



Research Paper

Socio-Economic Empowerment of Rural Poor: An Empirical Study of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) In Guntur District

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Abstract

Poverty and joblessness in rural areas continue to be forcible challenges in Andhra Pradesh, more so in districts like Guntur where a large part of rural population is dependent on agriculture and informal labour. Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has launched Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) on 25th September 2014 – a skill development scheme to transform rural poor youth into an employable nation. This study attempts to analyse the socio-economic benefits of DDU-GKY for the rural poor in Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. A total of 300 respondents were selected from DDU-GKY beneficiary households by utilizing a multi-stage random sampling technique. While the primary data was collected by conducting face to face interview through structured schedules, the secondary data was collected from Directorate of Economics and Statistics of the Government of Andhra Pradesh, and APSSDC, as well as MoRD annual reports. The analysis uses cross tabulations, chi-square tests, and logit models to examine changes in income, employment, consumption, and social mobility. Results demonstrate that DDU-GKY has transformed the rural youths ensuring a better socio-economic status for them especially among the SC and BC youths-controls.

Keywords: DDU-GKY, Skill Development, Rural Poor, Socio-Economic Empowerment, Guntur District, Employment, Income, Andhra Pradesh, Rural Youth

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I. INTRODUCTION

Decades of policy intervention have failed to transform the rural economy of India, which is still marred by chronic unemployment, underemployment and poverty. The proportion of the Indian population living in rural areas stands at around 65%, and close to 43% of the rural working population is still engaged in agriculture, which accounts for a mere 18.8% of the national GDP, reads the Economic Survey of India 2022-23. This a reflection of a much larger and more entrenched issue, with the Indian rural economy desperately in need of skill-led economic diversification. Andhra Pradesh with its rural population at 57.8% according to the 2011 Census, is also exposed to the same kind of structural deformities. The state's rural unemployment rate was at 9.6 per cent in 2021-22, according to the PLFS. According to the Government of Andhra Pradesh's Economic Survey 2022-23, the State harbours some 1.87 crore rural youth in the 18–35 age group out of which a large number of them are either unemployed or underemployed in the unorganized sector. The state's rural per capita income for the household was ₹1,02,450 in 2022-23, way behind the urban figure. Acknowledging this need, the Government of India initiated the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) on 25th September 2014 under the Ministry of Rural Development. The scheme operates as a placement linked skill development programme catering specifically to rural poor youth from BPL families in the age group of 18-35 years. It prescribes at least 576 hours of training in both technical and soft skills, third party evaluation and certification as well as assured placement with minimum wages. Andhra Pradesh has been empowered as an Annual Action Plan (AAP) state to assess and implement DDU-GKY projects independently. The Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) is the nodal agency for implementation at the district level. Andhra Pradesh has the best placement record in the country as of APSSDC figures (2020) trained 74,816 youth and placed 66,752 which is 89.22% that is highest in India. Guntur District, as bastion for rural dense population and high agricultural dependents, has been ticking as focal district in programme roll out. This

study concentrates on the change in employment, income, consumption and social mobility of the rural poor in Guntur District and assesses the socio economic impact of DDU-GKY on them.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The origin of DDU-GKY goes to the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY), which had constituted a "Special Projects" skilling activity that linked training to wage employment. This was later on changed to Aajeevika Skills under NRLM and further modified as DDU-GKY in 2014. With required industry partnerships and placement commitments, the scheme heralds a shift in focus from supply-driven to demand-driven skill development. In Andhra Pradesh, skill development activities achieved institutional significance with the bifurcation of the state in 2014. The APSSDC was established by the then new Government of Andhra Pradesh as the nodal agency for all skill development activities in the state. The government, under the AP Skill Development Policy 2015, has the vision of skilling 10 lakh youth under various schemes by 2019. DDU-GKY, in particular, was a cornerstone of this strategy. The state has earmarked ₹432 crore for skill development in the AP Annual Plan 2022-23, of which a major portion has been committed for DDU-GKY implementation. The district Guntur: a rationale for research With the rural poverty rate at 22.6 per cent (SECC 2011) and few non-farm employment opportunities, the rural youth of Guntur are the most exposed to the vagaries of the economy. The district has seen substantial DDU-GKY activity with a number of PIAs operating training centres in rural mandals. Trades like retail management, data entry, hospitality, electrician have seen huge number of enrolments. Yet there is little evidence at the micro level on how DDU-GKY has actually changed the socio-economic composition of household beneficiaries in guntur despite being celebrated for its strong macro level outcomes. This lacuna constitutes the scholarly justification for this study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR RURAL POOR:

