



STAY AT WORK

RAS REPORT

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Executive Summary

In India, traditionally, mothers bring up children and many women do not have child care support at home nor do many employers have flexible working hours or creche facilities at the workplace, that could give women the chance of having a fulfilling career. As a result, several women give up the idea of a career or end up quitting their jobs after having children and the percentage of working-age women who are economically active in the country (21%) is far lower than the global average of 47%. In other words, 79% of Indian women (aged 15 years and above) do not even seek work. Deep rooted cultural and traditional beliefs, the burden of housework and childcare, as well as domestic violence are seen to be some of the key reasons for India's abysmal female workforce participation.

Vipla Foundation conducted a study to assess the aspirations of women with regards to career and skill development, levels of awareness as far as jobs and current demand of skills were concerned and their existing support system as well as challenges faced. The study also explored the desire of these women to pursue a career or get into the labor market, if given an option of child care support.

The present study provides a better understanding on how women are often required to prioritize domestic work, particularly if they are married due to the cultural and societal expectations of women as caregivers. Survey women stated that their principal activity was domestic work because they were required to do so. With the burden of household chores steadfastly resting on their shoulders, 47% of respondents said that they never thought about their careers, while 76% said they do not think about what they wanted to become in life. Mounting family responsibilities, child care and a depleting interest over time are the major reasons.

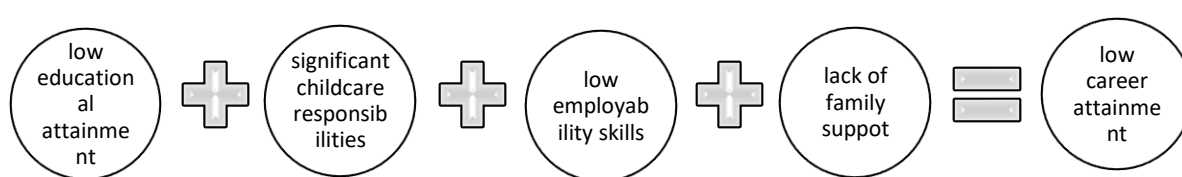
The group of women in this sample had low education levels with only 9% having completed their grade XII examinations and 56% who had not even reached grade X, with 40% of the women having married below the legal age of marriage. With limited support from the family there is little chance that they would achieve further educational milestones on their own. Existing basic skills – English levels and Digital literacy, as self-reported are shown to be below par and 55% said that they would like to gain skills, while 33% said that they would like to study further,

Notably, 76% of the households have children aged below 6 years, requiring a higher involvement of time and effort in child care duties which primarily lies with the mother, limiting her current scope for any self-growth or achievements. The study also found that 79% (192) of respondents do not have someone at home to take care of their children. Moreover, it was seen that 55% of the children not going to school, were aged 3-6 years and not enrolled in any pre-primary Balwadi or institute, which can potentially lead to these children also being disadvantaged, going ahead in the long run.

The study highlighted that several (47%) women had no career aspirations or if they did they did not pursue it. Findings show that women currently have desires to be in paid employment largely due to their adverse financial conditions. However, only 9% of respondents reported they are currently working. Of the 91% who are not working, the study found that 16% of respondents are not working because they had to stay at home to

look after children followed by too much household work (15%), no skills to get a job (15%), less education (14%), can't leave the home for long (12%), and 20% said that their family and spouse do not allow them to work. 55% of respondents who said that they would like to work said they are interested in doing any office related work and any private-sector jobs and the majority of them aspired to get salaries of 15000 at least. Respondents were also asked if they would be able to take upskilling, working or both in case they were supported with childcare and 30% said that could do either skilling or work if they had that option.

Smartphone ownership was high becoming a major facilitator for online skill acquisition, though adaptability may have to be worked on. However, when presented with enabling options such as the provision of free data, language options, handholding and the prospect of getting a certificate at the end of it or improving the chances of getting a job, a significant number of them responded positively and favorably.



Data reveals that household and child care responsibilities are keeping respondents away from the workforce. The study highlighted that survey respondents feel that childcare, family responsibilities are hindering their re-entry into the workforce. However, it is important to address the issue of childcare and flexible work to initiate positive social norms that encourage the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work burden. This group of women with low educational attainment and skills who are living financially unstable and dependent lives in marginalized urban pockets would definitely benefit from an intervention that focuses on developing their skills and helping them become employable. Further, supporting them with child care facilities and counselling their families would go a long way in empowering them to take up careers.

No	Key Data points	%
1	% Women in the sample who are certified in vocational training	10%
2	% Women in the sample who have gone for interviews	2%
3	% Women in the sample working currently	9%
4	% Women in the sample with a basic level of Spoken English	13.5%
5	% Women in the sample with certification in market demand skills such as BPO & Retail career readiness	0%
6	% Children who were not going to school and not enrolled in a Balwadi	55%

Introduction

We know from past research that women tend to take on more household responsibilities and taking care of children. According to data from the National Family Health Survey and the National Sample Survey Office, the presence of children aged 0-5 is a strong predictor of dropping out of paid work. The primary reason that women engaged in “domestic duties” (including childcare) gave to NSSO surveyors in 2011-12 for not being part of the workforce was that there was no one else to carry out their domestic duties.

According to the study conducted by the Genpact Centre for Women’s Leadership, “it is a well-documented fact that the Indian workforce is tilted in favor of men and skewed against women. While there are few entry points for women, the exit gates are many – pregnancy, childbirth, child care, elderly care, lack of family support, and unsupportive work environment. These factors create a leaking pipeline that hinders women from reaching leadership positions” (Ladhani, S., 2019).¹ The study further asserted that women have expressed challenges at four levels. At an individual level, most said that they felt guilt. At the level of family, they said that there was a feeling of “compromise”. Another predominant reason women gave was that supervisors felt that they were unproductive and inefficient. Social norms in India that dictate that women should stay at home and take care of their children also play a role in lower workforce participation (Genpact Centre for Women’s Leadership, 2018).

