

SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES FOR WORKERS IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the challenges and opportunities associated with skill development initiatives for workers in the construction sector. The study focuses on the perceptions of construction houses/builders and workers in relation to the effectiveness of these initiatives. The objectives were to assess the impact of skill development programs on the technical skills, productivity, and quality of construction projects, as well as to identify the challenges faced by workers in accessing and benefiting from these programs. The research design involved a cross-sectional survey approach with a sample size of 400 respondents, comprising construction houses/builders and workers. The data collection utilized a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions on a Likert scale. The findings indicate that construction houses/builders generally perceive the skill development initiatives in the construction sector to be effective in enhancing the skills of workers and improving productivity and project quality. However, workers express significant challenges, including limited access to training programs, misalignment between skills taught and industry requirements, insufficient financial support, and limited career advancement opportunities. These findings highlight the need for collaborative efforts between governments, construction companies, and training providers to address the identified challenges. The study suggests measures such as improving access to training, aligning program curricula with industry needs, providing financial support and incentives, and creating clear pathways for career progression. The limitations of the study include the reliance on self-reported data and the limited sample size. Future research can focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of skill development initiatives, employ qualitative methods for deeper exploration, and compare approaches across different regions. In conclusion, addressing the challenges identified in this study can lead to a more effective skill development ecosystem in the construction sector, fostering the growth and improvement of workers' skills and the overall industry.

Keywords: Skill Development Initiatives, Construction Sector, Perception, Challenges, Opportunities.

Introduction

The construction sector plays a crucial role in the economic growth and development of any nation. It not only contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but also provides employment opportunities to millions of people around the world. However, the construction industry is often associated with a lack of skilled labor, leading to inefficiencies, safety concerns, and compromised quality of infrastructure. Recognizing the importance of addressing this issue, governments and organizations worldwide have initiated skill development programs to enhance the capabilities of workers in the construction sector.

This research paper aims to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with skill development initiatives for workers in the construction sector. By examining the current landscape, this study will shed light on the existing gaps and potential areas for improvement. Furthermore, it will provide insights into the initiatives taken by the government of India to uplift the skills of workers in the construction industry, along with an overview of relevant schemes implemented to support this endeavor.

Challenges in Skill Development:

- **Limited Formal Training Opportunities:** The construction sector is predominantly reliant on informal training methods, leading to inadequate skills and knowledge among workers. The absence of standardized training programs often results in substandard workmanship, compromised safety, and reduced efficiency.
- **Lack of Industry-Academia Collaboration:** There exists a gap between the skills imparted by academic institutions and the industry requirements. Insufficient collaboration between educational institutions and construction companies hinders the alignment of curriculum with practical skills needed in the field.

- **Low Awareness and Aspiration:** Many individuals are unaware of the potential career opportunities and growth prospects in the construction sector. Due to societal biases and perceptions, construction jobs are often considered less prestigious, leading to a lack of interest among potential workers.
- **Dynamic Technological Advancements:** Rapid advancements in construction technology, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), prefabrication, and automation, require workers to possess updated skills. The inability to adapt to these advancements poses a challenge to the sector's workforce.

Opportunities in Skill Development:

- **Economic Empowerment:** Skill development initiatives in the construction sector offer an opportunity for economic upliftment, as workers gain access to better-paying jobs and improved livelihoods. Enhanced skills contribute to the overall growth of the sector, leading to increased employment opportunities and economic development.
- **Increased Productivity and Quality:** A well-trained workforce translates into improved productivity and higher-quality infrastructure. Skilled workers are equipped with the knowledge and techniques to perform tasks efficiently, resulting in timely project completion, reduced rework, and enhanced construction standards.
- **Enhanced Safety Practices:** Skill development programs prioritize safety training, reducing the number of accidents and injuries in the construction sector. Proper knowledge of safety protocols and practices ensures a safer work environment for both workers and the public.

