

**A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES PROVIDED AT A GLANCE (SHG)
VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE AT MYSURU**

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Abstract: *The term 'Empowerment' aims at encouraging, enabling and liberating an individual from being dependent on another. Various government and private agencies are working towards empowering those who are deprived and create self-confidence in them. Hitherto, women are considered the weaker sex and several instances show that they are dependent on their respective families for their needs. Self Help Groups or SHG's as they are more popularly called, aims at empowering women so as to make them confident to face life with more positivity. One of their focus is on imparting training modules for women at various centers and provide necessary support for these women to be independent, either as an entrepreneur or to seek employment and be financially stable. This study has reviewed a scheme under the Group for Urban and Rural Development (GROUP), which is a sub-scheme of the Priyadarshini Scheme, at a center, providing vocational training for women, run by a SHG at Jyothi Nagar area in Mysuru City. The study tries to assess the effectiveness of vocational training programmes in ensuring women empowerment.*

Keywords: *Sustainable Development, Women empowerment, Training, Employment, Self Help Group-SHG*

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing countries are focusing on empowering their citizens basically to ensure economic stability. However, women are given less importance, especially in developing countries, leading to several unhealthy circumstances. Presently, there is a growing awareness on ensuring empowerment for all and women being the weaker sex are being given more importance. Opportunities being available for women are seemingly less, though there are measures being taken to ensure equal opportunities for both men and women. India is a country with a varied cultural outlay. India has a mixture of individuals who are highly skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled. However, the percentage of un-skilled workers is higher in number. Therefore the problem of unemployment in the country is high. Having identified this, the government as well as private agencies are trying to bridge this gap by introducing training through vocational courses. Through this process, encouraging entrepreneurship is also being promoted to ensure creation of more avenues for employment. The focus on improving skill sets in individuals, specifically women, will help in ensuring employability and thereby ensure sustained economic development in the country.

Today's modern women do not wish to live as their counterparts lived, a few decades ago. Women in the past were majorly confined to their homes and focused on taking care of their family. The present day women are dynamic and are proving their capabilities both within the confines of their homes as well as being excellent professionals to the outside world. Women are identified as being the untapped human resource all over the world.

In India, like in other developing countries, all women do not get the same motivation and support from their families. Women in India are yet to achieve equal respect in society. This is

especially true for women in underdeveloped and developing countries. The fact lies in the tradition which is deep rooted in our society which is male dominated.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Nirmala¹ (2015), in her study focusing on women entrepreneurship, suggests various entrepreneurial solutions for empowering women and ensuring that they achieve their desired goals. The author highlights that women are perhaps the world's most unrealized resource. Similarly, Kameshwari VL² (2015) through her study focuses on poverty alleviation through self-employment and entrepreneurship for women and the factors that are hindering the success of such initiatives being provided by the Government.

Similarly, Meenu Goyal³ (2014) states through her study that in modern times, women are empowered and in a better position to participate as entrepreneurs and are playing a major role in the economic development of the country. Vikas V Bale⁴ (2014) in his study attempts to understand the influence of microfinance in the socio economic empowerment of women. The author identifies the power of micro finance in empowering women and motivating them to take up entrepreneurship. Dr. Shanta Bangari⁵ (2013), also highlights through her study, the effectiveness of schemes provided by the government for women empowerment and suggests the continuation of schemes for ensuring socio-economic development in the country.

The Government of India at the Centre and States are seriously focusing on empowering women through implementation of several schemes, vocational training programmes and several programmes specifically focusing on women empowerment. Initially, the Government of India implemented and adopted the welfare oriented approach, but now the approach has shifted towards development and empowerment of women. Presently, the government has several schemes of which the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Priyadarshini are most popular, focusing on women empowerment. These initiatives are being made not only by the Government but also by business houses, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

The present study focuses on the GUARD- Group for Urban and Rural Development scheme, which is a sub-scheme of the Priyadarshini Scheme, focusing on vocational training for women to make them financial independent. This study tries to analyze the effectiveness of vocational programmes being provided with the objective of empowering women, through Self Help Groups and to suggest measures for enhancing financial independence for women and in the long run, ensure sustainable economic development. Hence the necessity of this study.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the benefits of vocational training in ensuring women empowerment.
- To analyze the effect of the training in promoting entrepreneurship.
- To study the effect of the training on enhancing skills set among the participants of the vocational training programme.