The 68th round of the NSSO (2011-2012) survey found that the predominant reason for mothers not searching for jobs was the desire to focus on their children and family responsibilities, with up to 64% of women saying they have no choice as far as taking up child care in the household was concerned, as there is “no other member to carry out the domestic duties”. “Even women who have family support or can afford to pay for child care have a lot of guilt. This is because of the social conditioning of women that their responsibility is to bring up children².

Further, researchers at the Universities of Bristol and Essex³, examined how childbirth affects employment and career progression and the findings suggest that women still suffer economically and are often ‘stuck’ at work as a result of taking on childcare responsibilities, while there’s no impact on fathers. Another survey of 1,000 women working in the Indian capital of Delhi, and its neighbouring areas found that only 18-34% of married women continued working after having a child. Moreover, very few employers provide flexible working hours or creche facilities, so many working mothers end up quitting their jobs after having children.

¹ Women should just not have children anymore. Engendered Co. <https://medium.com/@engenderedco/women-should-just-not-have-children-anymore-27aa666d1694>

² Arya, D. (2015, April 23). Why motherhood makes Indian women quit their jobs <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-32377275>

³ Employment pathways and occupational change after childbirth, 2019 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840062/Bristol_Final_Report_1610.pdf

About the proposed intervention

Vipla Foundation plans to in partnership with the Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC), a suburb in the district of Thane, Maharashtra and the communities and schools falling under MBMC. The intervention will target women and children in these communities. On the one hand, it aims at strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education services offered by the corporation and extending it with Home Daycare, for children to have safe, secure and conducive learning and growth home environment. At the same time, it aims to provide access to marketable and employment-oriented skills training and job training to mothers of young children, to support their aspirations and motivate them to avail job opportunities. When women are empowered economically, they invest in their families and communities, spurring economic growth and creating more stable societies. The project aims to provide suitable alternate possibilities of child care for those women who stay out of the workforce due to a lack of viable at the same time reliable alternate options for child care.

The proposed project hence will focus on creating and strengthening an alternate home childcare system to help women reach their economic potential and secure opportunities within their local economies. The intervention has the potential to benefit women's increased workforce participation in the long run.

About Vipla Foundation

Vipla Foundation (VF) formerly known as Save The Children India, is a nonprofit organization established in the year 1988, that envisions India as a Child-Friendly Nation. VF is committed to preventing exploitation and all forms of discrimination of vulnerable women and children, and empowering them to lead a life of dignity, self-respect, and independence. There are three core areas that the organization works in - disability, education and anti-human trafficking. The disability intervention includes a school for the hearing impaired and for the mentally disabled and Dhvani - an early intervention for children with hearing impairment. VF's Education vertical works on early interventions for pre-primary children and also runs a remedial programme called 'Patang' for children in state-run schools from marginalized communities. VF has a strong presence in the state of Maharashtra and is known in the country for its pioneering work in combating trafficking through prevention, protection and prosecution projects in 10 districts in Maharashtra.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study was to assess the aspirations of women, career awareness, job acquisition, current employability, skill level, vocational skills, child care and support as well as understanding the opinion of women regarding paid work.

Methodology

1. Study Design and Approach

This study was conducted using a quantitative method of data collection. The study was conducted using a questionnaire with residents of selected communities in the slums of Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation, Thane, Maharashtra.

2. Sample

The study team used convenient sampling to select respondents in each area. As we were exploring the aspirations of women in the age group of 18-50, who are already identified by the VF during the mobilization phase of the project and meet the criterion that they have taken care of their children. Women who have quit jobs, just want to start work and children aged 3-6 living in communities in Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation.

3. Organization and Management of Data Collection

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed covering information on the array of issues ranging from household characteristics, educational qualification, career aspiration, career awareness, job acquisition, current employability, skill level, vocational skills, child care and support. The tool was created by the VF team, reviewed and was coded and uploaded on Kobo toolbox 20. Data was entered in Kobo using tablets and analyzed in excel using standardized statistical methodology.

A team of 6 project staff were assigned to conduct the data collection from targeted areas. Data collectors were trained on the tool virtually. They piloted the tool and their inputs were incorporated.

Identification and selection of area for the study were based on purposive methods and convenience and the Field plan and pre-arrangement was conducted for the study. Data collection was tracked every day for accuracy and completeness, through the usage of the online app.

4. Data Assertion Mechanism

In this study, the quality of data has been given primary attention. Experienced team leaders were assigned fieldwork. In order to increase the compliance of participants, the team leader explained the purpose of the survey, ensured confidentiality and established goodwill with the respondents before asking questions. Questionnaire filling started only after the enumerators read out the consent form and the respondents voluntarily agreed to participate. The team leaders/enumerators conducted the interviews in settings where questions and answers could not be overheard by others and the interviewers engaged in a rapport-building conversation before asking questions to reduce the likelihood that respondents may give socially desirable answers rather than the truth. The fieldwork was closely supervised and monitored by the M&E- Manager from Save The Children India for accurate and authentic data collection.

5. Ethical Considerations

The privacy of the respondents was respected in all phases of the study. Informed verbal consent of the respondents was taken before data collection. Through verbal consent process, the type and purpose of the survey, discussions or interviews; issues of vagueness and confidentiality; voluntary participation and freedom to discontinue the interviews/discussions at any stage; and absence of any known risk or benefit for participating in the study were briefed earlier. Confidentiality of all findings was ensured with all participants anonymized and with no mention of any respondents' identifiable personal descriptions.

6. Data Analysis

Primary quantitative data from the survey was captured and analyzed using Excel. To meet the general and specific objectives of the study; a descriptive quantitative method of data analysis was employed. The socio-demographic characteristics using frequencies, tables and graphs, were determined using descriptive statistics. Cross-tabulation was conducted to see the association between variables, this primary data was decoded, verified, analyzed and interpreted. Furthermore, information gathered from quantitative sources were summarized and presented in form of tables, graphs and narratives. The survey analysis focused on the important indicators of the Project.

7. Geography of the Study

The present study is mainly based on the primary data collected from the communities across Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation through the door-to-door survey. As part of the primary survey, quantitative information was collected to know the aspirations of women in relation to their educational qualification, current employability skill level, vocational skills, family support in the study area. Data collection was done in the month of September 2021.

