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ROLE OF RE-SKILLING AND UP-SKILLING IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: POST A CAREER BREAK

Mrs. Ankita Mehta[1] and Dr. Shahji Joseph[2]
[1]Research Scholar and [2]Research Guide, D.T.S.S College of Commerce, Malad East, Mumbai

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ABSTRACT

Career breaks due to family responsibilities, childcare, and care giving often interrupts women's professional trajectories, leading to skill gaps, reduced confidence, and limited opportunities for workforce reintegration. Career is a strong term in today's times as it is the identity and the activity through which women earn recognition and value for work that they put in. In today's rapidly evolving job market, reskilling and up skilling play a critical role in empowering women to reclaim their careers and contribute to sustainable economic growth. This study explores the challenges women face after career breaks, including technological advancements, changing industry demands, and workplace biases. It highlights the importance of reskilling and up skilling programs, such as digital literacy, leadership training, and sustainability-focused skills, in bridging these gaps. Additionally, this research examines the role of women and societal pressure that she faces. With the progress of research one thing that becomes valid that women probably your sister, wife or mother somewhere has taken break and this issue needs to be recognized and solved. By analyzing industry trends and women's perspective, the study identifies key areas where corporate policies, government initiatives and educational instituitions can collaborate to support women's career comeback. The findings aim to find barriers that a women faces not only in the external environment but also psychologically. There are times when women realize that leaving a job was a sudden decision but coming back needs a lot of efforts because till the time they are back a lot of hierarchy and designations are changed. This research specifically understands the need and importance of continuous learning and its application for an overall development that a women can sense specially after up-skilling and re-skilling..

KEYWORDS: *Women's career break, Re-skilling and Up-skilling, Sustainable future*

INTRODUCTION

Women often takes career breaks due to various responsibilities and roles defined by the society.While some may be voluntary in nature, these breaks normally create a gap in the professional space of a women. Career breaks could be due to various reasons such as family responsibility, transfer of spouse or due to child care responsibilities. Rapid changes in technology and growth in Artificial Intelligence is creating a lot of challenges for women who want to re-enter into the professional space. Market demand and volatility is asking for more skills and commitment from the candidates and that's where the solution lies of Upskilling and Reskilling of Women workforce. Nothing is permanent except for the change and to fill the void created by the break one has to be updated in terms of skills, language and sheer hard work.

Re-entry is always a task and to make sure that the process is easy and the industry is accepting women now-a-days there is a need to find alternatives that can now help them manage their conflicting lifestyles. One of the ways that are effective can be Reskilling where one can sharpen the existing knowledge. Employee Training and Online Distance Education are during wonders in this busy world.

Another thing that can be done is Reskilling where women candidates can find alternate career options or learn new skills probably not connected with the existing skills but still could give a new direction to women's career.

Challenges Faced

1. Skills Obsolescence: Technology driven industries are leaving women candidates who are struggling with the candidates.
2. Confidence and Self-Doubt: Extended gaps and stay at home moms are continuously losing their confidence due to lack of exposure.
3. Workplace Biased: Organizations are skeptical about hiring women with gap or women struggling with work-life balance.
4. Lack of Flexible Work Options: Traditional work environments are not willing to accommodate and adjust with flexible work timings. Part timers are normally not included in the process of decision making and work ethics.

Key Strategies for Reskilling and Upskilling Women

1. Industry –Specific Training Program: Courses in Digital skills, AI, Cyber securities can prepare women for future goals.
2. Online Learning platform: Flexible online platforms allow women to upskill along with managing other responsibilities.

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3. Networking and Mentorship: Mentorship programs help women to rebuild the confidence and have mental strength lost during the period of responsibility.
4. Sustainable job opportunities: Encouraging women to enter fields like renewable energy and green technology ensures long-term workforce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Kaushiva, Pavni & Joshi, Chetan. (2020)** in their research paper," Women's re-entry after a career break: Efficacy of support programs" stated that Organizations have recently placed more emphasis on managing and expanding gender diversity while emphasizing policies that support working mothers. In order to assist women in returning to the workforce after a career break, this article aims to investigate the impact of one such supporting policy, namely the completion of internship programs established by the employer.

2. **Singh, S., & Vanka, S. (2021)** in their Journal Career Break, Not a Brake on Career: A Study of the Reasons and Enablers of Women's Re-entry to Technology Careers in India said that There is still much to learn about women's career re-entry in the technology sector. Career re-entry among women professionals is worth examining; especially as information technology (IT) organizations concentrate more emphasis on luring, keeping, and advancing women in the workplace. This study aims to explore the factors that encourage and facilitate career re-entry among Indian women who intend to return to the IT industry. In order to gather data for this study, interviews were utilized as a method of qualitative research. Seven different career re-entry enhancers were identified by the findings. Based on this discovery, a support ecosystem model is presented that illustrates the complex interrelationships among career resumption, the support ecosystem, and the enablers of professional re-entry. Additionally, research shows that favorable life circumstances, a supportive environment, and women's active agency all contribute to job re-entry.

3. **CRYSHAL C.M., Dr. Catherine Nirmala, Jais V Thomas (2023)** in their research paper CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN RE-ENTRANTS IN IT INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY ON KARNATAKA said that with every industry focusing on gender diversity, women's career reentry is an important aspect of today's competitive environment. However, in today's competitive world, women encounter numerous obstacles when they reenter the workforce and are susceptible to rejection for a variety of reasons. In light of this, the current study aims to identify the obstacles women encounter when they reenter the IT industry. Assessing the perceived support element during their re-entry is another goal of the study. With n=122, the study used a purposive sample technique under non-probability sampling. A thorough questionnaire was created, and factor analysis revealed that the Overall Scale Reliability using Cronbach's Alpha is.960 with SPSS's assistance. Lack of equal-level employment prospects is a significant obstacle, according to the report. While enterprises must take steps and create policies to guarantee gender diversity, age and gender-based nondiscrimination, and equitable chances for bright women reentering the workforce, public policy involvement is crucial in labor markets.

4. **Of, & D'Cunha, Shiny Colaco. (2023)**. THE IMPACT OF UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING PROGRAMS ON JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR. XXIV, No: 1(I), 2023. 55. This study aims to ascertain the effects of retraining and upskilling programs on employee retention and job satisfaction in the industrial sector. Data for the study were gathered using a mixed-methods approach that included questionnaire research and a literature review. According to the study's findings, a large percentage of participants (55.7%) believed that choosing the optimum training program for both retrained and trained workers was challenging. This suggests that there may be a knowledge and comprehension gap regarding the various training programs, which could impact the efficacy of retraining and upskilling initiatives. The fact that 34.3% of respondents said they did not have enough money for training programs reveals one of the main barriers to giving employees the opportunity to retrain.

