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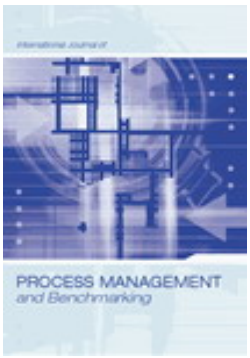

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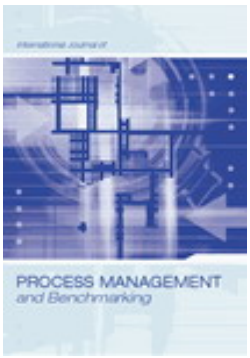

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Process for empowering rural women: finding a path to benchmark capacity building initiatives

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Abstract: The present research examines the role of capacity building in the context of the rural women workforce in an emerging economy. Drawing cues from the extant literature, this research identifies and empirically prioritises and benchmarks the dimensions of capacity building. The findings indicate that funding and microfinance-based programs, skill development initiatives, team building, and group-dynamics activities are the most important dimensions, based on the respondent perceptions. These findings offer newer insights on this under-explored domain to facilitate conceptual development and policy formulation of the process. Consequently, this study evidences the process of vitality towards benchmarking capacity-building initiatives to empower the underprivileged and economically backward sections of women in rural areas.

Keywords: skill development; process; rural women; benchmark; capacity building.

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1 Introduction

Amidst the major developmental goals in the emerging economies, empowerment of the rural women workforce remains one of the top priority areas. The last few decades have seen a steady rise in government initiatives and programs to substantially address the issue of women empowerment (Goldman and Little, 2015; Crittenden et al., 2019; Akter et al., 2020). In the Indian scenario, the Government of India (GoI) has implemented various measures to ensure more participation, skill enhancement, accessibility to funding resources, business training, etc. to improve the capabilities of the underprivileged women residing in remote locations. Despite such initiatives, many prevailing issues hinder the targeted impact of empowering and enabling the marginalised and economically weaker communities. The rich literature on empowerment suggests capacity-building mechanisms as a vital factor that can generate long-term benefits for the local communities (Boateng, 2021; Rashid and Ratten, 2020; Sengupta et al., 2018). The concept of capacity building revolves around the idea of strengthening the individual skills and competencies to find effective solutions for developmental problems, which encompasses both individual-level and societal-level issues. In this regard, Moreno et al. (2017) affirm capacity building can be considered as a 'nuanced and nonlinear' process that concerns enhancing multiple skills simultaneously.

Along the same vein, prior researchers outline the elements of capacity building concept that includes availability and accessibility of local resources, existing networks, and support groups, sense of commitment, collective action, and a strong desire for problem-solving (Chaskin, 2001; Imbaya et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Franco and Tracey, 2019). Additionally, the overall evaluation of such programs is crucial that can help in measuring the real impact at the grassroots level. In the context of emerging economies, both researchers and policymakers agree on the capabilities of the rural workforce to contribute towards economic development and welfare. Despite such acknowledgement, there are only a handful of studies dealing with the impact assessment of capacity-building programs on rural communities. In response, the present study intends to empirically measure the impact of capacity-building measures among rural women in the selected locations of India. To meet this purpose, the authors examine the dimensions of the capacity building using prioritisation techniques based on the respondent opinions. The outcomes of this study will extend the conceptual understanding of the domain and contribute towards targeted policy formulation.

The remaining sections of this article adhere to the following sequence. In Section 2, the authors provide an overview of the existing studies in the context of capacity building and finding a path to benchmark these initiatives. Section 3 and Section 4 describe the methodology and present the results of the empirical testing. Section 5 elaborately discusses the findings in light of the contemporary literature. The concluding sections highlight the implications, points out the limitations, and suggest future research directions.

2 Review of literature

The significance of skill-based initiatives towards positively affecting economic development and community empowerment has been widely recognised, with a specific focus on capacity building and training (Eger et al., 2021; Moreno et al., 2017; Niaghi,

2019). Generically, capacity building is defined as a process that comprises different dimensions or levels complemented by a specific aim/purpose (Simmons et al., 2011). Along the same lines, Flaspohler et al. (2008) delineate capacity building as a complex mechanism, which can exist at the individual, organisational, community levels and consists of skills, motivations, knowledge, and attitudes essential towards sustainable livelihood. According to Ansari et al. (2012), capacity building implies the creating, utilising, and retaining the capacity for accomplishing developmental goals such as poverty alleviation, improving self-reliance, and overall quality of life. This conceptualisation exhibits the capacity-building processes that majorly rely and build on existing capabilities within a community and available resources (Imbaya et al., 2019; Vallejo and Wehn, 2016). These initiatives render necessary support and information to the local communities and groups that may lead to network creation (formal and informal).

