Role Of Digital Era in Reshaping the Career of Women After Career Break: With Reference to Integration of Remote Work with Digital Tools

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ABSTRACT

The digital era has significantly transformed the landscape of work, offering new opportunities and challenges for women returning to the workforce after a career break. Remote work and digital collaboration tools—such as video conferencing, project management platforms and cloud-based communication systems—have reduced traditional barriers like commuting, rigid schedules, and geographical limitations. Digital tools give the freedom of coming back to work and having financial freedom just by being at home or comfort space from where managing work –life balance becomes far easier. These technologies have empowered women to reintegrate into the workforce with more flexibly, enabling part-time, freelance, and hybrid work arrangements that accommodate caregiving responsibilities and personal needs. This paper explores how digital tools are not only facilitating smoother career transitions for women but also reshaping professional identity, skill development, and workplace inclusion in a post-pandemic world. Digital space if learnt in a better way gives way to work and financial freedom that do not need any boundaries.

KEYWORDS: *Women's career break, Digital opportunities, Effect*

INTRODUCTION

Women and Career breaks have long association and despite of various solutions that were offered by the researchers by their end, implementing these solutions were very difficult because of the partiality and flexibility issues. Even with the best solutions offered women were not ready to accept them as these solutions required them to focus them on only a single aspect of life and balancing was difficult for them as one cannot have best of both the worlds. Digitalization has changed everything. The world of Internet and Social media has opened a lot of opportunities for Women. It is just not about working and applying online and working remotely, it is also about the fact that social media is giving equivalent work options. Working in hierarchy or under the brand with a leader are not only online options left for women. Freelancing, part- time work options are some alternatives that women can opt for. Online platforms come with their own challenges. Absence of guidance, Lack of clarity and Lack of digital awareness and knowledge are some key issues that women could face.

The current scenario, especially post-COVID-19, shows a significant shift. Remote work is more normalized, companies are adopting hybrid work models, and there is a rise in women-centric platforms like **JobsForHer**, **RestartIndia**, and **Sheroes**. Governments and NGOs are also stepping in with digital literacy initiatives for women.

Implementation mechanisms to accelerate reintegration include:

- Corporate returnship programs
- Mentorship and coaching for the right direction.
- Skill-based and Hiring in the terms of Re-skilling and Upskilling
- Customized learning pathways via online courses
- Creating inclusive digital work environments with flexible hours, mental health support, and zero discrimination policies

Current Opportunities through Digital Tools

1. Freelancing & Remote Work

- Content Writing & Editing
- Graphic Design & Branding
- Digital Marketing (SEO, social media, email marketing)
- Web Development or App Development
- Virtual Assistance

Why it works: Low entry barrier, remote-friendly, portfolio-based.

2. Online Teaching & Coaching

- Subject-based tutoring (school/college subjects)
- Soft skills / spoken English training
- Online course creation (via platforms like YouTube, or course marketplaces)
- Career or Life Coaching (with certification)

Why it works: Leverages existing skills; can build a personal brand.

3. Digital Entrepreneurship

- Start a blog or YouTube channel
- Launch a product on e-commerce platforms
- Social media-based businesses (Instagram shops, digital products)

Why it works: Control over time, scalability, passive income over time.

4. Tech Upskilling & Transition

- Data Analytics
- UX/UI Design
- Software Testing
- Cloud Computing
- Cybersecurity

Why it works: Growing demand, supportive learning communities, flexible learning paths.

5. Affiliate & Influencer Marketing

- Monetize personal interests (e.g., cooking, parenting, beauty, crafts)
- Earn through affiliate links, sponsorships, or brand collaborations

Why it works: Can start small, builds over time.

6. Remote Corporate Roles (Post-Upskilling or Returnship)

- Human Resources
- Project Management
- Customer Success / Support

- Sales & Business Development

Why it works: Companies are increasingly open to returnees, especially post-pandemic.

7. Creative & Digital Arts

- Illustration and digital art

- Animation and video editing

- Photography (with online sales, stock image sites)

Why it works: Creative freedom, niche markets available online.

8. Wellness & Holistic Services (Online)

- Yoga, fitness, or meditation instructor

- Nutrition and wellness coaching

- Mental health support (certified counselors, therapists)

Why it works: High relevance post-pandemic; digital demand growing.

Tips for Re-Entry Success:
- Start with free or low-cost online certifications
- Join peer groups or online communities
- Build a portfolio or simple website
- Begin as a freelancer or intern to rebuild confidence
- Keep your LinkedIn profile updated and active

Challenges for Women on a Career Break (Digital Context)
- Digital Skill Gap
- Many women face out-dated technical skills or lack training in current digital tools
- Fear of new technology can cause hesitation to re-enter digital workspaces.
- Lack of Structured Support
- Online tools exist, but without guided support, it's overwhelming to restart using them independently.
- Confidence and Self-doubt
- Women returning after a break often experience imposter syndrome or low confidence, especially in tech-driven workspaces.
- Time Constraints
- Online courses or tools often require consistent time and discipline — difficult for women balancing family responsibilities.
- Limited Awareness of Tools
- Many are unaware of free or low-cost digital platform that can help upskill and organize work.
- Bias in Hiring
- Despite having skills, women with a gap in employment may face digital application systems that filter them out automatically.

In conclusion, the digital era, while not a magic solution, provides critical infrastructure and momentum to reshape the careers of women on a break. By addressing challenges and implementing targeted strategies, we can ensure that career gaps do not become career ends but rather new beginnings.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Bedi, A. & Chauhan, R. (2021)

Title: *Digital Skills and Second-Career Women in India: Opportunities and Gaps*

Summary:
This study explores the critical role of digital skills in helping Indian women transition back into the workforce after taking career breaks. Conducted through surveys and interviews with second-career women in metropolitan and tier-2 cities, the research found that while many women were eager to resume their careers, they lacked updated technological skills and access to digital tools. Training programs provided by NGOs and companies were seen as helpful, but often not tailored to different education levels or time constraints faced by women. The authors also pointed out that digital skill programs tend to focus on generic training rather than sector-specific modules.
Digital literacy is a strong enabler for women's reintegration, but unless such programs are customized, scalable, and supported by mentorship and job placement support, the benefits remain limited. Collaboration between government, corporates, and civil society is essential for real impact.

2. Author: Khurana, A. (2020)

Title: *Remote Work as a Catalyst for Women's Workforce Participation in India*

Summary:
This paper analyzes how the rise of remote work, especially post-COVID-19, has opened up new avenues for women professionals in India who were previously restricted due to caregiving duties or societal norms. The study uses data from IT, finance, and customer service sectors to evaluate how work-from-home models have increased participation among married women, mothers, and those living in small towns. However, the paper also notes that remote work may blur boundaries between professional and domestic responsibilities, leading to burnout if not managed well.
Remote work is a game-changer in increasing women's access to jobs, but it must be accompanied by organizational policies that ensure work-life balance, technical support, and outcome-based performance evaluation.

3. Author: Joshi, S. & Sharma, R. (2018)

Title: *Career Breaks and Re-entry: Perspectives of Indian Women Professionals*

Summary:
Through in-depth interviews with 50 Indian women who took career breaks of 2–10 years, this study identifies recurring themes such as self-doubt, social stigma, employer reluctance, and lack of structured return options. Women reported feeling judged during interviews or being offered positions below their experience level. Some also expressed the struggle to adapt to newer technologies and changes in workplace culture. Emotional barriers, such as guilt and anxiety about leaving children or elderly care, were also commonly mentioned.
The re-entry process is emotionally and structurally challenging for women. Employers need to be more empathetic and provide formal re-skilling, mentorship, and graded return options. Women also benefit greatly from support networks and confidence-building programs.

