



SAMARTH

SKILL TRAINING PROGRAMME

Unlocking Potential

Addressing the Aspirations and Challenges of Youth in Maharashtra

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DISCLAIMER

This report is a culmination of primary research and analysis conducted to understand the aspirations and challenges of youth in Maharashtra. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are based on survey responses and qualitative insights gathered during the study. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, confidentiality and objectivity, the report may not capture the full diversity of experiences or perspectives of all youth in the region.

The contents of this report are intended for informational purposes only and do not constitute professional advice or endorsement of specific policies, programs or organisations. Readers are encouraged to use this report as a starting point for further discussion and action.

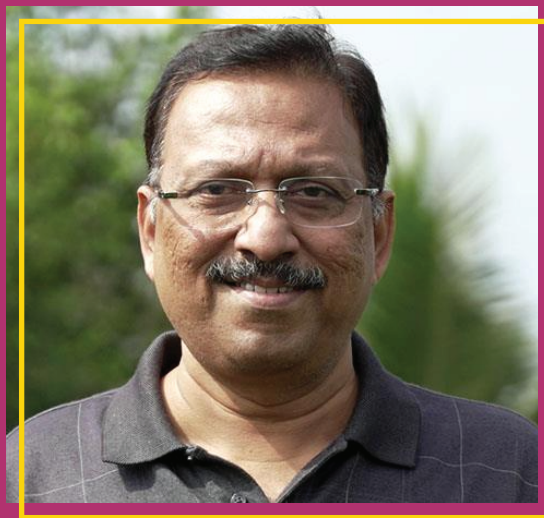
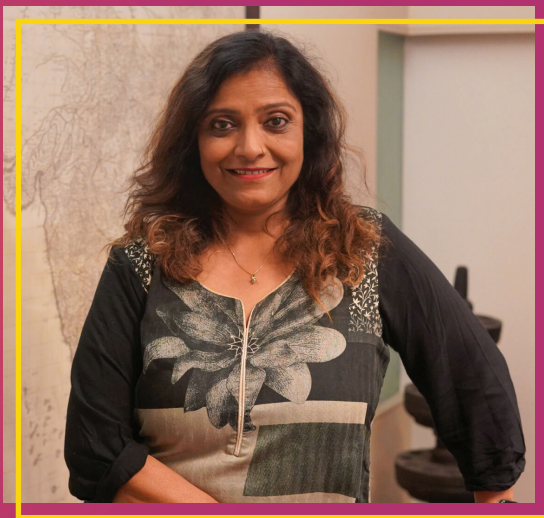
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FOREWORD

The Founders



DR. SARIKA KULKARNI AND GIRISH KULKARNI

Youth are the critical building blocks of any nation. They are the future and have the tremendous responsibility of carrying forward the prosperity and development initiated today. As a nation striving to become a trillion-dollar economy, it is vital that our youth are confident, skilled, and well-prepared. If our youth lack direction and purpose, we risk losing the potential to harness our demographic dividend effectively.

Skill training for the youth is not just about imparting technical know-how but shaping a confident, driven, and purpose-oriented workforce ready to contribute meaningfully. The skill training programs have demonstrated their impact in transforming young minds, moving them from the pool of unemployment to becoming productive and confident members of society. This forward-thinking initiative has shown immense promise in creating a robust and scalable model that fosters long-term success

This report delves into what the youth require to become empowered and highlights the transformative role of skill training. It underscores the journey, challenges, and scalable solutions in equipping our youth to be nation builders. We wish Vidya and her team continued success in this endeavor, and we look forward to a future where empowered youth shape a prosperous and sustainable India.

A Chartered Accountant by qualification, Vidya spent over 25 years in the corporate world, including more than two decades with Northern Marine Management, a Scotland-based shipping company where she was the Financial Director.

