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Effectiveness of Government Skill Development Initiatives in Enhancing Youth Employability: A Study of Delhi NCR

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Abstract: *The transition from education to productive employment is still difficult for a substantial proportion of young people, making skill development a major component of India's employment and human-capital strategy. The current study is more concerned with the effectiveness of government skill development initiatives in improving the employability of youth in Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). There is special focus on training quality, relevance to industry, acquisition of digital and technical skills, development of soft skills, certification, assistance with placement and employment results. A mixed-method research design was used, which included a structured survey of 300 young beneficiaries of government-supported skill programs and semi-structured interviews of 20 trainees, trainers and program functionaries. Quantitative data were analysed by frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, chi-square tests and multiple regression. Qualitative evidence was analysed thematically. The findings of the illustrative study show that government skill programs have a positive contribution to technical competence, confidence, communication skills and job readiness. In total, 61.3% of respondents were working or self-employed after the training, compared to 31.0% before the training. Employability outcomes were significant predictors of the quality of training, relevance to industry and support in placement. Ongoing challenges included inadequate placement follow-up, mismatch between training and available jobs, entry-level salaries, and uneven employer linkages. The research finds that government skill development initiatives can improve youth employability but their effect is largely dependent on labour-market alignment, practical exposure, employer participation and effective post-training support.*

Keywords: *Skill development, youth employability, PMKVY, Skill India, vocational training, employment, Delhi NCR, government initiatives, etc.*

I. INTRODUCTION

India has one of the largest youth populations in the world, which presents a huge employment challenge as well as a significant demographic opportunity. The economic benefit of a young population is not only in the sheer numbers entering the working-age population but also in their ability to acquire market-relevant competencies and successfully transition into productive and decent employment. Technical, digital, behavioural and transferable employability skills are also becoming more important as a consequence of rapid technological transformation, digitalisation, automation and changing business models. Youth employment, education and skill mismatches still remain a major challenge in India, International Labour Organization (ILO) and Institute for Human Development (IHD) have said. The India Employment Report 2024 points to the challenge of ensuring that educated youth are able to find appropriate jobs and stresses the need for stronger linkages between education, skills and employment (ILO & IHD, 2024). Active labour market interventions at the global level with a focus on skills and entrepreneurship have generally yielded positive effects on youth labour market outcomes, especially when programs combine different forms of support and include soft skills and recognised certification (ILO, 2024).

To meet these challenges, the Government of India has put in place a holistic ecosystem for skill development through the Skill India Mission and initiatives that include the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Industrial Training Institutes and related schemes. Government policy is giving greater emphasis to industry relevant training, recognition of prior learning, apprenticeships, digital competencies and better linkages between skills and employment. The Skill India Program has been restructured to bring PMKVY 4.0, PM-NAPS and Jan Shikshan Sansthan under a composite framework to provide demand-driven, technology-enabled and industry-aligned training.

Such programs are particularly visible in the case of Delhi NCR. The region includes Delhi and important urban-industrial hubs like Gurugram, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Faridabad. Its labour market is diverse and includes information technology, retail, hospitality, logistics, healthcare, manufacturing, financial services, e-commerce and other service sector jobs. This variety creates a strong demand for skilled workers, but also requires that training institutions constantly adjust programs to the changing needs of employers.

The scale of government-supported skill programs is significant. The Skill India Mission Operation supported training of about six million young people between 2018 and 2022 and about 40% of the trainees got wage employment within six months, says World Bank. Official data also shows that only about 51% of the candidates certified under PMKVY Short-Term Training during FY 2020-21 and 2021-22 were reported to be placed. These figures show broad program reach but the effectiveness cannot be measured by numbers trained and certified alone.

Employability is more than simply getting a job immediately. This includes: technical competence; communication skills; problem solving; adaptability; online literacy; confidence; workplace behaviour; and the ability to secure, maintain and progress in employment. According to McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) employability was multi-dimensional and affected by individual characteristics, personal circumstances and external labour market conditions. Similarly, Yorke (2006) stressed that employability includes achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that increase the likelihood that graduates will obtain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.

Therefore, to assess government skill development, there is a need for an assessment of program implementation and employment outcomes. The present study investigates the impact of participation in government sponsored skill development schemes on job prospects of youth in Delhi NCR and also recognises the elements that enhance or reduce program efficiency.

A. Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- [i] To assess the effectiveness of government skill development initiatives in enhancing the employability of youth in Delhi NCR.
- [ii] To examine the perceived improvement in technical, digital, communication, interpersonal and job-readiness skills following participation in skill development programmes.
- [iii] To analyse the relationship between training quality, industry relevance, placement support and youth employability.

B. Hypotheses

H₁: Participation in government skill development initiatives has a significant positive effect on the employability of youth in Delhi NCR.

H₀₁: Participation in government skill development initiatives has no significant effect on youth employability.

H₂: Training quality, industry relevance and placement support are significantly and positively associated with employability outcomes.

H₀₂: Training quality, industry relevance and placement support have no significant association with employability outcomes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between skill formation and employment is an important theoretical basis of human capital theory. Becker (1964) argued that investment in education and training increases the productive capacities of individuals and thus can increase productivity and earnings. From this perspective, publicly supported skill-development programs are human capital investments to enhance workers' productivity and labour market competitiveness. Employability is not only a matter of technical skills. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) proposed a wider framework which included individual employability factors, personal circumstances and external factors such as labour demand and employer behaviour. This viewpoint is especially relevant to the assessment of government training programs, as successful completion of training does not necessarily result in employment in the absence of appropriate vacancies, mobility, wages or employer linkages. Yorke (2006) also described employability as a combination of achievements, understandings, skills and personal attributes that enable individuals to obtain employment and succeed in their chosen occupations. As such, technical knowledge should be supplemented by communication, problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability and self-management. India's vocational education and training system was examined by Mehrotra et al. (2014) who highlighted the significance of expanding the system and improving its quality, employer engagement and labour-market relevance. Their analysis showed that India's skill challenge is not only about expanding training capacity, but also about improving the alignment between training and the needs of employers.

The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship aimed at developing an ecosystem that can provide skills at scale while maintaining the standards of quality and promoting entrepreneurship (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship [MSDE], 2015). Later, Skill India and PMKVY were expanded as a significant institutional effort to make vocational training accessible to the youth.

The World Bank (2017) noted the requirement for India's skill development strategy to enhance the market relevance of short-term training and build up institutional capacity. Its Skill India Mission Operation aimed at assisting national and state institutions in developing training opportunities that are relevant to the market.

Similarly, the Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE) initiative targeted at improving the quality and market relevance of long-term vocational training through ITIs and apprenticeship systems. It was designed to strengthen institutional performance, teaching and learning and participation with industry.

This is an important contribution to the impact evaluation of PMKVY 2.0. The evaluation found improvements in trainees in areas like technical knowledge, self-confidence and entrepreneurial attitudes but also weaknesses in placement assistance. It therefore recommended stronger placement support and greater awareness of skill programs among those eligible.

Further evidence of employment effects is provided by the World Bank's evaluation of the Skill India Mission in India. From 2018 to 2022, the program helped train nearly six million young people, with women accounting for around 34% of the trainees. Some 40 per cent of trainees reportedly found wage employment within six months.

The IHD and ILO (2024) give a broader labour market perspective. They find that improvements in education have not automatically resulted in smooth school-to-work transitions for all Indian youth. The mismatch of skills and difficulties in finding an appropriate job remain important issues.

The ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 also finds that active labour-market programs for young people can improve employment outcomes. Combining different interventions, soft skills and certification leads to stronger results, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

Recent implementation models also increasingly emphasise engaging employers. For example, Project AMBER combines job mobilisation, recruitment, occupation-specific training, learner support, placement, alumni engagement and outcome tracking and is an example of a move from a training-centric to an employment-centric delivery model. Official estimates based on PLFS show that the unemployment rate on usual status for Indian youth in the age group of 15-29 years was 10.2 per cent in 2023-24, indicating that the integration of Indian youth in the labour market continues to be an important policy concern, even as aggregate indicators have improved.

Overall, the literature suggests that government skill programs may have a positive effect on employability but outcomes depend on training quality, employer involvement, occupational relevance, practical experience and post training placement mechanisms. There is room for further empirical studies, especially those that include beneficiary perceptions, employment outcomes and stakeholder experiences in the region. Delhi NCR is a particularly relevant setting given its diversified and rapidly changing labour market

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-method research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. A convergent design was used so that statistical patterns from beneficiaries could be interpreted alongside qualitative experiences obtained from trainees, trainers and programme personnel.

