



## **Post maternity competencies for mothers returning to workforce: An organizational perspective**

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### **Abstract**

In this fast-changing technology and cutthroat competition, it becomes imperative to have desired competencies to sustain in the professional world. India is among the ten countries with the lowest female labor participation in the workforce which is again a matter of grim concern when half of India's population constitutes women. The existence of the traditional role of women as a homemaker and childcare provider has a critical impact on women's careers. One such notable phenomenon for career breaks among women is motherhood. The re-entry to workforce post maternity is not a welcoming event and most women fail to re-enter the workforce due to the perceived diminished level of competencies. The paper will identify significant competencies required for women returning to job post-maternity. In this study, research papers on competency and experiences of mother's returning to work were selected for review. These papers were reviewed rigorously and their findings were analyzed and conceptual competency framework model were developed. Also, content analysis of the company's policies practices through online sources, help us get more industrial insight. The findings from these research papers can be empirically tested to get the concluding result for future studies.

**Key words:** Career, Women, Motherhood, Competencies, Organisation

### **Introduction**

#### **Women in the workforce**

In this 21st century, there has been seen a shift in the women's role in paid employment from traditional jobs to those male-oriented jobs i.e., nontraditional role. There has been a drastic increase in women in the United States workforce from 34% in the year 1950 to 60% in the year 2000 (Toossi, 2002). But when it comes to a leadership role, only a few women reached the senior position of career leader (Huang et al., 2019). To retain these women, now a day's companies have offered flexibility in the work environment including part-time policies, parental leaves, etc. (Barsh & Yee, 2011). Women disproportionately deal with various challenges to enter the workforce including access to employment, work choice, job security, wage discrimination, and work-family balance (Chaudhary & Verick, 2014).

In India, as per the National Sample Survey Organisation (2009-2010), the 66th round stated that there exist 23% of women in workforce as compared to 55.6% men. India has witnessed declining trends

when it comes to women's participation, which further has many implications on social and economic factors (Borkar, 2016). Indian female force has fallen drastically low to 23.5% in the year 2017-18, which were a global matter of concern and placed India in the bottom 12th in the year (2011-12) (Rukmini,2019). These declines were highest among the women in the age bracket 35-39, the majority reported to retain the domestic duties. Additionally, access to quality education and socio-economic barriers limit the women to part of labor force participation (“Women’s Day,” n.d.).

### Indian Women in the workforce: Industry-wise distribution

In recent years as mentioned in table 1, women share in the organized sector is low as 19%, wherein manufacturing and commercial services every sixth employee is a woman while the public sector contributes 70% of female labor with the highest share of women in the formal sector (Klaveren et al., 2010), followed by the manufacturing sector with 19% female share, third transport, communication, and storage industry with female less than 4%. The notable third-largest employer for a female with 7.5% participation is finance, business services, and finance.