Findings and Analysis

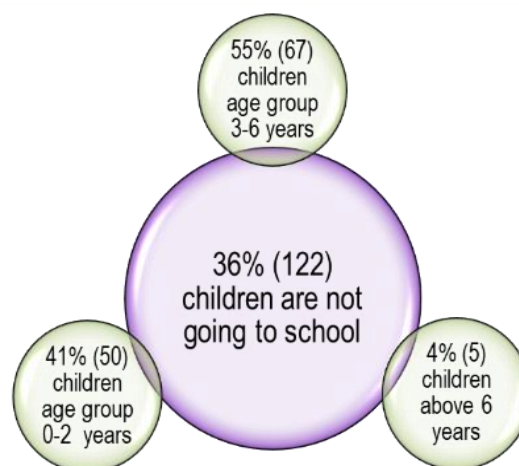
A. Demographic Profile of the Sample

A total of 244 women aged 18-50 years across the communities of Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation completed the rapid assessment survey. The larger portion of respondents was in the age group 25-34 (60%) followed by the age group 18-24 (19%), 35-44 (18%) and 45 years or more (2%). As far as educational qualifications are concerned, data depicts most respondents had low education levels with about 56% (137) not having completed their grade 10, 28% (69) had completed their grade X education, 9% (21) grade XII and about 2% (6) were illiterate. The majority of 84% (205) of respondents had done their schooling from Government schools/colleges.

95% (232) of 244 respondents said that their husband is the primary earner in their family and most of them earned their livelihoods through private jobs (32%) and were also largely engaged in informal work such as driver, dhobi, cleaner (30%), daily wage earners (22%) and Micro Entrepreneur/shop owner (9%). Household income levels of 70% of the respondents were less than or equal to INR 20000 per month.

In this study, 95% of respondents are married followed by 2% who are separated, 2% widowed and 1% of women were deserted. The study reveals that 40% of respondents got married below the legal age of marriage (18 years). The average family size is 5 members. 99% (241) of respondents said they had a child, of which 51% had a female child and 49% had a male child. 81 (34%) families had at least one child and 160 (66%) families had more than one child.

Data of a total of 343 children were collected during the survey. 40.5% (139) of children are between the age group 3-6 years followed by 16.9% (58) age group 0-2 years and the 42.6% (146) age group 7-17 years respectively. 64% (221) children are enrolled in schools, while 36% (122) children are not going to school. Out of 122 children who are not going to school, 55% (67) belongs to the age group 3-6, 41% (50) are aged between 0-2 years and 4% (5) are above 6 years.

