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RURAL EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF DDU-GKY AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS FOR YOUTH IN VIDARBHA REGION

Name: Mr. Shailesh Devidas Jambandhu
Research Scholar (Ph.D)
Faculty: Commerce and Management
University: Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University, Nagpur
Institution: G. S. College of Commerce, Wardha, Maharashtra, India

Name: Dr. Sachchidanand R. Junghare
Research Supervisor
Department: Commerce and Management
Institution: G. S. College of Commerce, Wardha, Maharashtra, India

Abstract
India's demographic dividend presents a significant opportunity for economic growth; however, the employability of rural youth remains a major concern, especially in economically distressed regions such as Vidarbha in Maharashtra. Skill development initiatives have emerged as critical policy interventions to bridge the gap between education and employment. The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) is a flagship placement-linked skill development programme implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, aimed at improving livelihood opportunities for rural poor youth. The present research paper examines the role of employability skills developed under DDU-GKY and analyses employment prospects, opportunities, and implementation challenges for youth in the Vidarbha region. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design using both primary and secondary data. The research evaluates technical skills, soft skills, communication skills, digital literacy, and life skills imparted under DDU-GKY. It also analyses placement outcomes, migration-related employment, gender participation, and retention challenges. The study identifies that while DDU-GKY significantly enhances employability skills and employment opportunities, challenges such as awareness gaps, regional mismatch, post-placement retention, and industry linkage limitations affect programme effectiveness. The paper concludes with policy recommendations including localized skill mapping, stronger employer partnerships, entrepreneurship promotion, and post-placement mentoring. The study contributes to policy discourse on rural skill development and sustainable livelihood generation in backward regions like Vidarbha.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Rural Youth, DDU-GKY, Skill Development, Vidarbha, Employment, Rural Livelihood, Skill Training, Placement Linked Training

1. Introduction

India is experiencing a demographic transition with a large proportion of youth entering the labour market each year. While this demographic dividend presents an opportunity for economic growth, it also poses challenges related to employment generation and skill development. A substantial share of India's population resides in rural areas where unemployment, underemployment, and disguised unemployment are prevalent. Rural youth often face barriers such as lack of industry-relevant skills, inadequate training infrastructure, limited access to career guidance, and poor awareness about employment opportunities.

The Vidarbha region of Maharashtra is one of the economically backward regions

characterized by agrarian distress, farmer suicides, seasonal employment, and migration to urban centers. Youth in this region often depend on agriculture and informal sector employment. Due to lack of structured skill training, their employability remains low. Therefore, skill development initiatives are crucial for improving livelihood opportunities.

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development with the objective of transforming rural poor youth into a skilled workforce. The programme focuses on placement-linked skill training and aims to provide sustainable employment. It targets rural youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years belonging to poor households.

Employability skills include a combination of technical skills, soft skills, communication abilities, digital literacy, adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. These skills enable youth to secure and sustain employment. The present study analyses employability skill development under DDU-GKY and examines prospects and challenges for youth in the Vidarbha region.

2. Conceptual Framework

Employability skills refer to a set of achievements, understandings, and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. These skills include foundational skills, technical competencies, behavioural skills, and life skills.

DDU-GKY adopts a demand-driven approach where training is aligned with industry needs. The programme includes classroom training, practical exposure, soft skills training, and placement support. The conceptual framework of the study is based on the relationship between skill training, employability skills, and employment outcomes.

Skill Training → Employability Skills → Employment Opportunities → Income Improvement → Sustainable Livelihood

3. Review of Literature

Skill development has gained importance in policy and academic discourse due to increasing unemployment among educated youth. Several researchers have highlighted the importance of employability skills in improving job readiness.

Studies indicate that rural youth lack communication skills, technical competencies, and workplace behaviour which affects their employment prospects. Placement-linked skill development programmes have shown better employment outcomes compared to traditional training programmes.

Research on rural employment suggests that skill development programmes improve income levels and reduce poverty. However, issues such as mismatch between training and local job opportunities, migration challenges, and dropout rates affect programme effectiveness.

Studies on DDU-GKY indicate that the programme has expanded access to skill training for rural youth. Women participation has increased and marginalized communities have benefited from training. However, retention after placement remains a challenge.