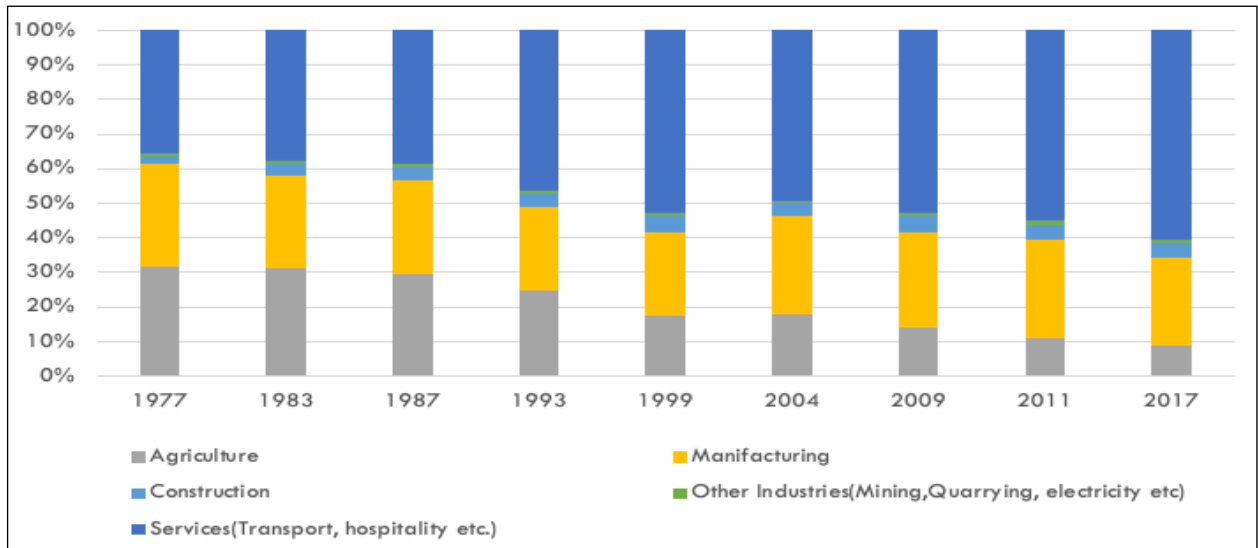
**Table 1:**

*Female labour market share in organised sector in India*

		all		women		men	
		mln.	%	mln.	%	mln.	%
agriculture, forestry, fishing		1,48	5.6	0,48	9.6	1,00	4.7
mining		1,09	4.1	0,08	1.5	1,01	4.7
manufacturing		5,62	21.3	0,94	18.7	4,78	22.2
utilities		0,91	3.4	0,05	1.1	0,86	4.0
construction		0,96	3.6	0,07	1.3	0,89	4.1
transport, storage, communication		2,84	10.7	0,19	3.8	2,65	12.3
wholesale, retail, restaurants, hotels		0,56	2.1	0,05	1.0	0,51	2.4
finance, real estate, business services		1,93	7.3	0,30	6.0	1,63	7.6
community, social, personal services		11,07	41.9	2,85	56.9	8,22	38.3
Total		26,46	100	5,02	100	21,44	100
of which	private sector	8,45	31.9	2,10	41.8	6,35	29.6
	public sector	18,01	68.1	2,92	58.2	15,09	70.4
	of which						
	central	6,22	23.5	0,61	12.2	5,61	26.2
	regional	9,67	36.6	1,73	34.4	7,93	37.0
	local	2,12	8.0	0,58	11.6	1,54	7.2

According to the WEST Survey analysis (2018) when we look into state-wise data, Bengaluru becomes the top city with the highest number of female employees followed by Bhopal and Ghaziabad (UNDP, 2018). As per India Hiring Intent Survey reveals the retail industry has the highest female workforce constituting 50% followed by travel, hospitality, BPO, ITES (UNDP, 2018). As per NSSO data (1970-2018), Women often took up concentrate more on home-based work, labor-intensive, and sector which have low work productivity. As mentioned in figure 1, the service sector has a significant contribution toward women's employment, in urban areas women predominately increased from 35.7% in 1977-78 to 60.7% in 2017-2018 where more concentration in professions such as teaching and nursing (Nikore, 2019). The services sector can be defined as a sector that produces intangible goods, activities in this sector include banks, retail, hotels, real estate, health, social work, computer services, media, communication, electricity, gas and water supply, computer services, etc. As per Pricewater House Coopers

(PwC) report 2019, In India in upcoming days manufacturing sector will be the next job creator and revenue generator, while the service industry contributes half of the gross value added (GVA) (Fast Forward: Relevant, 2019).



**Figure 1:** Employment by sector for urban females 1970 – 2018

Source: NSSO

### Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify core competencies i.e., behavior and skill sets required to re-enter into workforce post motherhood break
2. To organize the set of competencies required by the organization through intensive literature review
3. To develop an integrated competency framework for mothers returning to work