Although India's demographic dividend – with more than 62% of its population being in the working age group – offers a momentous opportunity, if it is suitably skilled. But only 2.3 percent of the Indian workforce has received formal skills training (World Bank, 2017), and Andhra Pradesh represents this national problem with severe rural unemployment. The DDU-GKY scheme, which falls under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) has strategic importance in a number of ways. It is, among other things, closely designed at rural poor aged 18–35 years from BPL households in addressing skilful labour supply of unskilled labour that meets industry demand. Secondly, it stipulates that 75 per cent of the trained youth be placed at a minimum wage of ₹6,000 a month, which will ensure that they can earn a dignified living. Third, Andhra Pradesh was accorded the status of one among the nine Annual Action Plan (AAP) states with full-fledged project appraisal powers, resulting in fast paced implementation. As per the data from APSSDC, 74,816 youth were skilled in Andhra Pradesh and 66,752 were placed — the State raked a remarkable placement rate of 89.22%, the highest across all the major states, towering over the national average of 54.53%. In Guntur District, DDU-GKY has transformed the lives of youth in trades such as retail, hospitality, healthcare and construction. The program is tackling structural poverty by turning unskilled farm labourers into qualified formal-sector retail workers. DDU-GKY is a pan-India scheme that is also an important social mobility tool particularly for Scheduled Caste and Tribal families, providing an alternative to seasonal agriculture for them. The horizontal integration of DDU-GKY with other schemes such as DAY-NRLM and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana has significantly strengthened its rural development footprint in Andhra Pradesh.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Okada (2012) focused on skill formation challenges for young people in India and argued that the demographic dividend could not be harnessed through the formal vocational training system. The research demonstrated the role of systemic mismatch in curricular relevance and linkages with industry as major impediments to youth employability. In her analysis of skill development programmes and rural women entrepreneurs, Verma (2015) found that focused skilling initiatives did bring considerable change for women from marginalised sections in their livelihoods options, but social resistances to full participation in formal work still prevailed. Gaur (2017) analysed the Skill India Programme along with its sub-schemes, namely DDU-GKY, and noted that reforms post 2014 put in place accountability mechanisms that led to improved placement outcomes but still the issue of employment sustainability after training seems to be troubling states. DDU-GKY is an empirical study by Mishra and Jena (2018) in Keonjhar District of Odisha that brings out statistically significant improvement in days of employment and income of household among trained beneficiaries and also that Scheduled Caste or SC households witnessed the highest growth of income. Lalitha (2019) researched into DDU-GKY in the NAC region of Telangana and discovered that the quality of learning among the operators was a far cry from planned expectations, the private training partners have attained far higher placement rates and skill certification scores than government bodies. Chakravorthy and Bedi (2019) assessed skill training and employment outcomes in rural Bihar and found that short duration training programmes resulted in modest long

term income gains without strong post placement diversification support systems. Phukun (2021) focused DDU-GKY implementation in Assam and found that geographic isolation, language impediments, and poor counselling had emasculated the programme among tribal people, and that it could be revived through community-specific mobilization strategies.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Andhra Pradesh reports a laudable placement rate of 89.22% in the DDU-GKY, but the quality, the sustainability and the level of impact of this transformation at household level in districts like Guntur is hardly documented. Caste, gender, educational attainment and type of trade really matter but aggregate figures conceal this. A previous rural development programme had barely dented high agricultural dependency, seasonal income fluctuations, and low consumption levels among the rural poor households in Guntur. The important questions that remain are: Have the incomes and consumption of DDU-GKY households been enhanced in a meaningful way? Has it narrowed the inter-caste socio-economic gap? Do skill certificates lead to stable and long-term employment? Policymakers cannot judge the success of the program and plan for corrective action — or even understand whether the program is having the desired effect — in the absence of rigorous micro-level empirical findings. In this context, the study attempts to fill the gap by conducting a structured primary survey of 300 DDU-GKY beneficiaries in Guntur District and secondary data from APSSDC, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Andhra Pradesh and MoRD annual reports.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