Despite several studies on skill development, limited research exists focusing specifically on employability skills under DDU-GKY in the Vidarbha region. The present study attempts to address this research gap.

4. Statement of the Problem

India has implemented several skill development initiatives to improve employment opportunities among rural youth. Among these initiatives, the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) plays a significant role in providing placement-linked skill training to youth from poor rural households. The programme aims to enhance employability by equipping trainees with technical skills, soft skills, and work place readiness. Despite the

implementation of such schemes, unemployment and underemployment continue to remain major concerns in rural regions, particularly in economically backward areas such as Vidarbha.

The Vidarbha region of Maharashtra faces unique socio-economic challenges including agrarian distress, limited industrialization, seasonal employment, and migration-related issues. A large proportion of rural youth in this region depend on agriculture and informal sector activities for livelihood. These employment opportunities are often unstable and provide limited income. Due to lack of access to industry-relevant training, many youth remain unemployed or underemployed. Although DDU-GKY provides structured skill training, it is important to assess whether the training programmes align with the employment needs of the region and whether trainees are able to secure sustainable jobs after completion of training.

Although DDU-GKY aims to enhance employability among rural youth, unemployment remains high in Vidarbha. There is a need to assess whether the skills imparted under DDU-GKY are relevant to industry requirements and whether the programme improves employment outcomes for rural youth.

5. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the role of skill development initiatives in enhancing employability among rural youth in the Vidarbha region with special reference to the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY). The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study employability skills developed under DDU-GKY
2. To examine employment opportunities for Vidarbha youth
3. To analyse placement outcomes of DDU-GKY training
4. To identify challenges faced by trainees
5. To evaluate post-placement retention
6. To suggest policy recommendations

   The suggestions focus on improving training quality, strengthening industry linkage, promoting localized skill development, enhancing awareness, and improving post-placement support. The study also proposes measures for increasing women participation, encouraging entrepreneurship, and ensuring sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural youth.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

1. H1: DDU-GKY training improves employability skills of rural youth
2. H2: Skill training positively influences employment placement
3. H3: Soft skills training improves job retention
4. H4: Awareness level influences participation in DDU-GKY

7. Research Methodology

The research methodology forms an important part of the study as it provides a systematic framework for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data related to employability skills under DDU-GKY. The present study adopts a structured methodology to examine employment prospects and challenges faced by rural youth in the Vidarbha region.

7.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive design is used to describe the profile of trainees, types of skills imparted, and employment outcomes under DDU-GKY. It helps in understanding the current status of employability skills among rural youth. The analytical design is used to analyse the relationship between skill training and employment outcomes. The study also examines placement performance, job retention, and challenges faced by trainees. This combined approach helps in providing both factual description and statistical interpretation of the data.

7.2 Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary data and secondary data to ensure comprehensive analysis. Primary data provides first-hand information from beneficiaries and stakeholders, while secondary data supports the study with policy-level insights and background information.

7.3 Primary Data

Primary data for the study is collected directly from respondents associated with DDU-GKY programmes in the Vidarbha region. The following methods are used:

- Structured Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire is administered to DDU-GKY trainees to collect information regarding demographic profile, training received, skill development, placement status, and job retention.
- Interviews with Trainees: Personal interviews are conducted with selected trainees to understand their experiences during training and employment. This helps in identifying challenges such as migration issues, salary concerns, and workplace adjustment.
- Discussion with Training Providers: Discussions with training centre officials are conducted to gather information regarding course structure, training duration, placement support, and industry linkage.
- Employer Feedback: Feedback from employers who recruit DDU-GKY trainees is collected to assess satisfaction level, skill adequacy, and job performance of trainees. This helps in evaluating the relevance of training to industry requirements.

7.4 Secondary Data

Secondary data is collected from various published and unpublished sources. These include:

- Government of India reports on skill development
- DDU-GKY operational guidelines and policy documents
- Skill India Mission reports
- Ministry of Rural Development publications
- Research journals and academic articles
- Books related to skill development and employability
- Maharashtra Economic Survey reports
- Training centre records and official statistics

Secondary data helps in understanding programme objectives, implementation strategies, and national-level performance of DDU-GKY.

