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Performance Evaluation of DDU-GKY Implementation in Haryana: From Enrollment Targets to Sustained Employment

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Abstract

Public skill development programmes play a central role in transforming demographic potential into productive employment. The Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) represents a flagship initiative of the Government of India aimed at equipping rural youth with market-relevant skills and sustainable livelihood opportunities. This study evaluates the implementation performance of DDU-GKY in Haryana by examining institutional outcomes across the full programme chain, including enrollment, certification, placement, and post-placement employment retention. Using administrative data from 81 Project Implementing Agencies and applying descriptive statistical analysis, the study identifies patterns of institutional performance and points of operational vulnerability. The findings reveal exceptionally strong enrollment achievement and high certification outcomes, confirming effective mobilization and training delivery mechanisms. Placement results, while broadly positive, display significant variation across implementing agencies, indicating uneven employer linkage capacity. Employment retention outcomes are notably strong, suggesting that once placement is achieved, sustainable employment is largely attainable. The study provides a replicable performance evaluation framework for large-scale public skill development programmes and offers evidence-based insights for strengthening employer engagement, institutional accountability, and post-placement support systems to enhance long-term livelihood outcomes.

Keywords: DDU-GKY; Skill Development; Programme Evaluation; Employment Placement; Employment Retention; Rural Youth; Public Policy; Institutional Performance

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INTRODUCTION

India stands at a pivotal demographic juncture, possessing one of the largest youth populations in the world. According to Census 2011, nearly 55 million potential workers fall within the 15–35 age group in rural India, presenting both an immense opportunity and a pressing developmental challenge(Ahuja, 2023). Transforming this demographic surplus into a productive workforce has therefore become central to national policy discourse. Recognizing this, the Government of India launched multiple skill development initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between unemployment and employability (Parida & Madheswaran, 2023). Among these, the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) , introduced in 2014 under the Ministry of Rural Development, emerged as a flagship intervention designed to equip rural youth from poor households with market-relevant skills and sustainable livelihood opportunities (DDUGKY, 2026).

DDU-GKY represents a strategic policy response to inclusive growth, emphasizing demand-driven training, placement-linked skill development, and structured post-placement support. Beyond merely training rural youth, the program aspires to ensure long-term employment retention and career progression. This ambition aligns closely with the national vision of "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India), which underscores human capital development, equitable economic participation, and self-reliance as foundations for India's transformation into a global economic leader by 2047. Within this broader developmental framework, DDU-GKY is positioned not simply as a welfare initiative, but as an instrument for converting demographic potential into productive national capital.

However, large-scale public skill development programs often face implementation complexities. While enrollment targets and training outputs may be achieved, translating training into stable and sustained employment remains a persistent challenge. Empirical evidence across Indian states has pointed to gaps between training completion, job placement, and long-term retention. These discrepancies highlight the need for systematic, data-driven evaluations that move beyond aggregate success claims and examine actual performance outcomes at the institutional level. In this regard, Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) play a crucial role, as their operational efficiency determines enrollment success, certification quality, placement outcomes, and post-placement sustainability.

Haryana provides a particularly relevant context for such an assessment. As one of India's most industrialized states with a dynamic rural economy, Haryana embodies both strong demand for skilled labour and significant opportunities for rural youth integration into the formal workforce. Evaluating DDU-GKY implementation in Haryana therefore offers valuable insights into how national skill development policies translate into real employment outcomes at the ground level (Rani et al., 2025)

Despite the program's policy importance, existing research on DDU-GKY has largely focused on descriptive reviews or short-term training outcomes. Limited empirical attention has been given to institutional performance variations across PIAs, particularly concerning the full trajectory from enrollment to sustained employment. This study addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive performance evaluation of DDU-GKY in Haryana across four critical dimensions: enrollment efficiency, certification outcomes, placement effectiveness, and three-month employment retention.

Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** To what extent did PIAs in Haryana achieve enrollment targets under the first phase of DDU-GKY?
- **RQ2:** What proportion of enrolled trainees successfully achieved certification?

- **RQ3:** How effective were PIAs in securing employment placements for trained and certified youth?
- **RQ4:** What proportion of placed candidates remained in employment three months after placement?