### Literature Review

#### Motherhood as a determining factor for women workforce

The gender gap is predominant issues over the past decades in India. As per the global gender report 2020, In India, women's workforce fell from 37% in the year 2006 to 18% in the year 2019 ("Women's Participation," n.d.). It has also been noticed that less than 30% of working women exist in the labor force than 80% of men, such absence of women from the labor force is a matter of concern for many economists, researchers, and policymakers (Sharma, 2019). The reason for such absence from the labor force varies from women-oriented jobs, higher education, societal values, etc. along with the cultural expectation of choosing housework and care work over the job. One of the dominating reasons for the shrinking women from the workforce indicated by many economists is the motherhood penalty, highly resulted for absence of India's most educated women from job during mid-term career (Bhandare, 2018). The statistics reveal that 90% of women across the globe didn't return to the same work profile post their motherhood ("3 ways to do," 2019). Due to commitment to raise kids, supporting spouse career, or elderly care; women either leave the workforce forever or get reluctant to join back. Several studies have reported the pattern of low female force participation and the reason varied from an underestimation of women's work (Kapsos et al., 2014; IAMR & ILO.2013; Sudharshan & Bhattacharya, 2009), higher enrollment of women in education owing to non-participation in the labor force (Himanshu, 2011; Rangarajan et al., 2011), rising household income causing women to stay back (Klasen & Pieters, 2015). The economic survey based on NSO employment and unemployment survey at various round data and periodic labour force survey estimates in

the year 2017-18, revealed that the female labor force participation among age group 15-59 years had a declining trend from 33.1% in 2011-12 to 25.3% in 2017-18 (“Share of women,” 2020). Women across the globe likely to be employed with preschool children or with lesser, the tradeoff between job and child care places a woman with a motherhood penalty (Das & Zumbyte, 2017). Many studies have revealed that there is an association between lower female labor participation and the presence of a child at home (Das, 2006; Rani & Unni, 2009; Bhalla & Kaur, 2011; Sengupta & Das, 2014; Kapsos, Silberman., & Bourmpoula, 2014; Das, 2015; Sorsa et al.,2015 as cited in Das & Zumbyte, 2017). While among urban women the association between employment and child at home is negative (Klasen & Pieters, 2015; Sorsa et al., 2015).

### Defining Competencies

Women returning to the workforce are perceived as less updated on industry knowledge and trends i.e., most often seen as having **deteriorated skills**; this contributes as the main reason for inhibiting women returning to the workforce (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2016). Thereby, it becomes important to **up skill the competencies** to rejoin the workforce. Competency defines an organization way of formulating the behavior of the people to get desired results. Competencies are also considered as significant elements for the organization to attain competitive advantage (Nordhaug & Gronhaug, 1994 as cited in Thomas and David, 2001) competencies can be further defined **as knowledge, abilities, skills, and behavior** to reach the desired performance outcome (Campion et al., 2011; Vakola et al.,2007; Spencer & Spencer,1994;Singh & Khamba,2014; Barber & Tietje,2004; Boyatzis,2011; McLagan,1980 as cited in Tomal and Jones 2015).It can be stated that competency is **clusters of skills, knowledge, and attitude** required to perform work. Primarily, the competency model is used by the companies to frame talent management (Naquin & Holton III,2006) further competencies are majorly incorporated in the human resource and employee development functions such as during selection procedures, formulating job description, conducting employee performance evaluations, employee development and succession planning (Campion et al., 2011: Marrelli, 1998 as cited in Rodriguez et al.,2002). The company formulates a competency framework to define a set of the behavior of an individual posse to carry out work to achieve the common goal of the organization (Vazirani, 2010). Further competencies are categorized into threshold competencies that deal with basic elements such as **knowledge, skill, and ability** while other is differentiating competencies contain factors such behavioral aspect, motives, and personal traits (Daud et al., 2010).

### Motherhood: Career & Competencies

Women returning to career post motherhood are the most discussed scholarly issues among the researchers and policymaker owing to the large number of women getting extinct from the labor force in India. Highly educated women working in the managerial position loss their job as higher position demands more commitment and create conflict with personal life owing to motherhood penalty as compared to unmarried or female without a child (Wilde et al., 2010). It has also been perceived that women with children are less competent and were not considered for promotion (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). The choice to stay at home and devote motherhood by leaving the job creates a friction on the professional life for these women and also generates a gap in the career graph (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). This gap further creates a negative **notion of the skills gap**, experience validation, and balancing of motherhood versus workplace among the hiring managers when women return to work post motherhood (Abendroth et al., 2014; Budig & England, 2001; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012; Rose & Hartmann, 2004 as cited in Yahraes, 2017). Research has also revealed that women who try to enter the workforce post 2 years of career break to raise a child experience more difficulties than women who enter before 2 years (McQuaid et al.,2012) as it has been identified that during the period of career opt-out the working knowledge, expertise and skill evade (Engler, 2013, p.109).