4. Author: Menon, S. (2022)

Title: *The Role of Digital Platforms in Supporting Returnship Programs in India*

Summary:
This paper evaluates digital platforms such as **JobsForHer**, **HerSecondInnings**, and **Sheroes** that cater

specifically to women trying to restart their careers in India. These platforms offer training, job listings, community forums, mentorship, and networking events. The study found that these portals have successfully created a supportive ecosystem, especially for women from urban and semi-urban regions. However, the research also highlights that platform usage drops off without guided engagement, personal mentoring, or guaranteed placement assistance.

Digital platforms are highly effective in bridging the gap between aspiration and opportunity. However, to improve their impact, they must offer personalized support, localized content, and stronger partnerships with corporates for placement pipelines.

5. Author: Desai, M. & Nair, R. (2019)

Title: *Workplace Inclusion for Second-Career Women in Indian Corporates*

Summary:
This study investigates the nature and impact of formal returnship programs initiated by Indian corporations, such as **TCS Rebegin**, **IBM Tech Reentry**, **Axis Bank GIG-A-Opportunities**, and others. The authors evaluated these programs on parameters such as duration, training intensity, mentorship availability, and hiring success rate. It was found that while such programs help reduce the stigma around career breaks, they are limited in scale and mostly confined to metro cities and large organizations. Women appreciated structured paths but criticized the lack of long-term roles post-internship or contract phase.

Corporate-led returnship programs are promising models but need to expand across industries and geographies. There must also be a cultural shift in recognizing career breaks as valid and not a career-ending phase.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1.   To understand various online work platforms available for women after a break for easier reintegration
2.   To examine the role of remote work and digital tools in facilitating the reintegration of women into the workforce after a career break.
3.   To analyze the challenges and opportunities women face while working with Digital platforms.
4.   To evaluate the impact of flexible work models on women's career and Work-Life balance.

Hypothesis

H_0: Work from home and digital tools don't help women return to a career after a break.
H_1: Work from home and digital tools helps women return to career after a break.

H_0: Digital tools and remote work options do not bring significant challenges and opportunities for women returning after a career break.
H_2: Digital tools and remote work options do bring significant challenges and opportunities for women returning after a career break.

H_0: Digital skills and flexible work options don't help women in maintaining Work-life balance
H_3: Digital skills and flexible work options do help women better in maintaining work-life balance.

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 36 individuals

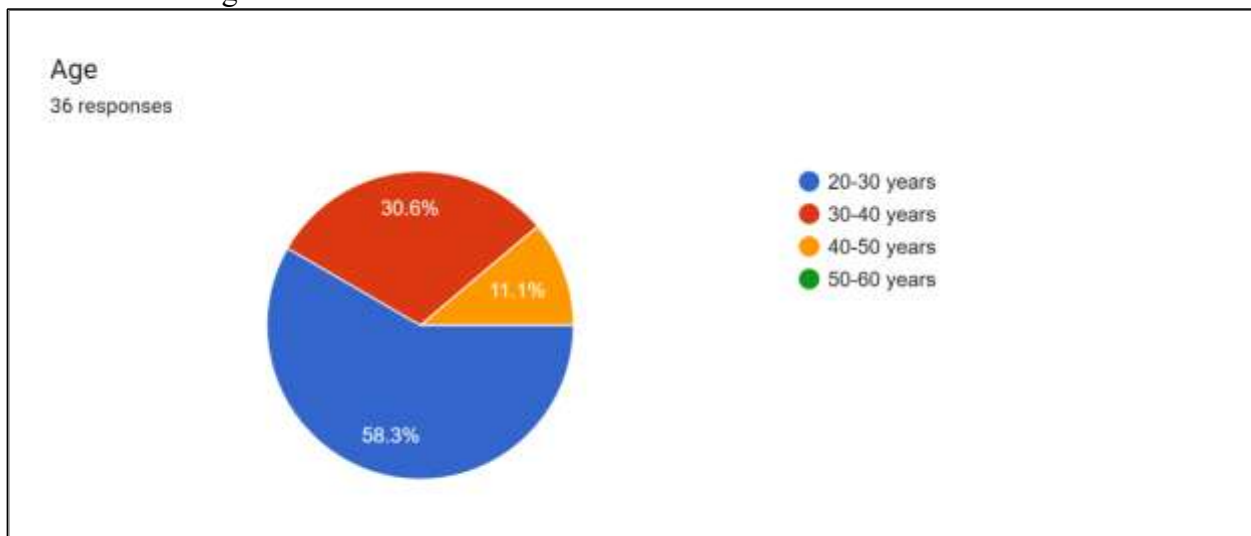## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION (PRIMARY DATA)

1. Age

Chart No: 1

Interpretation: According to the above diagram majority of the respondents were from the age of 20-30 year i.e. 58.3%.
30.6% of the respondents were from the age of 30-40 years and only 11.1% respondents were from the age of 40-50 years.
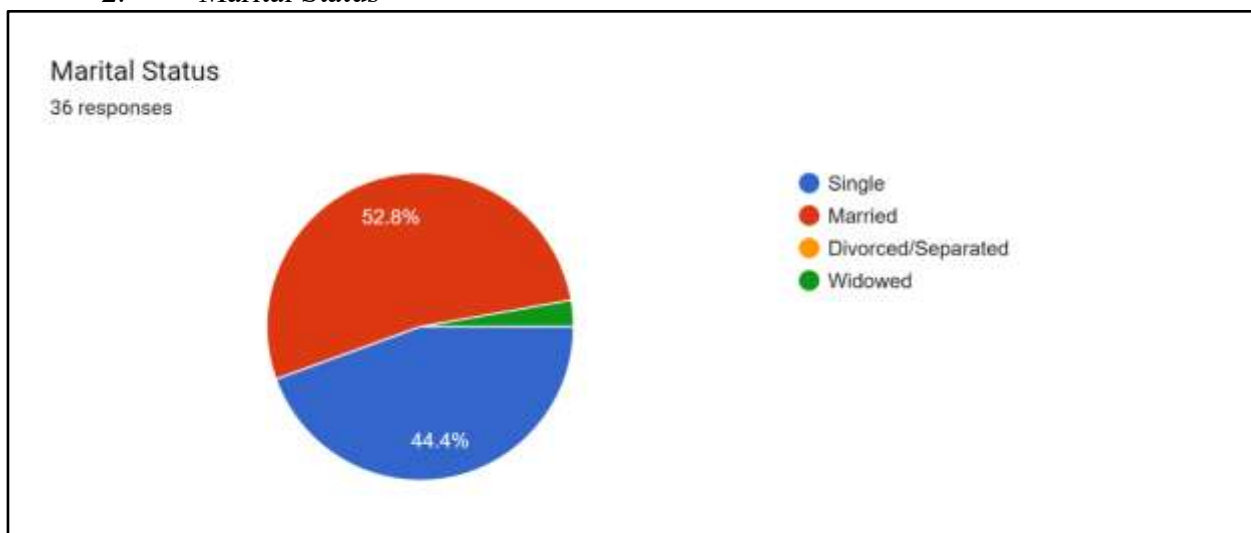
2. Marital Status