By addressing these questions, this research contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it situates DDU-GKY evaluation within the human capital theory and capability approach, viewing skill development as an investment in productivity and an expansion of livelihood freedoms. Practically, it offers evidence-based insights for policymakers and program administrators to identify best practices, diagnose institutional bottlenecks, and strengthen program design for improved employment sustainability. Ultimately, the study aims to move beyond headline performance statistics and present a nuanced, outcome-oriented evaluation of DDU-GKY implementation in Haryana, contributing to the broader national goal of building a skilled, resilient, and inclusive workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Skill Development as a Pathway to Demographic Dividend

India's pursuit of a demographic dividend has placed youth skill development at the center of national development strategy. Large-scale public investment in vocational education is viewed as essential for improving productivity and employability among young populations.(Agrawal et al., 2020) provide empirical evidence that skill development initiatives in India contribute positively to youth performance outcomes and earning potential, reinforcing the human capital argument that training enhances economic participation. Rural youth form the primary target group of these interventions due to their limited access to formal employment opportunities. The Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) was introduced as a demand-driven, placement-linked program specifically aimed at transforming rural youth into a skilled workforce capable of achieving sustainable livelihoods (Verma & Chauhan, 2021). This design reflects a shift from welfare-based support to outcome-oriented human capital formation. However, training participation alone does not ensure sustainable employment. (Lindsay et al., 2012) found that although employment-training programs successfully develop technical and social skills, participants often face difficulties securing or sustaining post-training employment. This underscores the importance of evaluating skill programs beyond training completion and into employment continuity a key concern addressed in the present study.

Institutional Performance in Government Skill Development Programs

The effectiveness of public skill development schemes depends heavily on institutional execution. Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) act as the operational backbone of DDU-GKY, responsible for mobilization, training delivery, certification, placement, and post-placement tracking. Variations in PIA capacity can therefore lead to uneven program outcomes. (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019), evaluating DDU-GKY in rural Bihar, found that the program initially raised employment rates among trained youth, but the positive effects diminished within months due to job mismatches and workplace discrimination. Their findings highlight that institutional success cannot be measured by placement rates alone, but must also consider job sustainability.

(Srivastava et al., 2025) further demonstrated that PIA-level factors such as training quality, industry linkage, and participant characteristics significantly influence employability outcomes. Their mixed-methods study in Gujarat confirmed that strong institutional mechanisms are crucial for translating training into real employment opportunities. In the Haryana context, (Verma & Chauhan, 2021) reported

declining trainee interest and recruitment trends under DDU-GKY, signalling the need for continuous institutional performance monitoring. These studies collectively emphasize that PIA-level efficiency is a decisive determinant of DDU-GKY's real-world success.

Certification, Placement, and Employment Retention in Vocational Training

Certification serves as a critical quality indicator of vocational training outcomes. However, high certification rates do not automatically translate into long-term employment.(Behera et al., 2025) observed that trainees often perceive vocational education as a secondary career pathway, which can influence post-training job commitment and retention. Similarly, (Kumari (2023)), examining PMKVY in Jharkhand, found that short-term skill training increased income and savings among participants, but long-term job stability remained uncertain without strong employer engagement. These findings align with concerns raised in DDU-GKY evaluations that placement achievements may not guarantee employment sustainability. (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019), also identified structural labor market constraints such as wage dissatisfaction and social barriers that undermine continued employment after initial placement. Together, these studies demonstrate that retention analysis is essential for measuring the genuine impact of vocational training schemes.

Research Gap: Need for Comprehensive PIA-Level Evaluation in Haryana

While existing literature has examined various aspects of DDU-GKY, most studies focus on training outcomes or participant perceptions rather than institutional performance across the full implementation chain. (Verma & Chauhan, 2021) provided early evidence on DDU-GKY functioning in Haryana but did not extend analysis to certification, placement, and retention simultaneously. Moreover, comparative institutional performance assessments across PIAs remain limited in Indian skill development literature. This gap restricts policymakers' ability to identify best-performing agencies, diagnose underperforming units, and replicate successful operational strategies. The present study addresses this limitation by systematically evaluating PIAs in Haryana across four interconnected performance dimensions: enrollment achievement, certification success, placement effectiveness, and three-month employment retention.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The reviewed literature confirms that skill development programs must be assessed through both human capital theory which views training as productivity-enhancing investment and the capability approach, which emphasizes expansion of livelihood opportunities. DDU-GKY embodies both perspectives, seeking not only to train rural youth but to enable sustainable employment pathways.