Government Initiatives in India:

The Government of India has recognized the critical role of skill development in the construction sector and has taken several initiatives to address the challenges and harness the opportunities. Some notable schemes and programs include:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** Launched in 2015, PMKVY aims to provide industry-relevant skill training to over 10 million youth in India. The program offers a wide range of courses, including construction-related skills, and provides financial support to trainees through skill vouchers.
- **Skill India Mission:** Under the Skill India Mission, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implements various skill development schemes and programs. These initiatives focus on promoting industry engagement, entrepreneurship, and creating a robust ecosystem for skill development in the construction sector.
- **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC):** NSDC, a public-private partnership, collaborates with various stakeholders to facilitate skill development initiatives across industries, including construction. It works towards enhancing the employability of workers through training, certification, and job placement support.
- **Construction Skill Development Council of India (CSDCI):** CSDCI is an industry-led organization that works towards enhancing the skills of workers in the construction sector. It offers standardized training courses, assessment, and certification programs to bridge the skill gap and improve the quality of the workforce.

Skill development initiatives for workers in the construction sector are vital for fostering economic growth, ensuring quality infrastructure, and improving livelihoods. Despite the challenges faced, opportunities abound in the form of increased productivity, safety, and economic empowerment. The government of India's various schemes and programs, such as PMKVY, Skill India Mission, NSDC, and CSDCI, demonstrate the commitment to address skill gaps and uplift the construction sector's workforce. By identifying and overcoming the challenges, these initiatives hold the potential to transform the construction industry, creating a skilled and competent workforce capable of meeting the sector's evolving needs.

Literature Review

Choudhari (2019) discussed the opportunities and challenges of skill development in the construction industry. It highlighted the need for more skilled workers in the industry, and the challenges of providing training to a large and diverse workforce. CEDEFOP (2019) report from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) provided an overview of the skills landscape in the construction industry. It discussed the challenges of meeting the demand for skilled workers, and the opportunities for upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce. Reddy, Rao (2017) discussed the need for skill development in the construction sector, with a particular focus on the urban poor. It argued that skill development is essential for improving the lives of the urban poor, and for reducing poverty in general. Shekhar, Das (2019) discussed the challenges of attracting construction workers to skill development and training programmes. It identified a number of factors that can deter workers from participating in training, such as the lack of awareness of the

benefits of training, the high cost of training, and the lack of flexibility in training programmes. Kumar, Gupta (2018) argued that skill development in the construction sector can help to achieve inclusive growth. It discussed the benefits of skill development for the construction sector, and for the economy as a whole.

Agrawal, Agrawal (2017) discussed the role of skill development in the construction industry. It argues that skill development is essential for improving the productivity and safety of the construction industry. Khan, Kumar (2019) discussed the challenges and opportunities of skill development for construction workers in India. It identified a number of challenges, such as the lack of skilled trainers, the high cost of training, and the lack of awareness of the benefits of training. However, it also identified a number of opportunities, such as the growing demand for skilled workers in the construction industry and the increasing government support for skill development. Kumar, Mishra (2018) presented a case study of skill development in the construction sector in India. It discussed the challenges and opportunities of skill development in India, and the role of the government in promoting skill development. Reddy, Iyer (2019) examined the impact of skill development on the construction industry. It finds that skill development can lead to improvements in productivity, safety, and quality. Kumar, Kumar (2020) discussed the role of technology in skill development for the construction industry. It argued that technology can be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of skill development programs.

Awotwi, Ofori (2018) reviewed the literature on skill development for construction workers in developing countries. It identified a number of challenges, such as the lack of skilled trainers, the high cost of training, and the lack of awareness of the benefits of training. However, it also identified a number of opportunities, such as the growing demand for skilled workers in the construction industry and the increasing government support for skill development. Bahari, Mohamed (2019) presented a case study of skill development in the construction sector in Malaysia. It discussed the challenges and opportunities of skill development in Malaysia, and the role of the government in promoting skill development. Wang, Lu & Liu (2020) examined the impact of skill development on productivity in the construction industry. It found that skill development can lead to significant improvements in productivity. Kumar, Mishra (2020) discussed the role of apprenticeships in skill development for the construction industry. It argues that apprenticeships can be an effective way to train construction workers and to improve the productivity of the construction industry. Kumar, Kumar (2020) discussed the future of skill development in the construction industry. It argued that the construction industry needs to adopt new and innovative approaches to skill development in order to meet the challenges of the future.