Chart No: 2

Interpretation: According to the above chart majority of the respondents are married with 52.8% respondents coming under the same criteria. 44.4% respondents are single

3.   Number of Children

Number of Children
36 responses
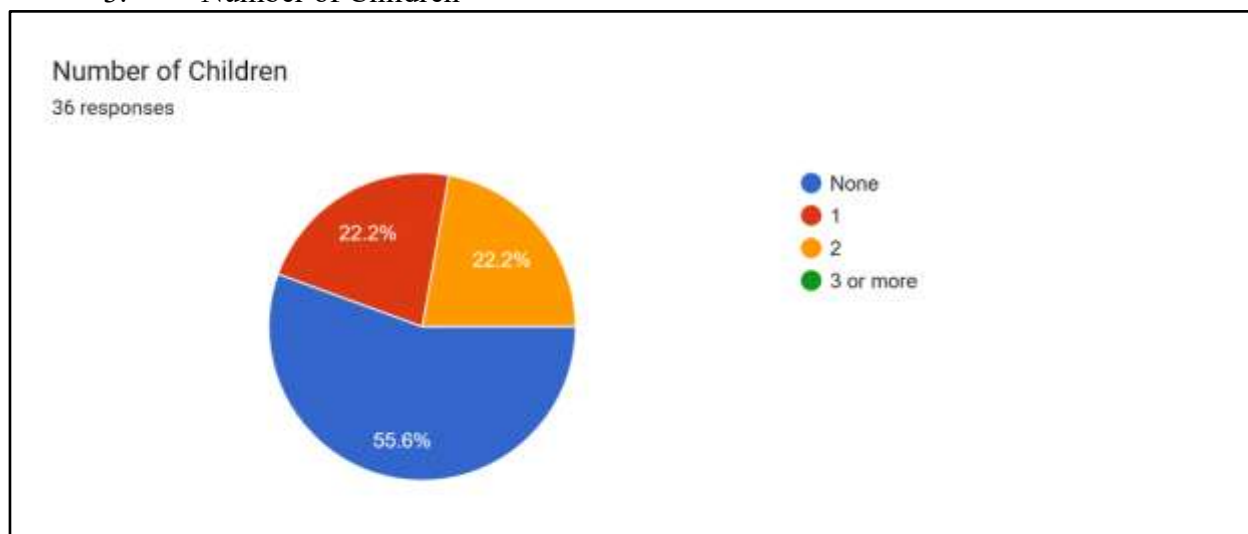
Chart No: 3

Interpretation: According to the above diagram out of total number of respondents almost 19 respondents did not children. 22-2% (7 respondents) had one and two children respectively.

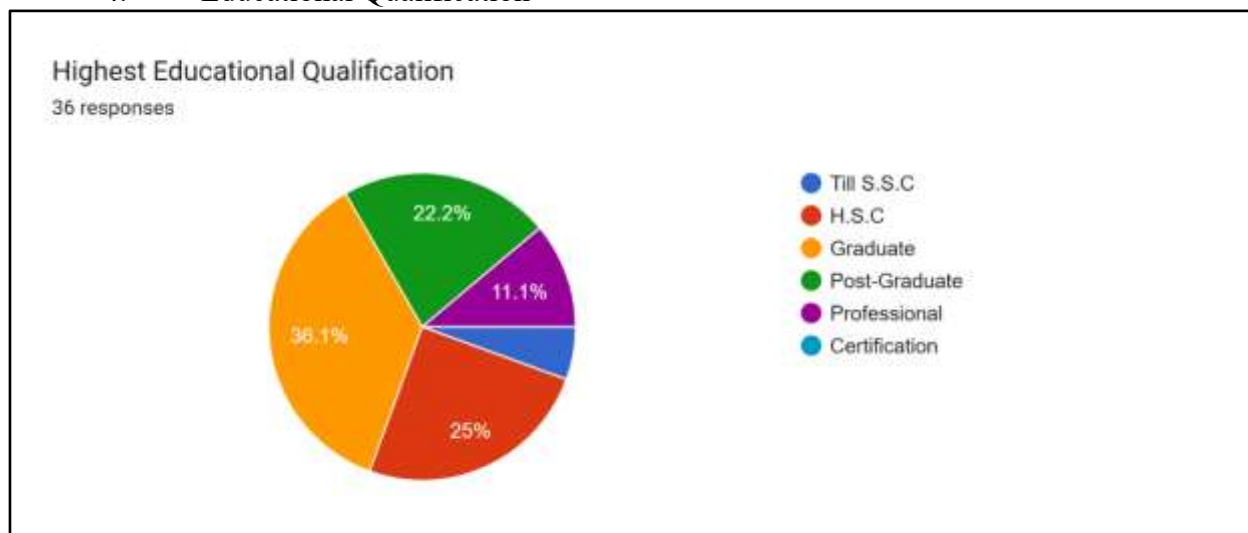4.   Educational Qualification

Highest Educational Qualification
36 responses

Chart No: 4

Interpretation: According to the above diagram and research taken majority respondents were Graduates i.e. 36.1% (12 respondents). The second highest qualification that respondents had, they were HSC cleared (9 respondents) and almost 7 respondents i.e. 22.2% were post graduate.