5. **Dr K Samuvel and Gilsha K (2023)** in their research paper A Study on Impact of Upskilling or Reskilling of Employees in IT Services said that With new trends and technology appearing often, the IT services sector is always changing. IT workers may find it challenging to stay current with the newest techniques and expertise as a result. Because of this, a lot of IT companies are spending money on reskilling and upskilling initiatives to keep their staff members up to date. The influence of reskilling or upskilling employees in IT services is the main topic of this study report. A sample of 150 IT workers was selected using a straightforward random sampling technique for this primary data analysis. This research is conducted online. to assess how well reskilling and upskilling initiatives enhance worker productivity and performance. To assess how employee engagement and retention are affected by upskilling and reskilling initiatives and to evaluate the impact of reskilling and upskilling initiatives on staff career advancement. To determine the possible obstacles to reskilling and upskilling initiatives' success and create plans to get around them. Factor analysis, Anova, Chi-Square, and correlation are the statistical tools employed in this data collection. IT organizations have several options for retraining and upskilling their staff. While some companies provide official training programs, others provide their staff members more casual chances to pick up new skills. To assist staff members in covering the cost of their own

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training, several companies also provide tuition reimbursement plans. The most effective strategy for retraining and upskilling IT staff will differ based on the particular requirements of the

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To investigate the difficulties women have while returning to the workforce following a hiatus.
2. To examine how career gaps affect women's employability and professional development.
3. To evaluate how well reskilling and upskilling initiatives improve women's career reintegration.
4. To investigate how flexible employment arrangements, digital learning, and technology might help with workforce re-entry.

Hypothesis

1. H_0 (Null Hypothesis): Women who take career breaks for family and childcare reasons do not face significant challenges in re-entering the workforce.
H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Women who take career breaks for family and childcare reasons face significant challenges in re-entering the workforce.

2. H_0: Reskilling and upskilling programs do not significantly improve women's chances of successful career reintegration.
H_1: Reskilling and upskilling programs significantly improve women's chances of successful career reintegration.

3. H_0: There is no correlation between flexible work policies and the successful return of women to the workforce.
H_1: There is a positive correlation between flexible work policies and the successful return of women to the workforce.

4. H_0: Employers do not perceive career breaks as a disadvantage when hiring returning women.
H_1: Employers perceive career breaks as a disadvantage when hiring returning women.

5. H_0: Women returning from a career break do not have a significant interest in learning new skills related to digital transformation and sustainability.
H_1: Women returning from a career break have a significant interest in learning new skills related to digital transformation and sustainability.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary data is collected individuals who belong to Mumbai Suburban
Secondary data is collected from Websites, Blogs, Online Research Papers and E-books.

RESEARCH TOOLS

Survey was conducted through questionnaire. (Google Form)

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size was 60 individuals

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION (PRIMARY DATA)

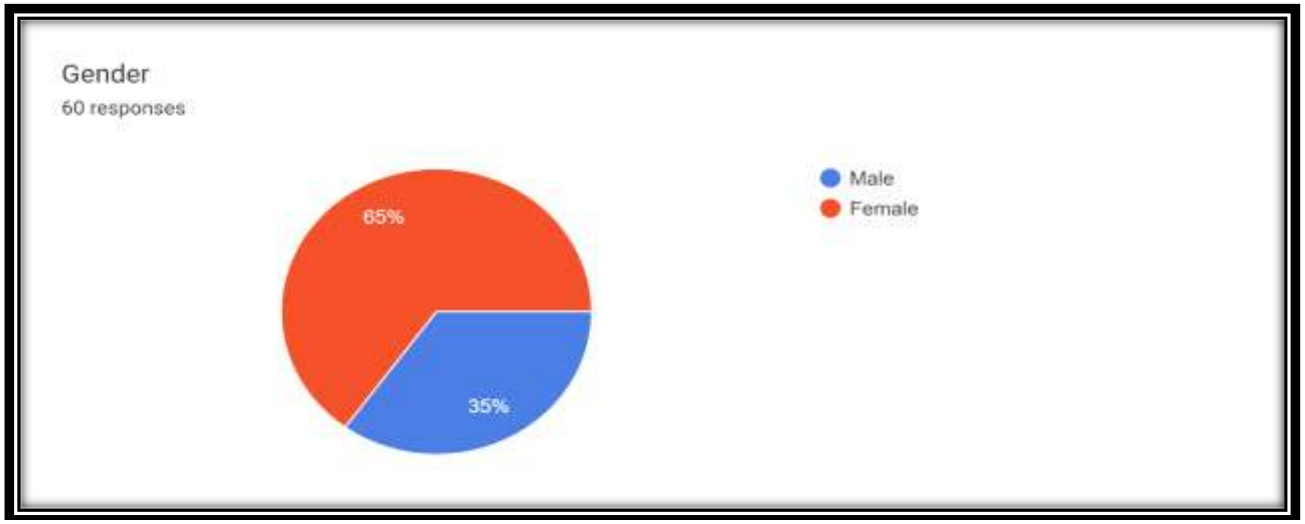


Chart No 1: From the total respondents 65% respondents were female and 35% were male.