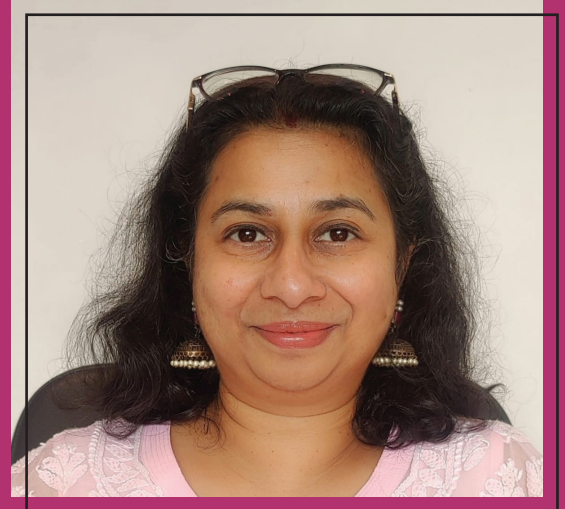
During her corporate tenure, Vidya was deeply involved with various NGOs in capacities such as volunteering, donor support, organizing donation drives, and promoting products for fundraising. Vidya's transition to the development sector was natural, intentional and the most-fulfilling journey. Her close friendship with Sarika and Girish, the founders of Raah Foundation, played a pivotal role in this decision. After several meaningful conversations with Sarika, Vidya decided to join Raah Foundation in April 2022, pro bono, to set up and lead the youth vertical.

Her cause of choice was clear—youth skilling and employment. Having observed the challenges of unemployment and the lack of industry-relevant skills among India's youth, Vidya was determined to address this gap. She strongly believes that one skilled and employed youth has the power to uplift an entire family out of poverty. While many organizations focus on women-centric initiatives, Vidya felt drawn to creating equal opportunities for all genders, with a vision to empower deserving young men and women alike.

Vidya's philosophy is simple yet profound: supporting young men to become responsible contributors to society can foster respect for women in their lives and create a balanced, inclusive environment. With the unwavering support of her family, Vidya is passionate about her work and firmly believes in the ripple effect of empowerment through skilling programs.

VIDYA RAI

Senior Vice President, Youth Skilling Initiatives



SAMARTH

An Employment-focused Skilling Initiative

The Samarth programme focuses on enhancing employability among youth aged 18 to 25, particularly those from economically underprivileged backgrounds in rural and semi-urban areas. The programme addresses the mismatch between traditional education and the requirements of the job market providing participants with practical training that directly aligns with the expectations of employers in sectors like retail, IT-enabled services (ITES), manufacturing, and customer support. The programme provides both hard and soft skills. It prepares participants for roles such as data entry operators, customer support executives, sales personnel, and business development executives.

The training spans 35 days and emphasises on practical application and confidence-building by ensuring that participants are job-ready upon completion. Graduates with minimal prior experience have reported securing jobs with salaries ranging from ₹12,000 to ₹17,000 per month, depending on their educational qualifications. The immediate impact of the programme is visible in the ability of participants to uplift not only themselves but also their families; the youth are contributing to breaking the cycle of poverty.

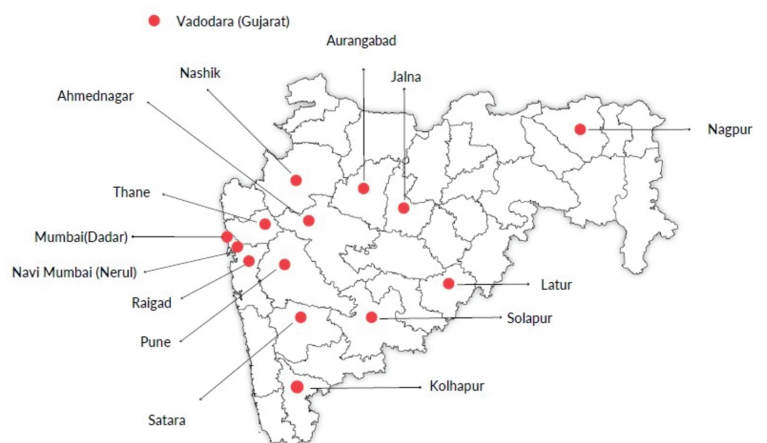
Skill Taught



Samarth operates through partnerships with local industries and corporate sectors to facilitate placements to make meaningful job opportunities accessible. The programme also provides six months of post-training support to help graduates address challenges in their employment journey.