Reis (2005 as cited in Sternberg & Davidson, 2005) formulated four factors that influence

women’s talent development including **personality, abilities, environment and perceived relationship** which drive women to develop their talents in various areas. It has also been observed that personal factors such as personality traits, skills, and abilities are significant elements shaping women’s overall competence development (Omar & Davidson, 2004; Reis (2005); Boyatzis (1982) as cited in Idris et al., 2012). When mothers seek a second career option it becomes imperative to match the competencies with those of the organization need. It has also been concluded in the research that employee who gets support for their career at workplace display more competencies than those who doesn’t get such support (Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006).

Gwal (2016) revealed another prospect of career phase among the women i.e., career break and re-entry of women, focus was to shed light on the experiences of women who took off time and have a willingness to rejoin the workforce. It has also been revealed in the study that the longer the career-break the more challenges to re-enter the workforce, the significant reason for career break for these women either to raise kids or for professional enhancement. Motherhood is a prominent contributing factor among women leaving jobs. It becomes imperatively important to understand the phenomenon of mothers returning to work, the considerable factor for such challenges includes workplace discrimination, lesser pay packages, and the notion of outdated skill set (“3 ways to do,” 2019). The top three challenges for women returning to career post-maternity are insufficient to support at home (23%), absence of professional network (59%), and skill gap (26%) as per the research survey conducted by India Story 2019 (Chakraborty, 2019) and to retain these women, now a day’s companies have given flexibility in the work environment including part-time policies, parental leaves, etc to (Barsh & Yee, 2011). Tanwar (2019) stated in his study that women returning to work post motherhood face many hiring disadvantages which he has categorized and sorted under various factors. The author further stated various reasons behind the career breaks and factors associated with such re-entry to work as depicted below on table 2.

**Table 2:**  
*Factors leading to career breaks for women*

Contributing factor for career break		Work Type sought by women returning to work post motherhood		Organisational Barrier for women returning to work post motherhood	
Reason	%	Profile	%	Barriers	%
Raising a child	45%	Full time	63%	Lack of professional network	59%
Maternity break	35%	Flexible work/hours	23%	Skill gap	36%
Pursuing hobby	17%	Part-Time assignment	11%	Lack of support from home	23%
Caring for elderly	16%	Project-based assignment	2%	Restricted mobility	15%
Relocating post marriage	15%			Low confidence	9%
Health challenges	12%				
Higher education	4%				

The decision to stay at home and leave a professional career, create a gap in professional lives (Heilman and Okimoto, 2008 as cited in Yahraes (2017). This gap further creates a gap in skill, valid work experience, and choice of motherhood over career build a negative perception among hiring manager about women’s career prospects (Abendroth et al., 2014; Budig & England, 2001; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012; Rose

& Hartmann, 2004 as cited in Yahraes 2017). The duration of child care further evades the knowledge, skills, and expertise (Engler, 2013, p.109 as cited in Yahraes,2017). While returning to the workforce post maternity career break the factors which hinder mothers to reenter are skill depreciation, employability, age factor, and stigma of career break (Lovejoy & stone, 2012). In the research paper, it has been revealed that skilled gained by mothers during the career break are not recognized by the employer (McIntosh, 2012 as cited in Yahraes 2017). Laney et al., (2014) indicated through their research among 30 women working as faculty in the university, that motherhood positively impacted the attitude toward the career and made them more empathetic, compassionate, sensitive, nurturing, practical, well in defining borders, emotional, accepting, authentic, effective, understanding, playful, influential less self-centered and better slowing down. The author also asserted that these are characteristics are sought by the employer. Correll and Benard (2007) revealed that mothers face due challenges during the hiring process as compare to men. They also stated that when compared to childless women, mothers were six times lesser to be recommended to get hire (Correll et al., 2007).

## Methodology

### Research design

The study followed qualitative research methodology by analysing secondary data to establish answer to research questions. An empirical review has been incorporated by summarising the results of recent studies related to competencies and identified most sought competencies. For this purpose, the various research papers have been reviewed and empirically analyzed; content analysis was conducted to infer the semantic relationship of the concepts.