From a practical standpoint, identifying variations in PIA performance provides evidence-based direction for strengthening program governance, improving employer linkage strategies, and reinforcing post-placement support systems. By integrating enrollment, certification, placement, and retention analysis within a single evaluation framework, this study contributes a comprehensive performance assessment model for DDU-GKY implementation in Haryana and offers replicable insights for similar skill development initiatives across India.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

Guided by outcome-oriented program evaluation frameworks in skill development research (Srivastava et al., 2025; Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019), this study adopts a quantitative descriptive and analytical research

design to assess the implementation performance of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) in Haryana. The design is structured to move beyond policy-level descriptions and examine real operational outcomes at the institutional level. Specifically, the study evaluates the performance of Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) across four interconnected dimensions: enrollment achievement, certification outcomes, placement effectiveness, and post-placement employment retention.

This multi-dimensional evaluation approach is consistent with recommendations in vocational training impact literature, which emphasize that training success must be measured not only through participation and completion but also through employment sustainability (Lindsay et al., 2012; Kumari, 2023). The study therefore adopts an output–outcome continuum model, linking training inputs to short-term and medium-term labor market results.

Data Source and Data Collection

The study is based on secondary administrative data obtained from official DDU-GKY programme records for Haryana during the first phase of implementation. This approach is consistent with established empirical assessments of large-scale government skill development schemes (Verma & Chauhan, 2021; Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019). Data were compiled at the Project Implementing Agency (PIA) level and drawn from programme monitoring records covering sanctioned training seat targets, actual trainee enrollment figures, numbers assessed and certified, numbers placed in employment, and numbers retained in employment three months after placement. A total of eighty-one PIAs operating in Haryana were included in the analysis. Aggregated trainee-level counts across these agencies were used to generate statewide performance indicators. Reliance on administrative programme data ensures objectivity, completeness, and consistency with government monitoring frameworks, thereby strengthening the reliability of the findings.

Variables and Performance Indicators

To comprehensively evaluate the performance of Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs), four core performance indicators were operationalized. The enrollment achievement rate was defined as the ratio of total enrolled trainees to total sanctioned seats for each PIA, serving as a measure of mobilization effectiveness. The certification rate was calculated as the proportion of trainees who successfully obtained certification out of the total enrolled trainees, reflecting training completion efficiency. The placement rate was measured as the proportion of trained and certified candidates placed in employment, indicating the effectiveness of the transition from training to the labour market. Finally, the employment retention rate was determined as the proportion of placed candidates who remained in employment three months after placement, representing the sustainability of livelihood outcomes. These indicators align with national DDU-GKY performance benchmarks and evaluation metrics commonly adopted in vocational and skill development programme assessments (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019; Behera et al., 2024; Srivastava et al., 2025).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical methods, which are widely applied in public programme performance evaluation (Verma & Chauhan, 2021). The analytical process involved calculating percentage achievement rates for each performance indicator, including enrollment, certification, placement, and employment retention. Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) were then classified into distinct performance categories, such as below 50 percent, 50–75 percent, 75–100 percent, and above 100 percent, in order to identify institutional variations in programme implementation. Aggregated statewide performance measures were computed to assess overall programme effectiveness,

while cross-tabulation of PIAs across performance tiers was undertaken to distinguish best-performing and underperforming agencies. Tables and charts were subsequently generated to visually represent the distribution of PIAs across different levels of performance for enrollment, certification, placement, and retention. This structured categorization and visualization approach follows established institutional performance assessment methods applied in DDU-GKY and other vocational programme evaluations (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019; Srivastava et al., 2025).