The programme aligns with five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): No Poverty, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Reduced Inequalities. Operating across multiple centers in Maharashtra and Gujarat, including Mumbai, Nagpur, Nashik, and Vadodara, Samarth has placed close to 2000 youth as of November 2024. The use of technology, such as apps and cloud-based platforms, ensures effective delivery and tracking of the training process.

Through targeted skill development and placement support, Samarth creates a pathway for economic independence and personal growth for young individuals from marginalised backgrounds. By bridging the employability gap, not only does the programme provide immediate job opportunities but also propel long-term social transformation.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India's youth, particularly those in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, represent a vast reservoir of untapped potential. Their aspirations and challenges are often shaped by a confluence of familial, societal and economic factors that differ significantly from their peers in metropolitan areas. This report delves into understanding the unique circumstances and needs of this demographic with a specific focus on youth from marginalised tribal communities and financially underprivileged families in Maharashtra.

Purpose

- To bridge the gap between the expectations of these young individuals and the realities of the job market by gaining direct insights into their experiences, aspirations, and barriers.
- To highlight actionable pathways for skill development, employment opportunities, and support systems.

Scope

- Youth aged 18–25 from diverse educational levels, including secondary, senior-secondary, and graduates.
- Youth from varied socio-economic backgrounds.
- Gender-neutral and voices across a wide spectrum of perspectives.

Methodology

- A survey tailored to explore key themes such as family influence on career decisions, emotional responses to unemployment, financial struggles, job preferences, and workplace values.
- The survey questions were designed to be inclusive, comprehensive, and reflective of the lived experiences of this demographic.

Findings

- Family and community strongly influence career choices.
- Youth face pressures stemming from financial struggles, relationship dynamics, and work-life balance.
- Emotional responses to unemployment vary, with many expressing hope and confidence about improvement, while others report frustration or embarrassment.
- When evaluating job opportunities, misalignment with personal and societal expectations, low salaries, and unclear career growth are common deterrents.
- In terms of workplace preferences, stability, a supportive culture, and growth opportunities are valued over immediate financial benefits.

INTRODUCTION

“We cannot always build the future for the youth but we can build our youth for the future”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

India, the world’s most populous nation, is also home to the largest youth population globally.¹ This demographic advantage, often referred to as the youth bulge holds immense potential for driving economic growth and fostering innovation. The National Youth Policy, 2014 defines the term ‘youth’ as persons between the ages of 15-29. This age group represents a dynamic and energetic force capable of shaping the country’s future; the backbone of the nation. However, the reality of harnessing this potential is far from straightforward.

The economic and educational opportunities available to the Indian youth are anything but uniform. These differences are often determined by access to resources, infrastructure, and the quality of governance in their surroundings. While the gap between urban and rural India is well-documented, disparities within urban areas also demand attention. Tier-1 cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi are buzzing hubs of opportunity, offering avenues in business, technology, corporate sectors, politics, arts, and hospitality. These cities have established ecosystems that encourage professional growth, attract investments, and cultivate innovation.

Meanwhile, although tier-2 and tier-3 cities are rich in terms of talent and have made progress in recent years, the gap remains enormous. Youth in these regions often face limited exposure to diverse career paths, inadequate mentorship opportunities, and fewer avenues for skill enhancement. This forces the youth to look elsewhere for better prospects. Hence, the allure of tier-1 cities is strong as they are seen as gateways to financial security, professional recognition and a better quality of life.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this narrative to some extent. The shift to remote work forced many professionals to reconsider their need to live in larger cities. With advancements in telecommunications, improved internet connectivity, and relatively stable power supply, a growing number of individuals found themselves able to work effectively from their hometowns. This reverse migration, born out of necessity, sparked a subtle transformation. Enterprises began exploring the potential of smaller cities as cost-effective hubs for operations recognising their untapped talent pools and lower overheads.



