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CREATIVE LIVELIHOODS AND RURAL ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION: FUSION JEWELLERY TRAINING AMONG RURAL WOMEN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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ABSTRACT----------
Women's economic participation is a critical component of rural development and inclusive growth. However, rural women and adolescent girls continue to face constraints related to skill access, employment opportunities and market exposure. The present action research study examines the effectiveness of fusion jewellery making as a livelihood-oriented skill development intervention for rural women and adolescent girls in Angadh and Karodiya villages of Vadodara district, Gujarat.

The study adopted an action project research design and involved 35 participants selected purposively. The intervention included need assessment, hands-on skill training in fusion jewellery, expert guidance, exposure to pricing, packaging and marketing strategies, and orientation towards digital marketing platforms. Data were collected through structured tools and analysed using frequency and percentage analysis.

The findings revealed significant improvement in technical skills, self-confidence and entrepreneurial readiness among participants. A majority of the respondents expressed willingness to adopt jewellery making as a supplementary or primary source of income and demonstrated improved awareness of marketing and e-marketing platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram.

The study concludes that fusion jewellery offers a low-cost, home-based and culturally relevant livelihood option for rural women and adolescent girls. Integrating skill development with market and digital literacy can strengthen rural women's participation in the rural economy and contribute to sustainable livelihood generation.

KEYWORDS: *Rural Women, Livelihood Generation, Fusion Jewellery, Skill Development, Rural Economy, Women Empowerment*----------

INTRODUCTION

The development of the rural economy in India is closely linked with the socio-economic empowerment of women. Rural women and adolescent girls constitute a significant human resource, contributing extensively to agricultural operations, household enterprises and informal economic activities. Despite their active participation, their economic contribution often remains undervalued, underpaid and largely invisible in official statistics. Structural constraints such as limited access to education, skill training, financial resources and market opportunities continue to restrict their participation in sustainable income-generating activities.

In recent years, livelihood-oriented skill development has emerged as an effective strategy for strengthening rural economies and promoting inclusive growth. Home-based and low-investment skills are particularly suitable for rural women, as they allow flexibility and compatibility with domestic responsibilities. Such skills not only provide income opportunities but also enhance women's confidence, decision-making ability and social status within the household and community.

Jewellery making, especially fusion jewellery, represents a promising livelihood option within this context. Fusion jewellery combines traditional craftsmanship with contemporary designs, making it affordable, lightweight and appealing to modern consumers. The growing demand for handcrafted and customized jewellery in urban and semi-urban markets has further increased its economic potential. Moreover, fusion jewellery requires minimal infrastructure, can be produced using locally available materials and offers creative freedom to the artisan.

However, skill development alone is insufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods unless it is supported by market awareness and exposure to digital platforms. With the expansion of digital technologies and social media, even rural entrepreneurs can access wider markets at minimal cost. Training rural women in pricing, packaging and e-marketing can significantly enhance the viability of micro-enterprises and strengthen their integration into the rural economy.

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Against this backdrop, the present action research study was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of fusion jewellery making as a livelihood-oriented skill development intervention for rural women and adolescent girls in selected villages of Vadodara district, Gujarat. The study situates fusion jewellery within the broader framework of rural economic development and women's empowerment and examines its potential to enhance income generation, entrepreneurial orientation and participation in the rural economy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

1. To equip women and adolescent girls with the technical skills required for fusion jewellery making.
2. To foster a sense of empowerment among women and adolescent girls by providing them with opportunities for economic self-sufficiency and creative expression.
3. To train women and adolescent girls in blending traditional jewellery making techniques with contemporary designs.
4. To establish a supportive community where women and adolescent girls can share knowledge, collaborate and inspire each other through their craft.
5. To facilitate access to markets (offline and online) and opportunities for the sale of their jewellery creations, thereby generating income and promoting entrepreneurship.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted an action research design, which is widely used in agricultural extension, rural development and community-based studies. Action research emphasizes participation, experiential learning and immediate application of knowledge, making it particularly suitable for interventions aimed at livelihood enhancement among rural women. The approach integrates action with reflection, allowing continuous assessment and improvement throughout the project implementation.

