

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

FUTURE SKILLS PROGRAM, PUNJAB



Image Source: HDFC Parivartan Social Media Archive

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Form
AI	Artificial Intelligence
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FUEL	Friends Union for Energizing Lives
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IOT	Internet of Things



IT	Information Technology
LFP	Labour Force Participation
NSDC	National Skill Development Corporation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UWD	United Way Delhi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India possesses the world's largest youth population, with over 600 million individuals under the age of 25.¹ This demographic advantage—often referred to as the "demographic dividend"—presents a unique opportunity for accelerated growth and innovation. However, to fully harness this potential, the country must rapidly evolve its skilling ecosystem to meet the demands of a dynamic, technology-driven global economy. One notable private sector initiative addressing this need is the **HDFC Bank Parivartan Future Skills program**, implemented in partnership with FUEL NGO in Punjab and alongside other NGO partners in other geographies.

The Future Skills Program aims to equip marginalized youth in Punjab with future-ready skills in the IT/ITES sector, thereby enhancing their employability and income-generating potential.

An assessment was undertaken to evaluate the program's relevance, effectiveness, and impact. The study included a survey of 290 course participants and one in-depth interview (IDI) with a Centre Head. The assessment examined indicators related to skill development, job readiness, placement support, and alignment with industry expectations.

Key Findings

- The program engaged a **diverse and educated youth cohort**, including participants from **marginalised groups**.
- Participants reported **high satisfaction** with training, especially in **soft skills**.
- Most felt **moderately to highly confident** in their job responsibilities post-training.
- **Placement rates were low** relative to training coverage.
- **Nearly half remained unemployed** at the time of the survey.
- **Men reported higher incomes** than women despite similar training and placement access.
- **High entrepreneurial intent** was observed, though **actual uptake was limited**.

¹ https://wheebox.com/assets/pdf/ISR_Report_2025.pdf



Recommendations.

- **Broaden placement networks** through stronger employer partnerships and recruiter coordination.
- **Align training with local labour market demand**, focusing on high-growth sectors.
- **Track gendered employment outcomes** to address disparities in income and role progression.
- **Enable self-employment pathways** via mentorship, financial literacy, and incubation support.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

According to the Economic Survey 2024–25, the labour force participation rate (LFPR) has risen from 49.8% in 2017–18 to 60.1% in 2023–24, while unemployment has declined from 6% to 3.2%.

- **India's digital economy is poised to cross the \$1 trillion mark by 2025**, catalysed by digital transformation across sectors.
- **However, the skills gap persists.** Only 8.25% of graduates are employed in jobs that align with their qualifications, highlighting a systemic disconnect between education and employability.²
- **The India Employment Report 2024, co-authored by the International Labour Organization and the Institute for Human Development, underscores the need for active labour market policies.** Equally vital is a robust national skilling ecosystem to equip youth with the capabilities required in a modern, tech-driven economy.³
- **India has taken key structural steps, such as the establishment of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2009** to promote industry-led skilling, and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in 2015 to unify fragmented efforts under a cohesive framework. But public action alone is not enough.

²

<https://www.competitiveness.in/economic-survey-reveals-only-8-25-of-graduates-have-jobs-matching-their-qualifications/>

³ https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/India%20Employment%20-%20web_8%20April.pdf



- **A transformative skilling agenda must be complemented by the private sector.**

Under its flagship CSR platform, the *Parivartan* program by HDFC Bank is working to bridge this gap by empowering India's underserved youth with both hard and soft skills, ranging from digital literacy and technical certification to communication and problem-solving abilities.

Through strategic partnerships with non-profits such as Friends Union for Energizing Lives (FUEL) and United Way Delhi (UWD) implements targeted skill development initiatives.

- UWD provides vocational skilling to unemployed youth in the healthcare sector, addressing the growing demand for allied health professionals
- FUEL focuses on IT (Information Technology) -enabled skilling, targeting marginalised youth in Maharashtra and Punjab.

The Punjab FUEL Project, which was executed between the years 2020-21 and 2023-24 and is the focus of this report, offered support from training to placement to pave the way to formal and future-ready employment pathways. **Between 2020 and 2024, the program offered training in Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing, Core Java, Cloud Computing, and the Internet of Things (IOT) for youth in Punjab.** Participants also received career counselling and placement assistance, with certifications aligned to National Skill Development Corporation standards.