5.   Previous Work Experience
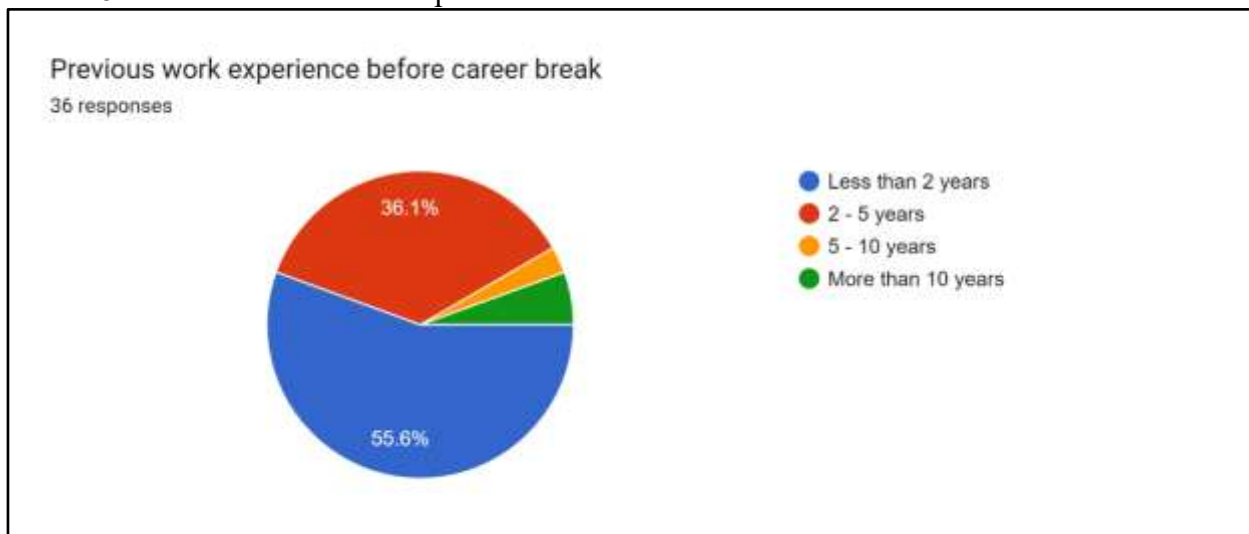
Chart No: 5

Interpretation: According to the above diagram before taking a career break almost 55.6% of the respondents had less than 2 years of work experience (19 respondents). 36.1% of the respondents had experience ranging from 2-5 years (7 respondents) and only 5.6% of respondents i.e. 2 respondents had more than 10 years of experience before taking a career break
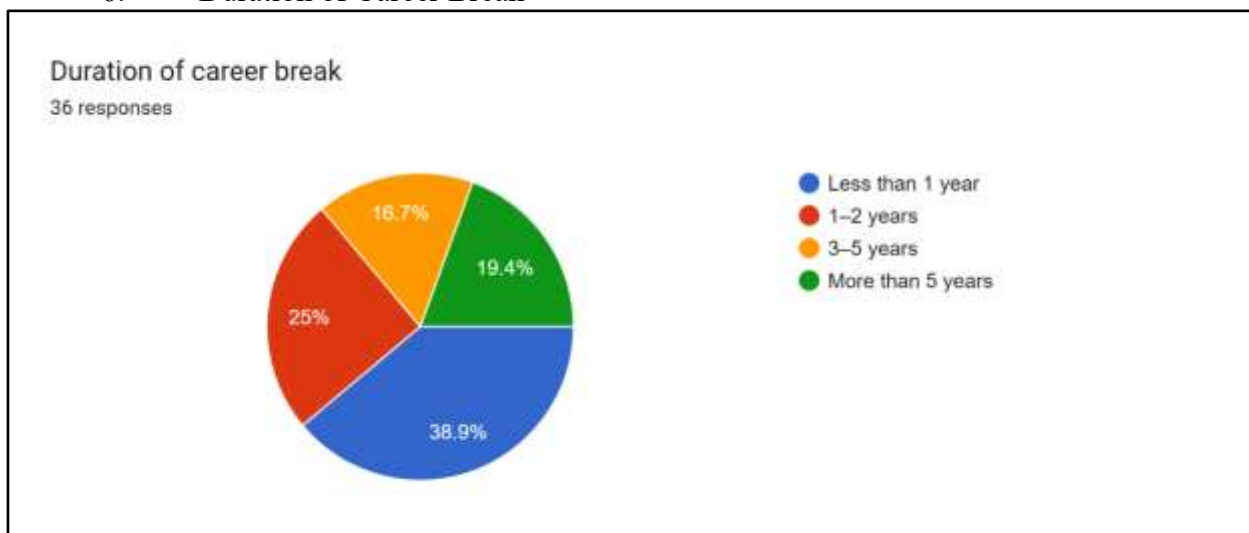
6.   Duration of Career Break

Chart No: 6

Interpretation: According to the above chart almost 38.9% respondents have taken break of less than 1 year (14 respondents). Almost 25% of the respondents have taken break from the range of 1-2years. (9 respondents). Almost 19.4% (7 respondents have taken a break for more than 5 years).
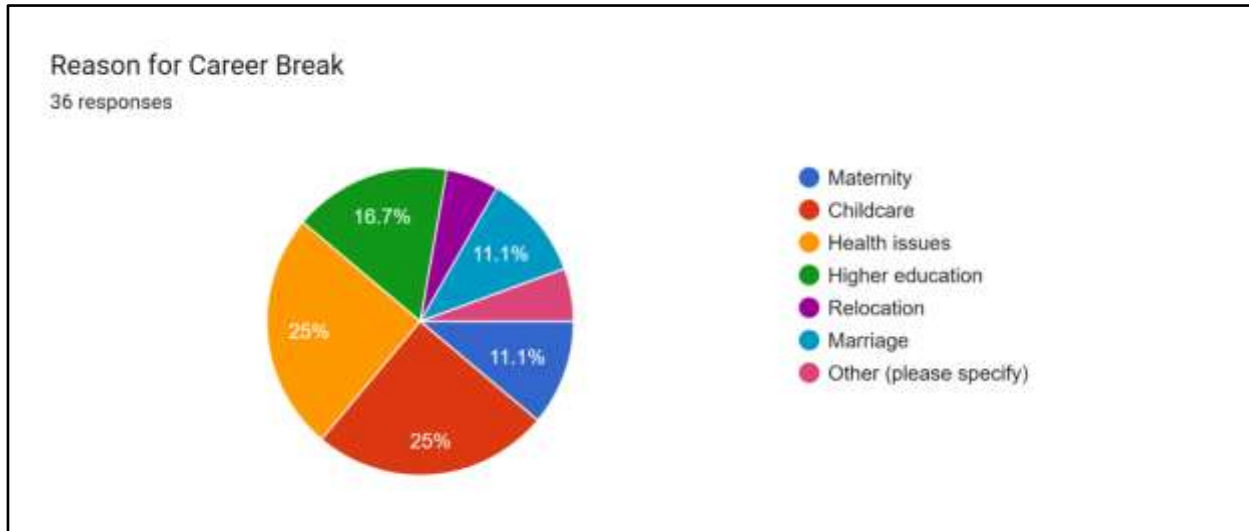
7.   Reasons for Career Break

Chart No: 7

Interpretation: According to the above diagram two issues due to which maximum respondents have taken a career break is Child care and Health Issues with 25% respondents (09 respondents voting for same.) Higher Education has also been a popular reason for a Career Break with 16.7% respondents voting for it (06 respondents). Maternity and Marriage got the lowest votes for a Career Break with 11.1 % respondents (04 respondents) voting for same.
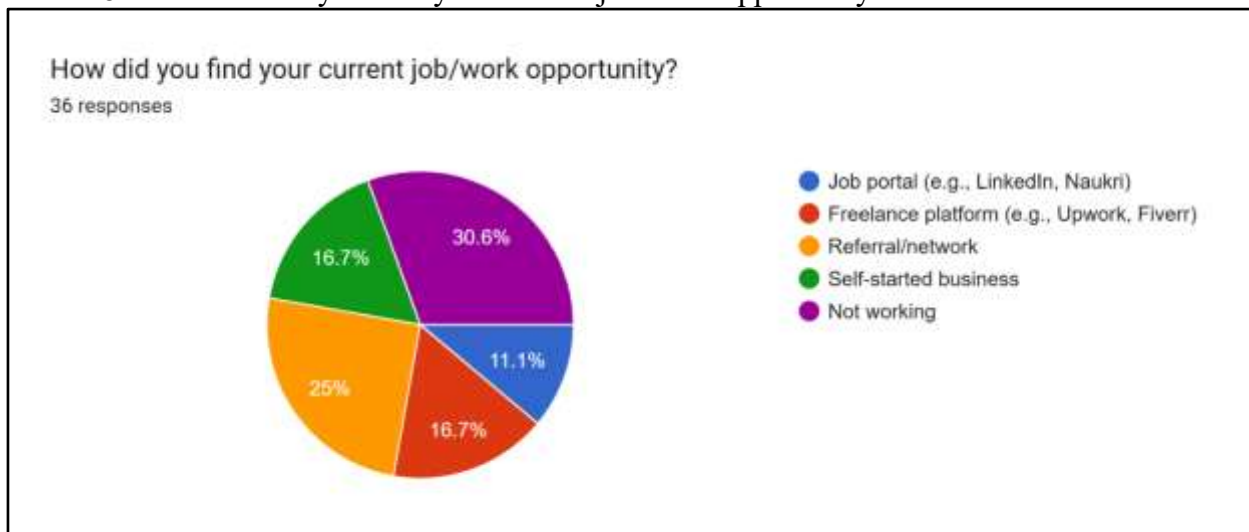
8.   How did you find your current job/work opportunity