There are more than 21 central government schemes under India's skill development ladder; however district-level outcome assessments are barely found. Guntur District, situated in rural Andhra Pradesh and one of the most populous districts, serves as a critical testing ground for whether DDU-GKY can bring about socio-economic change. With rural unemployment rate at 9.6% at PLFS 2021-22 and rural poverty ratio of 22.6% based on SECC 2011, there is a pressing need for the empirical substantiation of the effectiveness of skill schemes. The literature is largely focused on Odisha, Telangana and Bihar while the districts in which Andhra Pradesh implements hardly comes by any informed solution. There is also increasing policy debate as to whether short-duration skill training programmes generate sustainable income gains or yield ephemeral employment. The study provides a timely much needed empirical contribution to this discourse, with findings emanating from the district that can be used to re-design the DDU-GKY as it currently stands of in the current phase of implementation. The results have direct relevance for APSSDC's strategy and can be considered in Union Ministry of Rural Development's programme review guidelines.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the DDU-GKY beneficiaries in Guntur District and its effect on employment, income and consumption expenditure of rural poor families.
2. To assess the association between DDU-GKY participation and positive change in social mobility measures using chi-square tests and regression analysis among the beneficiary households from Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is based on the mixed-methods research design and involves the use of both primary and secondary information. Primary data: A pre-tested structured instrument was used to collect data from 300 DDU-GKY beneficiaries selected through multi-stage random sampling. In Stage I, purposive selection was applied to choose three taluks from Guntur District based on DDU-GKY training centre availability. Stage II – Six mandals were chosen randomly, two from taluk: two mandals in two taluks in the third one three mandals in one taluk. Stage III: Five objective questions were privately selected For objectivity each mandal Accordingly randomly 50 interviewees/survivors were picked out (N=300) (APSSDC) for Malabar Three Steps/Stages above) respondent surprisingly. The secondary data were taken from the Economic Surveys of the Government of Andhra Pradesh (2020–2023), annual reports of APSSDC, annual reports of MoRD, Directorate of Economics and Statistics Andhra Pradesh, Census 2011, SECC 2011 and the reports of PLFS 2021-22. Descriptive statistics, cross tabulation, chi-square tests (χ^2) and OLS (ordinary least squares) regression were the descriptive tools of analytics. The level of significance is taken 5%.(Source: Primary data)

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Guntur district located in Andhra Pradesh in the Krishna-Godavari region is a centrally located district of the state which is also a highly populated and agriculturally advanced one. Guntur District: As per 2011 Census, Guntur District had a population of 48,87,813, including 24,57,274 males and 24,30,539 females and with a rural population of 58.4 per cent. There are 57 mandals in the district under six revenue divisions:

Guntur, Narasaraopet, Sattenapalle, Tenali, Bapatla, and Palnadu, covering an area of 11,391 km². The economy of the district lies in agriculture mostly paddy, cotton, chilly and tobacco being the major crops. The district accounts for around 6.8 % of the state agricultural gross domestic product (GSDP) as per Economic Survey Andhra Pradesh 2022-23. Rural unemployment and underemployment are high, despite agricultural importance. SECC 2011 data had the district's rural poverty ratio at 22.6%. The literacy rate is 67.8 per cent, with enormous gender and caste-based variation. Guntur has been one of the DDU-GKY focus districts by the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC). As of 2022-23, more than 12,000 rural youth in Guntur District have been trained and placed under DDU-GKY, making it one of the most successful districts in the programme in Andhra Pradesh.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of DDU-GKY Beneficiaries in Guntur District

Characteristic	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	178	59.3
	Female	122	40.7
Age Group	18–22 years	89	29.7
	23–27 years	112	37.3
	28–35 years	99	33.0
Caste	Forward Caste	48	16.0
	Backward Caste	96	32.0
	Scheduled Caste	108	36.0
	Scheduled Tribe	48	16.0
Education	Below SSC	72	24.0
	SSC/Intermediate	156	52.0
	Graduate & above	72	24.0
Household Income (Before DDU-GKY)	Below ₹50,000	138	46.0
	₹50,001–₹1,00,000	114	38.0
	Above ₹1,00,000	48	16.0
Land Holding	Landless	165	55.0
	Marginal (< 1 acre)	87	29.0
	Small (1–2 acres)	48	16.0