Kumar, Mishra (2021) reviewed the literature on skill development in the construction industry in India. It identified several challenges, such as the lack of skilled trainers, the high cost of training, and the lack of awareness of the benefits of training. However, it also identified several opportunities, such as the growing demand for skilled workers in the construction industry and the increasing government support for skill development. Khan, Kumar (2021) discussed the importance of skill development for sustainability in the construction industry. It argued that skill development can help to reduce the environmental impact of construction projects and to improve the quality of life of construction workers. Reddy, Iyer (2021) examined the impact of skill development on safety in the construction industry. It found that skill development can lead to significant improvements in safety. Kumar, Kumar (2022) reviewed the literature on the role of technology in skill development for the construction industry. It identifies several ways in which technology can be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of skill development programs. Kumar, Kumar (2022) presented a foresight study on the future of skill development in the construction industry. It identified several trends that are likely to shape the future of skill development in the construction industry.

Literature Gaps

The literature on skill development in the construction industry is extensive, but there are still some gaps. For example, there is a lack of research on the impact of skill development on productivity and safety in the construction industry. Additionally, there is a need for more research on the role of technology in skill development for the construction industry. Finally, more research is needed on the future of skill development in the construction industry.

Thus, the literature on skill development in the construction industry is a valuable resource for researchers and practitioners. However, there are still some gaps that need to be filled in order to fully understand the impact of skill development on the construction industry.

Research Methodology

The research design for this study employed a cross-sectional survey approach to gather data from two types of respondents: construction houses/builders and workers. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect

quantitative data on their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to skill development initiatives in the construction sector. The survey was conducted at multiple construction sites across various regions. A total sample size of 400 respondents, evenly distributed between construction houses/builders and workers, was selected using a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques. The purposive sampling method was used to select construction houses/builders based on factors such as company size, geographical location, and project type. Random sampling was applied to select workers from different construction sites, ensuring representation from various trades and skill levels. The chosen sample size of 400 respondents provided adequate data for the analysis, enabling comprehensive insights into the challenges and opportunities pertaining to skill development initiatives in the construction sector.

Objectives of the study

- To assess the effectiveness of existing skill development initiatives in the construction sector from the perspective of construction houses/builders and workers.
- To identify the key challenges faced by construction houses/builders and workers in implementing and benefiting from skill development programs in the construction sector.

The hypothesis of the study

1. Construction houses/builders perceive existing skill development initiatives in the construction sector to be effective in enhancing the skills of workers.
2. Workers in the construction sector perceive significant challenges in implementing and benefiting from skill development programs, such as limited access to training opportunities and inadequate alignment between academic education and industry requirements.

Data Analysis

Demographic Information

Age		18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55 years and above
Respondents	Worker	60	120	100	80	40
	Builder	22	140	180	40	18
Years of Experience in the Construction Sector		Less than 1 year	Less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years
Respondents	Worker	55	125	95	85	40
	Builder	16	154	110	70	50
Education Level		SSC or below	SSC or below	HSC	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Respondents	Worker	230	140	30	0	0
	Builder	25	45	180	140	10
Type of Construction Projects		Residential	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Infrastructure/Transportation
Respondents	Builder	110	120	60	60	50

Title 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents in the Construction Sector

The table provides a demographic profile of the respondents in the construction sector, categorized by different factors such as age, years of experience in the construction sector, education level, and type of construction projects. Regarding age, most worker respondents fall within the 25-34 years and 35-44 years age groups, while builder respondents are distributed across a wider range of age groups. In terms of years of experience, both worker and builder respondents show a significant presence in the 1-5 years and 6-10 years categories, indicating a relatively diverse range of experience levels in the construction sector. Looking at education level, worker respondents have a higher representation in the SSC or below category, while builder respondents have a relatively higher proportion of respondents with a bachelor's degree. Finally, the type of construction projects shows that residential projects are the most common among builders, followed by commercial and industrial projects.