Chart No: 8

Interpretation: According to the above diagram about 25% (09) respondents have got their job from reference or networking with friends. 30.6% of the respondents are still on the career break while 16.7% (06) respondents have started their own business so that they can work on their own terms. While the same percentage of respondents are working with platforms that provide free lancing jobs. Only 11.1% (04) respondents have gone through the professional route to find a perfect job for themselves.
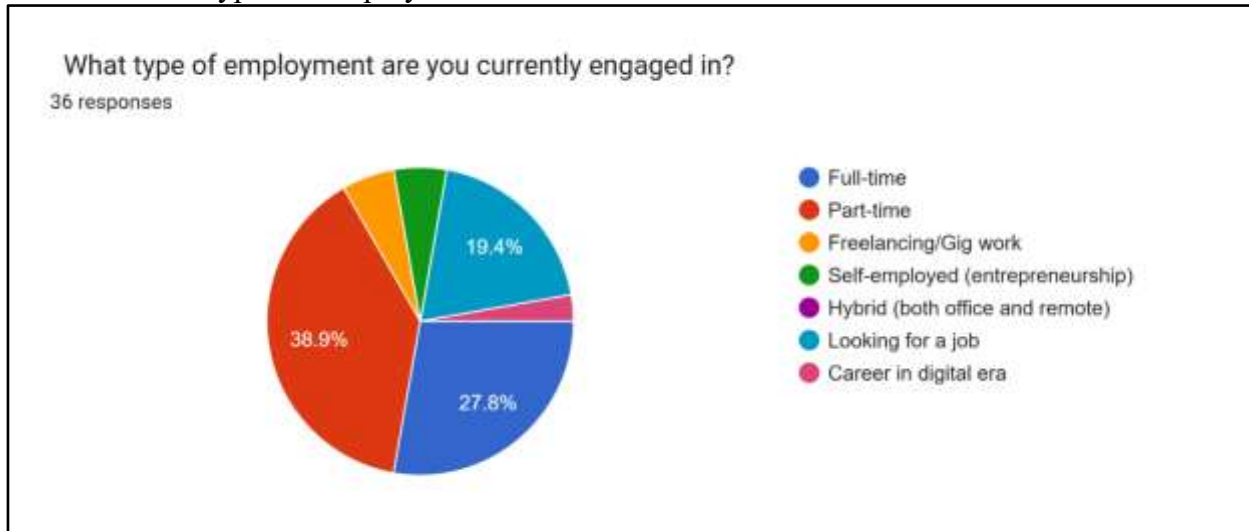
9.   Types of Employment

Chart No: 9

Interpretation: According to the above diagram majority of the respondents (38.9%) stated that they are working as a part time, where 27.8% respondents have claimed that they are again kick starting their career with full time employment. Equal numbers of respondents are working as a free lancer or are self-employed and were working for their own venture.

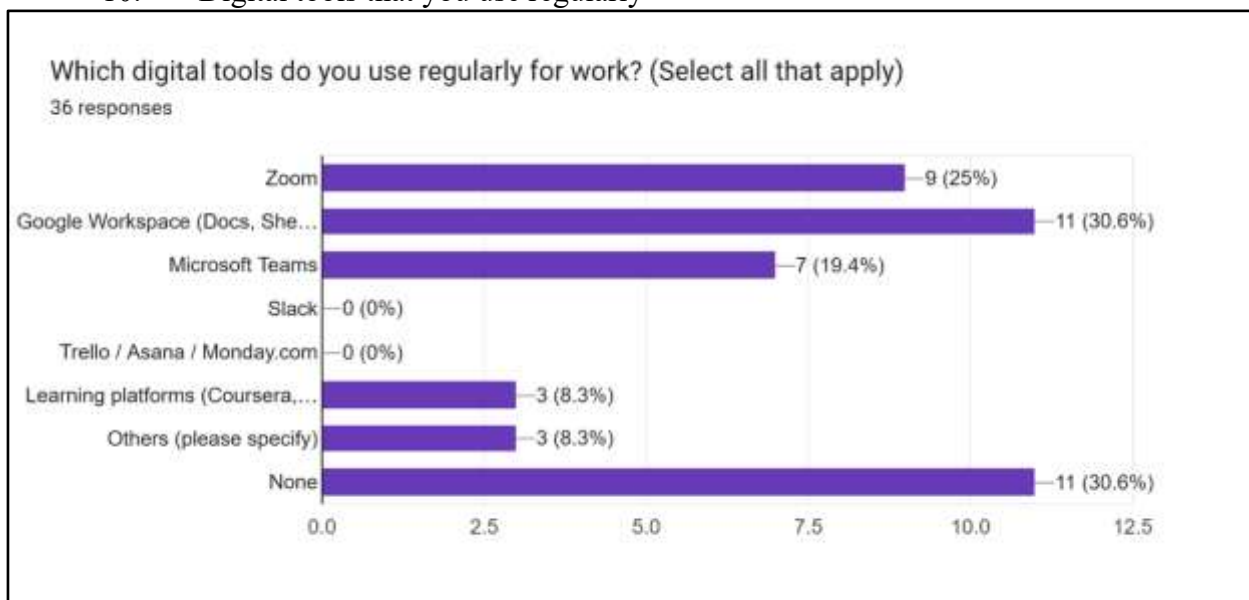10.   Digital tools that you use regularly

Chart No: 10

Interpretation: According to the above diagram maximum respondents i.e. 30.6% are very comfortable with using Google Workspace. 25% of the respondent's uses zoom regularly while Microsoft is also popular software among the respondents with almost 19.4% respondents voting for the same. Learning platforms like courser were also voted by 8.3%.