Source: Primary data

Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of DDU-GKY Beneficiaries

The DDU-GKY demographic profile of beneficiary in Guntur District has many defining tales. Sample males are 59.3% and females at 40.7%, the female representation is much higher than the national DDU-GKY average of 34% which is indicative of APSSDCs focused gender mobilisation in Guntur. The largest age group is 23–27 years (37.3%), which is also in line with the focus of the Programme on entry-level jobs. The majority of the beneficiaries belongs to the Scheduled Caste (36.0%) and Backward Castes (32.0%). This caste favouritism is in tune with the DDU-GKY targeting mechanism of BPL households, since SC and BC are the majority of rural poor in guntur district according to SECC 2011. It is 16.0% for Scheduled Tribes, in conformation with their rural share in the district. From an educational point of view 52.0% of the beneficiaries were either studied till SSC or Intermediate which imply that DDU-GKY is effectively able to channelize the semi-educated rural poor having no professional qualification. A substantial 24.0% went illiterate, a testimony to the programme's design for all practical purposes. The pre-DDU-GKY income distribution: On income, a majority (46 per cent) of the beneficiary households were earning less than ₹50,000 (about \$741) per year, which is an indication of their BPL status and the precarious nature of their livelihoods. Just 16. None reported a vintage over 1,00,000 rupees a year before training, indicating that this sub-group is poor, but not extremely so. The data on land holdings further underline the socio-economic fragility of the sample: 55 per cent have no land at all, and 29 per cent own marginal holdings of less than one acre. This lack of land is a key structural determinant of participation in the DDU-GKY programme, with rural non-farm work as the sole livelihood option for these households.

CROSS-TABULATION AND CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

Table 2: Cross-Tabulation of Gender and Employment Status After DDU-GKY

Gender	Employed (Formal)	Employed (Informal)	Unemployed	Total
Male	124 (69.7%)	38 (21.3%)	16 (9.0%)	178 (100%)
Female	68 (55.7%)	36 (29.5%)	18 (14.8%)	122 (100%)
Total	192 (64.0%)	74 (24.7%)	34 (11.3%)	300 (100%)

χ^2 (Calculated) = 6.84 | df = 2 | χ^2 (Table value at 5%) = 5.991 |

Source: Primary data

Gender and Employment Status After DDU-GKY:

Table 2 shows the joint distribution of gender and post-DDU-GKY employment status. 55.7 percent of female beneficiaries. The chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 6.84$ is greater than the table value of 5.991 for 2 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis — that gender and employment status are independent — is thus rejected. This is to prove a statistically significant relationship between gender and the nature of the job obtained post DDU-GKY training. Male beneficiaries also had significantly higher rates of formal employment, while female beneficiaries were more heavily represented in categories of informal employment. This finding indicates that "DDU-KYY is able to produce women trainees but structural gender barriers in the labour market continue to limit the extent of their formal placement outcomes." APSSDC may need to enhance post-placement gender-specific support mechanisms.

Table 3: Cross-Tabulation of Caste Category and Income Level After DDU-GKY

Caste	Below ₹1,00,000	₹1,00,001–₹1,50,000	Above ₹1,50,000	Total
Forward Caste	12 (25.0%)	22 (45.8%)	14 (29.2%)	48 (100%)
Backward Caste	28 (29.2%)	42 (43.8%)	26 (27.1%)	96 (100%)
Scheduled Caste	36 (33.3%)	48 (44.4%)	24 (22.2%)	108 (100%)
Scheduled Tribe	22 (45.8%)	18 (37.5%)	8 (16.7%)	48 (100%)
Total	98 (32.7%)	130 (43.3%)	72 (24.0%)	300 (100%)

χ^2 (Calculated) = 8.92 | df = 6 | χ^2 (Table value at 5%) = 12.592 |

Source: Primary data

Caste Category and Income Level After DDU-GKY:

Table 3 presents caste group wise income level after DDU-GKY. The chi-square test result is $\chi^2 = 8.92$ is less than the table value 12.592 at 5% significant level with 6 d.f. Therefore, the null hypothesis i.e. that caste and post DDU-GKY income level are independent is accepted. This shows that DDU-GKY has been effective in equalising income returns between castes to some extent. While Forward Caste beneficiaries also do marginally better in the top box of highest income (29.2%), Backward Caste and Scheduled Caste beneficiaries follow closely behind (27.1% and 22.2% respectively). The combination of these skill-building benefits along with relatively equal income results across the castes in the programme suggest that skill-building reduces the caste based income differences - an important social dividend.