Analytical Framework

The analysis was conducted sequentially across four stages corresponding to the implementation chain of DDU-GKY. First, enrollment performance analysis was undertaken to assess the success of Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) in mobilizing rural youth against sanctioned seat targets. This was followed by certification performance analysis, which evaluated training completion and assessment effectiveness. The third stage involved placement performance analysis to measure the transition from training to employment. Finally, retention performance analysis examined the sustainability of employment three months after placement. This sequential analytical framework reflects the logical progression of DDU-GKY implementation and enables the identification of drop-off points between training participation, employment placement, and sustained employment. Such an approach is consistent with evaluation frameworks recommended in skill development and vocational training literature (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019; Lindsay et al., 2012).

Validation and Reliability

Reliability of findings was ensured through the use of official program monitoring data recorded under standardized government reporting formats. Since all PIAs are mandated to submit periodic verified progress reports to the Ministry of Rural Development, data consistency across agencies is institutionally maintained. Additionally, internal consistency checks were conducted to confirm alignment between enrollment, certification, placement, and retention counts. This method of administrative data verification has been recognized as a reliable approach in large-scale program evaluation studies (Verma & Chauhan, 2021; Srivastava et al., 2025).

Ethical Considerations

The study uses only aggregated secondary data drawn from official government program records. No personal identifiable information of trainees was accessed or disclosed. Analysis was conducted at the institutional (PIA) level, ensuring confidentiality of individual participants.

Use of publicly available and administratively approved data aligns with ethical standards for social science research on government programs (Behera et al., 2024). The study therefore complies fully with ethical norms of data privacy and responsible research practice.

RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings of the performance evaluation of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) in Haryana. The results are structured to reflect the sequential implementation chain of the programme, beginning with enrollment achievement, followed by certification outcomes, placement effectiveness, and employment retention. This ordering provides a comprehensive view of how trainees progress from program entry to sustained employment, thereby directly addressing the research questions guiding this study.

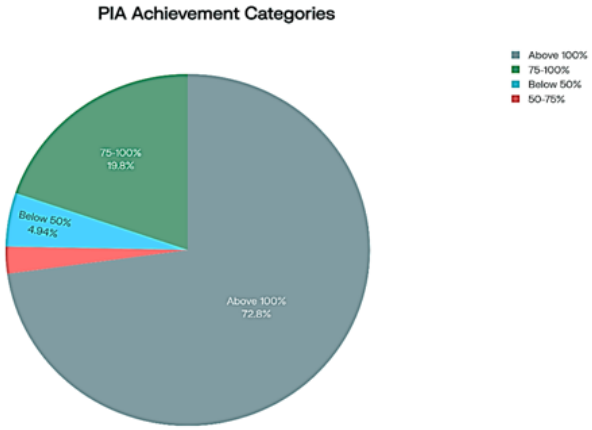


Figure 1: Pie chart of the data.

Enrollment Performance: Mobilization of Rural Youth

The first stage of analysis examined the extent to which Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) achieved enrollment targets against the number of sanctioned training seats. The findings demonstrate exceptionally strong mobilization performance across Haryana. Overall enrollment exceeded sanctioned capacity, reaching 103 percent of the total target. A dominant share of PIAs, representing nearly three-quarters of all implementing agencies, surpassed their enrollment targets, while most of the remaining agencies achieved close to full target fulfilment. Only a small minority of PIAs recorded enrollment below seventy-five percent of their assigned targets, indicating that underperformance was limited to isolated cases rather than reflecting a systemic issue.

This outcome suggests that DDU-GKY has successfully generated awareness and demand for skill training among rural youth in Haryana. The high enrollment achievement indicates effective community outreach strategies, strong local engagement mechanisms, and a positive perception of the programme's potential for improving livelihood opportunities. The enrollment findings thus confirm that PIAs in Haryana have been highly effective in fulfilling the programme's primary objective of mobilizing rural youth into structured skill development pathways.