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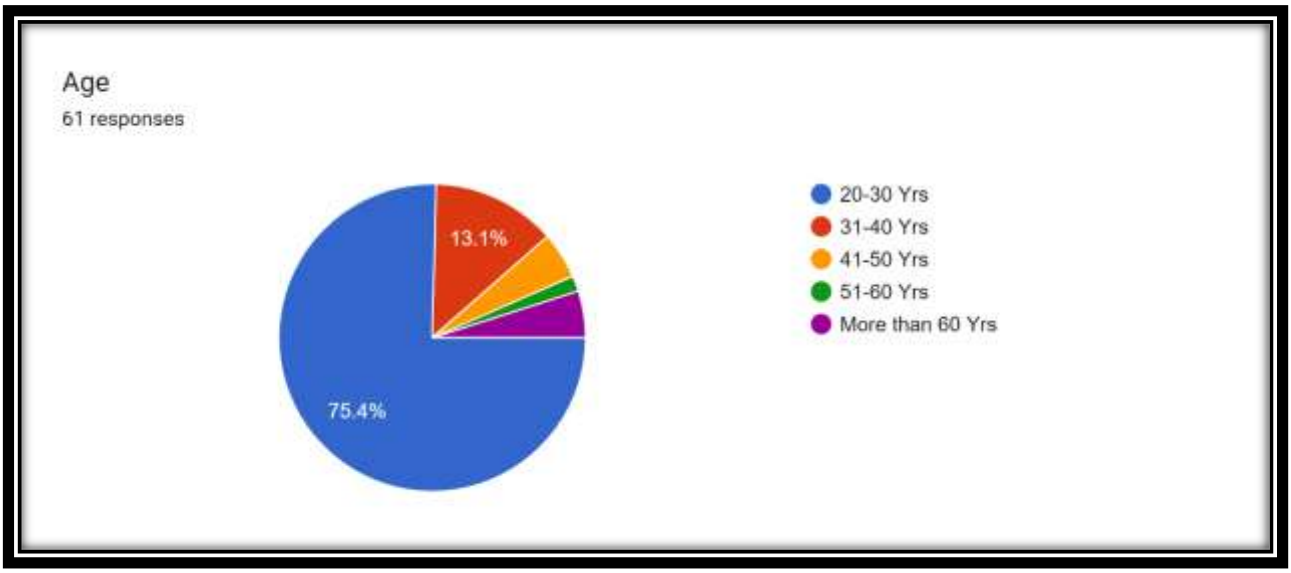


Chart No 2: There were various age groups that responded for the survey. 75.4% belonged to the category of 20-30 Years. 13.1% were from the category of 31-40 Years while the least number of respondents were from the age of 51-60 Years. Almost 10% of the respondents were also from the age group of more than 60 years.

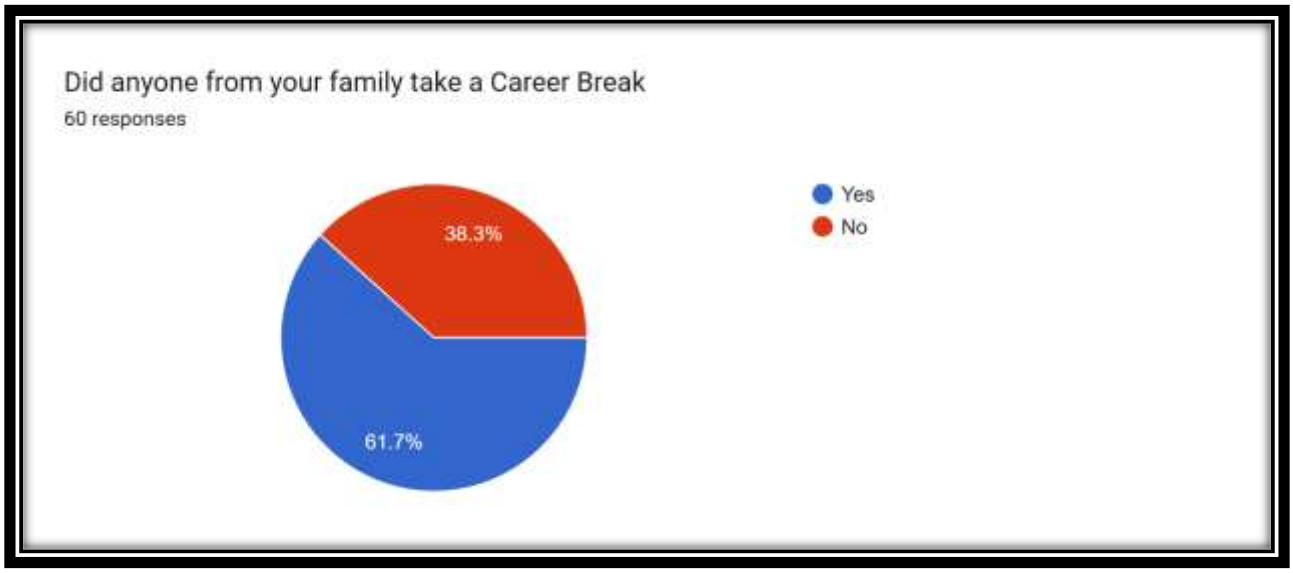


Chart No 3:

Almost 61.7% respondents voted that one of their close one's too had given on their career and took other responsibilities seriously.

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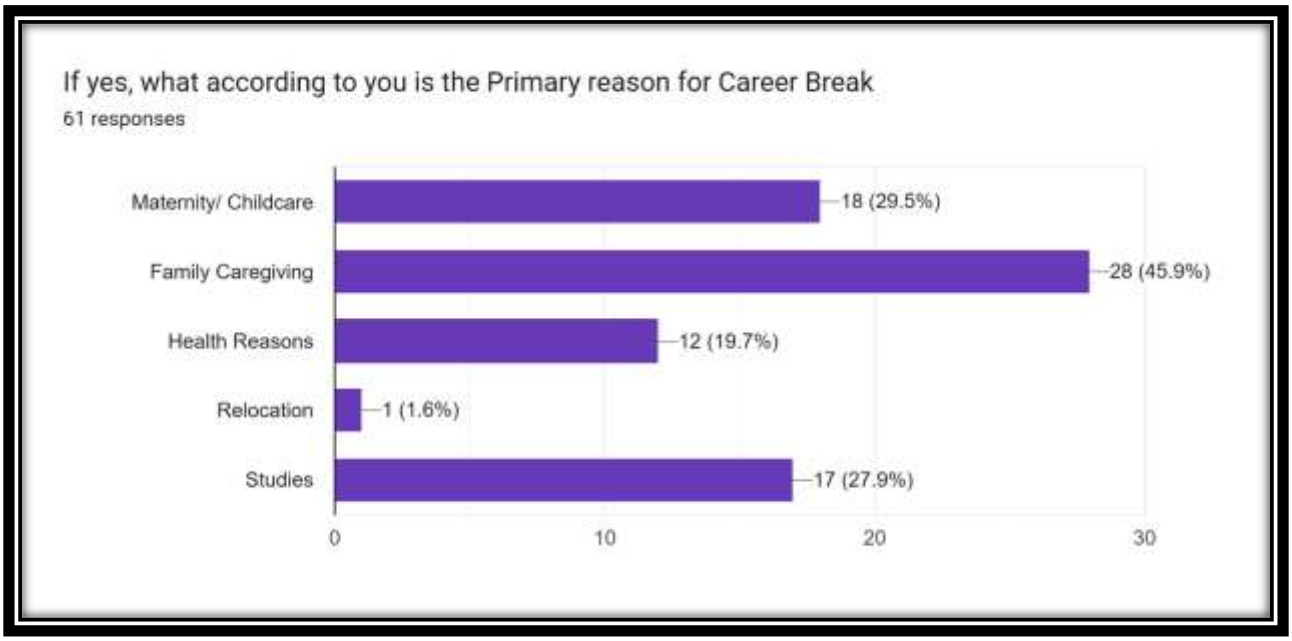


Chart No 4:

According to above chart 45.9% respondents have stated that Family Caregiving was one of the core reasons for a Career break. 29.5% respondents claimed Maternity break as the second most popular reason for a career break while Studies (27.9%) and Health reasons (19.7%) were also key factors for a women to give up on her career.