Table 4: OLS Regression — Determinants of Post-DDU-GKY Annual Household Income (₹)

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Significance
Constant	42,150	5,820	7.24	0.000	***
Age of Beneficiary (years)	1,240	420	2.95	0.003	***
Education Level (years of schooling)	3,860	680	5.68	0.000	***
Duration of Training (months)	8,520	1,140	7.47	0.000	***
Gender (1=Male, 0=Female)	12,340	2,760	4.47	0.000	***
Caste (1=SC/ST, 0=Others)	-6,480	2,190	-2.96	0.003	***
Pre-DDU-GKY Household Income (₹)	0.38	0.09	4.22	0.000	***

$R^2 = 0.682$ | Adjusted $R^2 = 0.674$ | F-statistic = 104.7 (p < 0.001)

Source: Primary data

Determinants of Post-DDU-GKY Annual Household Income:

The Ordinary Least squares (OLS) regression model in Table 4 reveals the major factors affecting post-DDU-GKY annual household income for the beneficiaries in Guntur District. The model has an R^2 of 0.682, meaning that 68.2 per cent of the variations of the household income after the programme is accounted for by the six explanatory variables included in the model. The overall became significant at $F=104.7$ (p < 0.001). Training duration turns out to be the most positive significant predictor ($\beta = ₹8,520$; $t = 7.47$; $p < 0.001$). Every additional month of DDU-GKY training adds about ₹8,520 to annual household income, which is compatible with the programme's design logic wherein longer training duration in trades leads to higher-wage placements. This result straight away vindicates DDU-GKY's funding pattern which is higher per beneficiary for 9-month and 12 months courses," indicates the study. The level of education is the second most powerful predictor ($\beta = ₹3,860$; $t = 5.68$; $p < 0.001$), indicating the complementary nature of formal schooling and skill training. An extra year of education is associated with an increase of ₹3,860 in post-programme annual income, implying DDU-GKY results in higher returns when its beneficiaries have stronger educational background. Gender is a very strong determinant of the income ($\beta = ₹12,340$; $t = 4.47$; $p < 0.001$) with female beneficiaries earning ₹12,340 less per year than male beneficiaries, which confirms the chi-square result of gendered employment outcomes shown in table 2. Income disadvantage for the SC/ST beneficiaries is still significant ($\beta = -₹6,480$; $t = -2.96$; $p = 0.003$) but DDU-GKY participation has a statistically significant effect in increasing the income of the beneficiaries it does not quite erase the handicap caused by the low caste dummy. This

indicates that the structuring of the programme cannot simply be expected to erase deep-rooted structural barriers in accessing the labour market. Pre-DDU-GKY income ($\beta = 0.38$) confirms income path dependency, i.e. that households with higher initial income also benefit disproportionately (households are benefiting more from DDU-GKY) — a result that calls for the intervention to be focused on the most deprived sub-groups.

IV. DISCUSSION

The from the DDU GKY in Guntur District revealed that the DDU-GKY has brought about certain qualitative changes in the living conditions of the rural poor who were the beneficiaries. The regression model ($R^2 = 0.682$) also shows that training duration, education, gender and caste are significant determinants of income — with some of these results having direct policy implications. The chi-square confirms a significant gender-work relationship, suggesting that structural labor market barriers still pose constraints for the female beneficiaries to gain formal employment in spite of similar quality of training. The caste-income figures, although statistically independent, highlight fine-grained inequalities at the upper ends of income distribution across the Forward Caste and SC/ST beneficiaries.

The socio-demographic characteristic reveals that the programme has reached out to recede into the most marginalised sections of the community - 55% landless, 46% pre-programme income less than ₹50,000 – which substantiates the poverty targeting of the programme. With 89.22% placement in Andhra Pradesh, based on APSSDC's AAP state autonomy and strong industry engagement, offers a model of execution that the nation should consider emulating. The study also reveals awareness deficits (12 percent unreached), income path dependency, and points to the need for further mobilization and mentoring support to the most at risk household to maximize DDU-GKY returns.

V. CONCLUSION

The research conclusively demonstrates that the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana has brought about transformational socio-economic changes among rural poor families in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. After participating in the programme, beneficiaries experienced a significant increase in days employed, income of the household and their level of consumption. The proven efficiency of the APSSDC-led implementation model and the state's AAP status is further exemplified by Andhra Pradesh's national best placement rate of 89.22%. The regression results suggest that length of training and education are the most important predictors of income after the program, indicating that longer, higher-quality training modules are more effective in improving livelihoods. But there are also a host of urgent challenges that needed to be addressed: gender-based disparities in employability, caste-based income disadvantages for SC/ST families, and knowledge gaps in distant mandals. These ingrained structural inequities require proactive policy attention that goes beyond the existing programme design. DDU-GKY must transition from a placement-linked training intervention to a holistic livelihood transformation platform — with post-placement mentoring, access to credit and career advancement pathways. With India's demographic dividend window closing, enhancing and expanding DDU-GKY's presence in districts such as Guntur, is both an economic and a social imperative. The programme's experience in Guntur proves that skill development is indeed a potent, evidence-based tool for rural poor alleviation in the India of today.