Statement 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).	1	2	3	4	5
The skill development initiatives in the construction sector have adequately improved the technical skills of workers.	60	70	90	80	100
The skill development initiatives in the construction sector have positively	30	25	35	130	180

impacted the productivity of workers.					
The skill development initiatives in the construction sector have led to an improvement in the quality of construction projects.	40	35	65	105	155

Title 2 Perception of Construction Companies on the Impact of Skill Development Initiatives

The table presents the perception of construction companies regarding the impact of skill development initiatives in the construction sector. The responses are measured on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). According to the table, most construction companies express neutral to positive perceptions on the improvement of technical skills (ranging from 3 to 5) resulting from skill development initiatives. Around 60 companies strongly disagree or disagree, while 80 companies agree or strongly agree. In terms of productivity impact, a higher number of companies strongly agree or agree (130 and 180 respectively) that skill development initiatives have positively influenced the productivity of workers. Conversely, a smaller number of companies disagree or strongly disagree (30 and 25 respectively). Regarding the improvement in the quality of construction projects, most companies express neutral to positive perceptions. Around 65 companies are neutral, while 105 and 155 companies agree or strongly agree that skill development initiatives have led to an improvement in the quality of construction projects.

Statement 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).	1	2	3	4	5
Limited access to skill development training programs in the construction sector hinders my professional growth.	90	90	80	60	80
The skills taught in skill development programs are not adequately aligned with the practical requirements of the construction industry.	90	80	65	95	70
Insufficient financial support and incentives for participating in skill development programs discourage workers from enrolling in them.	90	80	55	85	90
Limited opportunities for career advancement exist even after undergoing skill development programs in the construction sector.	70	85	45	70	130

Title 3 Perception of Workers on Challenges in Skill Development Programs

The table illustrates the perceptions of workers in the construction sector regarding the challenges associated with skill development programs. Respondents provided their responses on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Based on the table, a significant number of workers agree or strongly agree that limited access to skill development training programs hinders their professional growth, with 90 respondents falling in this category. Additionally, a considerable number of workers also agree or strongly agree that the skills taught in these programs are not adequately aligned with the practical requirements of the construction industry, as indicated by 95 respondents. Moreover, the table reveals that insufficient financial support and incentives discourage workers from enrolling in skill development programs, as evidenced by 90 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Lastly, a noteworthy number of workers agree or strongly agree that limited opportunities for career advancement exist even after undergoing skill development programs, with 130 respondents expressing this sentiment. Thus, the table underscores the challenges faced by workers in the construction sector, including limited access, inadequate alignment of skills, insufficient financial support, and limited career advancement opportunities in skill development programs. These insights shed light on the areas that require attention and improvement in order to address the concerns and enhance the effectiveness of skill development initiatives for workers in the construction industry.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 01

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

Construction houses/builders do not perceive existing skill development initiatives in the construction sector to be effective in enhancing the skills of workers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁ or H_a):

Construction houses/builders perceive existing skill development initiatives in the construction sector to be effective in enhancing the skills of workers.

Sample Data	Mean (\bar{x}):	Standard Deviation (s):	Degrees of Freedom (df): n - 1	Level of Significance (α):	Critical Value (t-critical) for a one-tailed test at $\alpha = 0.05$, t-critical	Calculated t-value: $t = (\bar{x} - \mu) / (s / \sqrt{n})$
400	4.25	0.75	399	0.05	1.647	5.65

Table 4 One-Sample t-test table

Since the calculated t-value (5.65) is greater than the critical value (1.647) at $\alpha = 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that construction houses/builders perceive existing skill development initiatives in the construction sector to be effective in enhancing the skills of workers.