Prior researchers have constantly argued regarding the appropriate sites/locations for implementing the capacity-building initiatives (Subramaniam, 2003; Cohen and Wheeler, 1997; Krauss et al., 2020; Niaghi, 2019). The lack of consensus on this issue arises mainly due to the scarcity of development resources. Specifically, there are debates around whether the govt. should solely implement capacity-building programs or even non-govt. organisations can play a part in such initiatives. Further, the locations of organising such programs (e.g., metros, rural, semi-urban, etc.) and resources utilised for this purpose is another concerning factor (Hanoum and Islam, 2021). In this context, relying on organisational resources to build capabilities at the grass-root level can prove beneficial for the accessibility of remote groups and communities and save valuable resources (Despard et al., 2018; Subramaniam, 2003). From the rural perspective, capacity-building forums are used by the village women to gather, learn new skills, access information and ideas. Capacity-building efforts involve formal training, which intends to impart skills and education among women. These opportunities can essentially help make more informed choices and decisions for their livelihoods.

In a general sense, there are two approaches to understanding capacity building in the community settings (Franco and Tracey, 2019; Hilson, 2007). The first approach, i.e., the bottom-up approach focuses on tackling the local problems and providing equal rights to the underprivileged people. Meanwhile, the other approach (top-down process) the institutions at govt. and organisational level work towards imparting skills, and building capabilities of the individuals and communities. This approach has been implemented majorly by various govt. institutions and companies for sharing information, knowledge-building, skill development, etc. among the local communities under their operational territory (Islam et al., 2022). Existing schools of thought regard education as an important facet of capacity building, specifically for community development and revitalisation (Eade, 1997; Arteaga and Glewwe, 2019). This notion supports the argument that local communities need meaningful education, enabling them to achieve their aspirations. The extant literature has highlighted certain elements of capacity building that include networking and participation, vocational training, skill enhancement, social awareness, etc. (Chaskin, 2001; Cornelius et al., 2008; McClenachan et al., 2014; Franco and Tracey, 2019).

The basic premise of the capacity building draws its root from the social cognition theory (SCT) and empowerment theory (ET). According to Bandura et al. (1999), SCT provides an understanding of the environmental drivers and psychological elements of learning and implicit empowerment. This theory presents a view of capacity development

that differs with changes in cultural experiences, thought processes, and variation in social norms. Further, it acknowledges the effect of local culture on knowledge-formation and interpretations. ET theory evaluates empowerment at three interconnected levels: the individual, relationship and collective (Rowlands, 1997; Salehi et al., 2021). Specifically, this theory integrates an agentic perspective of the self that aligns with the holistic definition of empowerment as "the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life" [Narayan-Parker, (2002), p.18]. Prior scholars have pointed the significance of agency in conceptualising the empowerment construct (Gammage et al., 2016; Hanmer and Klugman, 2016; Samman and Santos, 2009). The present study draws cues from both SCT and ET to understand the relational process that encompasses a desire to change from within, perceived ability and capacity to act, and freedom of making choices. Based on these discussions, this study considers selected dimensions of capacity building for conducting an empirical investigation in rural settings.

3 Methodology

This section briefly touches upon the research design used in the present study to achieve the specific objectives. The rationale behind the contextual choice, sampling methods, and data collection has been discussed in the following subsections. At the outset, the selected samples were evaluated using normality, reliability, and correlation measures to understand the characteristics and pattern of the data. Further, the identified items of the capacity building were subjected to RIDIT analysis for obtaining the priority rankings, which can provide an in-depth understanding of the importance of the study variables. As such, RIDIT analysis was first initially proposed by Bross (1958) to meet the objectives of ranking of variables. Since then, this technique has been applied in various contexts such as healthcare, supplier selection, business management, behavioural studies, etc. RIDIT analysis is distribution-free, which implies it does not assume the distribution of the population under study (Fleiss and Berlin, 2009). The further assessment of the data properties was carried out using IBM SPSS (version 20) and MS Excel 2016. Subsequently, the empirical results are discussed with reference to existing literature.