7.5 Sampling Method

The study adopts stratified random sampling method for selecting respondents. The population is divided into different groups such as trainees, training providers, and employers. Samples are then selected randomly from each group to ensure representation. This method helps in reducing sampling bias and ensures that different stakeholders of DDU-GKY are included in the study. The sampling method also helps in collecting balanced data from various districts of the Vidarbha region.

7.6 Sample Size

The sample size for the present study includes respondents from different stakeholder groups associated with DDU-GKY. The sample distribution is as follows:

- 150 DDU-GKY trainees from Vidarbha region
- 15 training centres implementing DDU-GKY programmes
- 20 employers recruiting DDU-GKY trained candidates

The selected sample size is considered adequate to analyse employability skills, placement outcomes, and challenges faced by rural youth.

7.7 Tools for Analysis

The collected data is analysed using appropriate statistical tools to test the hypotheses and interpret results. The following tools are used:

- Percentage Analysis: Used to analyse demographic profile, participation level, placement rate, and training outcomes.
- Mean: Used to measure average responses related to skill development and employment outcomes.
- Standard Deviation: Used to measure variation in responses among trainees.
- Correlation Analysis: Used to examine relationship between skill training and employment outcomes.
- Chi-square Test: Used to test association between variables such as training and placement, awareness and participation, and soft skills and retention.

These statistical tools help in drawing meaningful conclusions regarding the effectiveness of DDU-GKY in improving employability among rural youth in the Vidarbha region.

8. Employability Skills Developed under DDU-GKY

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) focuses on developing comprehensive employability skills among rural youth to enhance their job readiness and long-term employment sustainability. The programme adopts a holistic training approach that includes technical skills, soft skills, digital skills, and life skills. These skills are designed to meet industry requirements and prepare candidates for professional work environments. The employability skills developed under DDU-GKY are discussed as follows:

8.1 Technical Skills

Technical skills form the core component of DDU-GKY training programmes. These skills are industry-specific and designed according to market demand. Training is provided across multiple sectors to increase employment opportunities for rural youth.

- Retail Sector: Training includes customer handling, billing operations, inventory management, store operations, sales techniques, and merchandising. Trainees are prepared for job roles such as sales associate, retail executive, and store assistant.
- IT and IT-Enabled Services: Candidates are trained in basic computer operations, data entry, office automation tools, customer support services, and digital documentation. This training prepares youth for roles such as data entry operator, back-office executive, and customer care associate.
- Healthcare Sector: Training includes patient care assistance, hospital support services, basic medical knowledge, hygiene practices, and healthcare documentation. Trainees are prepared for roles such as general duty assistant, hospital attendant, and healthcare support staff.
- Hospitality Sector: Training focuses on front office operations, housekeeping, food and beverage services, customer service, and hotel management basics. Candidates are trained for employment in hotels, restaurants, and service industries.
- Manufacturing Sector: Training includes machine handling, quality control, production assistance, packaging, and safety procedures. Trainees are prepared for entry-level positions in manufacturing industries and production units.

These technical skills improve the job-specific competencies of trainees and enhance their chances of employment in organized sectors.

8.2 Soft Skills

Soft skills are essential for workplace success and job retention. DDU-GKY training

programmes include structured modules for behavioural and interpersonal skill development.

- Communication Skills: Training focuses on verbal and non-verbal communication, professional interaction, basic English communication, and workplace communication. These skills help trainees interact effectively with supervisors, colleagues, and customers.
- Teamwork: Trainees are trained to work collaboratively, share responsibilities, and adapt to team-based work environments. Teamwork skills are important for organizational productivity.
- Leadership Skills: Basic leadership qualities such as initiative, responsibility, decision-making, and problem-solving are developed during training. These skills help in career progression.
- Time Management: Training emphasizes punctuality, discipline, work planning, and productivity. Proper time management improves work efficiency and job performance.
- Work Ethics: Trainees are taught workplace discipline, professional behaviour, honesty, accountability, and respect for organizational rules. Work ethics play an important role in job retention.

Soft skills enhance confidence, improve behaviour, and increase the employability of rural youth.