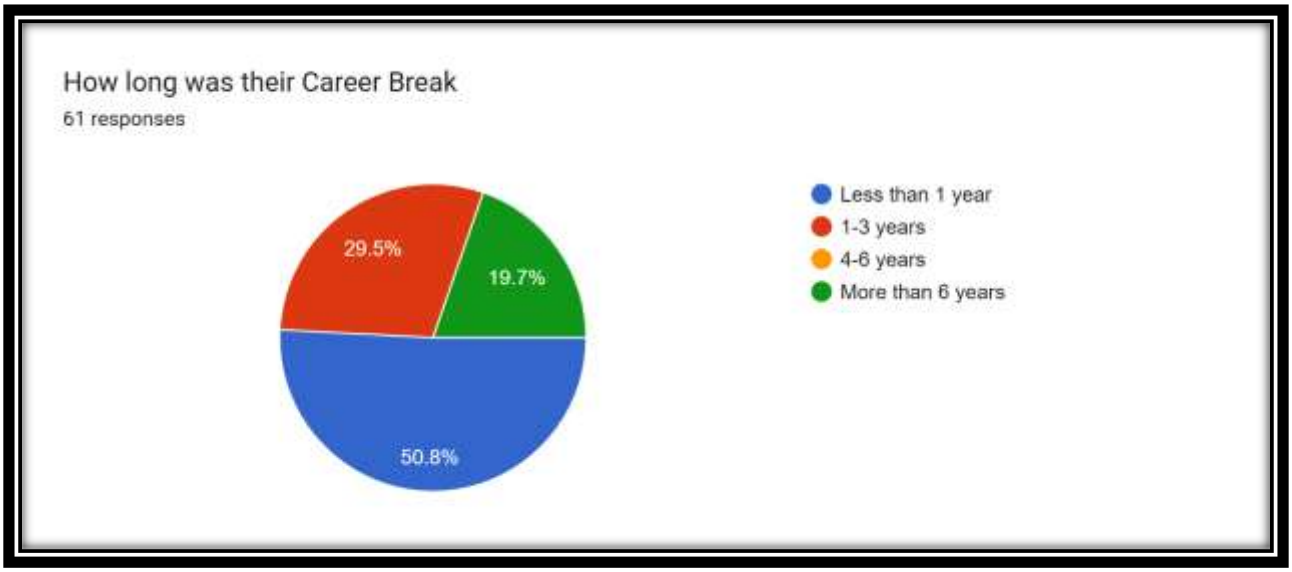


Chart No 5:

According to the above chart majority of the women took a break of less than 1 year according to 50.8% respondents. 29.5 % women took a break from 1-3 years while 19.7% have claimed that women in their house took a break that lasted for more than 6 years.

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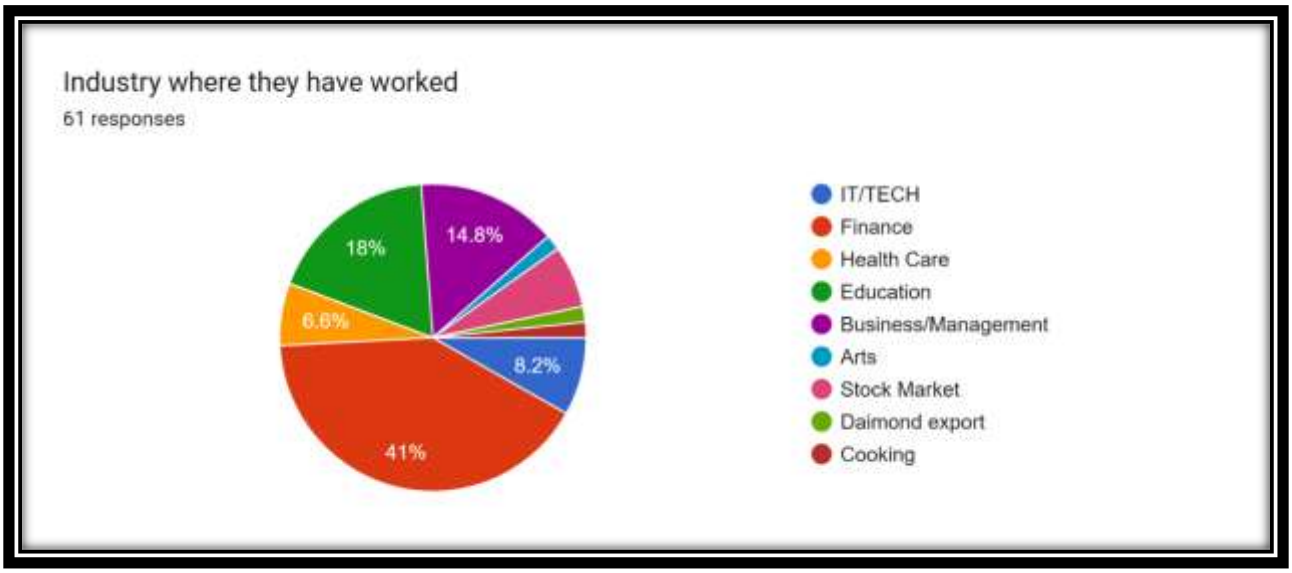


Chart No 6:

According to the above chart majority of the women were working with Finance sector where 41% respondents voted for the sector. 14.8% of the women were handling management or business before the career break where almost 18% of women were a part of Education sector before taking a career break.