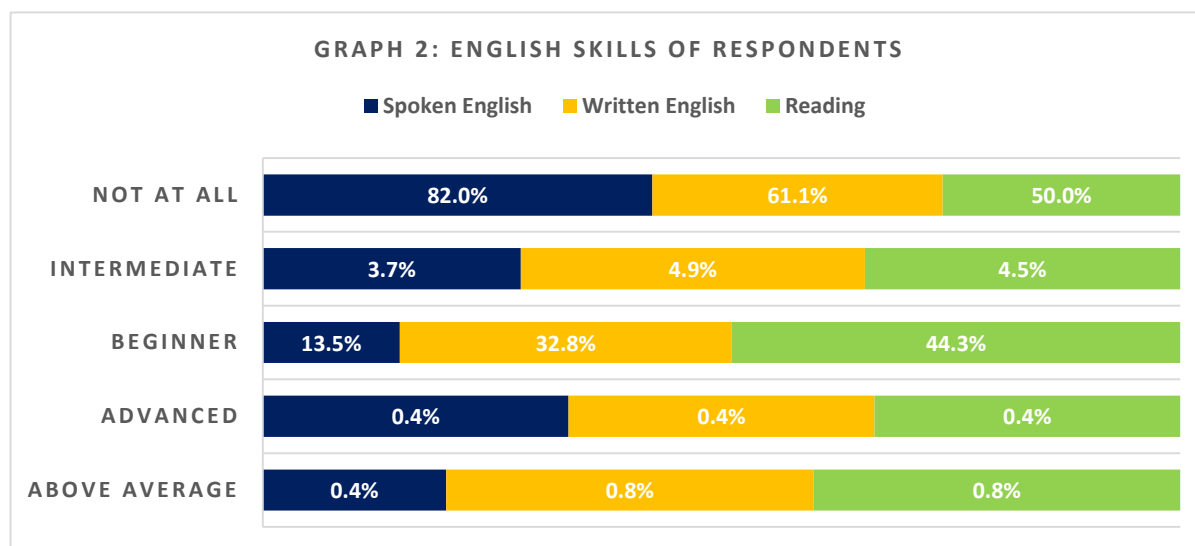


Graph 1: Child Data

B. Skill Levels of Respondents

B.1. English Skills of Respondents

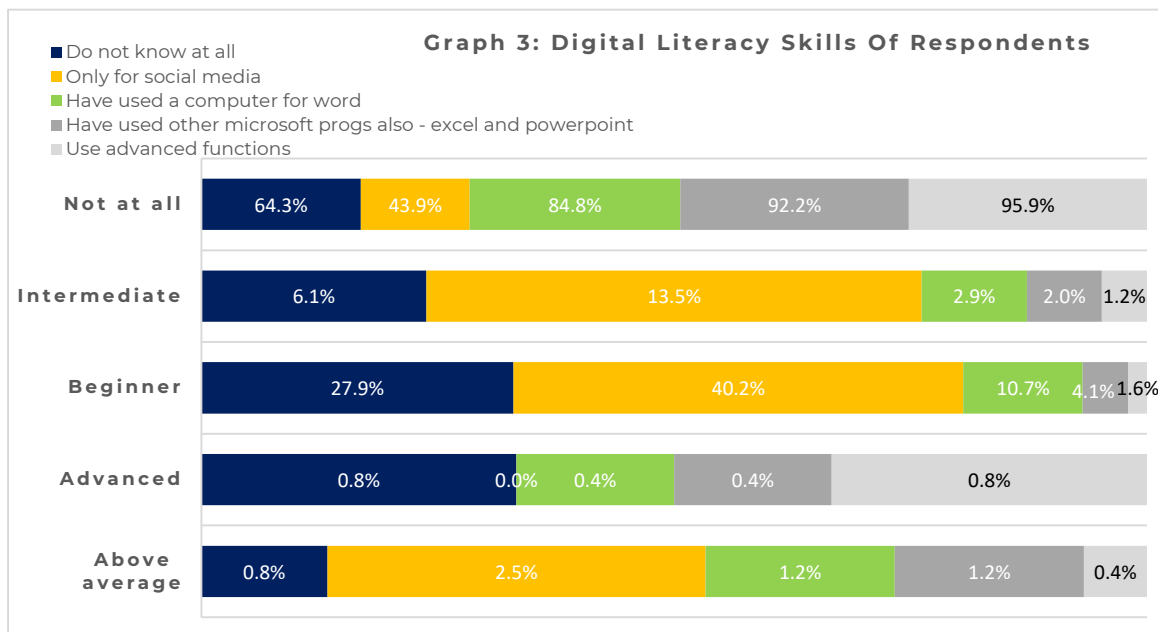
To assess respondents' English skills, respondents were to rate themselves on a scale of 1-5.



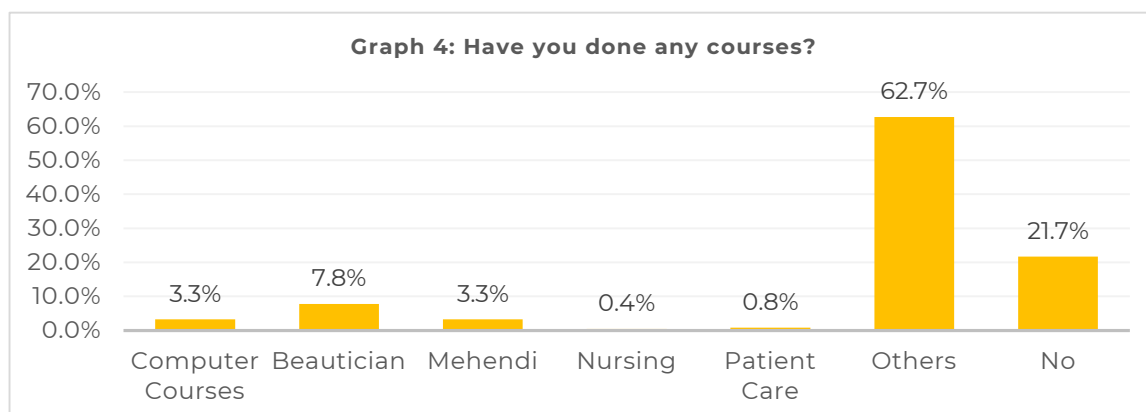
82% of respondents said they cannot speak English well whereas 14% said they are at a beginner level and less than 1% said that they speak English at an 'above average' or 'advanced' level. **61% of respondents said they cannot write in English at all**, whereas 33% said they are beginners and less than 5% said that they are at an intermediate level as far as writing skills were concerned. As for reading skills, **50% of respondents said they cannot read English**, and 44% said they can at a beginner level.

B.2. Digital Literacy Skills of Respondents

To assess respondents' Digital literacy skills, we asked respondents to rate themselves on a scale of 1-5. **The data shows that digital literacy is low among the survey respondents**, 64.3% saying that they do not have any digital skills at all and 96% of respondents said that they have never used Microsoft programs such as Excel, PowerPoint or Word. However, 54% said that they can use social media at a beginner and intermediate level while 44% also said that they do not use social media at all.



Respondents were also asked about the vocational skills that they have and the majority of respondents (63%) said they have done courses such as tailoring, painting work, cooking etc. followed by beautician courses (8%), *Mehendi* courses (3%), computer courses (3%).