3.1 Design: survey context and data collection

This research involves a cross-sectional survey of 172 respondents using convenience and purposive sampling, often used in previous social science research. Specifically, the respondents were contacted personally to participate in the self-administered survey. Regarding the contextual choice, the present study focused on the rural women in the selected districts of Odisha, i.e., Koraput, Bolangir and Nayagarh. Approximately 83% of the overall population of Odisha resides in the rural areas, which have access to limited resources and regular employment (Mishra and Behera, 2016). The status of women in these rural areas is strikingly worrisome due to low literacy rates, early marriage, and lack of skill. Therefore, the capacity-building programs and activities hold much significance in the identified areas. The GoI and the state government are implementing strategies to enhance the skill and competencies of the rural population, which can support them to initiate their own business such as handicrafts, pottery items, decorative, etc. Consequently, rural women offer an appropriate context to understand the capacity-building concept.

3.2 Research instrument and measures

The research instrument (questionnaire) was developed to minimise the possibility of response biases. Questionnaire items were derived and modified from the prior literature. Thus, it reduces respondent confusion and eliminates response and non-response errors. The research questionnaire involves three sections; the first section comprises the demographic profile of the respondents. The second section includes specific queries to measure the selected dimensions of capacity building:

a skill development

b funding and microfinance programs

c team-building and group dynamics

d networking

e resource utilisation

f social awareness and justice.

These dimensions were evaluated using an overall scale comprising 24 measurement items. The final sections of the questionnaire include opinions on the existing strategies and suggestive measures to effectively enhance the capacity-building activities for empowering rural and under-privileged Indian women. To essentially capture the responses, a seven-point Likert scale was applied where 7 denotes 'strongly agree' while 1 implies 'strongly disagree'. A pre-testing of the questionnaire was carried out to ensure the wording, sequencing of questions, and range of scale were adequately appropriate. Overall, 185 responses were collected from the survey participants, out of which; we dropped 13 responses owing to missing value and redundancy issues. The final analysis incorporated 172 usable responses, and we also ensured minimal sampling bias in the study.

4 Data analysis and results

4.1 Preliminary assessment: descriptive, reliability and correlation

The gathered sample data was initially examined by using the methods of descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis. Specifically, these statistical measures were applied to understand the data pattern, normality, reliability coefficients, and multicollinearity issues (if any) between the study items. The descriptive statistics offers a holistic evaluation of the data properties by providing the values of mean and standard deviation of the items used in the scale. Further, the reliability coefficients denote the repeatability of the scale items for further research. In this regard, Cronbach α value = .838 for the overall scale. According to the recommendations of Cho and Kim (2015) for interpreting the values of Cronbach α, a score greater than .7 is acceptable and proves the consistency and stability of the scale items. Additionally, the correlation analysis reveals the pattern of association among the study items. Therefore, the comprehension of these values can eliminate the possible multi-collinearity issues in the dataset. Table 1 and Table 2 indicate the descriptive statistics and the correlation coefficients for the capacity building construct.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for the study items

Measurement item	*Mean*	*Std. deviation*	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*
RU1	5.33	1.27	–0.56	–0.61
RU2	5.51	1.11	–0.64	–0.37
RU3	5.63	1.16	–1.05	0.71
NW1	5.29	1.26	–0.58	–0.45
NW2	5.19	1.23	–0.32	–0.40
NW3	5.30	1.20	–0.79	0.19
SAJ1	5.68	1.10	–1.38	2.46
SAJ2	5.68	1.18	–1.29	1.70
SAJ3	5.83	0.87	–0.79	0.68
SAJ4	5.66	0.99	–0.74	–0.13
SKD1	5.53	1.07	–0.72	–0.37
SKD2	5.53	1.13	–0.80	–0.23
SKD3	5.91	1.06	–1.53	3.31
SKD4	5.30	1.13	–0.56	–0.36
SKD5	5.77	0.89	–0.94	0.62
FMF1	5.90	0.89	–1.64	3.13
FMF2	5.58	1.11	–1.18	1.04
FMF3	5.60	1.27	–0.96	1.05
FMF4	6.05	1.29	–1.92	2.96
TBG1	5.74	1.26	–1.37	1.83
TBG2	5.97	.90	–1.30	3.34
TBG3	5.76	1.29	–1.47	2.45
TBG4	5.89	1.07	–1.41	3.24
TBG5	5.73	1.28	–1.25	1.49

Note: RU – resource utilisation, NW – networking, SAJ – social awareness and justice, SKD – skill development, FMF – funding and microfinance-based and TBG – team building and group-dynamics.