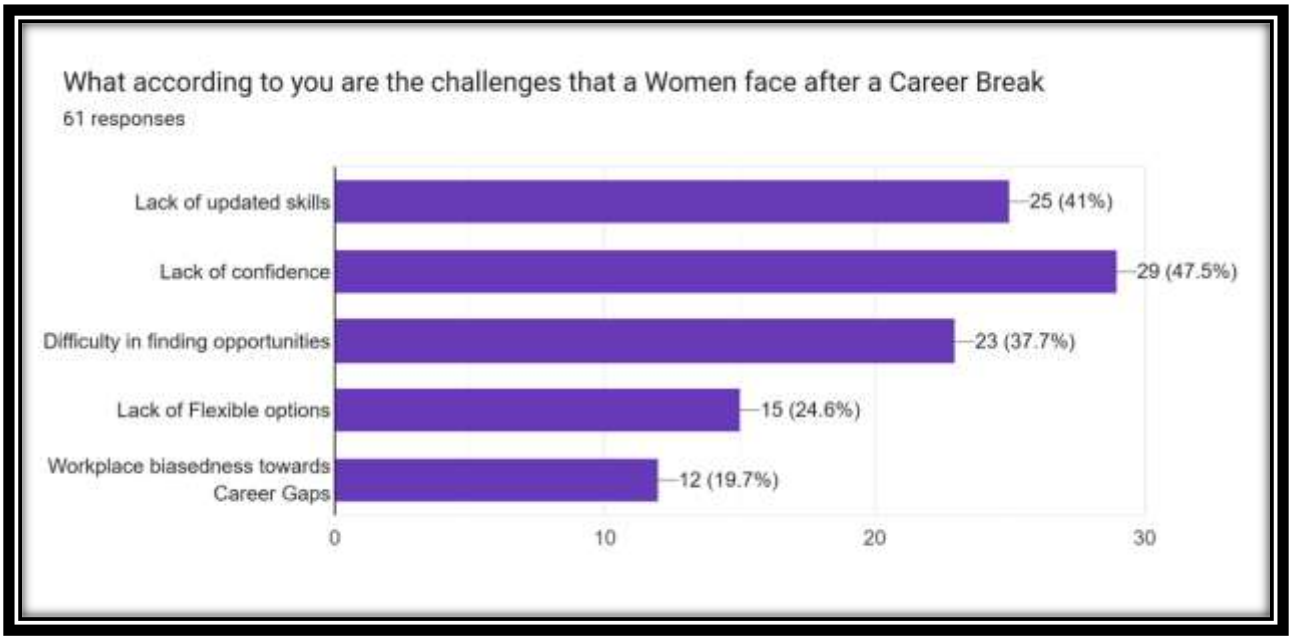


Chart No 7

According to the above diagram 47.5% respondents have stated that Lack of confidence after a Career break is one of the major challenges that a women face after a Career break. While 41% have claimed that lack of updated skills wasmajor issue 37.7% respondents have said that finding opportunities in the existing sector or the new sector is extremely difficult for women after a career break.

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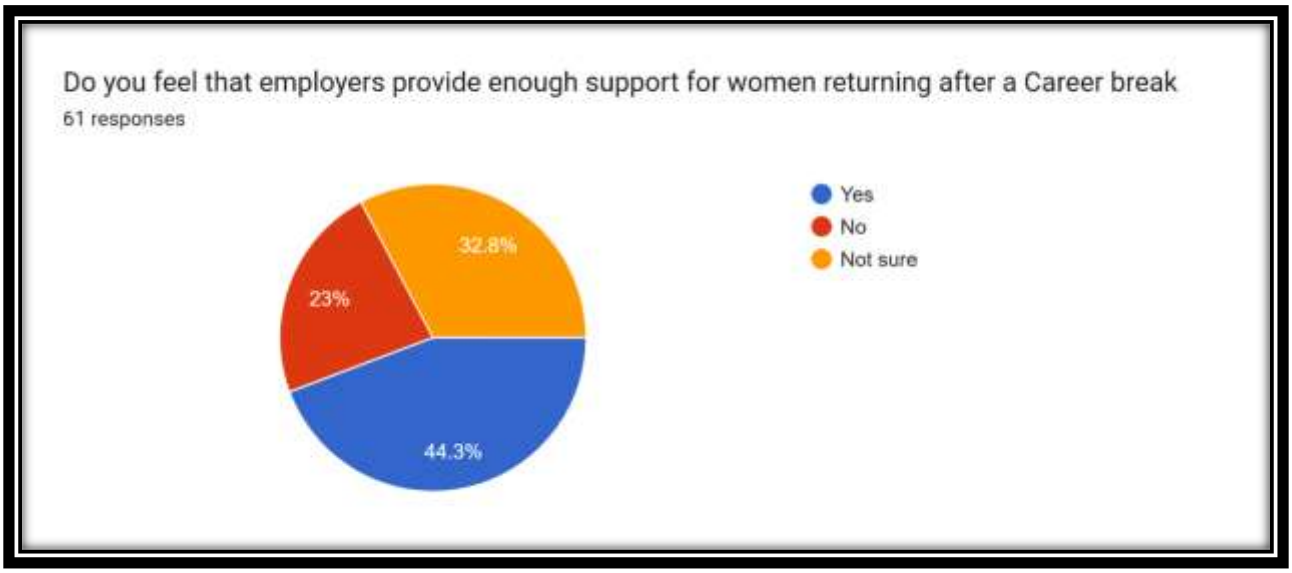


Chart 8: According to above diagram 44.3% respondents claim that times have change and employers are providing support to women after a career break. 32% respondents were not sure while 23% stated a straight 'No' on employers providing enough support to women after a career break.