¹ Source: R.Nirmala (2015), Women Entrepreneurship Problem, solution and Government Scheme for Development, Pezzattaite Journal, Vol 4, Issue April-June. Page.

² Source: Kameshwari VL (2015), A Study on Information Needs for Rural Entrepreneurship'. International Knowledge Sharing Platform, Vol.33 Page 277.

³ Source: Goyal Meenu (2014), Women Entrepreneurship in India-Problems and Prospects. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, Vol 1 Issue 5. Page.195.

⁴ Source: Vikas WVBale (2014), A Study in Rural India, with special reference to Thane District in the State of Maharashtra, Journal of Business Management. Vol-1. Page 31.

⁵ Source: Dr. Shantha Bangari (2013), Effectiveness of Women and Child Development Programs: A Study in Karnataka. The International Journal of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Research. Vol 2(8) Page 100.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this study is summarized in Table-1 given below.

Table-1: Showing the Summary of Research Methodology adopted

Research design	Exploratory and Descriptive Research
Sampling Technique	Judgmental and Convenience sampling
Sampling Unit	GUARD- (Group for Urban and Rural Development), a Self Help Group Centre at Jyothi Nagar, Mysuru.
Sample Size	30 trainees who have completed their vocational training and have been issued course completion certificate.
Research Instrument	Questionnaire
Data Collection	Direct interviews
Analysis	Simple Charts and Graphs

Source: Survey data

Through an empirical study, the objectives of this study were analyzed. The suggestions put forth are based on responses received from the target group selected for this study. The respondents selected for the study were women who had completed their training of vocational courses being provided by the Group for Urban and Rural Development (GUARD), in association with the corporate social responsibility committee of L&T Company, at a Self Help Group-SHG Centre in Mysuru City. These trainees had successfully completed their training and were awarded course completion certificates from the Centre. The study includes primary data which was collected through a questionnaire and interactions with women who had completed their training from the identified SHG and secondary data from relevant journals and periodicals with published articles on the topic. Sampling used in this study is judgmental and convenience sampling as only women who had completed their training from the identified Centre were chosen as respondents. The study tries to ensure that women from all age groups were selected to ensure that the responses and opinion collected were not biased. The authors were able to identify 38 women who had completed their vocational training from the identified Centre, who constitute the sample size for the study.

3. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

This study attempts to analyze the effectiveness of vocational training schemes provided under GUARD- Group for Urban and Rural Development, which is a sub-scheme of the Priyadarshini scheme. Under this scheme, women who enroll for vocational training are provided certificate and also assistance for starting their own small scale business and make them financially independent.

The GUARD center at Jyothi Nagar, at Mysuru, providing vocational training is being provided in association with L&T Company, Mysuru, as part of their CSR activity. The courses presently being offered for the women at the Jyothi Nagar GUARD Centre include Tailoring and Beautician course. The women who successfully complete their training are provided with a course completion certificate. The main objective of GUARD is to empower women through enhancement of skill and make them financially and economically independent. This scheme is an attempt to ensure sustainable development. The course is offered to women between 19- 40 years of age. The duration of the course is three months and the fee for the course is Rs.300, which includes materials required for the training. After successful completion of the course, these trainees are assisted by the Association, in securing loans when they showed keen interest in venturing into business activity.