Based on the descriptive statistics, the normality assumptions can be considered satisfactory based on the skewness and kurtosis values (Kline, 2011). Table 1 shows the skewness for the dataset ranges between –.32 and –1.92. Also, the kurtosis values were estimated and they fall in the bracket of –0.13 to 3.24. In this regard, Hair et al. (2012) suggest skewness and kurtosis values should lie below 2 and 5, respectively. Therefore, the measures for estimating normality-skewness and kurtosis fall within the acceptable range for conducting further statistical analysis.

Pearson's coefficient of correlation evaluates the strength of association between two variables. Table 2 shows the correlation estimate between the measurement items of capacity building varies in the range of .01 and .63, suggesting positive moderate effects. Further, majority of the items indicate significant correlation ($p < .05$). Since the correlation coefficients of the items are not excessively high, i.e., greater than .90 or .95, therefore, it is evident the dataset does not suffer from multi-collinearity issues. Consequently, the correlation values support the notion of variables being a part of the single construct as well exhibit satisfactory statistical significance.

Table 2 Correlation coefficients for the study items

	RU1	*RU2*	*RU3*	*NW1*	*NW2*	*NW3*	*SAJ1*	*SAJ2*	*SAJ3*	*SAJ4*	*SKD1*	*SKD2*	*SKD3*	*SKD4*	*SKD5*	*FMF1*	*FMF2*	*FMF3*	*FMF4*	*TBG1*	*TBG2*	*TBG3*	*TBG4*	*TBG5*
RU1	*1*	.62**	.30**	.51**	.51**	.47**	.19*	.20**	.26**	.50**	.50**	.45**	.33**	.18*	.08	.28**	.26**	.15*	–.05	.03	.01	–.03	.09	.01
RU2	.62**	*1*	.22**	.51**	.53**	.37**	.18*	.26**	.30**	.37**	.37**	.38**	.36**	.09	.08	.34**	.15	.22**	–.06	.08	.10	.04	.03	–.04
RU3	.30**	.22**	*1*	.41**	.32**	.40**	.23**	.18*	.29**	.23**	.39**	.28**	.21**	.20**	07	.12	.33**	.08	–.02	–.12	–.01	.05	–.09	–.01
NW1	.51**	.51**	.41**	*1*	.57**	.41**	.22**	.18*	.23**	.32**	.46**	.42**	.39**	.20**	.21**	.27**	.32**	.22**	–.14	–.04	–.04	–.09	–.01	.04
NW2	.51**	.53**	.32**	.53**	*1*	.34**	.22**	.22**	.30**	.41**	.34**	.47**	.24**	.13	.20**	.15*	.07	.38**	–.01	.05	.05	–.02	.06	–.02
NW3	.47**	.37**	.40**	.41**	.34**	*1*	.28**	.34**	.37**	.34**	.47**	.31**	.19*	.38**	.12	.27**	.50**	.05	.06	–.05	.07	.13	.04	.22**
SAJ1	.19*	.18*	.23**	.22**	.22**	.28**	*1*	.50**	.30**	.22**	.33**	.22**	.17*	.29**	.22**	.21**	.21**	.01	.07	.10	.14	.09	.01	.24**
SAJ2	.20**	.26**	.18*	.18*	.22**	.34**	.50**	*1*	.50**	.33**	.35**	.40**	.21**	.33**	.28**	.37**	.37**	.08	.14	.05	.13	.16*	.07	.04
SAJ3	.26**	.30**	.29**	.23**	.30**	.37**	.30**	.50**	*1*	.40**	.33**	.38**	.23**	.33**	.28**	.35**	.50**	.22**	–.02	.07	–.04	.10	.07	.04