Over the years, the project trained youth from across the country, equipping them with industry-relevant skills and facilitating access to formal employment pathways. Beyond skilling, HDFC Bank's *Parivartan* initiative operates across six thematic areas: rural development, education, skill enhancement, healthcare, financial literacy, and environmental conservation. In FY 2023–24, *Parivartan* impacted over 10.19 crore lives, reaching more than 9,000 villages and 10 lakh households, including 85 Aspirational Districts. The initiative has supported over 2 crore students through education-focused interventions and trained more than 3 lakh youth. As of March 2024, it has also created over 9 lakh women entrepreneurs, strengthening its commitment to sustainable and inclusive community development.⁴

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<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/hdfc-bank-spends-rs-945-crore-on-csr-impacts-10-19-crore-lives/articleshow/111869840.cms>

1.2. Assessment Objectives

The primary objective of the assessment was to evaluate the **relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the program** in Punjab. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- **Understand** the demographic and socio-economic profile of participants to assess the program's reach among marginalized communities.
- **Assess** the alignment of the training curriculum with market-relevant skills in sectors such as Artificial Intelligence(AI), Digital Marketing, Core Java, Cloud Computing, and IOT..
- **Evaluate** the extent to which the program improved participants' employability, skill levels, and access to formal employment opportunities.
- **Examine** the quality of program delivery and the support provided through career counselling and placement services.

METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Design

The assessment employed a mixed-methods ex-post evaluation design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to systematically evaluate the Future Skills program under HDFC Bank's *Parivartan* initiative.

Quantitative data was collected through structured telephonic surveys administered to a representative sample of program participants. The survey captured key indicators such as employment status, income levels, retention rates, and placement outcomes. To complement this the key informant interviews (KII) with a Centre Head interview was conducted. This component provided contextual insights into field experiences, training methods, curriculum design, and post-training career outcomes.

The assessment was guided by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, focusing on **relevance, effectiveness, impact**, and **sustainability** of the interventions. Specific thematic areas explored included

- Perceptions of training relevance

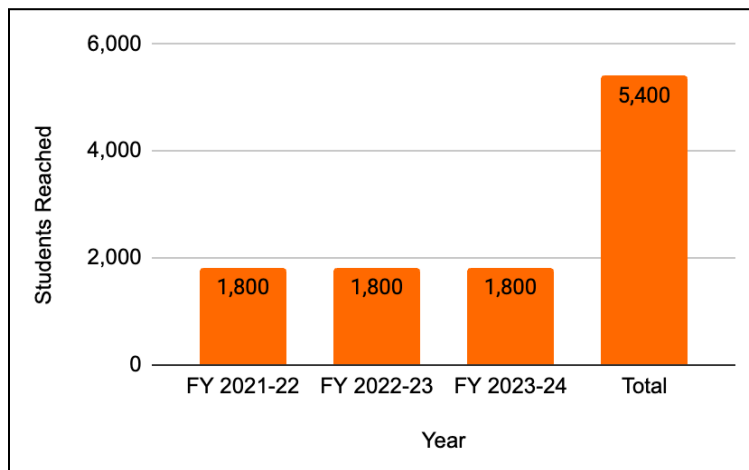
- Sufficiency of support
- Timeliness of delivery
- Quality of services
- Utilization of acquired skills
- Changes in employability outcomes.

Throughout the study, confidentiality of participant information was maintained, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

2.2. Sampling Strategy

A **stratified sampling approach** was adopted to ensure representativeness and reliability in evaluating the program's outcomes, covering both the quantitative and qualitative components. **Cochran's formula was adopted**, ensuring a **95% confidence level** and a **6% margin of error**. The sample size was proportionally distributed across training years based on the total number of students reached.

Figure 1: Punjab Survey Sample



For the Pune Future Skills project, the total student universe was 9,000, resulting in a calculated sample size of **290 respondents**. The sample was stratified across key variables to ensure balanced representation:

- **Gender:** Inclusion of male and female participants
- **Course Type:** Stratification based on courses completed (e.g., AI, Core Java, Digital Marketing)
- **Geographic Location:** Coverage across training centers and partner colleges
- **Employment Status:** Representation of both employed and non-employed participants

2.3. Data Analysis

The analysis was anchored in three core areas of inquiry: **Employability Skills**, **Employment Outcomes**, and **Career Progression**. This framework was shaped by the study's objectives and aligned with the **OECD-DAC evaluation criteria**, facilitating a systematic assessment of the program's *relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability*.