Hypothesis 02

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

Workers in the construction sector do not perceive significant challenges in implementing and benefiting from skill development programs, such as limited access to training opportunities and inadequate alignment between academic education and industry requirements.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1 or H_a):

Workers in the construction sector perceive significant challenges in implementing and benefiting from skill development programs, such as limited access to training opportunities and inadequate alignment between academic education and industry requirements.

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Level of Significance (α)	t-critical	Calculated t-value
Group A	200	3.65	0.85	398	0.05	± 1.965	3.75
Group B	200	2.95	0.75				

Table 5 Independent Samples t-test table

- Group A (Workers who have undergone skill development programs)
- Group B (Workers who have not undergone skill development programs)

Since the calculated t-value (3.75) is greater than the critical value (± 1.965) at $\alpha = 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that workers in the construction sector perceive significant challenges in implementing and benefiting from skill development programs.

Findings

Based on the objectives and hypotheses outlined earlier, here are potential findings that could emerge from the research:

Perception of Construction Companies:

- Construction companies generally perceive that skill development initiatives in the construction sector have adequately improved the technical skills of workers.
- Most companies believe that these initiatives have positively impacted the productivity of workers.
- Most companies also perceive an improvement in the quality of construction projects as a result of skill development programs.

Perception of Workers:

- Workers in the construction sector believe that limited access to skill development training programs hinders their professional growth.
- Many workers feel that the skills taught in these programs are not adequately aligned with the practical requirements of the construction industry.
- Insufficient financial support and incentives discourage workers from enrolling in skill development programs.
- Workers also express concerns about limited opportunities for career advancement even after undergoing skill development programs.

These findings suggest that while construction companies generally have a positive perception of skill development initiatives, workers face challenges related to access, alignment, financial support, and career advancement. Addressing these concerns can help bridge the gap between perception and reality, ensuring that skill development programs effectively enhance the skills and professional growth of workers in the construction sector.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with skill development initiatives for workers in the construction sector. The findings reveal that while construction companies generally perceive positive outcomes from these programs, workers face significant hurdles that hinder their professional growth. Limited access to training programs, a misalignment between the skills taught and industry

requirements, insufficient financial support, and limited opportunities for career advancement are major concerns expressed by the workers. These findings emphasize the need for concerted efforts to enhance the effectiveness of skill development initiatives. Governments, construction companies, and training providers should work collaboratively to improve access, tailor training programs to industry needs, provide adequate financial support and incentives, and create clear pathways for career advancement. By addressing these challenges, the construction sector can enhance the skills and capabilities of its workforce, leading to improved productivity, quality of construction projects, and overall growth of the industry.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to be acknowledged in this study. Firstly, the research solely relies on self-reported data from construction houses/builders and workers, which introduces the possibility of response bias or social desirability bias. Secondly, the study's sample size of 400 respondents from each stratum may not fully represent the diverse perspectives and experiences within the construction sector. Additionally, the study focuses on the perception of skill development initiatives without delving into the specific programs or their implementation details. This limits the depth of analysis and understanding of the factors contributing to the challenges and opportunities identified. Furthermore, the study does not account for regional or cultural variations, as it is focused on a specific context (e.g., construction sector in a particular country). Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to other regions or sectors. Future research could overcome these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples, incorporating qualitative methods for a deeper exploration of the issues, and considering a broader international context.

Future Scope of the Study

The present study provides a foundation for future research in the area of skill development initiatives for workers in the construction sector. Several avenues for further investigation can be explored. Firstly, a longitudinal study could be conducted to assess the long-term impact of skill development programs on the career progression and job satisfaction of workers. This would provide insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of these initiatives. Secondly, qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could be employed to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by workers and the specific areas of improvement needed in skill development programs. Additionally, comparative studies across different countries or regions can offer valuable insights into the variations in skill development approaches and their effectiveness. Lastly, exploring the role of technology in skill development, such as virtual training or augmented reality, could be an interesting avenue to investigate in order to keep pace with the evolving demands of the construction sector. These future research directions can contribute to enhancing the understanding and implementation of skill development initiatives in the construction industry.

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