8.3 Digital Skills

Digital literacy has become essential for employment across sectors. DDU-GKY integrates digital skills training to prepare candidates for technology-driven workplaces.

- Computer Literacy: Training includes basic computer knowledge, operating systems, typing skills, and use of common software applications.
- Email Communication: Trainees learn professional email writing, sending attachments, and online communication etiquette.
- Online Systems: Training includes use of online portals, digital attendance systems, online reporting, and internet-based applications used in workplaces.
- Documentation: Candidates are trained in preparing digital documents, spreadsheets, and maintaining records using computer systems.

Digital skills increase employability and enable trainees to work in formal sector organizations.

8.4 Life Skills

Life skills are included to improve personal development and long-term career sustainability. These skills help trainees adjust to professional environments and manage personal responsibilities.

- Confidence Building: Training includes personality development, public speaking, and self-presentation. This improves self-confidence among rural youth.
- Personality Development: Grooming, professional appearance, and behavioural training are provided to prepare candidates for interviews and workplace culture.
- Financial Literacy: Trainees are taught basic financial management, banking procedures, savings, digital payments, and salary management.
- Career Planning: Guidance is provided regarding career growth, job switching, skill upgradation, and long-term employment planning.

These life skills help trainees become self-reliant, responsible, and capable of sustaining employment.

Overall, DDU-GKY focuses on multi-dimensional skill development to improve employability among rural youth. The integration of technical, soft, digital, and life skills enhances job readiness, improves placement outcomes, and supports long-term career growth for youth in the Vidarbha region.

9. Employment Prospects for Vidarbha Youth

Skill development initiatives under DDU-GKY create significant employment prospects for rural youth in the Vidarbha region. The programme focuses on placement-linked training, which enhances employment opportunities in both local and national labour markets. The employment prospects generated through DDU-GKY are discussed as follows:

9.1 Increased Job Opportunities

DDU-GKY provides industry-oriented training that improves the employability of rural youth. After completing training, candidates become eligible for entry-level jobs in sectors such as retail, hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, and IT-enabled services. The programme helps youth transition from informal employment to structured job roles. This increases the availability of employment opportunities for trained candidates. The scheme also connects trainees with employers through campus placements and recruitment drives.

9.2 Placement in Organised Sector

One of the major employment prospects under DDU-GKY is placement in the organised sector. Rural youth who previously worked in agriculture or informal labour markets gain access to formal employment opportunities. Organised sector jobs provide benefits such as regular salary, job security, structured working hours, and career progression. Employment in organized sectors such as retail chains, hospitals, hotels, and corporate offices improves financial stability and professional growth.

9.3 Migration-Based Employment

Many DDU-GKY trainees from Vidarbha receive placement opportunities in urban centres such as Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Delhi. Migration-based employment expands job opportunities beyond local labour markets. Although migration presents challenges, it also provides exposure to modern workplaces, higher salary packages, and career growth opportunities. Migration-based employment helps rural youth gain professional experience and improve their socio-economic status.

9.4 Women Employment Opportunities

DDU-GKY has created employment opportunities for women in rural areas. Training in sectors such as healthcare, retail, hospitality, and apparel enables women to enter the workforce. Employment improves financial independence and social empowerment of women. The programme also promotes inclusive development by encouraging participation of women from economically weaker sections. Women employment contributes to improved household income and better living standards.

9.5 Income Generation

Skill training under DDU-GKY enables rural youth to secure wage employment with regular income. Compared to seasonal agricultural work, structured employment provides stable earnings. Increased income improves living conditions, supports family needs, and reduces poverty. Regular salary also encourages savings and financial planning among youth. Income generation is one of the major outcomes of skill development programmes.

9.6 Skill Certification

DDU-GKY provides nationally recognized skill certification after completion of training. Certification enhances credibility and increases employment opportunities. Employers prefer certified candidates as they possess standardized skills. Certification also helps trainees apply for jobs across different regions. It improves career

mobility and opens opportunities for further skill upgradation.