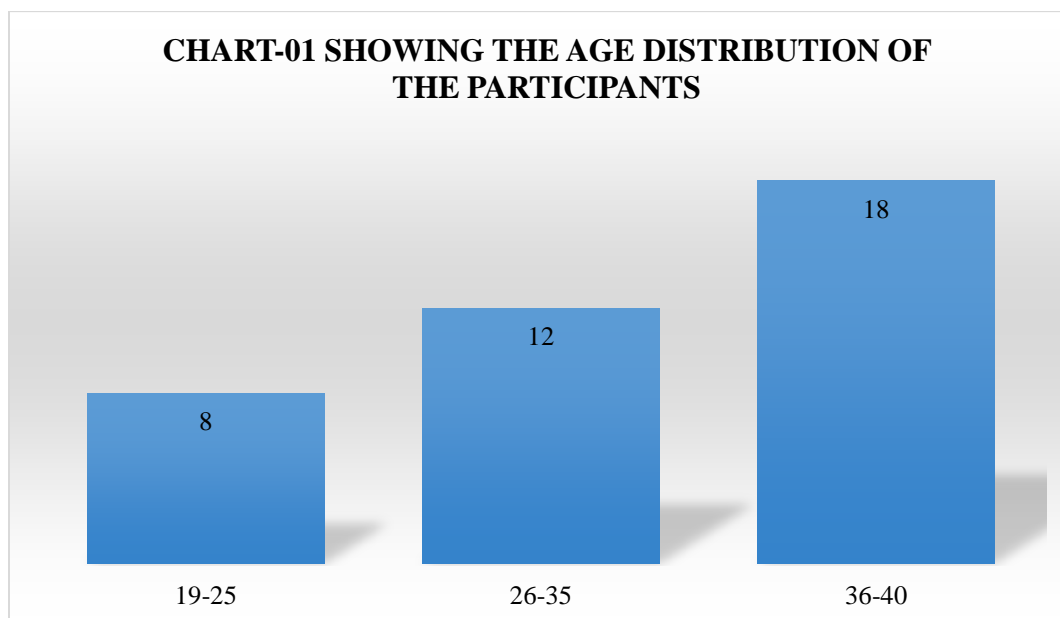
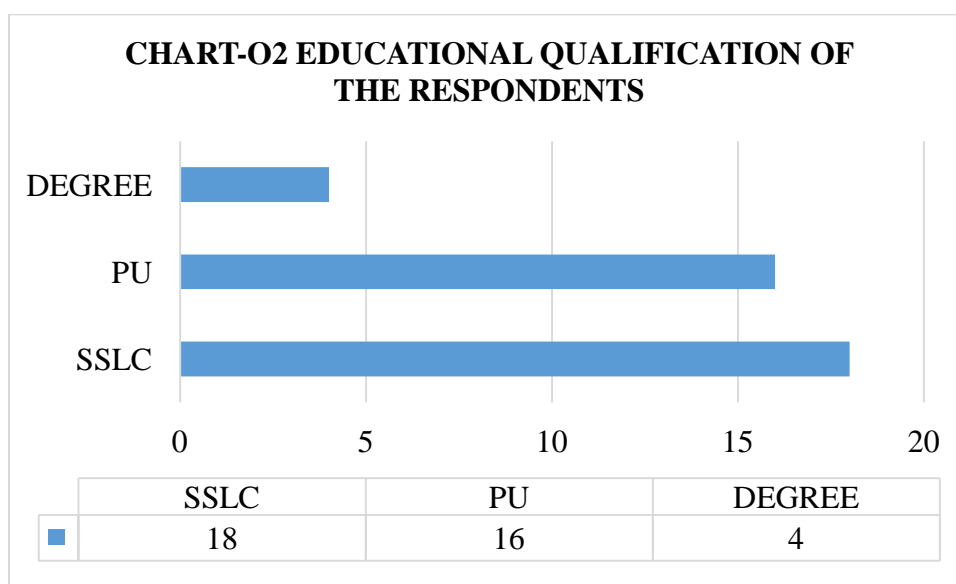


Figure 1: Age Distribution

Source: Survey data

The study focuses on women who have completed their training from the identified Centre and their responses have been collected, to assist the authors in achieving their objective, which this study aims at accomplishing. The study attempts to understand the benefits of the training being imparted under GUARD in association with L&T Company CSR initiatives.