Quantitative data were processed using **cross-tabulation in SPSS**, complemented by statistical techniques such as **Multivariate Linear Regression**, **Logistic Regression**, and the **Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test**. These methods were employed to identify key factors influencing participants' current monthly income.

2.4 Study Limitations

Absence of Baseline Data: The evaluation was conducted ex-post without baseline information on participants' skills, employment status, or income before their enrollment. As a result, the assessment relies on retrospective self-reporting, which may affect the ability to attribute observed changes solely to the intervention.

Self-Selection and Response Bias: Data collection depended on participants' voluntary responses through surveys and interviews. Self-reported information is subject to recall bias and social desirability bias, particularly regarding employment and income details.

Timing of Data Collection: The study captures outcomes at different stages post-training, depending on when participants completed the program. Variability in the time elapsed since completion may influence employment and income outcomes, affecting comparability across participant cohorts.

Sampling Constraints: Although a stratified sampling strategy was applied to ensure representativeness, certain subgroups (such as early dropouts or those unreachable by phone) may be underrepresented. This limits the ability to generalize findings to all program participants.

Limited Longitudinal Perspective: The study provides a snapshot of employment and career outcomes but does not track participants over an extended period. Thus, it cannot fully assess the long-term sustainability of employment, income growth, or career progression.

FINDINGS

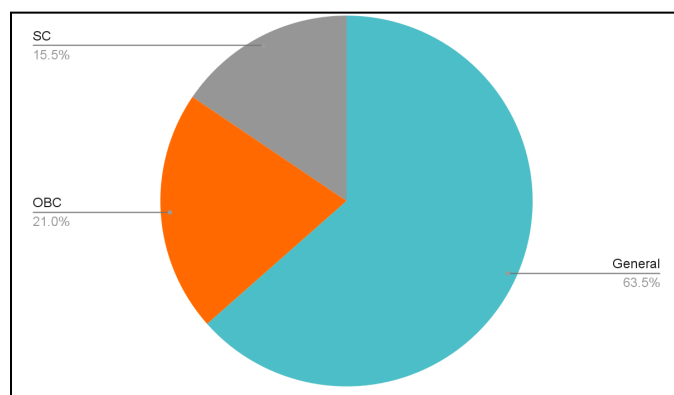
3.1 Program Reach

Between 2021 and 2024, the Future Skills Program in Punjab, implemented by FUEL under the HDFC Bank *Parivartan* initiative, provided vocational training to the **youth** with an objective to enhance employability through short-term, skills-based courses aligned with emerging digital sectors. The program maintained **gender balance** in participation, with **51% male** and **49% female** respondents. The **average age** of participants was **24 years**, indicating that the initiative reached individuals at the early stages of their careers.

Training was delivered across multiple urban locations in Punjab, with participants travelling an **average of 7 kilometres** to attend centre-based sessions. The courses were structured as **one-month classroom-based programs**, with five thematic areas offered: **AI, Digital Marketing, Core Java, Cloud Computing, and Python**. **Core Java** accounted for the majority of enrolments (**72%**), followed by **Digital Marketing (15%)** and **Python (10%)**. A large proportion of participants had completed formal education before enrolment. **79% were graduates** and **18% were postgraduates**. Among men, **87% had graduate degrees** and **8% were postgraduates**, while among women, **70% were graduates** and **29% held postgraduate degrees**. This indicates that the program primarily reached individuals with an existing academic background who were seeking market-oriented vocational training. In terms of social identity,

37% of participants belonged to **marginalised social groups**, including **21% from OBC** and **16% from SC communities**. **19% of respondents reported agriculture as their primary household income source**, suggesting the program has reached a segment of youth from farming backgrounds, **aiding livelihood diversification for vulnerable communities**.

Figure 2: Caste-wise Distribution of Respondents



3.2. Relevance, Sufficiency and Utilization

Participant feedback indicates a generally positive engagement with the program's core components: vocational training, soft skills development, and job placement assistance. A sizable proportion of respondents reported **frequent utilization of these services, notably of the soft skills (89%)**. With soft skills as a critical factor in enhancing employability worldwide, this is a strong indicator of the program's alignment with global workforce readiness standards.⁵ The perceived relevance of these interventions is also high, with **86% affirming that vocational training aligned with their needs and priorities**, 91% for soft skills, and 85% for job placement services. In terms of sufficiency, which assesses the adequacy of support provided, 82% found vocational training to be adequate or better, with even higher satisfaction levels for soft skills (86%) and job placement services (91%).