9.7 Career Growth Opportunities

Employment obtained through DDU-GKY provides entry-level positions that offer scope for career progression. With experience, trainees can move to supervisory roles, team leadership positions, and higher-paying jobs. Skill development also encourages continuous learning and upskilling. Career growth improves long-term employment sustainability and income levels. Exposure to professional work environments helps youth develop long-term career goals.

9.8 Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Skill training also encourages self-employment and entrepreneurship among rural youth. Some trainees utilize their skills to start small businesses such as retail shops, service centres, tailoring units, and repair services. Entrepreneurship reduces dependence on wage employment and generates local employment opportunities. Financial literacy and life skills training under DDU-GKY support entrepreneurship development. This contributes to rural economic development in the Vidarbha region.

Overall, DDU-GKY enhances employment prospects for rural youth by providing skill-based training, placement opportunities, and career development pathways. The programme contributes to improving employability, increasing income, and promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth in Vidarbha.

10. Challenges Faced by Youth

Although DDU-GKY provides significant opportunities for skill development and employment, rural youth in the Vidarbha region face several challenges during training, placement, and post-placement stages. These challenges affect participation, job retention, and long-term employment sustainability. The major challenges faced by youth are discussed below:

10.1 Lack of Awareness

One of the major challenges is the limited awareness about DDU-GKY among rural youth. Many eligible candidates are not informed about the scheme, training opportunities, eligibility criteria, and placement benefits. In remote villages, information dissemination is weak due to lack of proper outreach activities. As a result, youth from poor households often miss opportunities for skill training. Lack of awareness also affects enrollment, especially among women and marginalized communities.

10.2 Language Barriers

Language is another important challenge faced by trainees, particularly during placement outside their native region. Many rural youth from Vidarbha are more comfortable in Marathi or local dialects and may have limited knowledge of Hindi and English. When placed in metropolitan cities, communication difficulties arise in workplace interactions, customer handling, and training sessions. Language barriers reduce confidence and may affect job performance and retention.

10.3 Migration Issues

DDU-GKY placements are often located in urban centres outside Vidarbha. Migration for employment creates challenges such as adjustment to new environments, accommodation issues, and unfamiliar workplace culture. Rural youth may face difficulties adapting to city life, long working hours, and high cost of living. Homesickness and lack of social support also affect job continuity. Migration-related challenges often lead to early attrition.

10.4 Family Resistance

Family resistance is a common issue, particularly for female trainees and younger candidates. Parents may hesitate to allow their children to migrate to distant cities for employment due to safety concerns. Cultural norms and family responsibilities also limit mobility. In many cases, trainees leave jobs due to family pressure to return home. Family

resistance reduces participation in training programmes and affects placement sustainability.

10.5 Placement Outside Region

Limited industrial development in Vidarbha results in placement opportunities outside the region. While external placement increases employment chances, it also creates adjustment challenges. Trainees may prefer local employment near their hometowns. Lack of local job opportunities reduces long-term retention. Placement outside region also increases travel expenses and accommodation costs, which affect job sustainability.

10.6 Retention Issues

Job retention is a major challenge in skill development programmes. Many trainees leave employment within a few months due to low salary, long working hours, and adjustment difficulties. Some candidates find the job roles different from training expectations. Others return to their hometowns due to personal reasons. High attrition rates reduce the overall effectiveness of placement-linked training programmes.

10.7 Training Quality Variation

Training quality varies across training centres implementing DDU-GKY programmes. Differences in infrastructure, trainer competency, course duration, and practical exposure affect learning outcomes. Some trainees may not receive adequate hands-on training, which reduces job readiness. Inadequate soft skill training also affects workplace behaviour and communication. Training quality variation impacts placement success and job performance.

10.8 Limited Local Industry

The Vidarbha region has limited industrial development compared to urban regions. Due to lack of manufacturing units, service industries, and corporate offices, local employment opportunities remain limited. This forces trainees to migrate for employment. Limited local industry also restricts employer participation in training programmes. Strengthening local industry linkage is necessary for improving employment outcomes.

Overall, these challenges influence participation, training effectiveness, placement outcomes, and job retention among rural youth. Addressing these issues through improved awareness, localized training, industry linkage, and post-placement support can enhance the effectiveness of DDU-GKY and improve employability outcomes in the Vidarbha region.