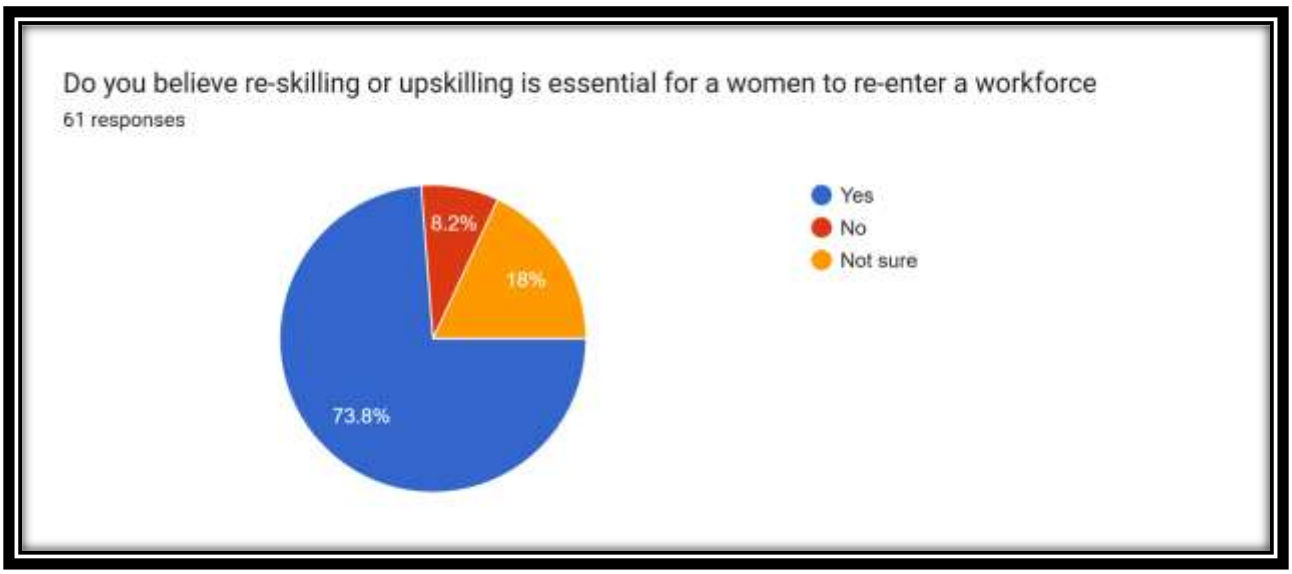


Chart No 9

According to the above diagram 73.8% respondents stated that it was necessary to either Re-skill or Up-skill for a woman to re-enter. While 18% stated that they not sure about re-skilling or upskilling

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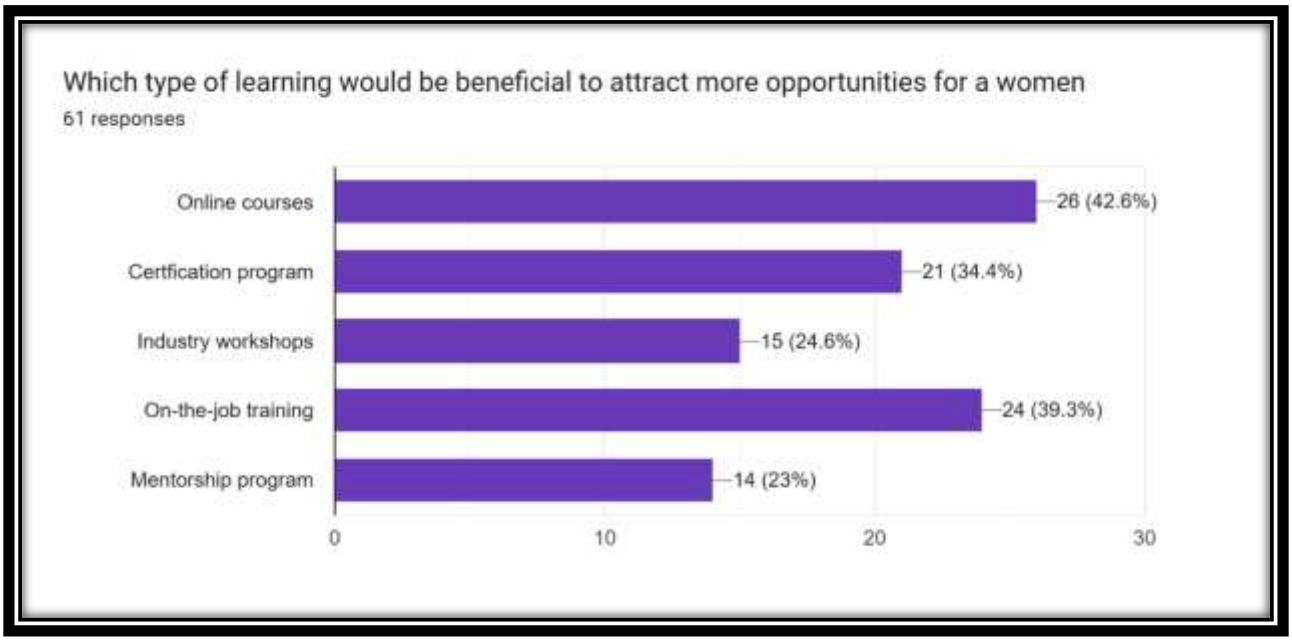


Chart No10

According to the above diagram 42.6% respondents voted for online courses as a way to attract more opportunities where 39.3% felt that on-the-job training would help women get more opportunities. 34.4% respondents felt that a certification program could help while 24% thought that an Industry workshop could increase opportunities foe a women.