Despite this promising shift, challenges persist. While tier-2 and tier-3 cities are gradually attracting businesses and investments, they are yet to achieve the vibrancy of their tier-1 counterparts. Many youths from smaller towns continue to equate success with migration to large urban centers, perpetuating a cycle where these regions lose their brightest minds to metros. This aspirational migration often leaves smaller cities struggling to retain talent, hindering their ability to develop sustainable ecosystems for growth.

Addressing this issue requires a multi-pronged approach. Firstly, stakeholders may invest in skill development programs tailored to the needs of youth in smaller cities. These programs should bridge the gap between academic learning and market demands which will equip young individuals with the tools they need to succeed locally. Secondly, creating more job opportunities in non-metropolitan areas is essential. This could be achieved through targeted incentives for industries to set up operations in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

Equally important is fostering a cultural shift in how success is perceived. Youth in smaller towns must be encouraged to view their hometowns as viable spaces for growth and innovation. This can be achieved by showcasing role models who have succeeded outside metropolitan areas and by promoting narratives that celebrate local success stories.

India's youth represent a powerful force for change, but their potential can only be realized if opportunities are made accessible to all, irrespective of geographic location. Bridging the gap between aspiration and opportunity is not just a matter of policy—it is a national imperative.

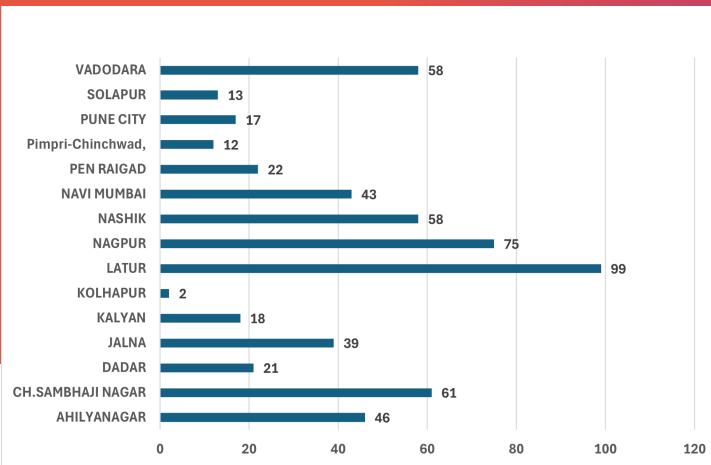
In spirit of inclusivity and dialogue, we conducted a preliminary survey with the youth associated with Samarth, seeking to delve deeper into their hopes and concerns. Our aim was to explore the nuanced aspirations of young individuals hailing from smaller cities and towns, where opportunities and challenges often intersect in unique ways. By engaging directly with them, we sought to discover the factors that shape their career choices, the barriers they face in achieving their goals and the kind of support they believe would make the most meaningful impact in their lives.

This study is not just a data-collection exercise; it represents a commitment to collaboration and co-creation. The insights drawn from these voices will help us identify gaps between existing systems and the actual needs of the youth. By analysing their responses, we aim to understand how factors like education, skill development, employment opportunities, and infrastructural limitations influence their trajectories. Being a preliminary exercise, it allows us to assess the direction of the next set of investigative questions necessary. This will assist Samarth to provide further interventions that are truly grounded in the realities of small cities and towns.