14% have got the certificate on

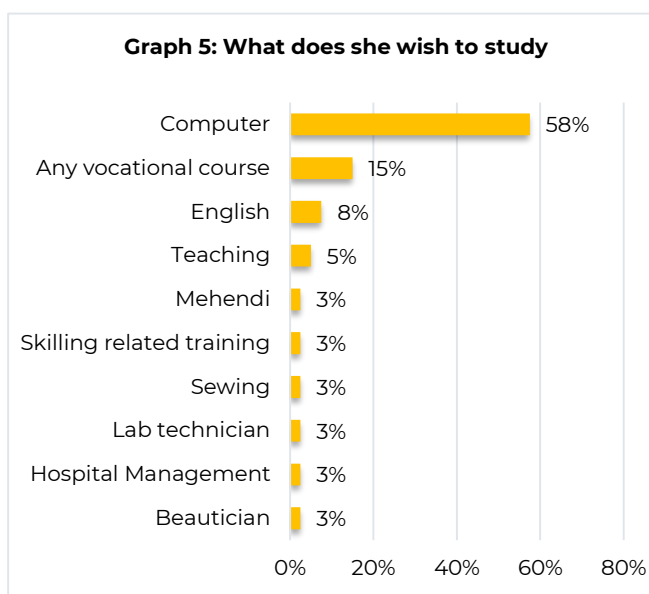


10% have utilized the skills acquired from the

C. Aspirations

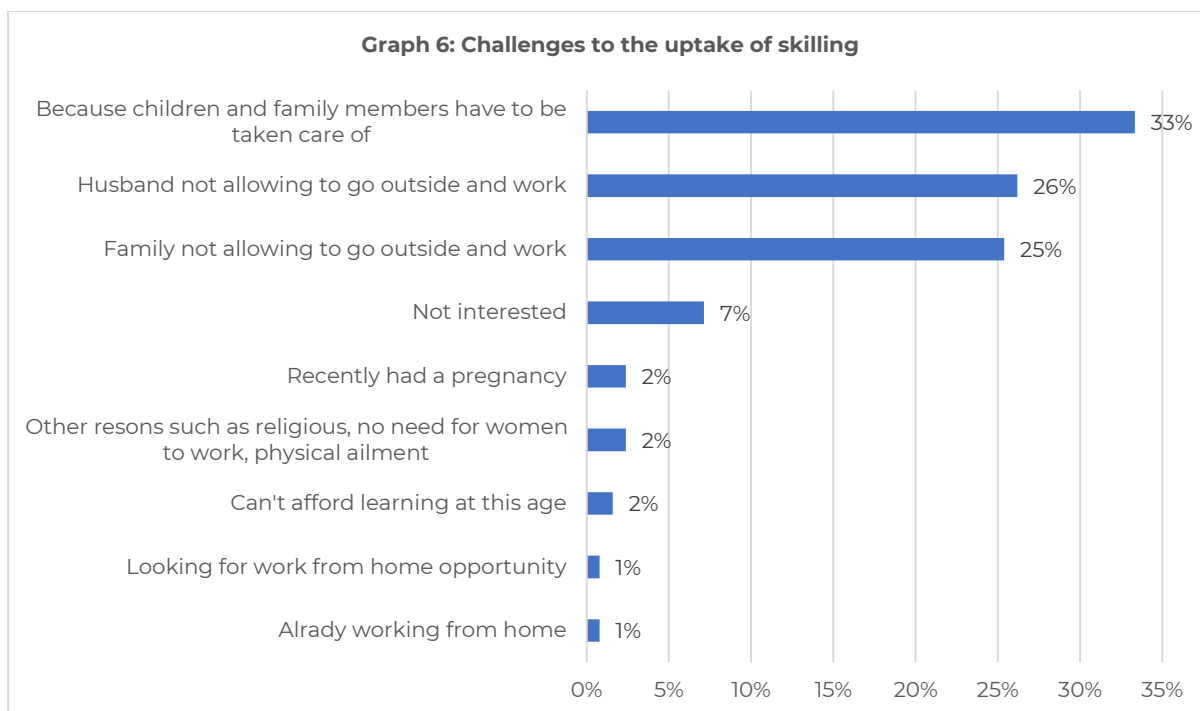
When asked about their desire to study further, 33% of the respondents said that they wish to study further.

When asked if they wished to study anywhere other than school - vocational or technical education 16% of respondents said that they wish to study any vocational or technical education anywhere other than school. Of which 58% respondents said they wish to study computer courses, followed by any vocational courses (15%), English course (8%), teaching courses (5%), Mehendi (3%), skill-related training (3%), sewing (3%), lab technician (3%), hospital management (3%) and beautician (3%).



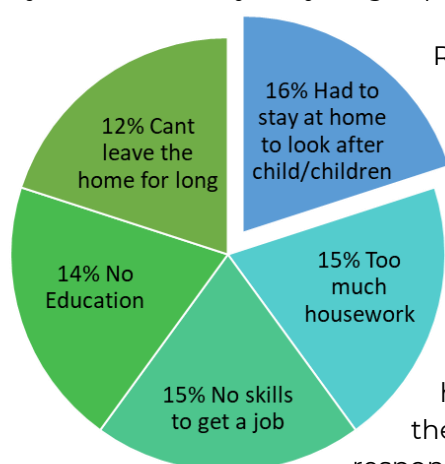
Most of them have said that they wish to take up these courses ***to gain more knowledge (58%)*** followed by 13% who were interested in studying it to ***get a better job*** and 8% said it will help them to ***earn money*** easily. ***73% of respondents said they wish to study from home or somewhere nearby home (25%).***

48% of the respondents said that their family members would support them if they were given an opportunity for skill training. The study also delved into potential challenges that candidates would face if they would like to take upskilling and to this - 33% said that children and family members should be taken care of, followed by husband not allowing to go outside and work (26%), family not allowed to go outside and work (25%) whereas 2% said they recently had a pregnancy.



Career Aspirations

Before exploring the career aspirations of respondents, the study looked for insights on awareness levels of existing careers and what they thought the common jobs of other community members were. Findings show that most of the respondents 34% (83) are not aware of any jobs or careers, while 11% (26) mentioned jobs such as doctors, 10% (25) said driving and delivery-related jobs, 9% (23) spoke about teaching and 7% (18) knew about private company jobs. Furthermore, 17% of the respondents think there are jobs in and around their locality, while 83% of the respondents said that there are no jobs available in their community. Most of them (33%) did not know the kind of jobs that neighbours and other community members were employed in, though 25% said that members in their community were mainly in private jobs and 19% mentioned driving and delivery-related jobs, followed by daily wages (7%) and part-time jobs (5%).



Graph 7: Reasons of not working

Respondents were asked about their earliest aspirations – on what they wanted to work in or be when they grew up and 47% said that they never thought about a career, while 14% said that they wanted to be a teacher, followed by 5% each saying a beautician and a nurse. When they were asked whether they still had that aspiration, 24% said they still think about what they wanted to become in life – of which, 30% said they have the skills to do it, followed by 'to earn good money (22%), 'job is stable' (18%), it will help their family's financial status (11%). When asked about their aspirations in the current situation, most of the respondents (35%) said that they currently have no job aspirations.

On the other hand, 14% said they want to be a doctor, followed by teachers (14%), private company jobs (6%), 12% of the respondents want to become beauticians, tailors and nurses.

Additionally, 9% of the women reported that they are currently working – of which, 29% were working as daily wage earners, another 29% as micro-entrepreneurs, 24% as domestic workers and 14% work part-time at home. As far as their income was concerned, 76% of survey respondents have a salary per month of INR 5000 or less.

Of the 91% who are not working, the study found that 16% of respondents are not working because they had to stay at home to look after children followed by too much household work (15%), no skills to get a job (15%), less education (14%), can't leave the home for long (12%), and 20% said that their family and spouse do not allow them to work.

Data reveals that household and child care responsibilities are keeping respondents away from the workforce.