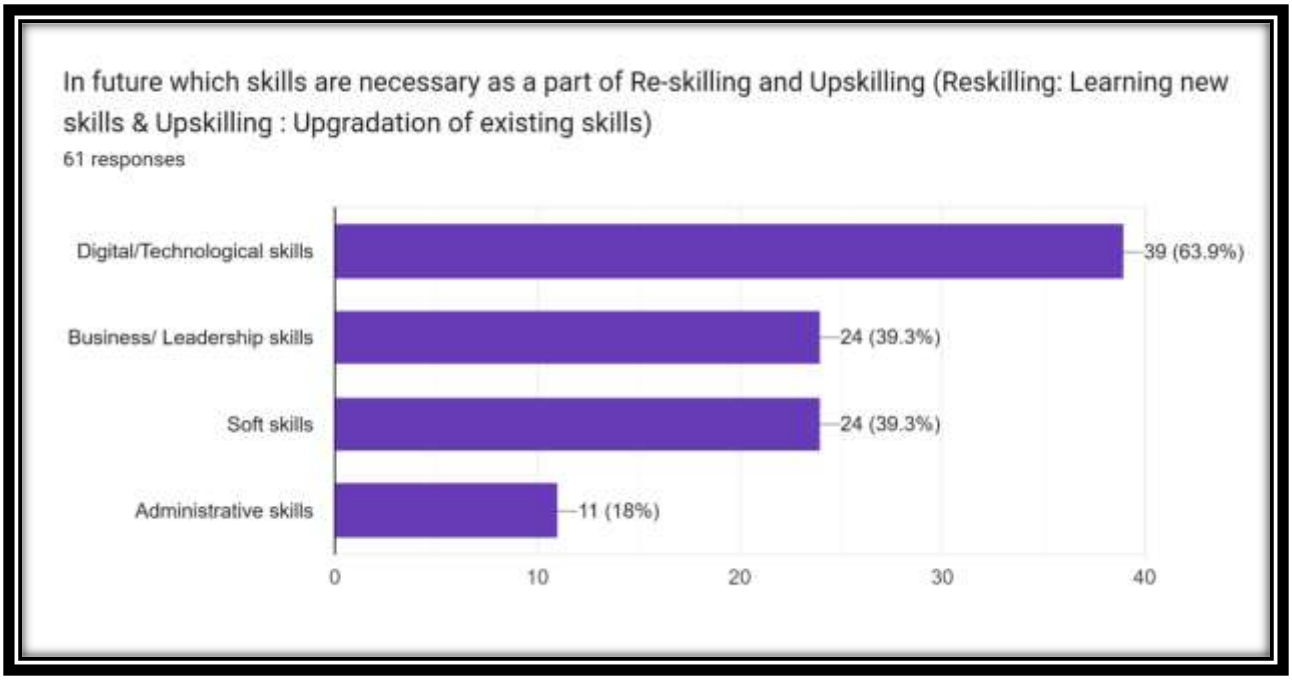


Chart No 11

According to the above chart 63% people said that Digital skills were necessary for Re-skilling while 39% respondents stated that both leadership and Softskills were necessary for women to re-enter

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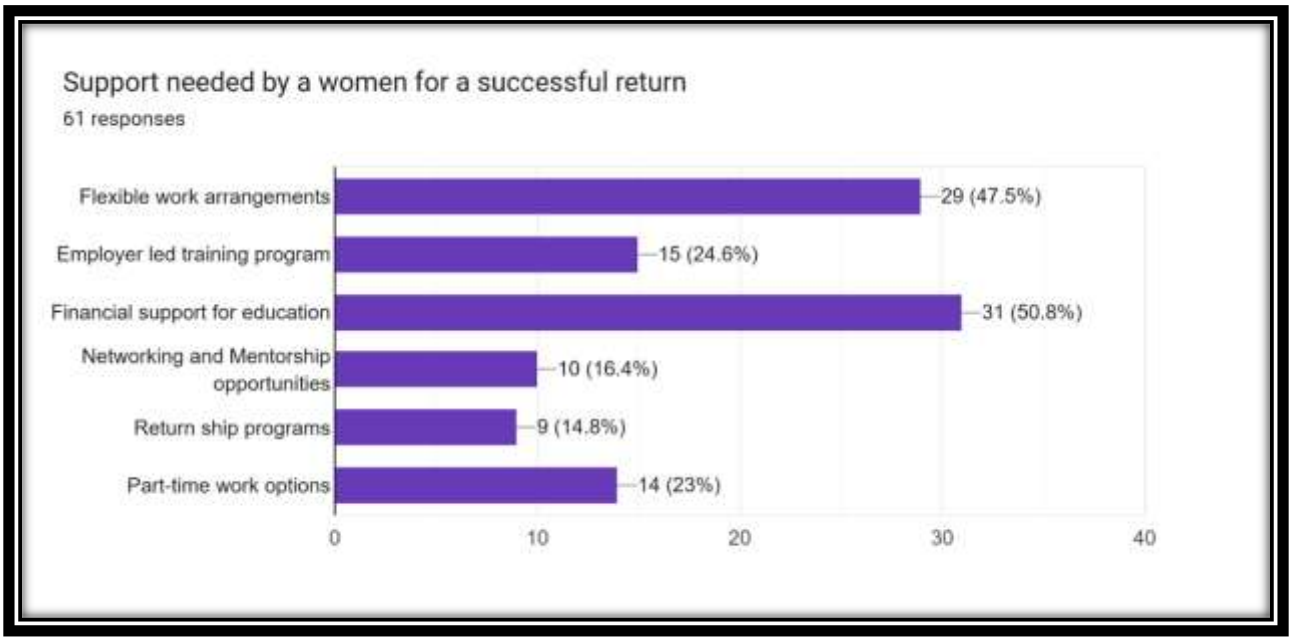


Chart No 12

According to above chart almost 47.5% respondents voted for flexible work arrangements where 50.8% respondents said that Financial Support for education is the most needed support for the women. 24.6% respondents stated that Employer led training programs were necessary and at the same time 23% respondents stated that Part –options were the need of the day in order to support women.

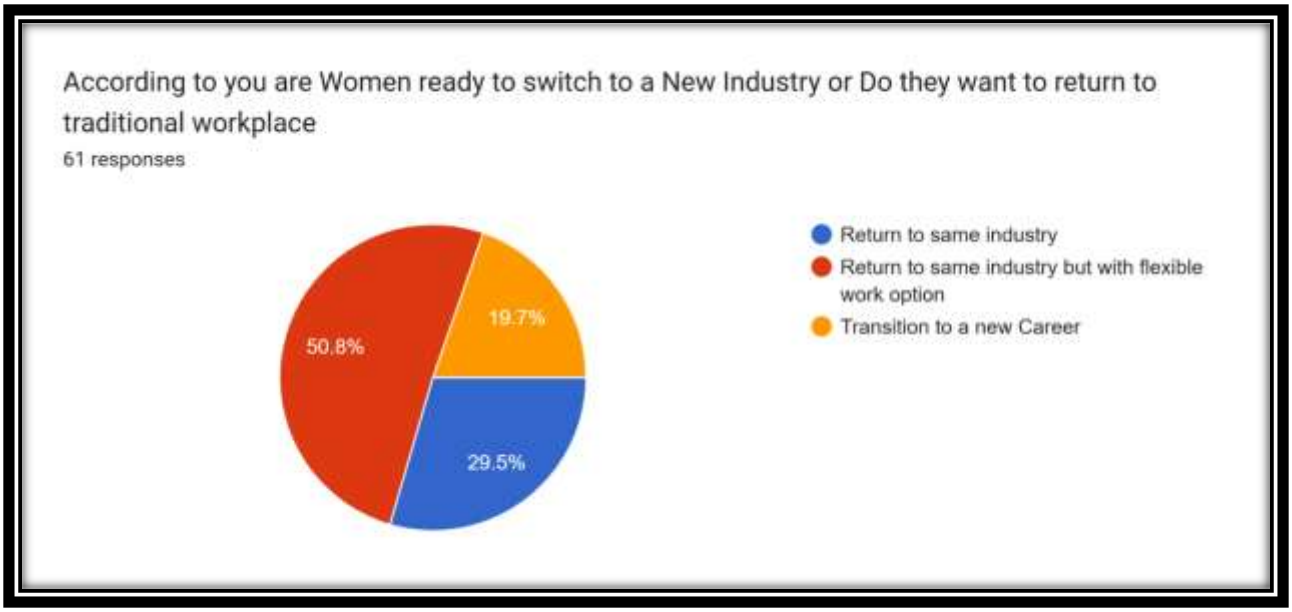


Chart No 13

According to the above chart 29.5% respondents stated that women want to return to the traditional work place where 50.8% respondents stated that they do want return to the workplace but with flexible work options. 19.7% respondents stated that women now-a-days do want to explore and try some new career options.