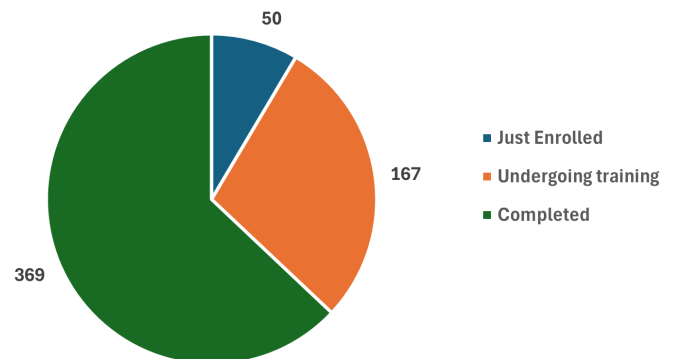
This approach is rooted in a simple yet profound principle: transformation is most impactful when it is guided by the very people it seeks to uplift. Through this study, we hope to highlight the voices of the youth who often remain unheard. Their stories, struggles and aspirations are invaluable in crafting strategies that align with their expectations while paving the way for sustainable growth and empowerment.

The Demography

Centrewise Responses



Participants Training Status



The demography consists of youth mainly belonging to tier-2 and tier-3 cities of Maharashtra, with the exception of Mumbai and Pune. Typically, they belong to marginalised communities and financially under-privileged families. Often, these youths are the most educated members of the family and have an added pressure to earn better. The sample size is 600 and their ages are between 18-25. The study is gender-neutral and consists of youth at different levels of education, i.e, secondary, senior-secondary and graduate.

The demographic focus of the study predominantly includes youth from tier-2 and tier-3 cities across Maharashtra, with the exception of Mumbai and Pune. This deliberate focus allows us to shine a light on the challenges and opportunities specific to smaller urban and semi-urban areas which are often overshadowed in larger discussions about youth development.

Most of the respondents come from marginalized communities and economically underprivileged families where access to resources and opportunities is limited. Another defining characteristic of these young people is their position within their families. Many are the first in their households to achieve significant levels of education which makes them trailblazers within their communities. This status brings with it immense pride but also considerable pressure. As the most educated members of their families, they are frequently seen as the key to improving their household's financial circumstances. The dual responsibility of achieving personal success while meeting familial expectations places a unique burden on their shoulders.

The sample size for this study is comprehensive to ensure that the findings reflect a wide spectrum of experiences and insights; a sum total of 600 responses were recorded. The study is intentionally gender-neutral aiming to understand the challenges faced by all youth regardless of gender identity.

By focusing on this demographic, the study seeks to explore the intersectionality of geography, socio-economic background, and education in shaping the lives and expectations of young people. These regions represent a unique microcosm where traditional values often meet the aspirations of a modernising India. Understanding this balance is crucial for designing interventions that address their specific needs and empower them to envision and create a future of their choosing.

METHODOLOGY

As much as we value the wisdom gained through years of experience in shaping the future of India's youth, true progress cannot be achieved by making decisions for them in isolation. Empowering the youth begins with listening to them—understanding their necessities, aspirations, and challenges from their own perspectives. The ideals of democracy and public consultation demand that we include their voices in every step of the process, ensuring that the solutions we design are not only relevant but also resonant with their lived realities.

The questionnaire has used many perspectives but is limited in its inquiry as it is of a preliminary nature, i.e., it sets a premise *ex facie* to frame deeper questions pertaining to each of the factors. The following questions were curated to collect valuable information about the aspirations and challenges of the youth enrolled in the Samarth programme.

HOW MUCH DOES YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INFLUENCE YOUR JOB SELECTION

- A great deal – My family and community play a central role in the decisions I make about my career. Their opinions and advice are very important to me.
- Somewhat – While I consider their advice, I also make independent decisions based on my interests and skills.
- Not much – I prefer to make my own career decisions, though I still value their support.
- Not at all – I make career decisions solely based on my goals and aspirations, without much influence from family or community.