In the present study, the women who responded to the questionnaire, had earlier enrolled and had successfully completed their courses. These women were considered respondents to the study. Chart-01 shows the age distribution of the trainees in the group selected for this study. We can observe that majority of the women are between the age group 36-40. This chart highlights the desire of women who have spent their initial years, taking care of their family responsibilities and identifying the need for financial independence are looking towards enhancing their skill and augmenting their family income.



Source: Survey data

Figure 2: Educational qualification of respondents

We can also observe from Chart-02 that majority of the trainees are not much educated. Out of the total 38 respondents, only 4 had completed their graduation. Majority of the women had just passed their SSLC, which according to present times, equals basic education, while the 16 women who had studied upto PUC, some had not completed their course completely. There is high likely hood that respondents would not have completed their studies either due to financial constraints, family background and lack of awareness on the benefits of education.

It is obvious that, it would be difficult to find a well-paying job with less qualification and the only alternative of becoming financially independent would be to become an entrepreneur. Lack of education was a detriment for seeking suitable jobs. The Chart-02 rightly confirms that due to lack of higher education these women have enrolled for the courses to enhance their skills for ensuring employability and making them financially independent.

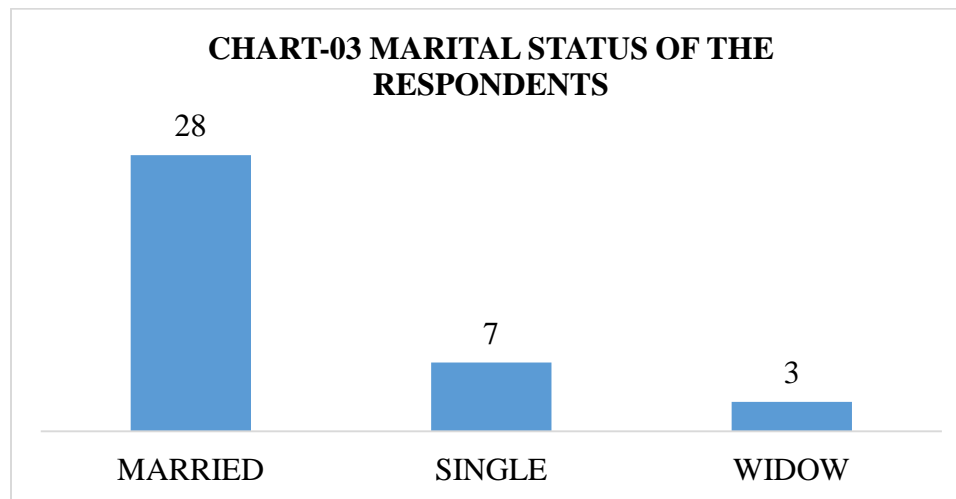


Figure 3: Marital status of respondents

Source: Survey data.

We can observe from Chart-03, that majority of the trainees were married women. This can represent that after a woman gets married, she shoulders several responsibilities and her role as a home maker, a mother, a wife, a daughter and member of a household which has a major impact on herself as an individual and also the family she is associated with. She understands the need for additional income to support her family needs. The continuous influence of technology, Cable TV, Internet, Channels on television are rising the awareness levels and motivating women to be proactive, leave the confines of their homes and enhance their skill set and seek employment, improve their financial status and standard of living. Secondly, the study shows that majority of the women were above 30 years of age, which again indicates that normally, by that age, women would have children who are able to take care of themselves and hence the mothers have time to concentrate on other important aspects as in enhancing their skills and augment their family income.

Similarly, when we check Chart-04, on the present occupation of the trainees, it shows that majority of the women are home-makers. We can also hypothesize that women above the age of 30 would usually have children big enough to take care of themselves and it is during this period in time that a woman feels she can assist in augmenting her family income as she finds some free time from her chores as a mother, when her children are at school. It is usually with these intentions that a woman joins these vocational courses to help her become financially independent and contribute towards her family's well-being.