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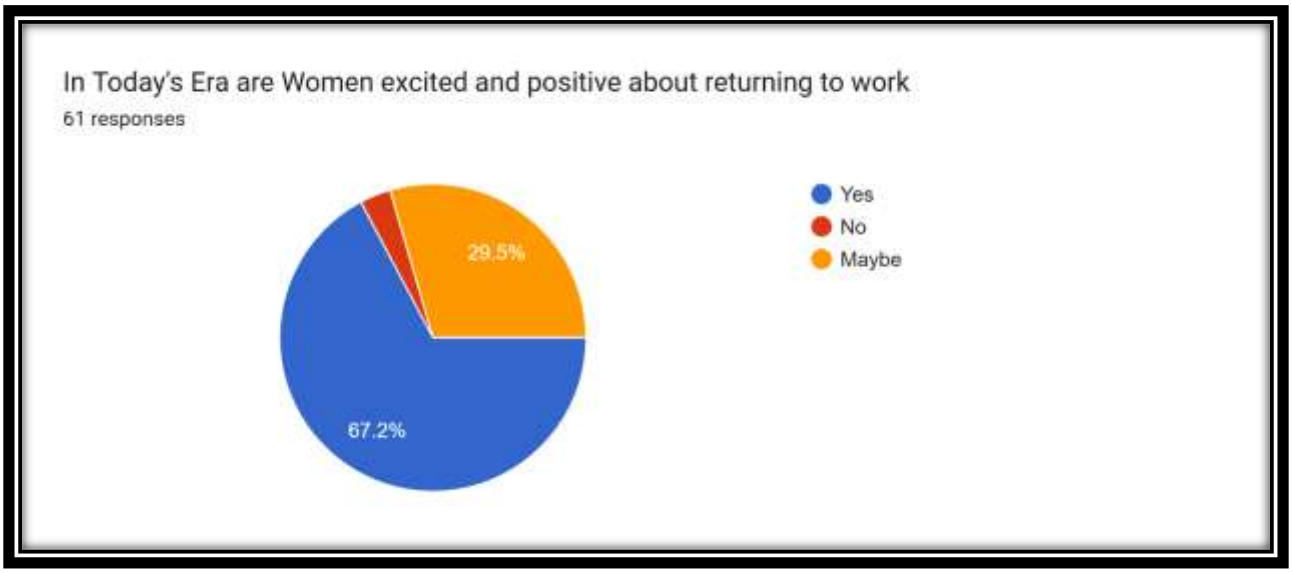


Chart No 14

According to the above chart women are willing to balance work-life with 67.2% women excited to return to their work place. 29.5% are unsure about their emotions and resuming to work.

FINDINGS

1. According to the chart No 3 and Chart 4 almost majority of the respondents have stated that Women in their home or the one's they know have taken a career break and have also stated that Family wellbeing and child-care were one of the major reasons for a women to take a break.
2. Chart 5 and Chart 6 stated that Most of the women had taken break for shorter period of time (Less than 1 year). Education and Finance were popular career options for women even before they had taken a break.
3. Chart 7 and Chart 8 stated that Lack of confidence and not able to find new opportunities were major challenges faced by women who had taken a break. Thus accepting Hypothesis H1 (Women who take career breaks for family and childcare reasons face significant challenges in re-entering the workforce.). Also almost 44% respondents have stated that Employers do support women who return to work after a break.Thus, accepting H0 (4) (Employers do not perceive career breaks as a disadvantage when hiring returning women.)
4. According to the chart 9 and 10 almost 76% respondents have stated that re-skilling and up-skilling have helped improved Women's career. Thus accepting H2 Re-skilling and up-skilling programs have significantly improved women's chances of successful career reintegration.)Online courses and On-the-job training have been voted as the best methods so that women could progress and work on their re-skilling and up-skilling journey.
5. Majority of the respondents according to Chart No 11 has stated that learning of Digital skills is the need of the day while soft skills and leadership skills are also essential. Thus accepting H5 (Women returning from a career break have a significant interest in learning new skills related to digital transformation and sustainability.)
6. According to Chart 12 Flexible work options and support in terms of Education were major factors that would support women to make a successful return. Thus accepting H3 (There is a positive correlation between flexible work policies and the successful return of women to the workforce)
7. Chart 13 indicates that Majority of the Women do want to return to their traditional workplace but with flexible programs. Chart 14 states that times' have changed a Women are equivalently excited to return to work.

CONCLUSION

It is important for a woman to sustain through the work-breaks that are taken. Responsibilities such as Caregiving, Household responsibilities and child care just do not take a substantial amount of time but also breaks the connection on the professional front. It is important to know the barriers and understand the emotions that a women goes through while happily giving up on her work. It is also necessary to understand ways through which come-backs could be easier and stress-free. In this volatile world exploring the opportunities of Re-skilling and Up-skilling is extremely important.

The paper covers the key challenges women face when re-entering the workforce, such as Lack of confidence, difficulty in re-entering and lack of flexible work options. The paper also emphasizes on the skills that can be adapted by the women in order to bring a fresh start and a better future. Mentorship programs, Online certification and Industry led training were some of the options in the research papers that could change the course of direction of a women's career.

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In order to enable women to succeed in the modern workforce, organizations, governments, and educational institutions must work together to create reskilling opportunities that are easily available, reasonably priced, and in line with industry standards. In addition to being a social change, ensuring women's successful career reintegration is also an economic necessity that promotes creativity, productivity, and sustainable growth. Career breaks should be seen as stepping stones rather than hurdles to achievement because a workforce that values inclusivity and ongoing learning will be better equipped to handle future problems. Also there are times when sabbasticaticals prove to be more worthwhile as they –bring newer and better versions among the individuals.

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