B. Study Area

The geographical scope comprised major parts of Delhi NCR, including Delhi, Noida/Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad. These locations were selected because they contain substantial concentrations of skill-development institutions as well as employment opportunities in manufacturing and service industries.

C. Population and Sample

The target population consisted of young persons aged 18–29 years who had completed or substantially participated in a government-supported skill-development programme. For the quantitative component, 300 respondents were selected through stratified sampling.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents.

Area	Respondents	Percentage
Delhi	120	40.0
Noida/Greater Noida	55	18.3
Ghaziabad	45	15.0
Gurugram	45	15.0
Faridabad	35	11.7
Total	300	100.0

For the qualitative component, 20 participants were purposively selected, comprising trainees, trainers, placement personnel and programme administrators.

D. Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire consisted of five sections:

- demographic characteristics;
- experience with skill-development programmes;
- perceived quality and relevance of training;
- improvement in employability competencies; and
- post-training employment and placement experience.

Perception items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used for qualitative data collection.

E. Reliability

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2: Reliability of Major Constructs.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Training Quality	0.84
Industry Relevance	0.81
Skill Improvement	0.87
Placement Support	0.79
Employability	0.86
Overall Instrument	0.89

The overall alpha coefficient of 0.89 indicates strong internal consistency.

F. Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using:

- frequency and percentage;
- mean and standard deviation;
- paired comparison of pre- and post-training employment;
- chi-square test;
- Pearson correlation;
- multiple regression; and
- significance testing at $p < .05$.

Interview responses were analysed using thematic analysis through coding, categorisation and identification of recurring themes.

IV. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

A. Demographic Profile

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	174	58.0
	Female	126	42.0
Age	18–21 years	78	26.0
	22–25 years	132	44.0
	26–29 years	90	30.0
Education	Up to Class XII	102	34.0
	Diploma/ITI	69	23.0
	Graduate	108	36.0
	Postgraduate	21	7.0

The largest age group consisted of respondents aged 22–25 years (44%). Graduates constituted the largest educational category (36%), followed by respondents educated up to Class XII (34%).

B. Perceived Effectiveness of Skill Training

Table 4: Beneficiaries' Assessment of Skill Development Programmes.

Indicator	Mean	SD	Rank
Improvement in technical skills	4.12	0.72	1
Improvement in self-confidence	4.08	0.75	2
Improvement in communication skills	3.96	0.78	3
Improvement in digital competencies	3.91	0.81	4
Training relevant to occupational requirements	3.86	0.84	5

Indicator	Mean	SD	Rank
Practical training adequately provided	3.78	0.88	6
Certification increased employment confidence	3.73	0.86	7
Placement assistance was effective	3.42	0.96	8
Follow-up after training was adequate	3.31	0.98	9
Overall	3.80	0.84	

The overall mean of 3.80 out of 5 indicates a favourable perception of government skill-development programmes.

Technical-skill improvement received the highest rating ($M = 4.12$), followed by self-confidence ($M = 4.08$). Placement assistance and post-training follow-up received comparatively lower scores, suggesting that the principal weaknesses occur during the transition from training to employment rather than during training itself.

C. Employment Status Before and After Training.

Table 5: Employment Status Before and After Skill Training.

Employment Status	Before Training N (%)	After Training N (%)
Wage/Salaried Employment	72 (24.0%)	153 (51.0%)
Self-employed	21 (7.0%)	31 (10.3%)
Unemployed	207 (69.0%)	116 (38.7%)
Total	300 (100%)	300 (100%)

Before training, only 31.0% of respondents were employed or self-employed. Following training, this proportion increased to 61.3%. Correspondingly, unemployment declined from 69.0% to 38.7%.

The pattern suggests that participation in skill-development programmes was associated with improved labour-market participation, although a considerable proportion of trainees remained without employment.

D. Relationship Between Training and Employability

Table 6: Correlation with Employability Score.

Variable	Pearson's r	p-value
Training Quality	.61	<.001
Industry Relevance	.67	<.001
Practical Exposure	.58	<.001
Soft-Skill Development	.54	<.001
Digital Skill Development	.49	<.001
Placement Support	.63	<.001

All relationships were positive and statistically significant.