Respondents were further probed if they want to work now or were looking for a job and ***45% said that they would be keen to get a job and earn money.*** Of which 55% of respondents said they are interested in doing ***any office related work and any private sector jobs*** whereas 16% said they want to work from home and 11% said that they would be like to work as a teacher. Again, when asked why they would want to work now 24% respondents said ***they want to work to earn money***, followed by to support the family financially (17%), 9% said because the job is easier and 9% said the work is easier, to gain good experience (8%). The same question on the need to work was asked twice once with aspirations and then with reasons for working and common answers emerged, depicting that the need ***'to earn money and 'support the family financially'*** was a primary driving force for employment in this sample. Only 6% of respondents reported that they have tried to look for a job before. They all say that they did this by asking for help from their relatives. Only 2% said they have attended any interviews and 3% said they had found a job, but left that job.

Attitudes towards jobs being gender-based were explored and ***10% of the respondents believe that there are specific jobs for girls and specific jobs for boys whereas 90% did not think so.*** From those who believe in gender-specific jobs, most of them (60%) believe driving-related jobs are for boys while 8% think boys can do any jobs (8%) and 4% of respondents said that household work is only for girls. Moreover, 52% said boys get more training than girls and 32% felt that boys anyway get more jobs than girls. Going further, only 6% (15) of respondents said that if they found any job that boys usually do, they would take it, while ***94% (229) did not want to do jobs that are traditionally meant for boys. As far as salary expectations go, 93% (14) expect a salary of INR 10000 while 7% (1) are expecting a salary of INR 25000 or more.***

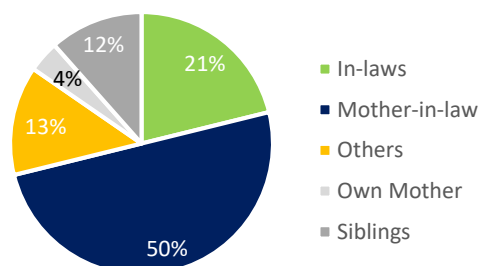
Factors affecting the take-up of a job was also looked at and only 34% of respondents said they would travel if they found a job of their choice, while 24% of respondents said nearby home location is fine and 8% said any location is fine. ***56% of respondents said that they would have no problems at home if they had to commute a long distance*** for a job and a meagre 13% said it would be okay to work late.

D. Child Care Available

The study found that 79% (192) of respondents do not have someone at home to take care of their children.

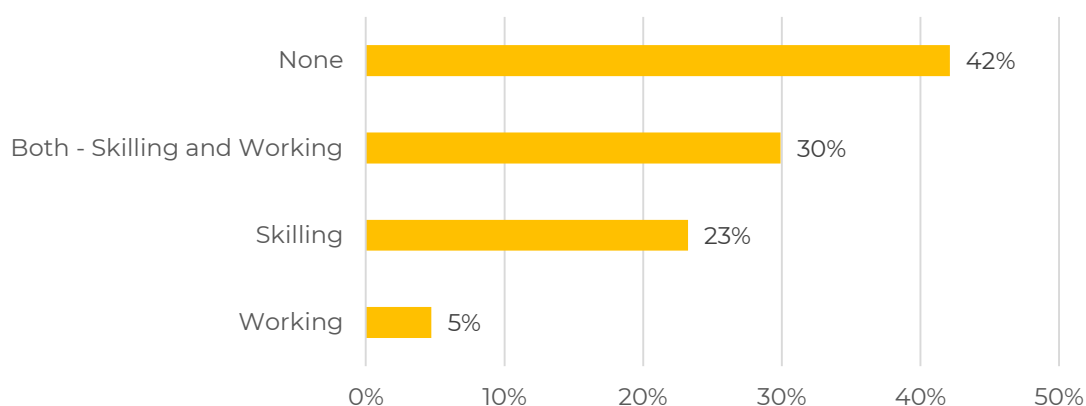
21% (52) said they have someone at home to take care of their child. 50% (26%) specifically said their mother-in-law is the primary caregiver to their child/children, 21% (11) other in-laws such as an uncle, aunty, father-in-law, 12% (6%) said that siblings looked after the child at home. Also, 4% (2) said their own mother is a secondary caregiver for their children at home. The study highlights that survey respondents feel that childcare, family responsibilities are hindering their aspirations, entry and re-entry into the workforce.

Graph 8: Who is the primary care giver for children at home



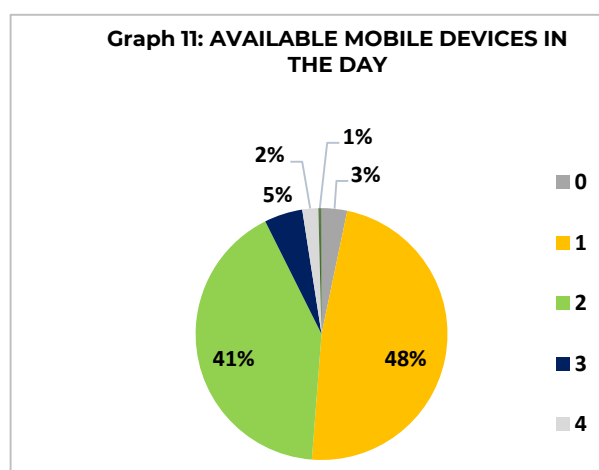
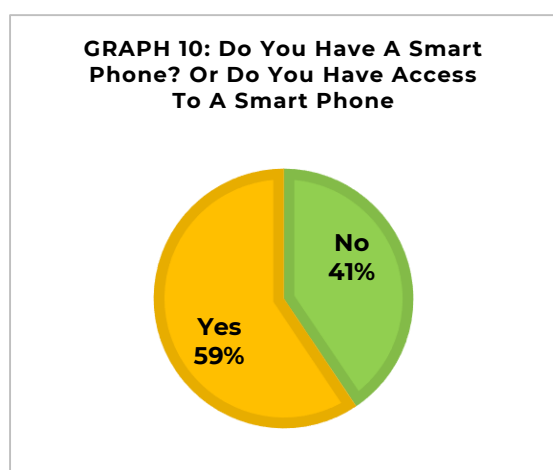
Respondents were asked if they would be able to take upskilling, working or both in case they were supported with childcare and 42% did not seem to appear to pick any of the choices, however, 30% said that could do either skilling or work if they had that option. Further 23% chose to skill and only 5% exclusively said that they would like to work.