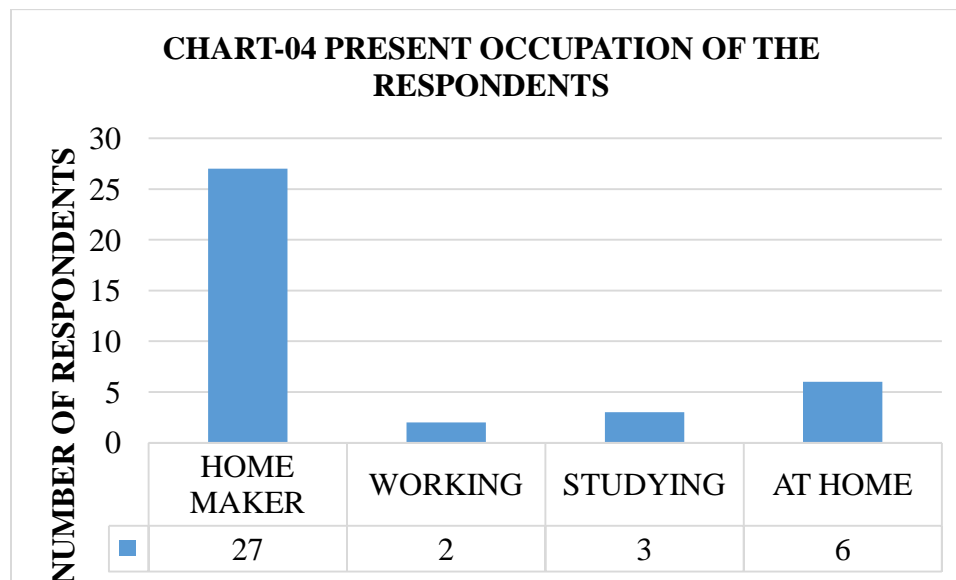


Figure 4: Occupation of respondents

Source: Survey data.

GUARD-Group for Urban and Rural Development, in association with L&T Company, Mysuru, presently provide two vocational courses namely, Tailoring and Beautician course. Women who have an inclination towards dress designing and know a little bit of math (calculations), take up tailoring. They take up the course with the intention of saving on expenses for stitching clothes or for starting a tailoring unit at their respective homes in order to augment their income. For those of the women who are creative and have an inclination towards makeup, hair-dressing and are beauty conscious the beautician course is designed to help them promote their aptitude and to help them construct their career in the chosen field.

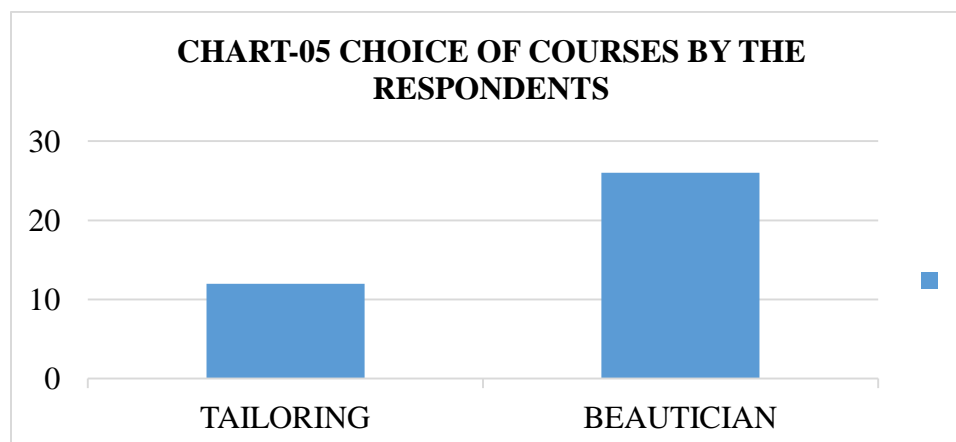


Figure 5: Choices of courses by respondents

Source: Survey data.