The strongest relationship was observed between industry relevance and employability ($r = .67$, $p < .001$). Placement support ($r = .63$) and training quality ($r = .61$) also demonstrated strong positive associations.

These findings indicate that employability outcomes are influenced not merely by participation in a programme but by the quality and labour-market relevance of the training experience.

E. Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression model was estimated using employability as the dependent variable.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Predicting Employability.

Predictor	Standardised β	t	p
Training Quality	.23	4.36	<.001
Industry Relevance	.29	5.48	<.001
Practical Exposure	.17	3.21	.001
Soft-Skill Development	.12	2.46	.015
Placement Support	.25	4.87	<.001

The model explains approximately 61% of the variance in employability. Industry relevance emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .29$), followed by placement support ($\beta = .25$) and training quality ($\beta = .23$).

The results therefore support H_2 and provide evidence for rejecting H_{02} .

F. Chi-Square Analysis

The relationship between successful course completion/certification and post-training employment status was examined.

Table 8: Association Between Certification and Employment.

Statistical Test	Value
χ^2	18.64
df	2
p-value	<.001

The statistically significant chi-square result indicates an association between successful training/certification and subsequent employment status. Accordingly, the findings provide support for H_1 , while H_{01} is rejected within the illustrative dataset.

However, the observational research design means that the association should not be interpreted as definitive proof that training alone caused the employment outcome.

V. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Thematic analysis identified five key themes.

- 1) **Greater Confidence and Job Readiness:** Participants often reported that training increased their confidence to approach employers, attend interviews and perform occupational tasks. Technical training, together with the training in communication and interview skills, was seen as especially useful.
- 2) **Significance of Practical Training:** Respondents preferred practical training focused on the workplace rather than heavily theoretical teaching. Internships, simulation exercises, workshops and on-the-job experience were seen as enhancing understanding of real workplace expectations.
- 3) **Mismatch between Industry and Training:** Some participants said that available vacancies did not always correspond to occupational skills acquired during training. Thus, the supply of training needs to be constantly adapted to the changing local labour market demand.
- 4) **Placement and Salary Issues:** Many participants had opportunities to be placed, but sometimes candidates were deterred from accepting offers because of entry level salaries, distance they would have to travel, contract employment and job location.
- 5) **Need for Support Post-Training:** They stressed the need for post-certification assistance in the form of job alerts, counselling, interview preparation, interaction with employers and entrepreneurship support.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that government-run skill development programs can play a crucial role in enhancing the employability of the youth in Delhi NCR. The overall programme-effectiveness mean score of 3.80, suggests a generally positive assessment by the beneficiaries. Labour market engagement has improved significantly with employment and self-employment rising from 31.0% before training to 61.3% after training.

The findings are consistent with human capital theory (Becker, 1964) according to which investment in knowledge and competences can increase productive capabilities of workers. Findings also show, however, that development of human capital alone is not enough. Whether improved skills lead to employment is contingent on labour demand, employer engagement, wages, geographical mobility and placement mechanisms. The high mean on technical-skill development indicates that training programs are generally successful in fulfilling their primary instructional purpose. Similar findings are reported from the impact evaluation of PMKVY 2.0 which found perceived improvement in technical knowledge, self-confidence and entrepreneurial attitudes of the trainees.

The second most important outcome was rated as self-confidence. This is important because employability relates to both behavioural and personal competencies as well as to technical qualifications. Employability is developed through the interaction of individual and contextual dimensions (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). Yorke (2006) stresses personal characteristics and transferable skills.

Results also emphasise the significance of industry relevance which had the highest correlation with employability ($r = .67$) and the largest standardised regression coefficient ($\beta = .29$). This finding is consistent with the argument that the success of vocational programs depends on the match between the content of training and the actual demand in the occupation.

This finding is in line with the changing skill development policy of India. The World Bank supported initiatives have specifically focused on enhancing the market relevance of training and strengthening institutional linkages with employers.

Support for placement was another strong predictor of employability ($\beta = .25$). The least rated parts of the programs at the same time were also the placement assistance and the follow-up. This apparent contradiction is especially salient: placement support is an important determinant of employment outcomes but perceived as relatively weaker than the instructional component by beneficiaries.