SAJ4	.50**	.37**	.23**	.32**	.41**	.34**	.22**	.33**	.39**	*1*	.57**	.63**	.29**	.29**	.15*	.30**	.32**	.20**	.05	.11	–.01	–.04	.06	.08
SKD1	.50**	.37**	.39**	.46**	.34**	.47**	.33**	.35**	.33**	.57**	*1*	.60**	.39**	.26**	.10	.34**	.41**	.21**	–.04	–.01	.06	.08	.06	.18*
SKD2	.45**	.38**	.28**	.42**	.47**	.31**	.22**	.40**	.38**	.63**	.60**	*1*	.33**	.19*	.21**	.35**	.27**	.34**	–.05	–.03	.03	.03	.12	–.03
SKD3	.33**	.36**	.21**	.39**	.24**	.19*	.16*	.21**	.23**	.29**	.39**	.33**	*1*	.31**	.21**	.63**	.26**	.05	–.01	.14	.01	–.05	–.08	–.10
SKD4	.18*	.09	.20**	.20**	.13	.38**	.29**	.33**	.33**	.28**	.26**	.20*	.31**	*1*	.43**	.32**	.48**	–.02	.03	.11	–.07	.02	–.09	.02
SKD5	.08	.08	.07	.20**	.20**	.12	.22**	.28**	.28**	.15*	.10	.21**	.21**	.43**	*1*	.37**	.30**	.29**	.01	.01	–.05	–.09	–.11	–.12
FMF1	.28**	.34**	.12	.27**	.15*	.27**	.21**	.37**	.35**	.30**	.34**	.35**	.63**	.32**	.37**	*1*	.40**	.10	.08	.15*	.10	.07	–.02	–.06
FMF2	.26**	.15	.33**	.32**	.07	.50**	.21**	.37**	.50**	.32**	.41**	.27**	.26**	.48**	.30**	.40**	*1*	.07	.09	.03	–.05	.08	–.10	.08
FMF3	.15*	.22**	.08	.22**	.38**	.05	.01	.08	.22**	–.04	.21**	.21**	.34**	–.02	.29**	.10	.07	*1*	–.01	.02	–.08	–.03	.20*	.01
FMF4	–.05	–.06	–.02	–.13	–.01	.06	.07	.14	–.02	.05	–.04	–.05	–.01	.03	.01	.08	.09	–.01	*1*	.22**	.30**	.30**	.03	–.04
TBG1	.03	.08	–.12	–.04	.05	–.05	.01	.05	.07	.11	–.01	–.03	.14	.11	.01	.15*	.03	.02	.22**	*1*	.38**	.39**	.11	–.03
TBG2	.01	.10	–.01	–.04	.05	.07	.14	.13	–.04	–.01	.06	.03	.01	–.07	–.05	.01	–.05	–.08	.30**	.39**	*1*	.58**	.28**	.04
TBG3	–.23	.04	.05	–.09	–.02	.13	.09	.16*	.10	–.04	.08	.03	–.05	.02	–.01	.08	.08	–.03	.30**	.39**	.58**	*1*	.40**	–.08
TBG4	.09	.03	–.09	–.01	.06	.04	.09	.07	.07	.06	.06	.12	–.08	–.09	–.11	–.02	–.01	.19*	.03	.11	.28**	.40**	*1*	.12
TBG5	.01	–.04	–.01	.04	–.02	.22**	.24**	.04	.04	.08	.18*	–.03	–.10	.03	–.12	–.05	.08	.01	–.04	–.03	.04	–.07	.12	*1*

Notes: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two–tailed).
*Signifies that Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two–tailed).
**Signifies that Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two–tailed).

4.2 RIDIT analysis for prioritising the items of capacity building

The sample survey indicates the role of capacity building in empowering and enabling rural women in the Indian context. Accordingly, the respondents were asked to give their opinion on a seven-point Likert rating scale. The value of 7 indicates the 'strongly agree' while 1 shows the 'strongly disagree'. The gathered responses were analysed through the RIDIT technique to assign the priority ranks of these measurement items. These ranks can provide an idea regarding the crucial dimensions of capacity building, which can help in effective policy formulation. Table 3 exhibits the RIDITs for the reference dataset.