Chart-05 shows, the number of respondents who have chosen courses as per their individual choice. Out of the 38 respondents to the study, 12 members had chosen tailoring course while the rest 26 members had chosen beautician course for their vocational training.

It was understood, through this study, that both the courses involved a lot of practical exposure. In terms of tailoring course, the trainee needs to stitch several types of dresses to become perfect in stitching and tailoring. For this the trainee needs to be provided cloth, thread, scissors, measuring tape and a sewing machine. Similarly, for the beautician course, the trainee has to learn skills relating to various facilities through intensive training. For this course, the trainee requires creams, lotions, thread, suitable furniture, mirror, scissors etc. She would also require

people who would volunteer to her practice. This will ensure that the trainee is well versed with her skills and can independently work on her own.

The respondents were asked to share the reason for taking up vocational training at GUARD. Majority of the respondents (24 out of the 38 trainees) mentioned that they wished to start their own business and become entrepreneurs. While the remaining mentioned that they preferred to learn skills for bringing down expenses incurred for such requirement for their family members. This also shows that women are becoming more confident and are coming out of the confines of their homes. They need to be guided correctly and motivated to take up activities that could make them financially independent.

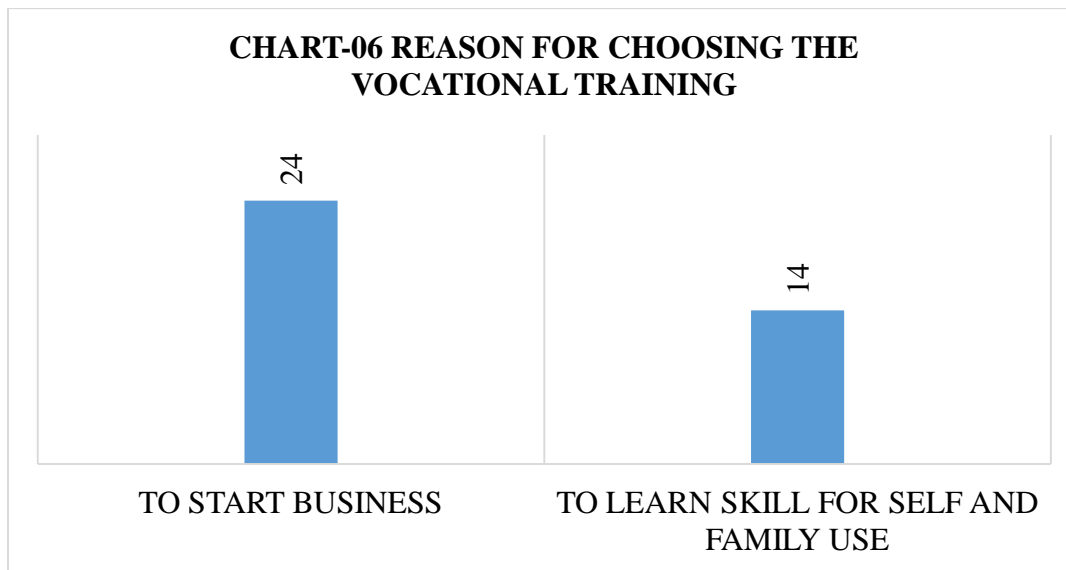


Figure 6: Reasons for choosing vocational training
Source: Survey data

Chart-06, above shows rejoinder regarding motivation and purpose for enrolling for the vocational training provided by GUARD. Majority of the women had a vision of starting their own business and that motivated them to register for the courses.