Graph 9: If you received support for child care, would you take up any skilling or working opportunity

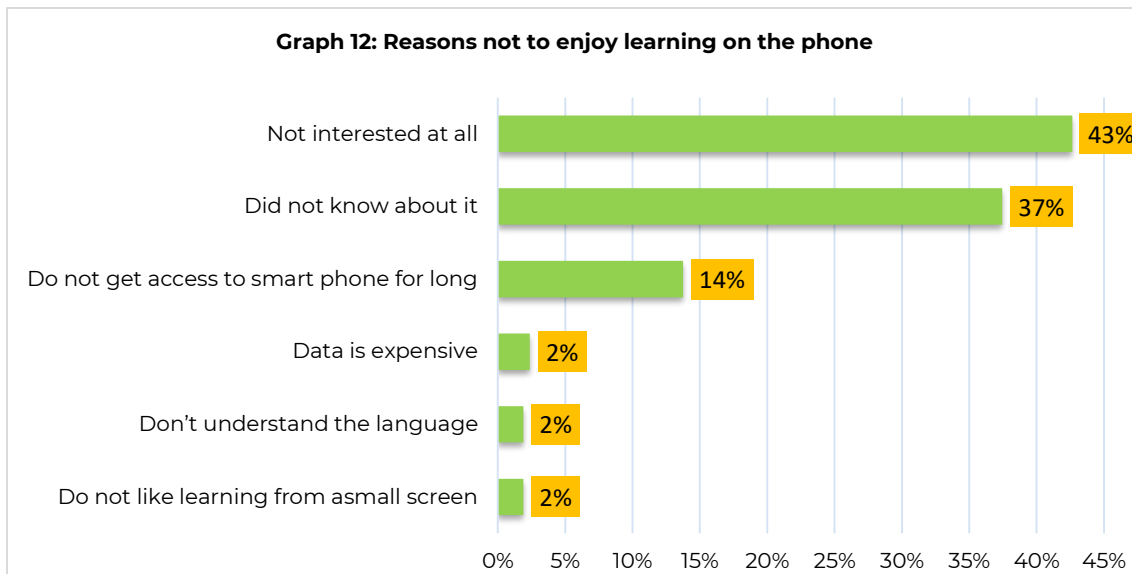


E. Smartphone Ownership and Adaptability

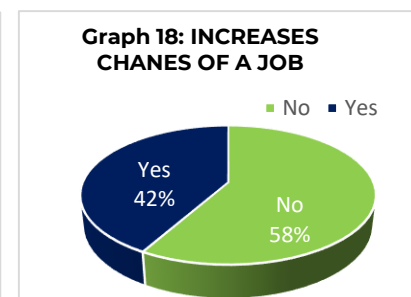
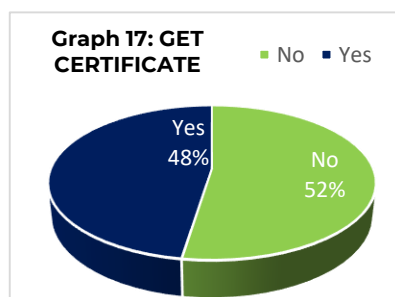
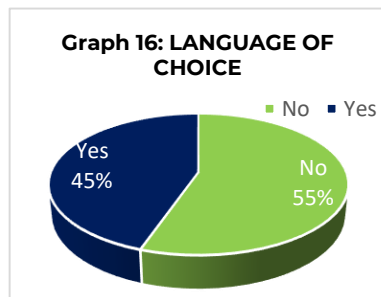
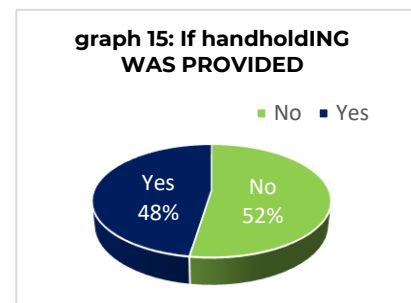
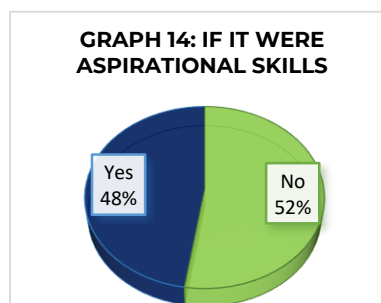
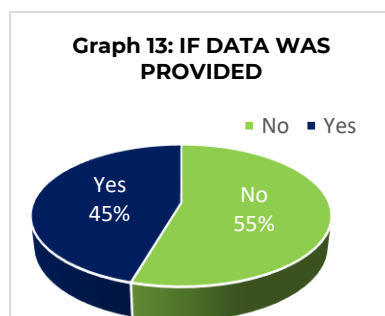
Smartphone ownership, accessibility and self-reported adaptability levels were explored in the study and the findings show that majority of respondents (59%) said they have a smartphone or have access to one. Respondents were asked about the availability of mobile devices with internet connection in the home and **48% of the respondents said that they have at least 1 mobile device available**, followed by 41% who said they have access to 2 mobile devices, while 3% of the respondents said they did not have any mobile device with the internet at home. This means **most respondents have mobile devices with internet connections available in their homes during the day**.



The study explored the inclination towards learning on smartphones and found that only 6% of the respondents had previously taken learning/free courses such as cooking and beauty services on a smartphone, despite having smartphones. Further, only 14% of respondents said that they enjoy learning on the phone whereas a larger portion of respondents said they do not enjoy it (86%). **Low interest (43%), lack of knowledge (37%) and no access to a smartphone for long (14%) are the major reasons for the low adoption of online learning.** When asked whether their friends use smartphones to learn new things, 32% of the respondents also said that their friends/family used smartphones to learn new things.