Certification Performance: Training Completion Outcomes

The second dimension of analysis assessed training completion and certification performance across PIAs. The results reveal a consistently high level of training effectiveness throughout the state. Out of the total candidates enrolled, more than ninety-one percent successfully completed training and achieved certification, leaving a relatively small proportion of non-completers. Most PIAs recorded certification rates above eighty percent, and a substantial number achieved certification rates exceeding ninety percent. A small group of agencies recorded lower certification performance, but these represent a limited share of overall programme implementation.

The consistently high certification outcomes demonstrate that once trainees enter the programme, the majority are supported effectively through course completion and assessment. This reflects well-structured training delivery, adequate learner support systems, and functional assessment mechanisms within most PIAs. The certification results therefore indicate that DDU-GKY in Haryana has been successful in transforming enrollment participation into tangible skill acquisition and verified competence.

Table 1

Achievement Category	Number of PIAs	% of Total PIAs	Total Sanctioned Seats	Total Enrolled	Avg Achievement Rate
Below 50%	4	4.94%	2,820	1,063	37.70%
50-75%	2	2.47%	1,414	1,002	70.86%
75-100%	16	19.75%	12,168	11,290	92.78%
Above 100%	59	72.84%	42,687	47,538	111.36%

Source: Author Compilation.

Table 2: Representing the overall data of trainees enrolled and certified

Metric	Value
Total PIAs	81
Total Enrolled Candidates	60,893
Total Trained/Certified Candidates	55,508
Overall Certification Rate	91.16%
Dropout/Non-Completion	5,385 candidates (8.84%)

Source: Author Compilation.

Placement Performance: Transition from Training to Employment

The third stage of analysis examined the transition from certified training outcomes to employment placement. The findings indicate that approximately two-thirds of certified trainees were successfully placed in employment, yielding a statewide placement rate slightly below the national benchmark prescribed for DDU-GKY. While this reflects a generally positive placement outcome, the analysis also reveals significant variation in placement performance across PIAs. Several agencies demonstrated excellent placement capacity, placing nearly all their certified trainees, whereas others achieved moderate success. However, a small number of PIAs recorded very low or even zero placement outcomes.

This variation suggests that while the training and certification components of the programme function effectively across most agencies, the capacity to secure employer partnerships and job opportunities differs substantially between PIAs. Factors such as industry linkages, geographic connectivity, sectoral training choices, and employer engagement strategies likely influence this divergence. The placement findings therefore identify the training-to-employment transition as the principal point in the programme chain where performance inconsistencies emerge.

Employment Retention Performance: Sustainability of Livelihood Outcomes

The final dimension of analysis evaluated the sustainability of employment by measuring the proportion of placed candidates who remained in employment three months after placement. The results demonstrate strong overall retention outcomes, with more than eighty-four percent of placed trainees continuing in their jobs beyond the initial adjustment period. Most PIAs achieved good to excellent retention rates, and a substantial proportion recorded retention levels exceeding ninety percent. However, a limited number of agencies showed comparatively weak retention outcomes, indicating that some placed candidates exited employment early.

The high overall retention rate suggests that when employment placements are achieved, job matching, workplace adaptation, and post-placement support mechanisms are generally effective. This implies that the quality of employment secured under DDU-GKY in Haryana is sufficiently stable for most

trainees. Nevertheless, the presence of low-retention PIAs signals the need for closer monitoring of job conditions, wage suitability, and post-placement follow-up practices in specific institutional contexts.

Table 3: Representing the distribution of PIAs by Certification Rate

Certification Category	Number of PIAs	% of Total PIAs	Enrolled	Trained	Avg. Cert. Rate
Below 50%	5	6.17%	1,234	452	36.63%
51-60%	2	2.47%	453	250	55.19%
61-70%	6	7.41%	3,570	2,426	67.96%
71-80%	7	8.64%	2,426	1,873	77.21%
81-90%	27	33.33%	16,101	13,942	86.59%
91-100%	34	41.98%	37,109	36,565	98.53%
Total	**81**	**100%**	**60,893**	**55,508**	**91.16%**

Source: Author Compilation.

Table 4: Summary of the Placement Data.

Metric	Value	Percentage
Total Trained	55,508	
Total Appointed/Placed	37,266	67.14%

Source: Author Compilation.