### Data analysis- Developing a concept

To gain more insight of competency required for mother joining workforce post motherhood, content analysis has been adopted to analysis the competencies. In this paper content analysis has been implemented to assess the significant competencies across industries and framework has been established by formulating categories and sub categories. In this paper, we had used both terms “skill” and “competency” interchangeably.

### Developing a competency framework

Competency can be defined as the ability of a person to perform any work; it can be traits and motive self-image, or a body of knowledge used by the person (Boyatzis & Emotional, 2009). In the 1960s and 1970s, industrial and organizational research promoted the study of the competencies in management (Spencer et al., 1994), while McClelland's (1973, as cited in Tomal and Jones, 2015) research associated the competencies with the job performance. Lo et al. (2015) revealed that individual behavior and attributes are important for job success and value addition to the organization, wherein self-belief and social factor are highly important for both functional HR and strategic roles, these competencies are important for dealing uncertainty and ambiguity during organizational crisis and changes (Selmer & Chiu, 2004; Buckley & Monks, 2004 as cited in Jan and Randy 2004).

Brown et al. (2018) developed a competency model for medium-scale power utility organizations, USA. In their paper, they had identified and defined the competency need of each hierarchy which were bifurcated into (a) **Core competencies** which were across roles including technical competency, respect and dignity, accountability, integrity, trustworthiness, servant leadership, and safety (b) **Technical and professional staff competencies** include communication, decision making, flexibility, initiative, problem-solving, quality, team orientation, and technology acumen (c) **Supervisory competencies** are conflict resolutions, emotional intelligence, hiring/staffing, informing, performance management and planning to empower (d) **Managerial competencies** includes analytical thinking, change management, conceptual thinking, execution, financial acumen, fostering innovation, and managerial courage (e) **Executive competencies** includes influence, managing stakeholders, managing vision and purpose,

perseverance, and strategic thinking. The research stated that organization support and commitment are essential competencies.

Finegold and Notabartolo (2016) proposed a competency framework with 15 competencies under 5 broad categories including (1) **Interpersonal skill** – communication, collaboration, leadership, and responsibilities (2) **Analytical skills** – Critical thinking, problem-solving, decision making, research, and inquiry (3) **Information processing** – Information literacy, media literacy, digital citizenship, ICT operation (4) **Ability to execute** – Initiative and self-direction and productivity, and (5) **Capacity for change/learning** – creativity/innovation, adaptive learning/learning to learn, flexibility. The author suggested that competencies such as the capacity for change, problem-solving must be considered an advanced stage of development, and also there should be openness to include competencies such as financial literacy, system thinking, and cross-cultural fluency as these are significant to the global economy. Northhouse (2014) stated competencies as a model for leadership traits which include social judgment skills/problem and problem-solving skills.

### **Industry-wise segmentation of skills and competencies**

National Association of Colleges and Employers (2018) surveyed various employers to identify the essential competencies, the result indicated that critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaborations, professionalism/work ethics, and oral/written communications are the most essential competencies. While the rating of these competencies revealed that critical thinking/problem-solving top the list followed by the teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, and oral/written communication. Digital technology became the fifth, followed by leadership as the most essential competency as per the survey.

Rohinesh (2019) asserted that India needs skill sets which are a mix of both technology and soft skills and stated that cognitive skills such as creativity, ability to collaborate, critical thinking, relationship building, empathy, leadership flair, and E.Q. (emotional intelligence) are equally important across all industries at all level. LinkedIn Survey (2019) assessed soft skills such as management, leadership, team management; customer services followed by project management are among the top skills across the industry in India (Business Insider India Bureau, 2019). The soft skills are becoming more in demand despite the emergence of technology-based job, as per a survey by Udemy (2019), most practices soft skill at the workplace are adaptability to change, creativity, decision making skill, innovation, communication, organization of comprehensive thought and data sets, culture awareness, emotional intelligence (EQ) and leadership (Top 10 Tech and Soft Skill, 2019)

Harvard Business Review (2019), asserted women are better than their male counterpart when it comes to leadership and also outnumbered men's in 17 skills/capabilities out of 19 some of them included taking self-initiatives, self-development, result-oriented, high level of integrity, and honesty, motivating and inspiring others, etc (Zenger & Folk man, 2019). Women score more on emotional intelligence as compared to men and with emotional and social competencies women have more chances to reach the top of the latter (Ferry, 2016). The author also revealed other competencies where women are more predominant than men are mentoring and coaching, influence, leadership, inspirational, adaptability, teamwork, organizational awareness; conflict management and orientation of achievement along with emotional self-awareness and emotional self-control are 12 proven competencies which impact business performance.