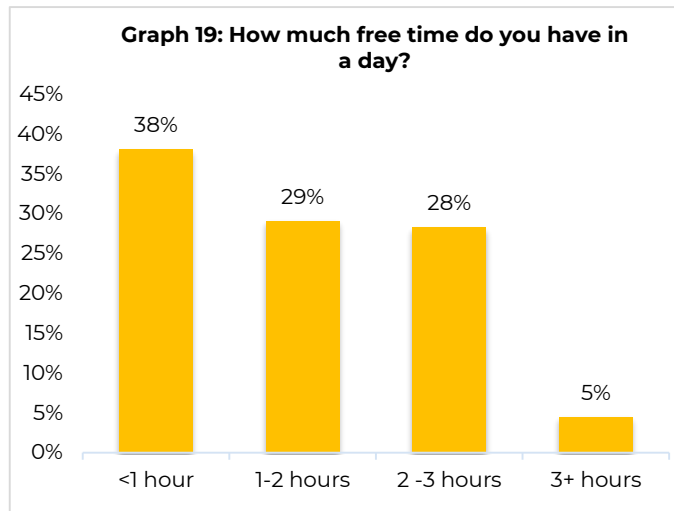


Respondents were then asked if they would try learning something on the phone in their homes, whenever they have the time and at no cost - to which 42% said that they would. Moreover, 45% said that they would if given data free of cost; 48% said they would try to learn if it was a skill that they were interested in, whereas 48% said they would try learning if given support to understand the subject while learning and 45% said they would try learning if it is in a language of their choice



Furthermore, 48% of respondents said they would try learning something on the phone in their home if they will get a certificate at the end of it, while 42% said they would try learning if it might increase the chances of getting a job.

While asking about free time in a day, most of the respondents (38%) said they have free time less than 1 hour followed by 1-2 hours (29%) whereas only 5% have free time more than 3 hours in a day. Additionally, only 16% of the respondents said that they would be able to spend 4 hours every day on learning a skill that could help them get a job, but only 10% of respondents said they are able to go to a centre to get skills. Permission from husband and family responsibilities are the major reasons.



Conclusions and Recommendations

the study aimed to look at the aspirations of women who live in marginalized urban pockets and the respondents were aged between 18 to 50 years, once married and had children. The study delved into the educational and career aspirations of these women who were largely stay at home mothers. The findings showed that 40% of the women in this survey were married before they attained majority, which meant that they would have lower educational attainment and it was confirmed with only 9% having completed their grade XII examinations and 56% who had not even reached grade X. Several of these women will not attain any further educational milestones as they do not have the support of their families to continue studying post marriage, as shown by the data collected here. Moreover, 76% of the households have children aged below 6 years, requiring a higher involvement of time and effort in child care duties which primarily lies with the mother, limiting her current scope for any self-growth or achievements.

In this study, labour market participation is bleak with only 9% currently working - largely in the informal and insecure sector, with the average salary being Rs.4500. These women appear to be financially dependent on their family household income where the main earners are their husbands, who again are employed in sectors that do not provide for adequate financial security. Additionally, the average family size is 5 with the majority monthly household income lying in the bracket of less than or equal to INR 15000, which does not portend any financial stability. Looking at the socio-demographic profile of the women surveyed here, there is a need for additional family income that can aid household financial stability.

Existing basic skills – English levels and Digital literacy, as self-reported are shown to be below par and while 33% said that they would like to study further, 55% said that they would like to gain skills that could help them get jobs and help their families financially. The skills that they would like to acquire are digital literacy (54%) and English proficiency (44%). When looking at career aspirations, the study found that the majority of the women have never dreamt of a career in their childhood nor do they have major aspirations at this stage of their life. However, 45% of women expressed that they definitely want to work due to adverse financial conditions but are unable to do so due to household duties, child care responsibilities and the lack of basic employability skills or those that are market demand-driven. The jobs that found favour amongst this group are any office related jobs, private-sector jobs, work from home and the basic requirements for these jobs would entail acquiring hard and soft skills.

When looking at potential challenges facing the study explored family support, child care, logistical issues, time available, adaptability to online skill training, smartphone accessibility and adaptability and priorities. The majority of the women said that their families and their children have to be taken care of first before they can make the decision on work and when asked if they would consider taking up a skill or a job if they were given childcare support, 23% said they would take up skills, 5% said they could take a job, 30 per cent said that they would take up both job and skills but a large number (42%) said that they would still not be able to. The reason that has emerged from this study is a significant lack of support from the family - 52% said that their family would not support them to acquire skills. Also, lack of anyone to look after their children is a notable issue with 76% of families having children in the age group 0-6 years. The lack of time - 38% said that they have less than one hour of

free time during the day, or the lack of employability skills as reported by them. Additionally, most women said that they would like to take up a job that is located close to their homes.

Smartphone ownership was high becoming a major facilitator for online skill acquisition, though adaptability may have to be worked on, as, even though usage of social media was higher, the actual experience of and interest in online learning was very low. However, when presented with enabling options such as the provision of free data, language options, handholding and the prospect of getting a certificate at the end of it or improving the chances of getting a job, a significant number of them responded positively and favorably.

Recommendations

Though career aspirations were low and not significant, women felt a need to work due to their adverse financial conditions but are inhibited by the lack of family support, education and market-demand driven skills. It is therefore imperative that the intervention focuses on building these skills.

It has emerged that due to the lack of sufficient time women are unable to focus on their need to get financially independent and many have said that if they get childcare support, they might consider skilling themselves or looking for a job. Providing that support would enable the entry of these women into the workforce

Furthermore, the study found that a number of children (40%) who are age-ready to attend pre-school or a Balwadi nearby, were not enrolled, losing precious years of early education. This is a cause for concern as these children will start life missing the benefits of early education, while lagging behind peers. Enrolment of these children in a Balwadi or ensuring that they get the same or similar inputs will help break the cycle of disadvantage and inequity that children from marginalized areas typically face.

One of the major challenges that women will face is the lack of support from the family and it is recommended that the intervention counsels family members on the benefits of empowering the women in their households.



SF9, G Block, adjacent to American School of Bombay, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra East, Mumbai, Maharashtra 400098

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