Synthesis of Findings: The Programme Performance Continuum

Bringing together the four analytical stages reveals a clear implementation continuum. Enrollment performance is exceptionally strong, demonstrating the programme's success in mobilizing rural youth. Certification outcomes remain consistently high, confirming effective training delivery. Placement results, while generally positive, reveal the greatest variation across PIAs and represent the principal operational challenge. Once placement is secured, employment retention outcomes are strong, indicating that most trainees sustain their jobs. This pattern suggests that the critical performance gap lies not in training participation or completion, but in the transition from training to employment. The findings therefore position employer linkage and placement facilitation as the key leverage points for further strengthening DDU-GKY implementation in Haryana.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide empirical insight into the operational realities of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) in Haryana. By evaluating the programme across the full implementation chain; enrollment, certification, placement and employment retention, the study reveals both areas of strong institutional performance and points of operational vulnerability. This discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing scholarship on vocational training and public skill development programmes, while outlining the theoretical and practical contributions of the research.

Thematic and Affective Duality Performance Continuum in Skill Development Implementation

The results demonstrate that DDU-GKY in Haryana exhibits a clear performance continuum. Enrollment outcomes are exceptionally strong, indicating that the programme has succeeded in mobilizing rural youth

Table 5: Distribution of PIAs by placement rate.

Placement Rate	PIAs	% of Total	Trained	Appointed	Average Rate
(No Placements)	6	7.41%	759	0	0.00%
1-25%	2	2.47%	623	132	21.19%
26-50%	11	13.58%	12,458	5,521	44.32%
51-75%	28	34.57%	17,817	11,824	66.36%
76-90%	21	25.93%	19,273	15,298	79.38%
91-100%	13	16.05%	4,578	4,491	98.10%

Source: Author Compilation.

Table 6: Percentage of Youth Retained in Employment After 3 Months.

Retention Rate Category	Number of PIAs	% of Total PIAs	Total Appointed	Total Retained (3 Months)	Average Retention Rate
0% (No Retention)	8	9.88%	207	0	0.00%
1-25%	4	4.94%	1,042	196	18.81%
26-50%	3	3.70%	790	373	47.22%
51-75%	21	25.93%	5,972	4,114	68.89%
76-90%	23	28.40%	8,526	6,795	79.70%
91-100%	22	27.16%	20,729	20,041	96.68%
Total	81		37266	35519	84.57%

Source: Author Compilation.

into structured skill training. This finding aligns with Verma and Chauhan (2021), who noted growing awareness of DDU-GKY in Haryana, and supports broader evidence that rural youth respond positively to government-supported training opportunities when outreach mechanisms are effective. Certification outcomes are similarly robust, with more than ninety percent of enrolled trainees completing training and achieving certification. This confirms that once trainees enter the programme, institutional mechanisms for training delivery, learner engagement, and assessment function effectively. These results reinforce the observations of Srivastava et al. (2025), who emphasized the role of training quality and institutional capacity in shaping employability outcomes in DDU-GKY implementations. However, the transition from certification to employment placement emerges as the principal performance bottleneck. Although the overall placement rate in Haryana approaches national benchmarks, the study reveals substantial variation across Project Implementing Agencies. This divergence mirrors findings by Chakravorty and Bedi (2019), who reported that placement achievements in DDU-GKY do not always translate into consistent employment outcomes due to differences in employer linkage capacity and labour market alignment.

The present findings therefore confirm that placement facilitation, rather than training delivery, remains the critical operational challenge in public skill development programmes. Once placement is achieved, employment retention outcomes in Haryana are notably strong. More than four-fifths of placed trainees remain in employment beyond three months, suggesting that job matching and post-placement support systems are generally effective. This contrasts with earlier concerns raised in vocational training literature regarding early job exits (Lindsay et al., 2012; Chakravorty & Bedi, 2019), and indicates that Haryana's DDU-GKY implementation has achieved comparatively stable post-placement outcomes. Nonetheless,