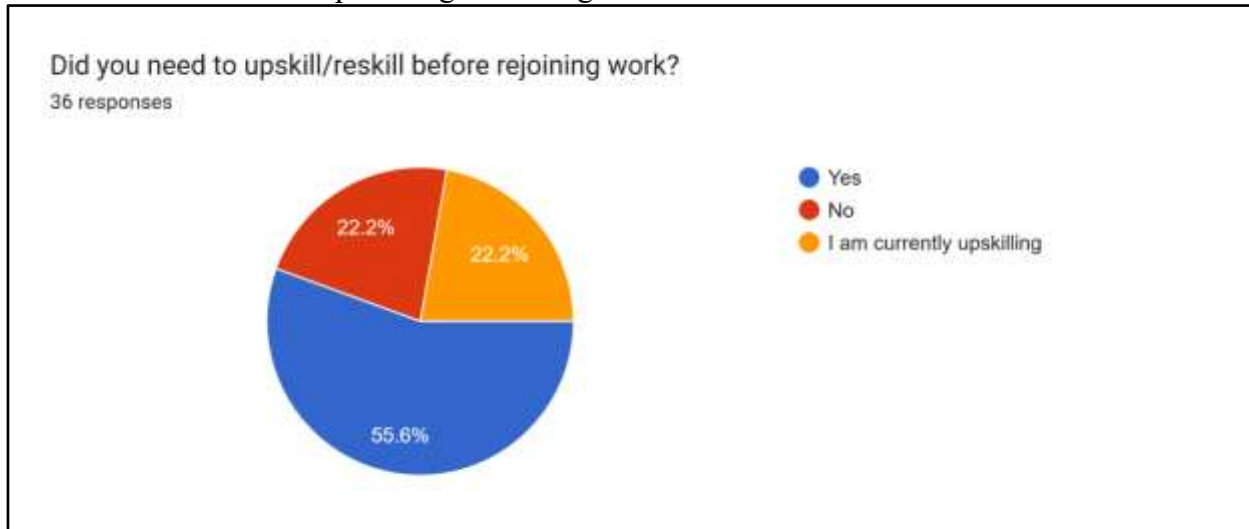11.   Need for up skilling/ reskilling

Chart No: 11

Interpretation: According to the above chart 55.6% (20 respondents) said that reskilling or upskilling was the need before joining digital work. 22.2% (08 respondents) said that they never needed extra skills to make a career in digital workspace. While 22.2% (08 respondents) said they were still in the learning process and thought that the process of learning was still going on for them.
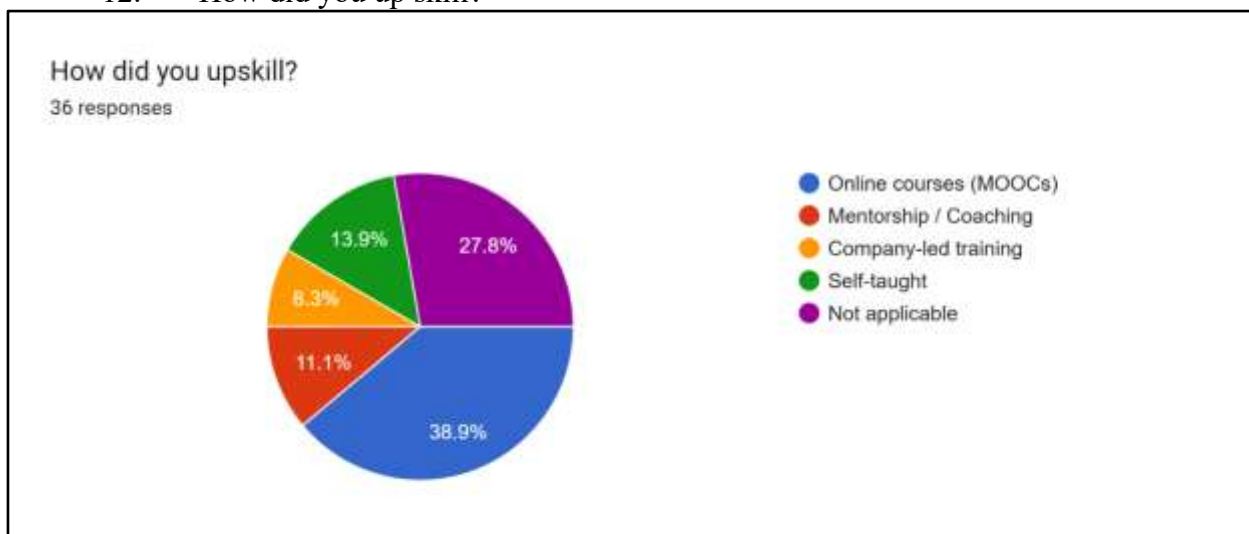
12.   How did you up skill?

Chart No: 12

Interpretation: According to the above pie-chart Online courses were the main platforms to learn digital content with almost 38.9% (14 respondents) voting for the option. 11.1% aid that they opted for offline coaching in order to learn online coaching while 13.9% respondents stated that they themselves took initiatives in learning new contents while 13.9% (05 respondents) said that it was an organization's initiative in making them learn about online venture.

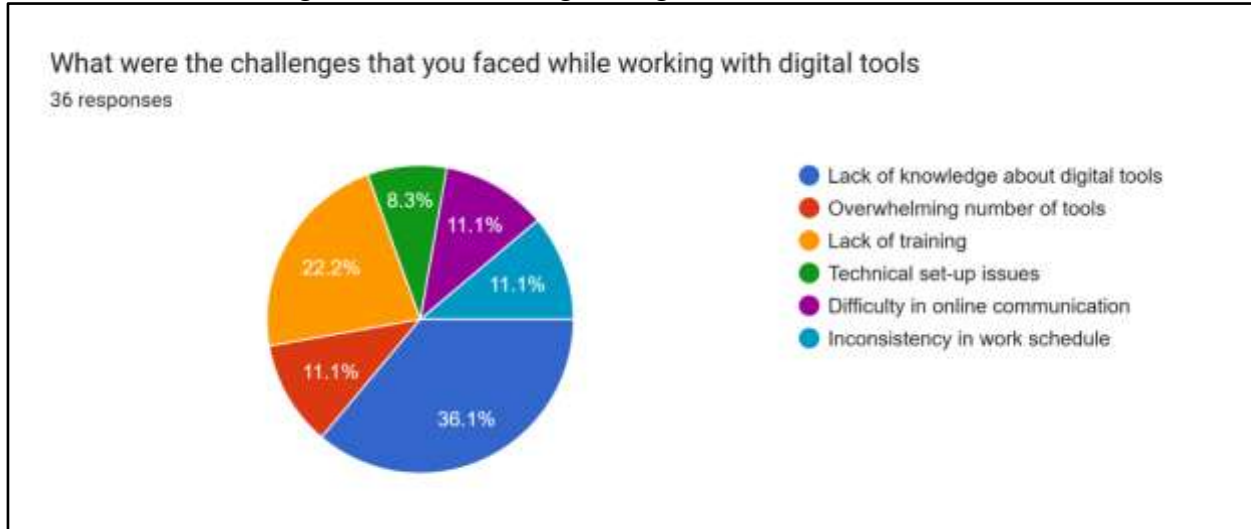13.   Challenges faced while using the digital tools

What were the challenges that you faced while working with digital tools
36 responses

- ● Lack of knowledge about digital tools
- ● Overwhelming number of tools
- ● Lack of training
- ● Technical set-up issues
- ● Difficulty in online communication
- ● Inconsistency in work schedule

Chart No: 13

Interpretation: According to the above diagram the major challenge that candidates faced before entering into the digital space was lack of knowledge and scope of digital space with almost 36.1% (13 respondents) voting for the same. While 22.2% said that lack of training was one of the major challenges faced by them). 11.1% (04 respondents) said that difficulty in online communication and Overwhelming digital tools were also a part of the challenges they face in their digital journey.
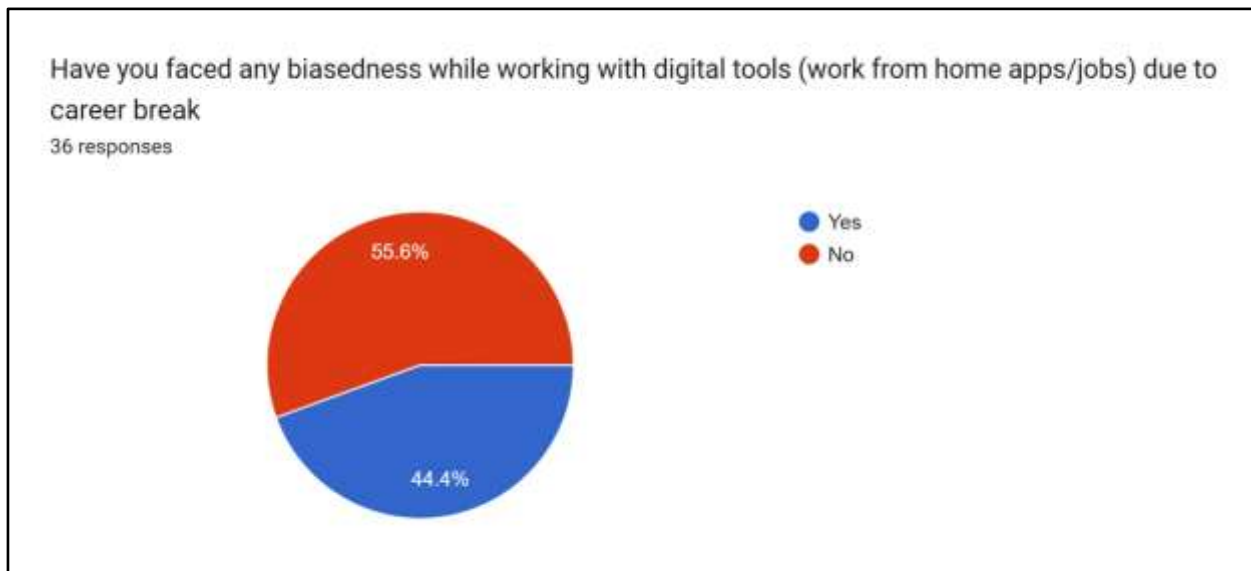
14.   Have u faced biasedness