HOW DOES BEING UNEMPLOYED MAKE YOU FEEL AROUND YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

- Embarrassed or awkward – I feel like I am letting them down or not meeting expectations, and it makes socializing difficult.
- Neutral or okay – I don't feel bad about it; I'm confident things will improve, and I don't mind talking about it.
- Supported and understood – My family and friends are encouraging and patient, and I feel supported during this time.
- Frustrated or upset – I feel frustrated with my situation, and sometimes it creates tension or awkwardness around my family and friends.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL ANXIOUS OR STRESSED ABOUT YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

- Very often – I constantly feel anxious about my future, job prospects, or financial situation.
- Sometimes – I experience anxiety or stress occasionally, especially when things feel uncertain, but I try to manage it.
- Rarely – I feel generally calm and optimistic, though there are moments of stress.
- Never – I rarely feel stressed or anxious, and I am confident things will improve in due time.

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN SOURCES OF STRESS OR WORRY IN DAILY LIFE BESIDES UNEMPLOYMENT?

- Financial struggles – I worry about managing my finances, paying bills, and saving for the future.
- Family or personal relationships – I face tension or challenges in my relationships with family members, friends, or a partner.
- Health concerns – I am stressed about my physical or mental health, whether it's due to existing conditions or potential future health issues.
- Work-life balance – I feel overwhelmed balancing work, personal life, and time for myself, and it affects my well-being.

DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE A SUPPORT SYSTEM (FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY) TO DISCUSS THE ABOVE CHALLENGES IN YOUR LIFE?

- Yes
- No

DO YOU THINK HAVING A COUNSELLING SERVICE TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE WOULD HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR PROFESSIONAL GOALS?

- Yes
- No

ARE YOU OPEN TO MOVING TO BIGGER CITIES FOR JOB GROWTH AND WHY?

- Yes, for better job opportunities – I believe moving to a bigger city will open up more job opportunities and help me grow professionally.
- Yes, but only if the lifestyle suits me – I'm open to moving, but only if the city has a good quality of life, and I feel comfortable there.
- No, I prefer staying close to my family – I am more focused on staying near family and friends, even if it means fewer job options.
- No, I don't want to leave my current environment – I'm happy where I am, and I don't feel the need to move to a bigger city for career growth.

HAVE YOU EVER TURNED DOWN A JOB OFFER?

- Yes
- No

IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTION, WHAT WAS THE PRIMARY REASON TO TURN DOWN AN OFFER?

- Salary too low
- Job role not matching personal expectations
- Job does not match societal expectations
- Unclear career growth
- Other (please specify)

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU FACE IN PURSUING A CAREER IN YOUR FIELD OF INTEREST?

- Lack of job openings in the field
- High competition for positions
- Insufficient skills or qualifications
- Not enough experience required by employers
- Limited access to networking or contacts

WHAT INDUSTRY DO YOU FEEL HAS THE MOST JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU?

- Information Technology
- Healthcare and Life Sciences
- Retail and Customer Service
- Manufacturing and Engineering
- Finance and Banking
- Others : _____

HOW DO YOU THINK SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACTS YOUR CAREER GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS?

- Positively, it motivates me to achieve more.
- Negatively, it sets unrealistic expectations.
- Neutral, it has little to no effect.
- Other (please specify)

IF YOU FOUND OUT THAT MANY JOB ROLES DO NOT OFFER THE LIFESTYLE PORTRAYED ONLINE, WOULD YOU STILL BE WILLING TO PURSUE THOSE OPPORTUNITIES?

- Yes, with adjusted expectations.
- Yes, but with some reluctance.
- No, I would look for alternatives.
- Undecided.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THAT PREVENT YOU FROM WORKING OR FINDING A JOB?

- Transportation
- Discrimination
- Lack of qualifications
- Lack of confidence in my skills
- Unclear career goals
- Limited job openings in my area
- Unfamiliarity with the hiring process
- Other: _____