Table 3 RIDITs for the reference dataset

Variables	*7*	*6*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	π_i
RU1	29	63	28	30	16	4	2	172
RU2	27	79	21	36	5	1	3	172
RU3	35	77	21	22	7	6	4	172
NW1	25	71	23	36	10	4	3	172
NW2	26	54	33	48	9	1	1	172
NW3	19	77	32	28	14	1	1	172
SAJ1	31	92	24	17	5	2	1	172
SAJ2	37	86	21	17	8	2	1	172
SAJ3	33	81	31	13	7	5	2	172
SAJ4	28	82	27	24	4	3	4	172
SKD1	29	82	19	32	7	0	3	172
SKD2	32	86	11	33	7	1	2	172
SKD3	48	88	16	15	3	1	1	172
SKD4	18	74	31	38	8	2	1	172
SKD5	37	85	26	20	2	1	1	172
FMF1	33	84	31	11	8	2	3	172
FMF2	32	79	34	13	12	2	0	172
FMF3	46	63	21	30	9	1	2	172
FMF4	79	59	17	7	5	1	4	172
TBG1	50	72	25	13	6	5	1	172
TBG2	47	82	28	8	3	2	2	172
TBG3	54	63	27	17	3	6	2	172
TBG4	52	73	31	12	1	2	1	172
TBG5	53	68	19	22	6	2	2	172
Fj	900	1,820	597	542	165	57	47	4,128
1/2 fj	450	910	298.5	271	82.5	28.5	23.5	
Fj	450	1,810	3,018.5	3,588	3,941.5	4,052.5	4,104.5	
Rj	0.109	0.438	0.731	0.869	0.955	0.982	0.994	

Note: RU – resource utilisation, NW – networking, SAJ – social awareness and justice, SKD – skill development, FMF – funding and microfinance-based and TBG – team building and group-dynamics.

The data on specific dimensions of capacity building is chosen as the reference dataset. The frequencies of the responses are shown in Table 3. The last row of reference dataset on Table 3 shows the RIDITs of the reference dataset for each item category. From the RIDIT analysis, as shown in Table 3, it was evident that among all the measurement items of capacity building, item 'FMF4', i.e., related to the dimension of funding and the microfinance-based program has the highest priority. Further, the second rank/preference was the item 'SKD3', which relates to the skill development dimension. Also, the third priority item concerns team-building and group dynamics (TBG4). The RIDIT results indicate the survey respondents consider that capital funds and microfinance loans are crucial for capacity building in the context of women belonging to rural and underprivileged areas of India. Additionally, the respondents hold a view that skill-based training measures enhance their overall competencies and empower them to start their businesses. Further, the programs for developing a conducive team-based environment assist to understand the essence of communities and social groups, which can enable them to develop interpersonal skills. Table 4 shows the rankings of the capacity building dimensions and their respective items.

Table 4 RIDITs for the comparison datasets and ranking the capacity building items

Variables	*7*	*6*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	ρ_i	*Priority rank*
RU1	.018	.161	.119	.152	.089	.023	.012	.573	21
RU2	.017	.201	.089	.182	.028	.006	.017	.541	19
RU3	.022	.196	.089	.111	.039	.034	.023	.515	16
NW1	.016	.181	.098	.182	.056	.023	.017	.572	20
NW2	.016	.138	.140	.243	.050	.006	.006	.598	24
NW3	.012	.196	.136	.141	.078	.006	.006	.575	22
SAJ1	.020	.235	.102	.086	.028	.011	.006	.487	10
SAJ2	.023	.219	.089	.086	.044	.011	.006	.479	9
SAJ3	.021	.206	.132	.066	.039	.029	.012	.504	13
SAJ4	.018	.209	.115	.121	.022	.017	.023	.525	17
SKD1	.018	.209	.081	.162	.039	.000	.017	.526	18
SKD2	.020	.219	.047	.167	.039	.006	.012	.509	14
SKD3	.030	.224	.068	.076	.017	.006	.006	.427	*2*
SKD4	.011	.189	.132	.192	.044	.011	.006	.585	23
SKD5	.023	.217	.111	.101	.011	.006	.006	.474	8
FMF1	.021	.214	.132	.056	.044	.011	.017	.496	11
FMF2	.020	.201	.145	.066	.067	.011	.000	.510	15
FMF3	.029	.161	.089	.152	.050	.006	.012	.498	12
FMF4	.050	.150	.072	.035	.028	.006	.023	.365	*1*
TBG1	.032	.184	.106	.066	.033	.029	.006	.455	5
TBG2	.030	.209	.119	.040	.017	.011	.012	.438	4
TBG3	.034	.161	.115	.086	.017	.034	.012	.458	7
TBG4	.033	.186	.132	.061	.006	.011	.006	.434	*3*
TBG5	.034	.173	.081	.111	.033	.011	.012	.455	6

