demanding jobs. Only 2 respondents showed interest in digital skills, suggesting limited digital literacy or a lack of confidence in using technology. This highlights the need for digital awareness and basic tech education among women.

A large proportion of women, 75 in total (53 strongly agree + 22 agree), believe that vocational training can enhance women's status in the village. This demonstrates a positive attitude toward skill development as a means of social and economic empowerment. However, 12 women disagreed, and 13 were unsure, suggesting that while training is generally viewed favourably, doubts remain about its real-world impact, possibly due to previous experiences with ineffective programs or a lack of job placements.

The most needed form of support, cited by 81 respondents, is family support, underscoring the central role of household approval and encouragement in enabling women to step into training and work. Local training centres (74) are also a critical enabler, highlighting the importance of physical accessibility and proximity. Financial aid was cited by 36 respondents, highlighting the cost as a barrier, even for government-subsidised or free programs. Women may need assistance with transportation, materials, or lost wages. Awareness camps (31) were less frequently mentioned, but they remain essential for encouraging participation and breaking the stigma.

CHALLENGES

Data reveals a complex interaction between aspirations, cultural norms, and practical challenges. A majority of women currently lack interest in joining vocational training. Yet most believe that such training can improve women's status, indicating a disconnect between belief and action, likely shaped by household expectations or limited opportunities. There is a strong preference for home-based work, which reflects safety concerns, mobility restrictions, and traditional gender roles. Family support is the most critical enabling factor, followed by local training centres, suggesting that interventions must be hyper-local and socially sensitive. Though digital skills are rarely preferred, introducing them in user-friendly ways could help bridge the digital divide and open new job avenues. Such an approach can lead to inclusive and sustainable women's empowerment in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the nuanced challenges rural women in Rohtak face in accessing vocational training and employment. Despite growing awareness and moderate success rates in training conversion, social norms, limited mobility, and infrastructural deficits continue to constrain participation. Preferences for home-based work and reliance on family support underscore the importance of culturally sensitive interventions. Vocational training has significant potential to enhance women's status and economic independence; however, systemic reforms are necessary to strengthen market linkages, diversify skill programs, and promote digital literacy. Empowering women at the grassroots level remains crucial to fostering inclusive and sustainable development in Haryana's semi-urban landscape.

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