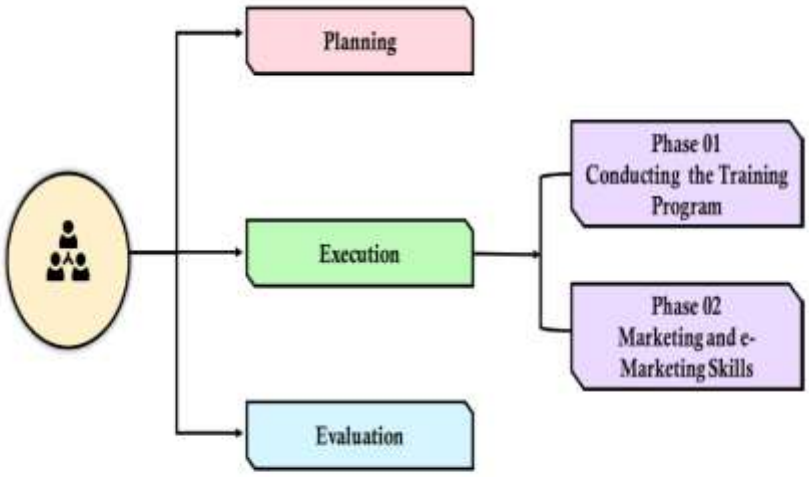


Figure 5: Steps Followed: A Pathway to Success

The study was conducted in Angadh and Karodiya villages of Vadodara district, Gujarat. These villages were selected purposively due to their rural socio-economic characteristics and their inclusion under CSR-supported development initiatives. The target population comprised rural women and adolescent girls who showed interest in acquiring income-generating skills. A total of 35 respondents were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring voluntary participation and active involvement in the training programme.

The methodology followed a systematic and phased approach. Initially, a baseline survey was conducted to collect information on socio-demographic characteristics such as age, education, marital status and occupation. Data were also collected on existing skills, awareness of jewellery making, access to mobile phones and internet facilities, and prior exposure to training or income-generating activities. The baseline assessment helped identify training needs and provided a foundation for designing a context-specific intervention.

Based on the findings of the pre-survey, a structured fusion jewellery training module was developed. The training emphasized hands-on learning and covered techniques such as bead work, mirror work, fabric-based jewellery and the integration of traditional and contemporary elements. Participatory teaching methods including demonstrations, guided practice sessions, interactive discussions and continuous feedback were used to enhance

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skill acquisition. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials were prepared to support learning and improve skill retention.

To strengthen livelihood orientation, expert sessions were organized focusing on finishing techniques, quality control, creativity, innovation and cost calculation. Participants were guided on pricing strategies, product differentiation and maintaining uniform quality to meet market expectations. Recognizing the importance of market access, the methodology also included training on marketing and e-marketing, covering packaging, exhibition-based selling and the use of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Mahila E-Haat.

After completion of the training programme, a post-training evaluation was conducted to assess changes in skills, confidence and entrepreneurial readiness. Structured feedback tools were used to collect responses from all participants. The data were analysed using frequency and percentage distribution, which is appropriate for action research and extension studies. Ethical considerations were ensured by obtaining informed consent from participants and maintaining confidentiality of the information collected.

Evaluation and outcome of the Project

The evaluation of the fusion jewellery training programme was undertaken to assess its effectiveness in enhancing technical skills, self-confidence and entrepreneurial readiness among rural women and adolescent girls. Post-training feedback was collected from all participants using a structured evaluation tool. The data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency and percentage distribution to understand the overall impact of the intervention.