the presence of low-retention PIAs suggests that job quality and follow-up support require continued monitoring in specific institutional contexts.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to skill development literature in several ways. First, it extends existing research by offering a comprehensive institutional-level evaluation of DDU-GKY that simultaneously examines enrollment, certification, placement, and retention. While previous studies have typically focused on isolated dimensions such as training outcomes or participant perceptions, this research demonstrates the value of examining the entire implementation chain to identify where performance gains or losses occur. Second, the findings reinforce the relevance of human capital theory in explaining the effectiveness of DDU-GKY's training and certification components. High enrollment and certification rates indicate that investment in structured vocational training can successfully enhance skill acquisition among rural youth. At the same time, the results support the capability approach, as strong employment retention outcomes suggest that the programme expands real livelihood opportunities for participants rather than merely delivering short-term training outputs. Third, the study highlights the importance of institutional performance heterogeneity in public programme implementation. The observed variation across PIAs in placement and retention outcomes confirms that programme success is not solely determined by policy design but also by operational capacity, employer networks, and local labour market integration. This insight adds to existing scholarship emphasizing the role of intermediary institutions in translating training into employment (Srivastava et al., 2025).

Practical Implications

Beyond theory, the findings carry direct implications for policy and programme management. The exceptionally strong enrollment outcomes indicate that awareness-generation and mobilization strategies are functioning effectively and should be sustained. Similarly, high certification rates suggest that existing training and assessment frameworks are largely adequate.

However, the variation in placement performance signals the need for targeted strengthening of employer engagement mechanisms. Underperforming PIAs require structured capacity-building initiatives, enhanced industry partnerships, and closer performance monitoring. Best-performing PIAs, in contrast, provide operational models that can be replicated to improve placement efficiency across the programme.

The strong employment retention outcomes demonstrate that once job linkage is achieved, sustainable livelihoods are attainable. This underscores the value of continuing post-placement tracking and support services, while also highlighting the need to address localized retention failures through improved job-matching, wage alignment, and grievance redressal mechanisms. Overall, the findings suggest that future improvements in DDU-GKY implementation should focus less on mobilization and training delivery, and more on strengthening placement ecosystems and institutional accountability frameworks.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study set out to evaluate the performance of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) in Haryana across enrollment, certification, placement, and employment retention. Using administrative programme data from 81 Project Implementing Agencies, the study found that DDU-GKY has been highly successful in mobilizing rural youth into skill training and enabling the majority to complete certified courses. Placement outcomes, while broadly positive, display institutional

variation and represent the principal operational challenge. Once employment is secured, retention outcomes are strong, confirming that sustainable livelihood pathways are achievable for most participants. Taken together, these findings present a complete picture of DDU-GKY implementation in Haryana: a programme that performs strongly in mobilization and training delivery, faces moderate challenges in employment linkage, and demonstrates promising outcomes in sustaining post-placement employment.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Like all empirical studies, this research has limitations that provide avenues for future inquiry. The study relies on secondary administrative data, which, while reliable for institutional performance assessment, does not capture trainee-level perceptions, job satisfaction, or wage adequacy. Incorporating beneficiary surveys or qualitative interviews in future research would provide deeper insight into individual employment experiences. The study focuses on short-term employment retention measured at three months after placement. Future research could extend the analysis to six-month or one-year retention periods to better assess long-term livelihood sustainability. Another promising direction lies in comparative state-level evaluations. Examining DDU-GKY performance across multiple states would help identify how regional labour market conditions, institutional capacity, and industry structures influence programme outcomes.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that DDU-GKY in Haryana has made significant progress in advancing rural youth skill development and employment generation. By evaluating the full implementation chain from enrollment to sustained employment, the research identifies both institutional strengths and operational gaps. The findings emphasize that while training and certification systems are functioning effectively, placement facilitation remains the critical lever for further programme improvement. Ultimately, this study contributes to both academic understanding and policy practice by offering a replicable framework for evaluating large-scale public skill development programmes. Strengthening employer linkage mechanisms, enhancing institutional accountability, and sustaining post-placement support will be essential to ensuring that DDU-GKY evolves from a training initiative into a truly transformative instrument for rural youth empowerment.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data availability

We affirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the manuscript and/or supplementary materials. Any additional data or materials required for verifying the study's findings can be made available upon reasonable request.

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