"The confidence they gained came from focused soft skills training. By the end of the program, students could say, 'I can answer interview questions, I've cleared aptitude,

⁵ <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/soft-skills-improve-employability-youth-and-job-seekers>

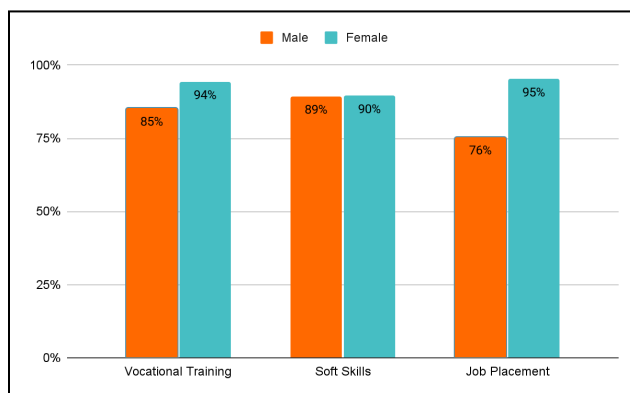
‘I’ve done a project.’ That shift in self-assurance made a real difference.”

—Centre Head, Punjab Program Implementation Team

3.3 Effectiveness of Training Delivery

Effectiveness of the intervention was assessed across two dimensions: **timeliness of delivery** and **participant-rated quality**. Timeliness data shows that **85% of respondents reported soft skills sessions were delivered on time**, while **76% reported timely delivery for job placement services**. **Vocational training recorded the lowest on-time completion**, with **67%** of participants confirming that sessions were conducted as scheduled. **On perceived quality, responses across all three interventions were largely positive**. 95% of female respondents and 85% of male respondents rated the quality of vocational training positively. In the case of soft skills, 90% of females and 89% of males reported a positive quality. **For job placement, the ratings diverged significantly by gender; 95% of female respondents reported a positive rating compared to 76% of male respondents ($z = 2.51, p = 0.012$)**, despite the actual placement rates being nearly identical across gender—with 30% of male and 31% of female respondents. This disparity may be influenced by differing expectations and evaluative criteria between genders. The differential expectations may be shaped by historical labour market inequalities.

Figure 3: Perception of Quality of Support



Women, having traditionally faced poorer job opportunities, may evaluate outcomes relative to lower reference points, leading to greater satisfaction when support mechanisms exceed those expectations.⁶

⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0927537197000109>

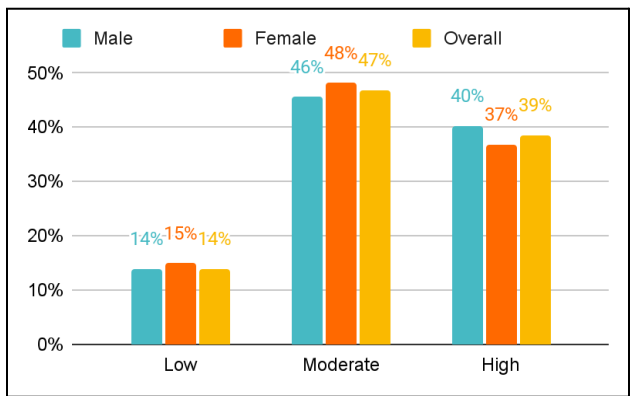
This pattern, while potentially transitory, underscores the program’s ability to deliver meaningful value to participants who have historically been underserved and reflects its success in creating a positive and affirming experience for young women entering the workforce.

3.4 Impact

Building on the perceptions of quality and satisfaction, the assessment explored how participants experienced the program’s **impact on their skills, confidence, and employability**.

Confidence in Performing Job Responsibilities: Participants reported a **moderate to high level of confidence in carrying out job responsibilities post-training**. Specifically, 47% indicated “moderate” confidence, while 39% reported “high” confidence. **Confidence levels were broadly consistent across genders**, with 46% of male and 48% of female respondents reporting moderate confidence, and 40% of men and 37% of women indicating high confidence. 14–15% of participants across both groups reported low confidence, suggesting **gaps in establishing a foundational level of self-efficacy among learners**.