Have you faced any biasedness while working with digital tools (work from home apps/jobs) due to career break
36 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No

Chart No: 14

Interpretation: According to the above chart while 55.6% respondents stated that they did not face any biasedness 44.4% stated that they did face biasedness in the digital space due to the break taken.
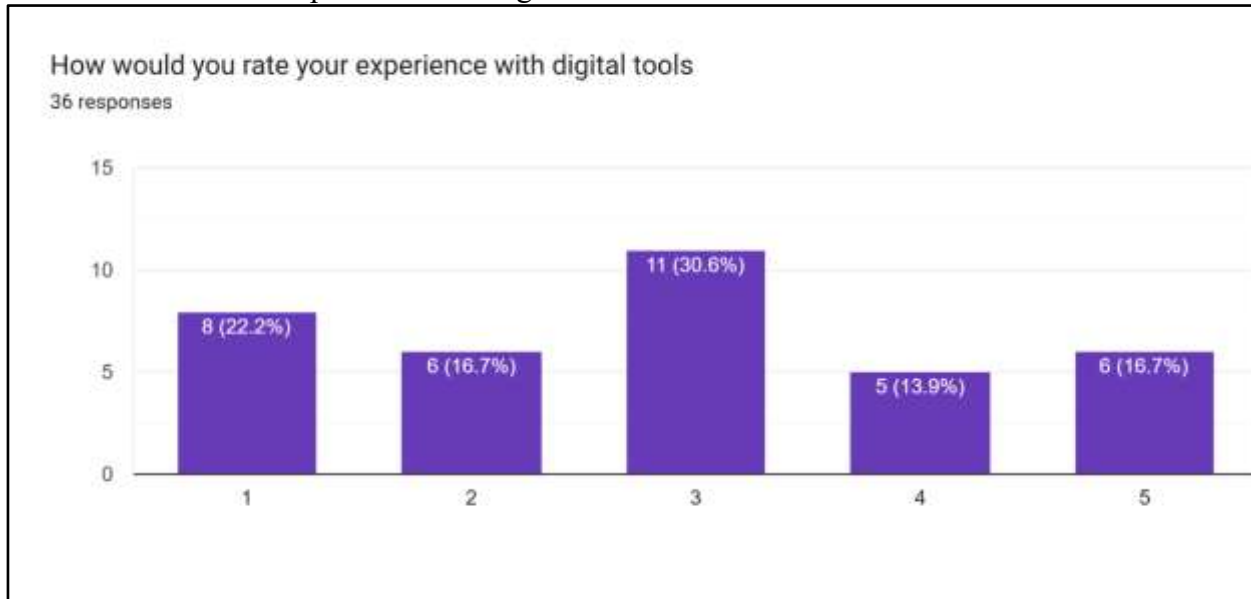
15.   .Your experience with digital tools

Chart No: 15

Interpretation: According to the above chart 30.6 % respondents said that working with digital tools average and were either very difficult or easy. While 16.7% stated that it was easy but 22.2% said that working with digital tools was very difficult as a process.
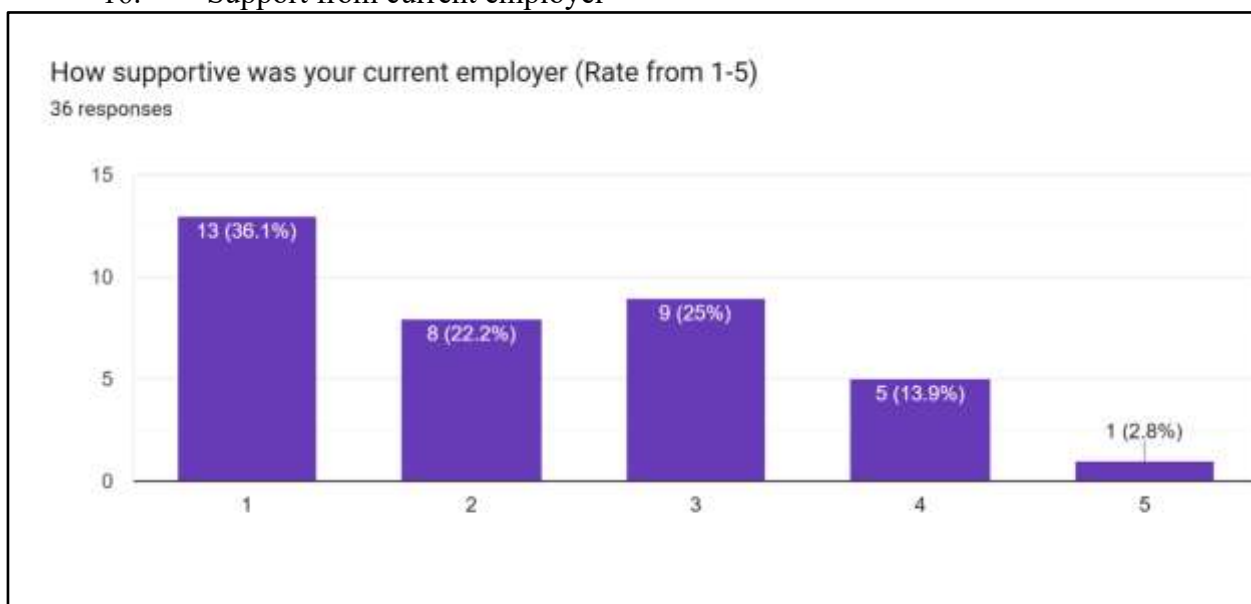
16.   Support from current employer