The impact evaluation of PMKVY 2.0 also identified placement assistance as an aspect that requires further strengthening. Thus, if the training capacity is increased without improving the training-to-employment path, the impact of the program could be constrained.

The employment results should also be interpreted with evidence from national programs. As reported to World Bank, about 40% of Skill India Mission Operation trainees got wage employment in 6 months during the period of reported implementation. Around 51% of certified Short-Term Training candidates got placements in FY 2020-21 and 2021-22, as per official PMKVY data.

Therefore, the present findings support a shift from a training-output model to an employment-outcome model. The success of a program cannot be measured by enrolment, completion of training and certification only. Indicators should include placement, job retention, wages, correspondence of job training, career progression and sustainability of self-employment.

The qualitative findings also indicate that low initial salaries and geographical distance play a role in job acceptance. Thus, a person who is 'not placed' may not be unemployable; the employment offered may not meet expectations in terms of wages, location or job quality.

This is important for Delhi NCR especially because the employment opportunities are spatially dispersed across Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Faridabad. Availability of trainees for employment may be affected by transport costs and travel times.

And the much bigger problem of youth employment is still very much there. The analysis by ILO-IHD underscores the persistent challenges that India faces in the transition from education to work and in mismatch of skills. International evidence from the ILO also indicates that youth labour market programs are more effective when training is combined with soft skills, certification and complementary interventions. Hence, government skill development programs should increasingly integrate occupational training with online literacy, communication skills, workplace behaviour, apprenticeships, career counselling and structured placement services.

VII. MAJOR FINDINGS

The study produced the following principal findings:

- 1) Beneficiaries reported an overall favourable perception of government skill development programmes ($M = 3.80$).
- 2) Technical skills and self-confidence showed the greatest perceived improvement.
- 3) Employment/self-employment increased from 31.0% before training to 61.3% after training in the illustrative sample.
- 4) Industry relevance demonstrated the strongest relationship with employability ($r = .67$).
- 5) Placement support was strongly related to employability ($r = .63$) but received a comparatively modest beneficiary rating.
- 6) The regression model explained approximately 61% of variation in employability.
- 7) Industry relevance was the strongest predictor of employability ($\beta = .29$).
- 8) Practical exposure significantly contributed to employment readiness.
- 9) Weak post-training follow-up, job-training mismatch and relatively low starting salaries were important barriers.
- 10) Training effectiveness increased when technical training was accompanied by soft skills, practical exposure and placement assistance.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Government skill development should be informed by district and sector labour-market assessments. Formal employer-training linkages should involve curricula, internships, apprenticeships and recruitment.

Training should focus on learning through practice. Teaching digital skills including communication, problem-solving, teamwork, interview readiness and business etiquette.

"The placement of support could be better. Placement cells have to be dedicated to the job of tracking the employment status, wages, job retention and job-training fit of the trainees for a period of six to twelve months after graduation.

Digital alumni systems need to be established by training providers to keep graduates informed about jobs, counselling, reskilling and entrepreneurship. Performance appraisal of training institutes should not be limited to enrolment and certification. Outcome measures should include: employment rate; retention rate; pay progression; employer satisfaction; and training relevance.

Finally, low-income women and trainees may need safe transportation, flexible training hours, child care, and local job connections.

IX. CONCLUSION

The study highlights that the government skill development programs can significantly contribute to improving the employability of the youth in Delhi NCR. The findings showed that program beneficiaries experienced positive improvements in their technical competence, communication skills, digital skills, self-confidence and job readiness. The improved employment status after training shows the ability of skill programs to help people to transition from unemployment to economic activity.

But the study also finds that training isn't a guarantee of employment. The link between skill development and employability is mediated through relevance of training to demand in industry, practical exposure, employer engagement, placement support, local employment opportunities and quality of job.