Women who enter Science and Engineering (S&E) mostly have attributes related to (1) technical expertise in the field of science and engineering, risk-taker, planning and meeting goals, openness to change, and self-confidence (“Human Resource and skill,” nod.). The skill required by the IT industry at different levels of software engineer includes logical/analytical thinking, basic programming skills, communication skills, adaptability to changing IT environment, domain knowledge, customer interfacing role, client management skill, and team management skill while ITES industry most often seeks functional skills such as business process and management skills and soft skills such as communication, EQ, aptitude, integrity, team management, level of perseverance and client management as per the National Skill Development Corporation (“Human Resource and skill,” n.d.).

Based on various research papers and studies most prominent competencies for job seekers have been

framed. The paper further identifies similar competencies required by the various industries and based on common attributes these competencies were grouped under five categories, viz., **analytical skills, interpersonal skills, ability to execute, information processing, and capacity for change.** In this paper, we had adopted 5 broad categories of competencies from Finegold and Notebartolo (2016) and integrated the various competencies-based on the above-stated surveys and research to formulate the competency framework.

**Five broad categories of skills**

1. **Analytical skill** are defined as the most sorted and high level thinking skill which includes problem-solving, critical thinking, decision making, and creative skill (I K Yulina et al., 2019).
2. **Interpersonal skill** is the ability to communicate, motivate, and build team (Khan & Ahmad (2012 as cited in Hardati & Febriantia 2019). Katherine Quinn (2014 as cited in Hardati & Febriantia 2019) defines interpersonal skills as “ease and comfort of communication between individuals and their associates, seniors’ level, juniors’ level, clients, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, Quinn believes whether interpersonal skill contains the capability to inspire others, conflict managing, effective communication, and team-building”
3. **Ability to execute:** This skill deals with the ability to take initiative, this skill is needed to exercise other skill sets. Finegold and Notebartolo (2019) defined the ability to execute as “Individuals need to be able to take responsibility for managing their own lives and situate their lives in the broader social context and act autonomously”
4. **Information processing:** It is also known as foundation skill, which deals with familiarities in using print and computer-enabled information.
5. **Capacity for change:** The way the technologies and organization work structure changes at a fast rate, it becomes significant for professionals to be more adaptive with the change. The capacity to change is the ability to respond to a changing environment.

As stated earlier, the skill gap is one of the contributing factors among mothers returning to work. To make the returning journey easy, the assessment of skill gaps and the required set of competencies are paramount for women returning to the workforce post maternity. The skill gap is defined as the variance between the skill required at the workplace and skill possessed by the job seeker (Belyh, 2017). The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) defined skill gaps between organization capability and skill to achieve the goal. The definition of skill has been changed just from owing technical knowledge to various general and personal attitudes and capacities to perform any job (Chappell et al., 2003) while competency is more than just skills and knowledge, it is an ability to perform the complex task by optimizing psychosocial resources such as skills and attitudes for particular situations e.g., ability to communicate effectively is competency while communication is a skill (Finegold & Notabartolo, 2016).

**Competency framework-An integrated conceptual model**

In this section, an empirical review has been incorporated by summarising the results of recent studies related to competencies and identified the most sought competencies by the organization so that it will help mothers to understand the significant competencies while applying for job post-maternity. For this purpose, the concept has been categorized as mentioned below in table 3 formulated from Finegold and Notabartolo (2019).