Chart No: 16

Interpretation: According to the above bar diagram 36.1% said that their employer were extremely supportive while they were learning about the digital tools while only 2.8% (01respondent) said that employer were not supportive of them learning new digital tools.
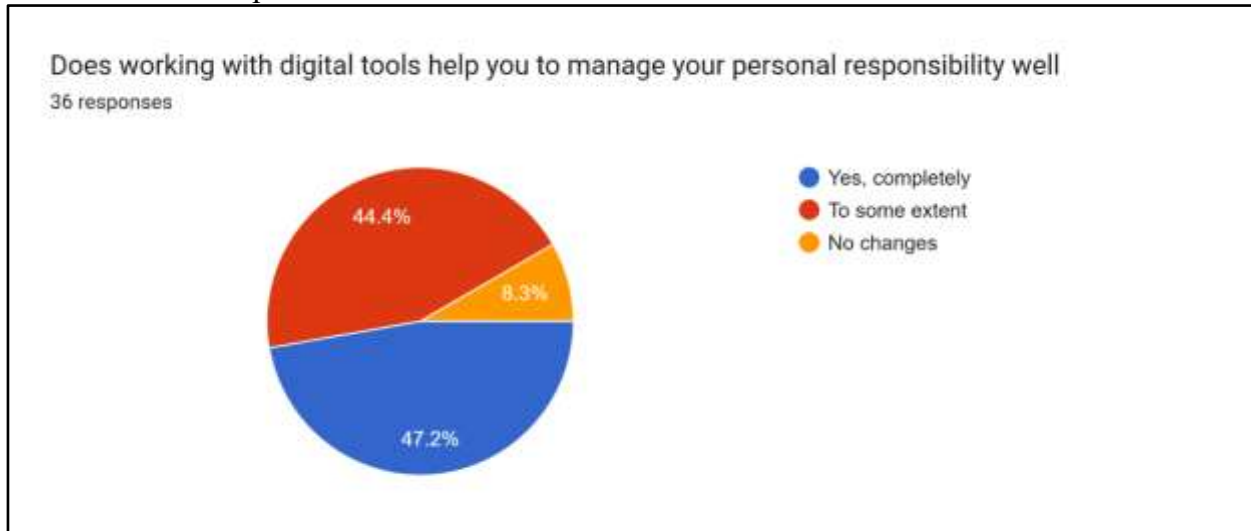
17.   Helps to balance work-life

Chart No: 17

Interpretation: According to the above diagram almost 47.2% (17 respondents) stated that while using digital tools/ remote work place option they could manage work life balance better. While 44.4% (16 respondents) said that not fully but definitely partially balancing home was better. Only 8.3% said that digital work space did made any difference in handling their personal responsibility.

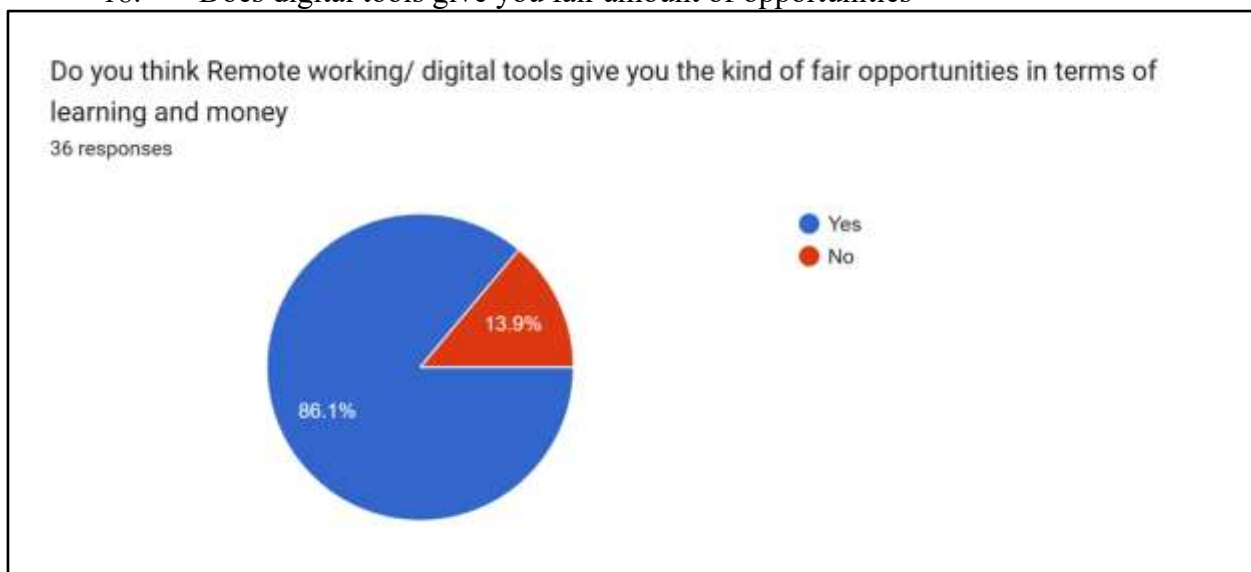18.   Does digital tools give you fair amount of opportunities

Chart No: 18

Interpretation: According to the above diagram majority of the respondents (86.1%) said that yes digital tools did give those fair opportunities in terms of money, learning and experience. It means that majority are in favor that taking up digital jobs would never mean compromising with their careers.

FINDINGS

1.   **Age and Marital Status:** Most respondents were young, between 20–30 years (58.3%). More than half (52.8%) were married, while the rest were single.
2.   **Children:** Over half of the respondents did not have children, while some had one or two.
3.   **Education and Work Experience:** Most were graduates (36.1%), followed by HSC pass respondents. Before their career break, more than half (55.6%) had less than 2 years of work experience.

4. **Length of Career Break:** The largest group (38.1%) took a break of less than 1 year. Childcare and health issues were the most common reasons for a break (25% each).

5. **Employment After Break:** Part-time jobs (38.9%) were the most preferred way to return to work. Others chose full-time jobs, freelancing, or starting their own business using online platforms. Thus accepting H1 (Work from home and digital tools help women return to job/career after a break.)

6. **Use of Digital Tools:** Google Workspace (30.6%) was the most commonly used tool, followed by Zoom (25%) and Microsoft tools (19.4%).

7. **Upskilling Needs:** More than half (55.6%) felt the need to learn new skills before joining back. Online courses were the most common way of learning (38.9%).

8. **Challenges:** The main problems faced were lack of knowledge about the digital space (36.1%), lack of proper training (22.2%), and difficulty in online communication. Thus accepting H2 (Digital tools and remote work options do bring significant challenges and opportunities for women returning after a career break.)

9. **Bias and Support:** 44.4% experienced some form of bias due to their career break, while 36.1% said their employers were very supportive when learning new digital tools. . Thus accepting H2 (Digital tools and remote work options do bring significant challenges and opportunities for women returning after a career break.)

10. **Work–Life Balance:** Almost half (47.2%) said that remote work and digital tools helped them balance work and home better, and 44.4% said it helped to some extent.

11. **Opportunities from Digital Tools:** A large majority (86.1%) agreed that digital tools gave them fair opportunities for earning, learning, and gaining experience. Thus accepting H3 (Remote work options and Digital tools do help women to strike better work life balance)

CONCLUSION

Women on a Career break have consistently faced a lot of challenges. While for some the break may be for a small period of time for some it may last for long years. Compromising on careers for a better and healthy home has been one of the key issues faced. No amount of qualification and capability has helped them take their career seriously. Now was the time to appreciate and highlight the importance of Digital tools and online platforms that could change the course of direction for women waiting at home for better opportunity that is less time consuming, more convenience and has better career prospects. It is necessary to highlight that how comebacks could be easy and stress free for a woman.

This paper highlights reasons and duration for career breaks along with what work options are woman ready to take after a career break. Remote work options and digital tools are changing the scenario of today's working culture. Challenges and opportunities associated with the same were also highlighted in the paper. It is also necessary to understand whether these digital tools were actually making an impact on a better work life balance or were actually just changed method of getting your job done.

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