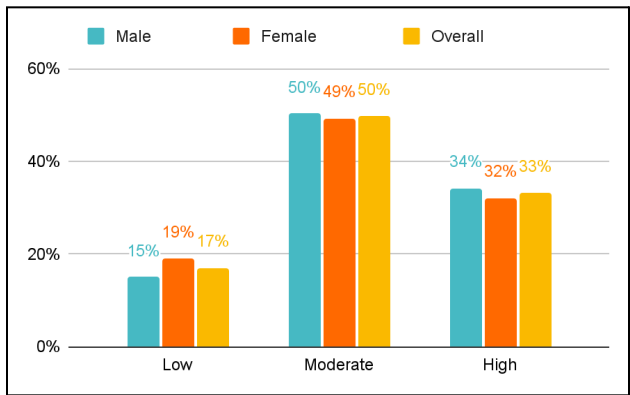
Figure 4: Confidence Levels In Performing Job Responsibilities



Exposure to Industry Practices: Half of all respondents (50%) reported moderate exposure to industry practices through the training, while 33% rated their exposure as high, and 17% as low. Gender-wise, responses were consistent: **50% of male participants and 49% of female participants reported moderate exposure**, while high exposure was reported by 34% of men and 32% of women. These figures suggest that while the training offered a structured introduction to real-world work

contexts, a sizeable proportion of participants experienced only partial or limited engagement with industry environments.

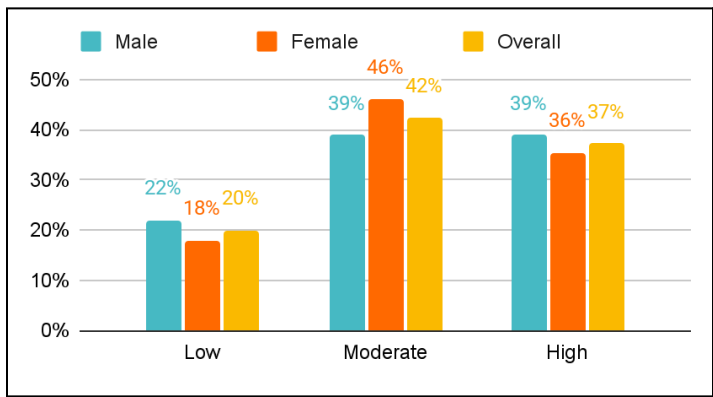
Figure 5: Perceived levels of Exposure to Industry Practices



Acquisition of Job-Relevant Skills:

Participants’ perceptions of skill acquisition indicate that the training delivered a baseline level of preparedness for formal employment, with some variation in depth of perceived benefit. Overall, **42% of respondents reported moderate skill gain, 37% reported high, and 20% reported low.**

Figure 6: Perceived levels of Acquisition of Job-Relevant Skills

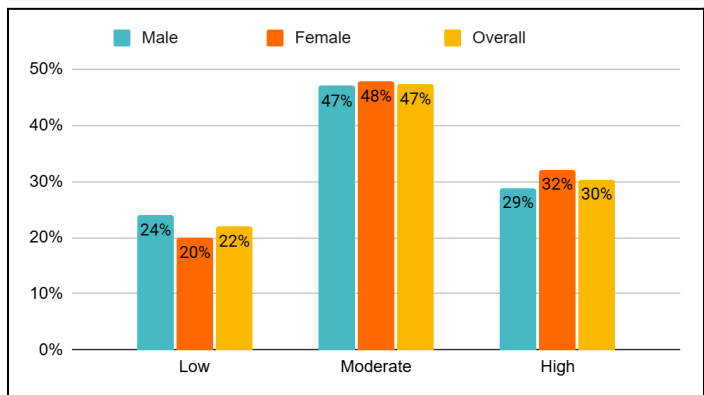


Gender-wise, 46% of women and 39% of men reported moderate skill acquisition, while high skill gain was reported by 36% of women and 39% of men. Low skill gain was noted by 18% of female and 22% of male participants, showing minimal gender-based variation. **The distribution reflects broadly consistent**

experiences across male and female participants. At the same time, the share of respondents identifying with low skill acquisition is notable.