**Table 3:**  
*Competencies required across industries according to core skills*

Core skills	Competencies required across industries
	<b>1. Critical Thinking</b>
Analytical skills	Logical Thinking Novel and adaptative thinking Cognitive load Management Managerial courage



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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Problem Solving</b> Positive Attitude</li> <li>3. <b>Decision Making</b> Sense making management Planning &amp; empowering</li> <li>4. <b>Research and Inquiry</b> Computational thinking Understanding of Domain The organization of comprehensive thought and data set</li> </ol>
Interpersonal skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Communication</b> Collaboration Team management Motivating/inspiring others</li> <li>2. <b>Leadership and responsibility</b> Relationship building Self-initiative Self-Development Level perseverance Servant Leadership</li> </ol>
Ability to execute	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Initiative and Self Directing</b> Self-belief EQ (Emotional Quotient) Integrity Honesty Social Intelligence Professionalism/work ethics Aptitude Respect &amp; Dignity Safety</li> <li>2. <b>Productivity</b> Customer-centric Result Oriented Performance Management Financial Acumen</li> </ol>
Information processing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Information Literacy</b> Basic programming Technology Knowledge</li> <li>2. <b>Media Literacy</b></li> <li>3. <b>Digital Citizenship</b> Virtual collaboration Digital Technology</li> <li>4. <b>ICT Operations and concepts</b> Domain knowledge</li> <li>5. <b>Technical</b></li> </ol>
Capacity for change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Creativity/Innovation</b> Adaptive Learning/Learning to Learn Adaptability to change Transdisciplinary adaptability</li> <li>2. <b>Flexibility</b> Cross-Cultural Awareness</li> </ol>

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### Managerial implications

In today's modern career, employers are promoting the employability of employees (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2000) and offering learning experiences, work experience, and building a professional network (Van Der Heijden, 1998 as cited in Kuijpers, MACT., & Scheerens, J. 2006). As gender diversity becomes significant, the companies are encouraging women to take up work even post-career break. According to industry insight observation, about 50% of women resign the work at age of 30 to take care of kids, and approximately 48% drop out within 4 months of maternity break (Sarkar, 2019). A study also states that the main two factors that hinder mothers from re-entering to the workforce (1) **skill deterioration theory** – which argues that those with employment gap are not valuable than those who have continues employment as skill deteriorate or become obsolete due to the gap in employment (2) **Signaling theory** i.e., assessing candidate history and assuming their potential based on their unemployment period resulting in fewer opportunities (Fox, 2019). When it comes to hiring, **mothers are six times lesser** to get hired compare to childless women (Correll et al., 2007).

As when the majority of Indian women fail to come back to work, it becomes imperative for companies to resume these women. With such a notion of welcoming women to the workforce, many companies had initiated the various program and exclusive job options for women returning to work post maternity. Likewise, MG motor India recently initiated a program to have the diverse talent of returning women who can be placed in various roles of the company. The initiative focused on a mentor, coach, and access to professional development networking opportunities and select women for a one-year-long program based on the performance and job vacancy these women are absorbed into full-time jobs. Similarly, company's like Airbus, Accenture, Tata Group, IBM, and Amazon invited women to join their various programs to train and up skill women having career breaks (Sarkar, 2019). While a company like IBM also initiated a re-entry program for women looking to enhance skills in the technology sector, it's a 12-week internship dedicated to women to absorb post-completion. Another renowned program was "Rekindle", an initiative by the Amazon to facilitate women resume career through flexible work-option, on the job learning, and mentoring for their women in technology. By this way companies are aligning such programs with their recruitment strategy and attract women with skill gaps to get benefit from such learning experience and seek full-time job further (Returnship programs for women, n.d.)

With the availability of various supporting resources/programs, networking opportunities, and skill buildings programs, these mothers can elevate their skills and don't have to settle with a low paying job. Addressing the motherhood penalty of women returning to work, reassessing their potential and formulating skill development programs can be building blocks for the many women returning to work.

### Conclusion

The review of various literature and exiting policies suggest that competencies played a vital role in hiring the desired the candidate and when it comes to hiring the mothers returning to work, there exist a skill gap which is one of the predominant challenges faced by returning mother to join workforce post maternity. The paper has highlighted key competencies required by various industries and the most trending competencies that returning mothers needed to upskill to re-join the workforce. In this study through literature review and relevant content analysis, we had developed a competency model that can be further tested and evaluated from the perspective of HR professional.

### Recommendations

Most of the studies directly assess the competencies by working professional or professionals seeking jobs. This further suggests the need for research on competency assessment exclusively for mothers seeking to re-join the workforce and also, examine the causal relationship between skill gap and women's competencies post maternity. The conceptual framework developed in this paper can be further empirically tested to develop a model for key decision makers and researchers for future studies.

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