VI. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. DDU-GKY brought about a remarkable increase in the employment of rural poor beneficiaries of Guntur District in terms of the number of days of employment, which rose from 183 to 296 days, an increase of 61.75% in output of the annual employment generation per beneficiary household.
2. The average annual household income increased from ₹77,226 pre-DDU-GKY to ₹1,40,600 post programme participation, leading to an average income gain of ₹63,374 per household — which translates to an 82.06% income improvement across all caste groups.
3. Scheduled Caste beneficiaries witnessed a gain in the highest additional employment days of 137 days, showing an equity-oriented impact of the programme for the historically marginalised sections of the society who have limited chances to opt for other forms of formal employment.
4. And the highest placement rate of DDU-GKY at national level of 89.22% (national average at 54.53%) was achieved by Andhra Pradesh due to its APSSDC-led AAP state implementation autonomy coupled with its industry connect and aggressive candidate mobilisation.
5. The OLS regression ($R^2 = 0.682$) The OLS regression model suggested training duration was the most significant income predictor ($\beta = ₹8,520$ per month), corroborating DDU-GKY's policy rationale of subsidizing longer, specialised training programmes for better-wage employment placement outcomes.
6. Gender was a significant predictor of post-DDU-GKY employment ($\chi^2 = 6.84 > 5.991$ at 5%), and male beneficiaries were more likely to be in formal employment (69.7%) when compared with female beneficiaries (55.7%), indicating enduring structural gender barriers in labour market.

7. Caste and income level after participating in DDU-GKY were independent ($\chi^2 = 8.92 < 12.592$ at 5%), indicating that DDU-GKY curtails caste based income aberrations by providing a relatively uniform skill-to-income translation to Forward, Backward, Scheduled Caste and Tribal beneficiaries.
8. Village Extension Workers – 34.0% of the respondents found them to be the best channel of DDU-GKY awareness, and 12.0% were still not fully aware that suggests persistence of blind spots, especially in the interior mandals of Guntur District.
9. After participation DDU-GKY beneficiaries increased their consumption expenditure by 19.89%, and ST households were found to have the lowest absolute level of consumption (₹82,281), emphasizes the need for focused post-placement support mechanism for ddugky beneficiaries.
10. The level of education was a major determinant of earnings ($\beta = ₹3,860$ per year of schooling; $p < 0.001$) after the completion of the programme, a finding which corroborates that DDU-GKY provides higher economic returns to the beneficiaries who come with better educational background, demonstrating (and hinting at) some form of complementarity between regular schooling and vocational skilling.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Enhance gender responsive post-placement support: In light of statistically significant gender differences in formal employment ($\chi^2 = 6.84$), APSSDC needs to roll out gender-specific post-placement counselling, safety networks, and industry-sensitisation modules to support female DDU-GKY graduates to achieve equal access to formal sector employment and wage levels vis-à-vis their male peers.
2. Increase training length and expand trade options: As the length of training is the most significant income determinant ($\beta = \text{Rs.}8,520/\text{month}$), the MORD should nudge the PIAs in Guntur District to focus on 9- and 12-month programmes in high-growth sectors like healthcare, IT, and advanced manufacturing, gradually phasing out short-duration 3-month programmes that generate scanty sustained income.
3. Plan supporting interventions for SC/ST households: The negative coefficient of caste ($\beta = -₹6,480$) for SC/ST households shows continued income deficit. A focused sub-component under DDU-GKY for post-placement mentoring, linkages to microfinance and enterprise development support for SC/ST graduates would mitigate the systemic obstacles which vocational training, on its own, cannot surmount.
4. Utilize SHG networks for greater outreach: As 12 percent of beneficiaries remain unaware of the benefits of DDU-GKY even after enrolment, APSSDC shall formalize integration of SHG networks — which already are in scale under the NRLM — as focus DDU-GKY mobilisation partners in all the 57 mandals of Guntur District, by way of digital awareness drives using mobile-based platforms.
5. Institutionalise a district-level DDU-GKY performance monitoring cell: Establish a real-time district-level monitoring dashboard that monitors Guntur District's DDU-GKY outcomes in terms of employment retention, wage progression and consumption indicators at six-monthly intervals after placement to provide evidentiary basis to APSSDC and MoRD to make programme corrections in a timely manner and scale

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