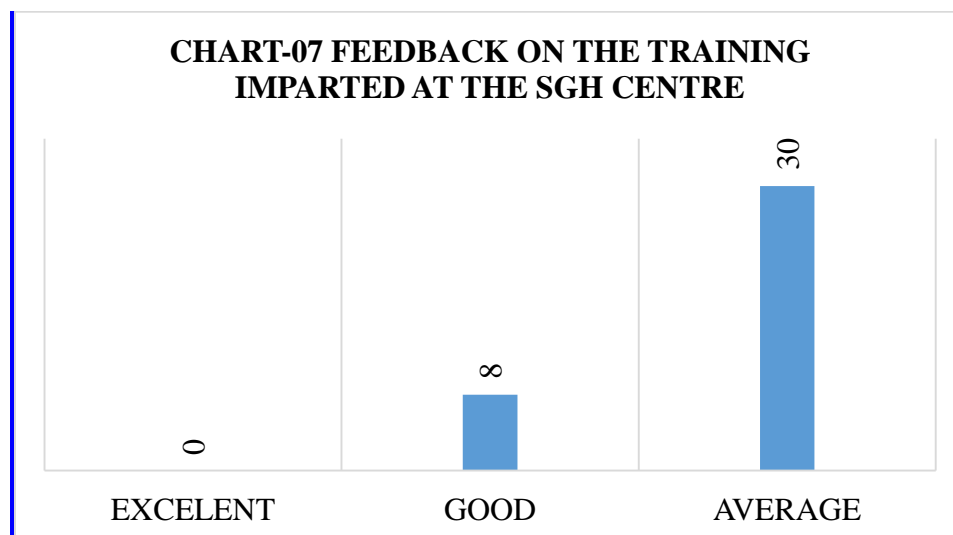


Figure 7: Feedback of training at SGH centre
Source: Survey data

Chart-07 gives a diagrammatic representation of the opinion of the respondents regarding the vocational courses. The feedback collected shows that quality of the training and relevant aspects related to the training is average. The justified reason for this feedback is the lack of confidence in the respondents in the skill they were trained in.