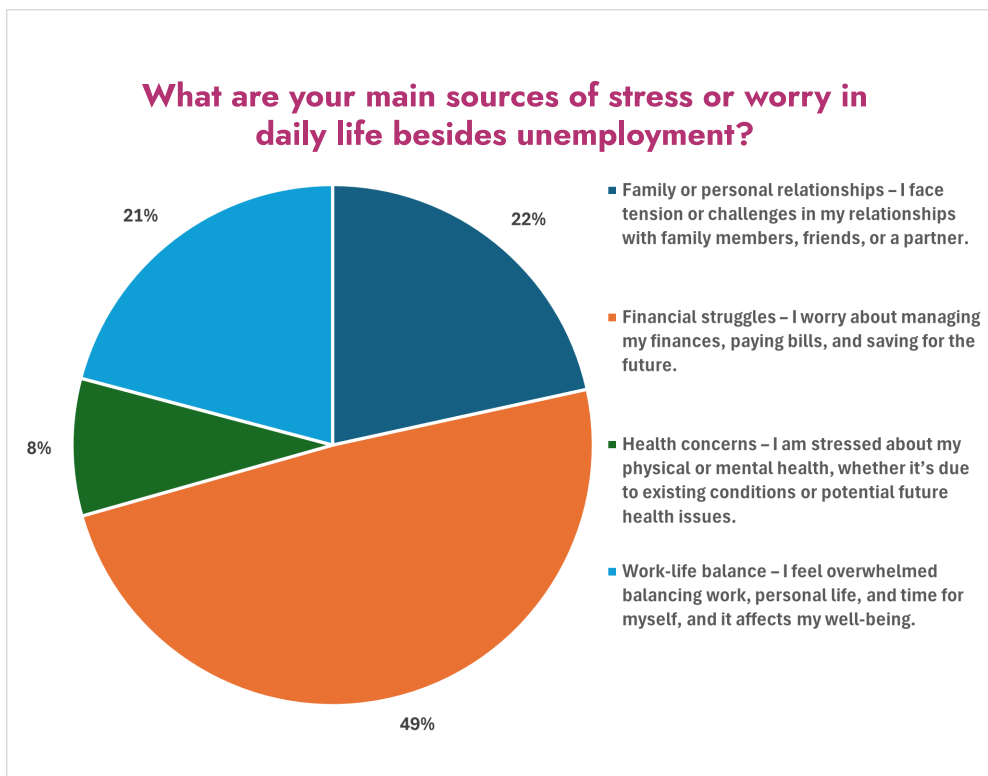


FINDINGS

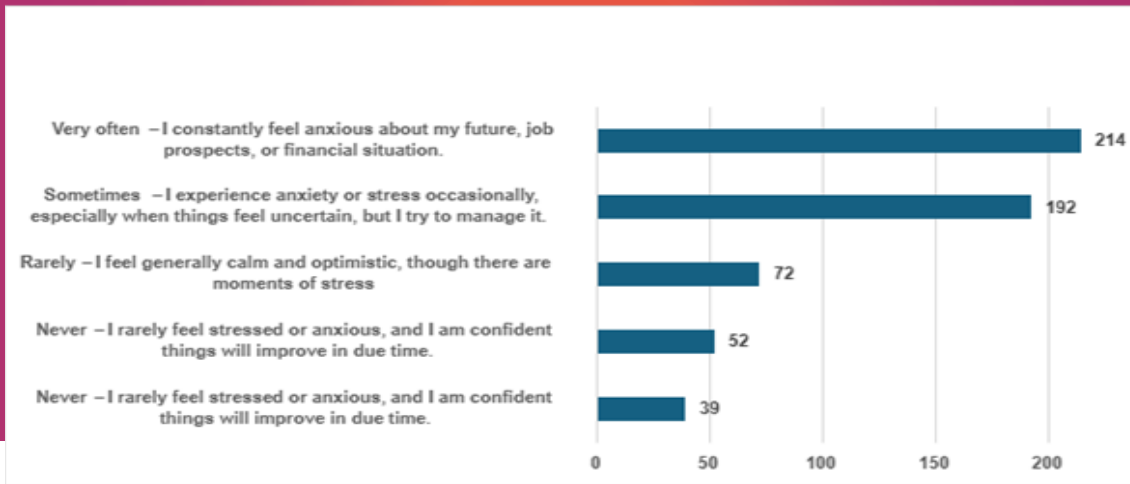
How much does your family and community influence your job selection?