The evaluation findings revealed a marked improvement in technical skills related to fusion jewellery making. A majority of the participants reported that they were able to understand and independently apply various jewellery-making techniques after completing the training. The hands-on training methodology, supported by repeated practice sessions and live demonstrations, played a significant role in strengthening skill acquisition. Participants expressed confidence in producing a variety of fusion jewellery items such as necklaces, earrings, bracelets and matching sets using the techniques learned during the programme.

A key outcome of the training was the enhancement of self-confidence and motivation among the participants. Many rural women reported that prior to the intervention they lacked confidence in their abilities and were hesitant to engage in income-generating activities. Post-training responses indicated a positive shift in self-perception, with participants feeling more capable, confident and motivated to utilize their skills for productive purposes. Adolescent girls, in particular, showed high levels of enthusiasm and viewed the newly acquired skill as an opportunity for future economic independence and self-reliance.

The evaluation further highlighted a positive change in entrepreneurial orientation among the participants. A substantial proportion expressed interest in adopting fusion jewellery making as a supplementary or primary source of income. Several respondents indicated their willingness to participate in exhibitions, sell products within their social and community networks and explore small-scale entrepreneurial ventures. The exposure to real-life selling experiences helped participants understand customer preferences, pricing strategies and market dynamics, thereby strengthening their entrepreneurial outlook.

In addition, the evaluation revealed a significant improvement in marketing and pricing awareness. Participants demonstrated better understanding of cost calculation, product pricing and the importance of appropriate packaging for enhancing product appeal and marketability. Many respondents acknowledged that prior to the training they were unaware of these aspects and recognized their importance only after the intervention.

The training programme also contributed to increased awareness and acceptance of digital marketing platforms. Participants reported improved knowledge of using WhatsApp and Instagram for promoting and selling jewellery products. These platforms were perceived as accessible, cost-effective and suitable for reaching customers beyond the local market. The exposure to e-marketing enhanced participants' confidence in using digital tools for livelihood activities.

Overall, the evaluation findings indicate a high level of satisfaction with the training programme. Participants appreciated the relevance of the content, simplicity of instruction, practical orientation and guidance provided by experts. The results clearly demonstrate that the fusion jewellery training programme was effective in enhancing skills, confidence and entrepreneurial readiness, thereby contributing positively to livelihood development and women's participation in the rural economy.

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CONCLUSION

The present action project successfully demonstrated that fusion jewellery training can serve as an effective tool for empowering rural women and adolescent girls through livelihood-oriented skill development. The project focused on practical skill acquisition combined with exposure to marketing and digital platforms, enabling participants to view fusion jewellery making as a feasible and sustainable income-generating activity rather than merely a creative pursuit.

From an economic perspective, the action project highlighted the suitability of fusion jewellery as a low-cost, home-based enterprise that aligns with the socio-cultural realities of rural women. The flexibility of production, minimal investment requirement and growing market demand make fusion jewellery an accessible livelihood option for rural households. By incorporating training on pricing, packaging and digital marketing, the project strengthened participants' capacity to engage with both local and online markets, thereby enhancing the sustainability of income-generation efforts.

Beyond economic outcomes, the action project contributed significantly to social and psychological empowerment. Participants demonstrated increased self-confidence, creativity and motivation to participate in income-generating activities. Adolescent girls, in particular, perceived the training as an opportunity to build skills that could support future economic independence. The project fostered a sense of self-reliance and agency, encouraging women to recognize their productive potential within the household and community.

The action-oriented nature of the project ensured immediate application of skills through hands-on practice and market exposure. This experiential approach reinforced learning outcomes and strengthened participants' readiness to translate skills into livelihood activities. The integration of digital exposure further enhanced participants' awareness of emerging market opportunities, which is increasingly important in the evolving rural economy.

In conclusion, the action project underscores the value of community-based, skill-oriented interventions in promoting women-led rural development. Replication of similar projects through agricultural extension systems, self-help groups, non-governmental organizations and rural development programmes, supported by institutional and policy backing, can contribute significantly to sustainable livelihoods, reduced economic vulnerability and inclusive rural growth

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