Access to Employment and Income Opportunities: Most participants (77%) perceived some degree of improvement in their employment or income opportunities following the training, with nearly half of them (47%) reporting a moderate increase. This indicates that while most saw the program as beneficial, the extent of perceived change was generally moderate rather than substantial. A smaller segment of 22% reported “low” improvement, suggesting variation in how participants experienced the post-training outcomes. Gender-wise, the response patterns were largely consistent, reflecting similar perceptions of benefit among male and female participants.

Figure 7: Perceived Access to Employment and Income Opportunities



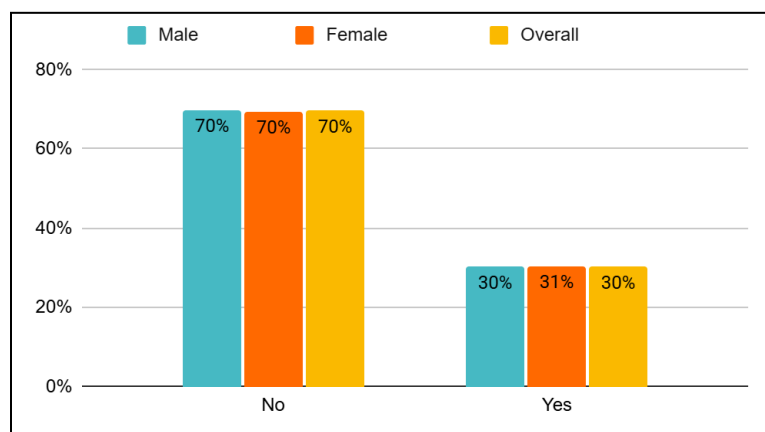
Placement Outcome Post-Training: The program’s placement rate stood at 30%, with 70% of participants not placed in employment through the training centre. Placement rates were consistent across gender, with 30% of men and 31% of women reporting job placement. This parity suggests no major gender-based disparity in access to placement support. However, the overall rate signals a significant disconnect between training completion and labour market absorption. This finding aligns with broader challenges observed in Punjab’s ITES sector, which, despite growing demand, continues to face bottlenecks in employment generation for newly skilled youth. According to the Punjab Skill Gap Report, the IT/ITES sector in the state is characterised by low levels of entry-level hiring relative to the number of trained candidates, due to a combination of limited industry presence outside major hubs

and employer preferences for prior experience.⁷

Field insights further suggest that job opportunities were available but primarily in cities like Pune, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. This combination of labour market concentration and geographic immobility appears to have constrained post-training employment outcomes, despite industry alignment in curriculum.

“Students from places like Jalandhar or Ludhiana were often hesitant to relocate directly to metros in other states, which made placement more challenging.” —Centre Head, Punjab Program Implementation Team

Figure 8: Placement Outcome Post-Training

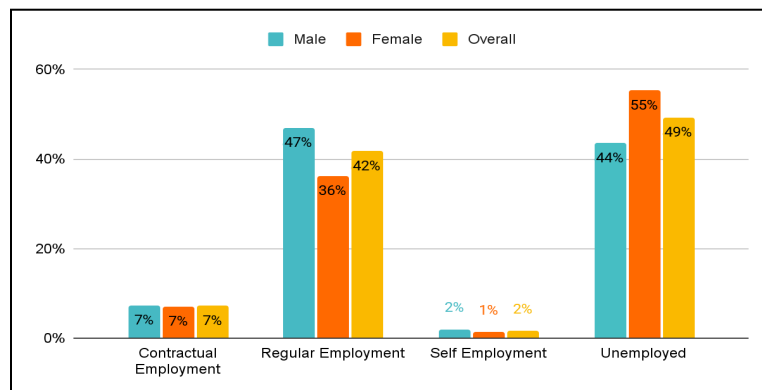


Nature of Current Employment: While formal placement through the training centre was limited, the type of employment participants reported at the time of the survey offers further insight into their post-training trajectories. Among those currently employed, **42% reported being in regular employment**, while **7% were in contractual roles**.