The Kruskal-Wallis (W) for the items of capacity building is calculated in the following manner:

$$12\times\{172\times(0.573-0.5)^2+172(0.541-0.5)^2+172\times(0.515-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.572-0.5)^2+172\times(0.572-0.5)^2+172\times(0.598-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.575-0.5)^2+172\times(0.487-0.5)^2+172\times(0.479-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.504-0.5)^2+172\times(0.525-0.5)^2+172\times(0.525-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.509-0.5)^2+172\times(0.427-0.5)^2+172\times(0.585-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.474-0.5)^2+172\times(0.496-0.5)^2+172\times(0.510-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.498-0.5)^2+172\times(0.365-0.5)^2+172\times(0.455-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.438-0.5)^2+172\times(0.458-0.5)^2+172\times(0.434-0.5)^2$$
$$+172\times(0.455-0.5)^2=\mathbf{155.802}$$

Since the Kruskal-Wallis W (155.802) is significantly greater than $\chi^2(24-1)=35.172$, it can be inferred that the opinions regarding the scale items among the respondents are statistically different somehow.

5 Discussion and conclusions

The initiatives and programs aimed at capacity building and the creation of the enabling environment makes a vital impact towards sustainable livelihood of the rural population. These initiatives impart essential skills and competencies using various training measures among the underprivileged and unemployed workforce (Eger et al., 2018; Ferrero et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, optimum utilisation of local resources, upgradation of skills, participation and networking, accessibility of microfinance loans, and other training measures may generate formal employment opportunities for the local communities. Accordingly, the process for effective implementation of such strategies may minimise the skill-gap; thereby, empowering the rural women both economically and socially. Against this backdrop, the present study carried out an opinion survey in the selected rural locations of India. To effectively meet the research objectives, this study conducted an extensive literature review and empirical testing for prioritising and benchmarking the capacity building dimensions. The findings of RIDIT analysis provide an in-depth understanding regarding the important dimensions based on the priority ranks. According to the prioritisation process, funding and microfinance-based programs (FMF), skill development initiatives (SKD), and team-building and group-dynamic activities (TBG) are the most crucial facets in the capacity building process. Also, the findings exhibit statistical differences among the respondent perceptions about the respective dimensions.

There are specific implications derived from the study. At the theoretical level, the study findings contribute to the limited literature on capacity building, especially in emerging economies. The identification of the capacity building dimensions and their respective priority-levels extend the conceptual knowledge of the domain. These findings can be treated as a baseline model for exploring the prevailing skill-based issues in the rural and economically-deprived regions. In addition, this study provides newer insights

to the policymakers, govt. agencies, think-tanks, NGOs, and other related stakeholders to formulate customised training strategies to enhance equity, strengthen social inclusion, and promote transparency, thereby, empowering women in the rural areas. Further, the study offers assistance to the govt. authorities to benchmark the quality standards and best practices to enable economic sustainability using capacity building mechanism in the backward areas.

Unlike all research studies, the present study also bears some limitations. First, the data collection process involved women in the selected rural locations of India, which limits the generalisability of the empirical results. Therefore, the findings require careful interpretation to draw meaningful conclusions. Future research may consider extending the locations to draw relevant samples. Second, the use of cross-sectional data might limit the minute understanding of the complexities associated with capacity building, especially in rural settings. Additional studies may use longitudinal measures for gathering more insights into this domain. Third, RIDIT analysis is an effective method for ranking the indicators based on the importance assigned by the respondents; however, it prevents any definitive conclusions from being drawn about the relationships among the dimensions. The authors suggest implementing qualitative techniques such as focus group discussions, interviews, etc., to yield newer insights on benchmarking capacity-building.

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