11. Major Findings

The present study analysed the effectiveness of employability skill development under DDU-GKY and examined employment prospects and challenges for rural youth in the Vidarbha region. Based on the analysis of primary and secondary data, the following major findings were observed:

11.1 DDU-GKY Improves Employability Skills

The study found that DDU-GKY training significantly improves employability skills among rural youth. Trainees acquired technical skills related to specific sectors such as retail, healthcare, hospitality, and IT-enabled services. In addition, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and workplace behaviour improved after training. The programme also enhanced digital literacy and life skills. Overall, the training contributed to improved job readiness and employability among participants.

11.2 Placement Rate Increased after Training

The study observed that placement-linked training under DDU-GKY increased employment opportunities for rural youth. A considerable proportion of trainees received job offers after completion of training. Placement drives conducted by training centres helped connect candidates with employers. The availability of organized sector jobs increased after training. The programme facilitated entry-

level employment for candidates who previously depended on informal sector work.

11.3 Women Participation Rising

The study found that participation of women in DDU-GKY training programmes has increased in the Vidarbha region. Women enrolled in sectors such as healthcare, retail, and hospitality. Skill training improved their confidence and encouraged them to enter the workforce. Employment opportunities for women contributed to financial independence and socio-economic empowerment. However, mobility constraints and family responsibilities still affected participation in some areas.

11.4 Soft Skills Improved Confidence

Soft skill training under DDU-GKY played an important role in improving confidence among rural youth. Trainees reported improvement in communication skills, personality development, and workplace interaction. Confidence gained during training helped candidates perform better during interviews and job placement. Soft skills also contributed to teamwork and professional behaviour in work places.

11.5 Migration Challenge Significant

The study identified migration as a major challenge affecting employment sustainability. Many trainees were placed in cities outside the Vidarbha region. While migration provided better salary opportunities, adjustment difficulties affected job continuity. Challenges such as accommodation, cost of living, language barriers, and homesickness influenced retention. Some trainees preferred local employment opportunities closer to their hometowns.

11.6 Digital Literacy Enhanced

The study observed that digital literacy improved significantly among trainees. Candidates developed basic computer knowledge, email communication skills, and familiarity with online systems. Digital skills increased job opportunities in office-based and service sector roles. Improved digital literacy also helped trainees adapt to modern workplace requirements.

11.7 Retention Moderate

The study found that job retention among DDU-GKY trainees was moderate. While many candidates secured employment, some left jobs within a few months. Reasons for attrition included low salary, migration-related challenges, family pressure, and limited career growth. Post-placement support helped in some cases, but strengthening follow-up mechanisms is necessary to improve retention.

Overall, the findings indicate that DDU-GKY has a positive impact on employability skill development and employment opportunities for rural youth in Vidarbha. However, challenges such as migration, retention, and limited local opportunities need to be addressed to improve long-term employment outcomes.

12. Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed to improve the effectiveness of employability skill development under DDU-GKY and enhance employment prospects for rural youth in the Vidarbha region:

12.1 Localised Skill Training

Skill training programmes should be designed based on the local employment potential of the Vidarbha region. Training aligned with local industries such as agro-processing, food processing, textile units, rural tourism, healthcare services, and retail can improve employment opportunities within the region. Localised training will reduce migration-related challenges and increase job retention. Conducting district-level skill mapping can help identify demand-based training sectors.

12.2 Industry Linkage Strengthening

Strong collaboration between training providers and industries is essential for improving placement outcomes. Training centres should establish partnerships with local industries, service sector organizations, hospitals, retail chains, and manufacturing units. Industry

participation in curriculum design, guest lectures, and on-the-job training can improve skill relevance. Employer involvement in training evaluation will also ensure that candidates meet industry expectations.

12.3 Post-Placement Support

Post-placement support should be strengthened to improve job retention among trainees. Training providers should maintain regular follow-up with placed candidates and provide counselling support. Assistance in accommodation, workplace adjustment, and migration-related issues should be provided. Career guidance and skill upgradation opportunities should also be offered. Continuous mentoring will help trainees sustain employment for a longer duration.