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<https://skillsip.nsdcindia.org/sites/default/files/kps-document/punjab-sg-report%20%281%29.pdf#page=73>
.17

Figure 9: Type of Employment among participants currently in the workforce



Although most participants did not transition into the labour market via institutional placement, those who did secure jobs were more likely to be employed in **stable and structured forms of work**. Gender disparity, however, is notable. At the same time, **49% of respondents remained unemployed**, with a higher proportion among women (55%) compared to men (44%). This indicates that nearly half of the participants had not entered the workforce by the time of the survey, pointing to **uneven labour market absorption** even beyond the immediate post-training window. Notably, within this broader employment landscape, a clear association emerges between initial placement and longer-term outcomes: **participants who received placement were 2.7 times more likely to be employed at the time of the survey** ($p = 0.002$). This statistically significant relationship underscores the link between early institutional support and sustained employment status.

In parallel, a considerable proportion of participants expressed **readiness for self-employment or entrepreneurial activity**—**66% overall**, with **71% of men** and **62% of women** indicating agreement. In contrast, only **2% were actually self-employed** at the time of the survey. This divergence between intent and uptake may reflect external barriers such as access to capital or networks, but it also highlights that **entrepreneurship is widely perceived as a viable, if currently underutilised, livelihood pathway** among participants.

Current Monthly Income: Among participants who were employed for at least one consecutive year at the time of the survey, the **average monthly income was ₹25,000**. This amount is higher than the **national average for regular employment (₹20,039)**, suggesting that the income levels reported by

participants fall on the higher end of the typical wage distribution in comparable settings.⁸ Gender-disaggregated data reveal a **statistically significant difference** in current earnings: **male participants reported an average monthly income of ₹27,427**, compared to **₹21,777 among female participants** ($p = 0.007$). While both groups reported employment income, the difference in reported averages reflects variation in labour market outcomes across gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Recommendations

The following recommendations are grounded in data-driven insights and aim to address key gaps identified in employment access, income disparities, and post-placement continuity. Areas of focus include gender-linked differences in outcomes, variations in earning levels, and factors influencing sustained workforce engagement.

Table 1: List of Recommendations and Proposed Actions

Recommendation Area	Key Findings	Proposed Actions
Strengthening Placement Linkages	Placement outcomes were lower than expected relative to training coverage, indicating a weak transition from skilling to employment.	Coordinate with industry councils to leverage sector-specific recruitment initiatives, improving access to job opportunities and enabling participation in official placement fairs.
Enhancing Labour Market Alignment	A large proportion of participants remained unemployed post-training, highlighting weak alignment between training and actual labour market demand.	Embed sector-specific labour market data into curriculum planning . Prioritise high-growth, high-preference sectors for Punjab to improve employability outcomes
Addressing Gender-Based Disparities in Income	Despite similar access to training and placement, income outcomes differed between male and female participants.	Introduce tracking mechanisms for gender-disaggregated placement and wage outcomes. Strengthen strategic partnerships with recruitment teams of hiring companies to systematically address structural gender gaps
Bridging the Gap in Entrepreneurial Uptake	A high number of participants expressed readiness for entrepreneurship, but few had taken	Develop structured self-employment tracks that integrate mentorship, financial literacy, seed funding access,

⁸ https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/AR_PLFS_2022_23N.pdf?download=1

	steps toward self-employment.	and incubation linkages to convert entrepreneurial intent into sustainable enterprise pathways.
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4.2 Conclusion

The **Future Skills program**, implemented by FUEL under **HDFC Bank's Parivartan initiative**, has contributed meaningfully to enhancing **youth employability** in Punjab. It engaged a **diverse and educated participant base**, including individuals from **marginalised communities**, and delivered training in **emerging digital domains** such as **Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing, and Core Java**.

Participants reported **positive experiences** with both the **content and delivery** of the program. Many expressed **increased confidence** in performing job responsibilities, and those currently employed reflected **favourable income levels** when compared to national reference points. The program also strengthened **soft skills**, which were widely acknowledged as useful across employment contexts.

Findings from the assessment indicate **scope for further strengthening** the program's **employment linkages and long-term engagement mechanisms**. There is potential to enhance **placement systems**, reinforce connections with **industry partners**, and expand access to **entrepreneurial pathways**, particularly given the high levels of **self-employment readiness** among participants. Gender-based differences in income outcomes also highlight an area where more **equitable support structures** could deepen the program's impact.

The program has established a solid foundation in delivering **relevant, future-facing skills**. Building on this foundation through **targeted employer partnerships, responsive placement support, and expanded post-training pathways** presents a clear opportunity to scale its effectiveness in the next phase.