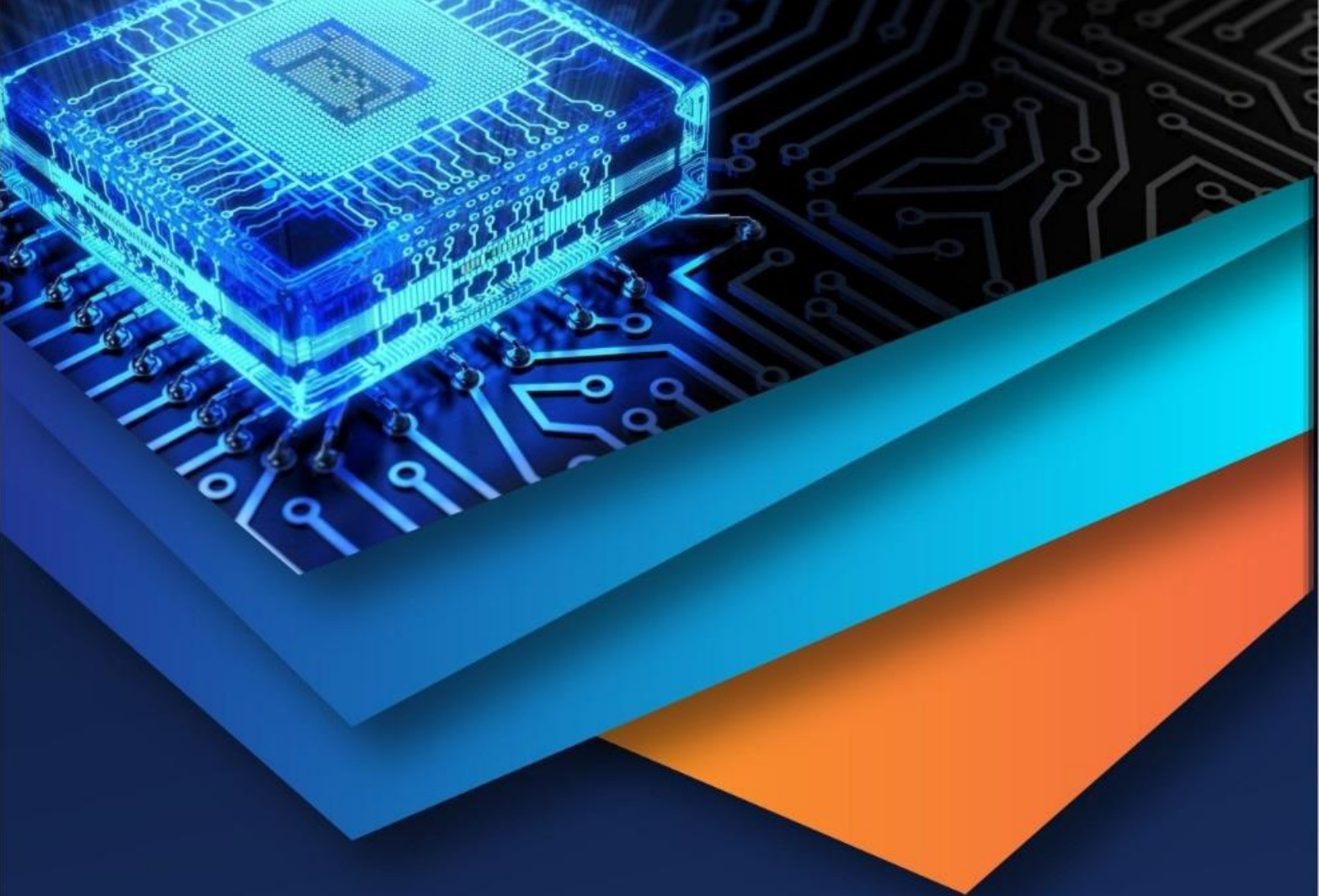
The strongest predictor of employability was the strength of the industry, suggesting that governments should focus on demand-driven training and not just increasing the volume of training. Placement assistance also emerged as one of the comparatively weaker aspects as well as a critical factor as identified by the respondents.

As such, government policy on skills development should gradually move from the perspective of training and certification to a skills-to-jobs transition and sustainable employment perspective. Continuous labour market mapping, industry engagement, apprenticeships, digital skills, soft skills development, career counselling and systematic post training tracking can do a lot in improving program outcomes.

To summarise, initiatives like Skill India and PMKVY provide an important institutional platform to augment India's human capital. However, in the final analysis, their long-term effectiveness must be judged not by the number of persons who are certified, but by the extent to which the beneficiaries are able to find relevant, productive and sustainable employment and opportunities for career advancement.

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