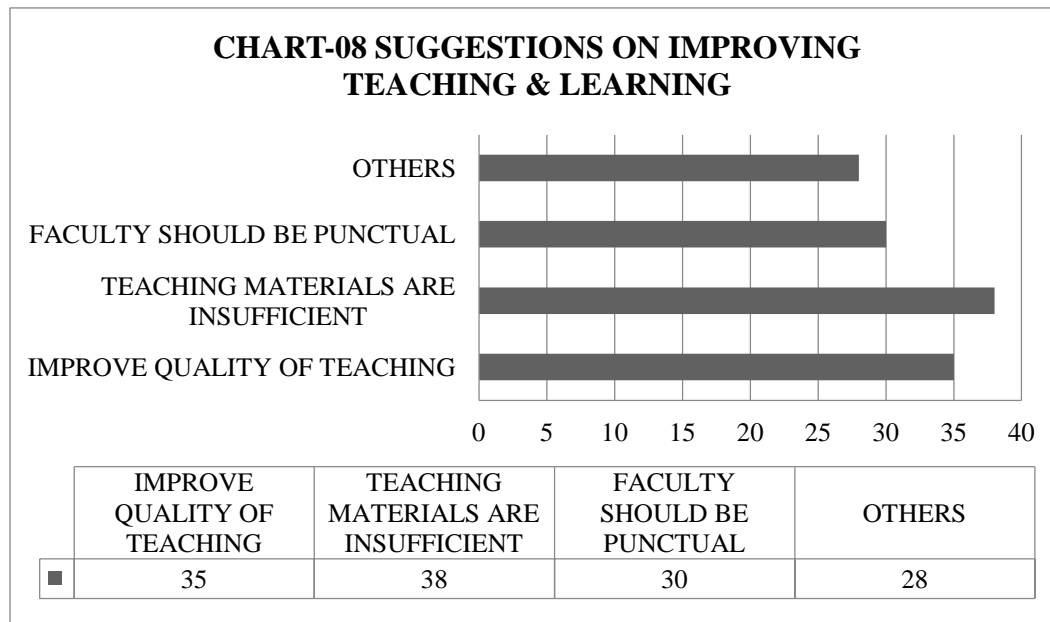


Figure 8: Suggestion for improving teaching & learning

Source: Survey data

Further, Chart-08 clearly gives an overview of the valid suggestions given by the respondents for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning for the vocational courses. The respondents to the study had completed their respective courses and their responses were therefore considered appropriate. The above graphical representation is based on the responses collected and justifies the suggestions given by the authors.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has brought to light several facts and specifics for the concerned authorities to note and implement. The scheme is a welcome step for enhancing confidence of women who are less educated or unemployed. Through vocational training, women learn an extra skill which they could use either to seek employment or to start their own business venture. However, the implementation of the scheme needs some focus and emphasis. Further, this study evidences the hypothesis that women try ways and means to augment their family income. Such training being provided, assists these women in enhancing their skills and ensuring that they become financially independent. When properly implemented, these schemes also can help ensure the country in achieving sustained economic growth.

Firstly, from the study it is observed that majority of women who enrolled for the vocational course were married. It would be important to mention here that through interaction with the respondents, that the authors observed that, the respondents who were married were very enthusiastic and keen in learning new skills that could assist them in being employable or in starting a business venture. The married respondents were found to have more family responsibilities and were therefore keen on augmenting their family income to countenance family expenses. While some of the respondents were finding it difficult to run their families due to the irresponsible attitude of their spouse a few others were determined to learn skills to be on

par with their educated counterparts, having jobs and being financially secure. These were the extreme reasons for the respondents to enrol for the vocational courses.

Secondly, majority of the respondents were above 30 years of age and this shows that the women were mature to think and act practically, on the skills they were trained in. The respondents in their 30's had children who could independently take care of their day to day activities, without the constant supervision of their parents. Majority of the respondents were homemakers. Therefore these women were utilizing their spare time (when their children were at school and spouse were on their respective job assignments), advantageously and suitably for enhancing their skills and utilizing the facilities being provided by the Self Help Group for their benefit. This was true as the respondents were not well educated to be ensured a well-paying job. Therefore enhancing skills could positively and undeniably facilitate them in enhancing their income and also make them financially independent. It was also observed that the choice of course made by the respondents was based on their aptitude. Respondents who had more female members at home preferred tailoring course. Observing the tailoring charges paid by them for getting their clothes stitched, they either wanted to learn tailoring skills to reduce their expenses on tailoring charges and also alternatively felt it would also help in increasing their earnings or augment their family income. Similarly in the case of respondents who choose the beautician course.

Based on the responses received during the study, it is suggested that the duration of training which presently is three months, needs to be extended. Emphasis needs to be given for imparting and extending practical training for the trainees, keeping in mind that both the vocational courses being provided are practically oriented. By doing so, the trainees will gain more confidence in their respective skill-set and thereby the objective of the government to ensure that women gain financial independence along with ensuring sustained economic development in the country, is realized soon.

Suggestions on improving the quality of the teaching learning process, calls for serious concern by the concerned authorities. The respondents had several recommendations to make. Firstly they felt that the teaching materials being provided were insufficient. They also mentioned that the trainers need to be more committed and proficient in their teaching practice, which, they observed, would influence the trainees to learn the required skills, better. The study revealed the fact that the duration of the training was not sufficient and hence the women who had completed their training were not confident of either finding employment or starting their business venture.

The schemes being implemented by the government both by the Centre and the respective State with the objective of ensuring sustainable economic development is a welcome move. The schemes are well planned and strategically designed. However, the implementation of these schemes also needs to be taken care of. However good a scheme could be, but if there are impediments and hindrances in its implementation, the scheme loses its worthwhileness and effectiveness. Therefore it is suggested that these measures are taken care of. This could help in positively and quickly achieving the objective with which the schemes was introduced in the first place. The suggestions given are based on the feedback and responses received from the women who had completed their training from the respective SHG Centre. The feedback is gives the concerned officials a positive outlook for improving the effectiveness of the vocational course being presently offered and ensure its effectiveness for future batch of women trainees.

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