

Skill Development Initiatives and their Impact on Decent Work Outcomes Among Msme Workers

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Abstract

Achieving sustainable development goal 8 requires not only employment generation but also improvement in the quality of employment. This study examines the impact of skill development initiatives on decent work outcomes among MSME workers in Kerala, with special focus on the mediating role of employability skills. Kerala has made significant progress in human development; however, challenges remain in ensuring quality employment opportunities for its workforce. In line with sustainable development goal, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of employability skills.

Keywords: Sustainable development, MSME, Employability skill, SDG8, Skill development.

INTRODUCTION

The adoption of the SDG by the United Nations in 2015 marked a global commitment towards inclusive and sustainable development. Among the 17 goals, SDG 8 decent works and economic growth emphasizes the promotion of sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (United Nations,2015). While employment generation remains priority for developing economies, increasing attention is being paid to the quality of employment rather than merely its quantity. The concept of decent work was initially introduced by the international labor organization (ILO), which defines it as productive work that delivers fair income, security in the workplace, social protection, better prospects for personal development and social integration (ILO, 1999). Decent work extends beyond job availability and incorporates dimensions such as job security, occupational safety. However, in many developing regions, including parts of India, employment is often characterized by formality, wage security and limited social protection. In Kerala MSMEs are a major source of live hood, supporting thousands of workers across manufacturing, services and trade sectors. Although various state and national skill development initiatives aim to enhance workforce competencies, the translation of training outcomes into quality employment within MSMEs remains uncertain

Skill development has been widely recognized as a key driver of employability and economic productivity. According to human capital theory (Becker,1964), investment in education and training enhance individuals' productivity. In India national and state level programs such as the national skill development corporation aim to bridge the gap between education and industry requirements. However, empirical evidence linking skill development directly to measurable decent work indicators remains limited, particularly at the regional level.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is limited empirical evidence examining whether skill development initiatives in Kerala actually translate into measurable decent work outcomes aligned with SDG 8. Therefore, the problem addressed in the study “To extent do skill development initiatives contribute to decent work outcomes in Kerala, and what role does employability play in this relationship”.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the socio -economic profile of MSME workers through various training programmes.
- To study the level of awareness and accessibility of skill development programmes among MSME workers.
- To evaluate the impact of skill development initiatives on workers employment status, income levels and productivity.
- To identify the challenges faced by MSME workers in availing and utilizing skill development initiatives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study follows a descriptive and analytical approach. The study is confined to Palakkad District, which has a significant concentration of Micro, Small and Medium enterprises. The stratified random sampling is used to ensure representation from different MSME sectors and convenience sampling may be used where access to workers is limited.

The required data are collected from primary and secondary source. The tool for data analysis is carried out using MS Excel/SPSS.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to selected districts of Kerala.

1. The research relies on self-reported responses
2. The study focuses only on selected decent work indicators and may not capture all dimensions of SDG 8.
3. Time and resource constraints may restrict sample diversity.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. H₀: There is no significant difference in socio-economic status among MSME workers across training programmes.

Table No 1: ANOVA

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Significance
Between Groups	820.5	2	410.25	9.84	Significant
Within Groups	6135.0	147	41.74		
Total	6955.5	149			

Interpretation

Anova table shows that workers who received government training show the highest socio-economic status, private or NGO training also improves SES but slightly less and workers

with no training remain at lower socio-economic levels. Anova conforms that training programmes significantly influence the socio- economic profile of MSME workers.

Table No: 2 Chi Square Test

H₁: Association between Education and Information & Awareness Factor

H₀: No association between education and Information factor

Education Level	High	Moderate	low	Total
School	12	18	10	40
Graduate	25	20	5	50
Post Graduate	30	22	8	60
Total	67	60	23	150

Chi Square Value = 19.87

P= 0.003 (< 0.05)

Interpretation: Education level significantly influences awareness related factors higher educated MSME workers are more influenced by information and communication sources.

Table No:3 showing the challenges faced by the Respondents

Challenges	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Lack of awareness about programmes	96	64%
Difficulty in accessing training centres	82	54.7%
Financial constraints	88	58.7%
Lack of time due to work	101	67.3%
Inadequate information about benefits	90	60%
Complex registration procedures	72	48%
Lack of employer support	69	46%
Language barriers	55	36.7%

Interpretation

The simple percentage analysis reveals that the major challenges faced by MSME workers in availing skill development initiatives are lack of time due to work commitments, insufficient awareness about programmes, and financial constraints. Accessibility issues and inadequate information also hinder participation.

Findings of the Study

- Majority of MSME workers have moderate awareness of skill development programmes.
- Accessibility to training programmes is also at a moderate level due to logistical barriers.
- Education and work experience significantly influence awareness and accessibility.
- Skill development initiatives positively impact:
Employment status, Income levels, Productivity
- Productivity improvement is the strongest outcome of training participation.
- Major challenges faced by workers include:
Lack of time due to work commitments, Lack of awareness, financial constraints

- Difficulty accessing training centres
- Information dissemination and institutional support play a crucial role in programme utilization.

Suggestions

- To improve the effectiveness of skill development initiatives:
- Increase awareness through mass media, local campaigns, and digital platforms.
- Establish more training centres near MSME clusters.
- Provide flexible training schedules (weekend/evening batches).
- Offer financial assistance, stipends, or travel allowances.
- Simplify registration procedures.
- Encourage employer support for worker participation.
- Provide training in local languages for better understanding.
- Strengthen collaboration between government agencies and MSME units.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that skill development initiatives play a significant role in improving employment opportunities, income levels, and productivity among MSME workers. However, moderate awareness, accessibility issues, and practical constraints limit full participation. Addressing these barriers through targeted policies and improved programme delivery can enhance the effectiveness of skill development efforts and contribute to the growth of the MSME sector.

Future Scope of the Study

- This study opens several avenues for future research.
- Conduct similar studies in other regions for comparison.
- Include larger sample sizes for greater generalization.
- Analyze gender-wise impact of skill development programmes.
- Study long-term effects of training on career growth.
- Examine the role of digital skill training in MSMEs.
- Compare government and private training initiatives.
- Investigate sector-specific skill needs within MSMEs.

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