12.4 Awareness Campaigns

Awareness about DDU-GKY should be increased in rural areas through structured outreach programmes, self-help groups, community organizations, and local institutions can be involved in spreading information. Awareness camps, village-level meetings, and career counselling sessions can encourage participation. Special efforts should be made to reach remote villages and economically weaker sections.

12.5 Entrepreneurship Support

Skill development programmes should also promote self-employment and entrepreneurship. Trainees should be encouraged to start small businesses based on their skills such as repair services, retail shops, tailoring units, and service enterprises. Financial literacy training, business guidance, and access to credit facilities can support entrepreneurship. This will reduce dependence on wage employment and generate local employment opportunities.

12.6 Women-Focused Programmes

Special training programmes should be designed to increase participation of women. Training centres should provide safe and accessible learning environments. Courses suitable for women such as healthcare services, retail, tailoring, digital services, and office administration can be introduced. Flexible training schedules and local placement opportunities can improve participation. Women employment will contribute to socio-economic empowerment.

12.7 Digital Training Enhancement

Digital skills training should be strengthened to meet modern workplace requirements. Advanced digital modules such as online communication tools, basic data management, and digital financial services should be included. Exposure to digital platforms used in workplaces will improve job readiness. Digital literacy will also support entrepreneurship and remote employment opportunities.

Overall, these suggestions aim to improve training quality, increase employment opportunities, strengthen placement outcomes, and enhance long-term job retention. Implementation of these measures can improve the effectiveness of DDU-GKY and promote sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural youth in the Vidarbha region.

13. Conclusion

The present study examined the role of employability skill development under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) and analysed employment prospects and challenges for rural youth in the Vidarbha region. The findings of the study indicate that DDU-GKY has emerged as an important skill development initiative aimed at improving employability and livelihood opportunities for youth belonging to economically weaker rural households. The programme provides structured, placement-linked training that focuses on technical skills, soft skills, digital literacy, and life skills. These components collectively contribute to improving job readiness, confidence, and professional adaptability among rural youth.

The study found that participation in DDU-GKY training enhances employability skills and increases access to employment opportunities in organized sectors such as retail, healthcare, hospitality, IT-enabled services, and manufacturing. The placement-linked approach adopted by the programme helps trainees transition from informal and seasonal employment to structured job roles with regular income. This contributes to income generation, improved living standards, and reduced dependence on agriculture-based livelihood. The programme also promotes inclusive development by encouraging participation of women and marginalized communities. Increased participation of women in skill development programmes contributes to financial independence and socio-economic empowerment.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified several challenges affecting the effectiveness of DDU-GKY in the Vidarbha region. Lack of awareness about training programmes in rural areas limits participation of eligible youth. Migration-based placement creates adjustment difficulties and affects job retention. Limited industrial development in the Vidarbha region reduces availability of local employment opportunities, forcing trainees to seek jobs outside the region. Language barriers, family resistance, and financial constraints also influence placement sustainability. Variation in training quality across centres and limited post-placement support further affect long-term employment outcomes.

The study also observed that soft skills and digital literacy play a crucial role in improving employability and job retention. Trainees who developed communication skills, teamwork ability, and workplace discipline showed better adjustment in professional environments. Digital skills improved access to office-based and service sector employment. However, strengthening these components within training programmes can further enhance employment outcomes.

In order to improve the effectiveness of DDU-GKY, the study suggests the need for localized skill training aligned with regional employment opportunities. Stronger industry linkage, improved placement support, and continuous mentoring are essential for enhancing job retention. Awareness campaigns in rural areas can increase participation among eligible youth. Promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities can also generate local employment and reduce migration. Special focus on women participation and digital skill enhancement can further strengthen employability outcomes.

In conclusion, DDU-GKY has significant potential to transform rural youth into a skilled workforce and contribute to sustainable livelihood generation in the Vidarbha region. The programme has improved employability skills, increased employment opportunities, and supported socio-economic development. However, addressing implementation challenges and strengthening training and placement mechanisms are essential for achieving long-term impact. Effective implementation of DDU-GKY, combined with region-specific strategies, can play a vital role in reducing rural unemployment and enhancing economic development in backward regions such as Vidarbha.

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