In India, families and social groups deeply influence career decisions. Their role becomes especially significant when young people are preparing to enter the workforce. Expectations, advice, and sometimes pressure from these networks can shape the direction of their choices. At this stage, the support and opinions of family and community often determine not only the career paths considered but also the opportunities pursued. In India, families and social groups have a large impact on career decisions at all ages. It is especially more influential when youth are scouting for their very first job. (Rees & Grey, 1982).²



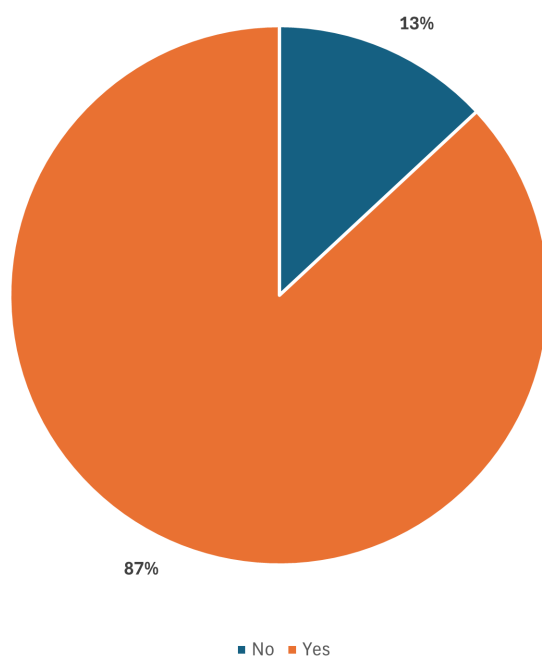
How often do you feel anxious or stressed about your current situation?



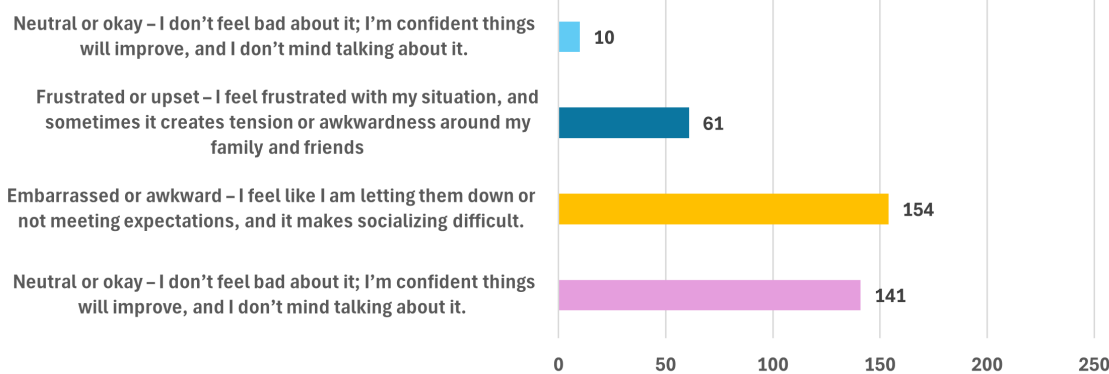
Financial instability is a major source of worry in India, affecting people across all age groups. For young individuals, especially those starting their careers, the impact is often more severe. Many of them face immense challenges as they try to escape the cycle of poverty. Limited resources and a lack of opportunities can make their efforts feel overwhelming and unending.

Unemployment adds another layer of difficulty to their struggles. For youth without stable jobs, financial hardship often triggers stress, anxiety, and depression. The constant pressure to make ends meet while searching for meaningful work takes a toll on their mental health. This stress is not just personal—it also affects their families and communities, making it harder to focus on long-term growth and stability. Financial instability is one of the leading causes of worry in India. (Minhas, 2023).³ As these youth attempt to burrow out of poverty, stress, anxiety and depression among unemployed youth due to financial hardship. (Mamun et al., 2020)⁴

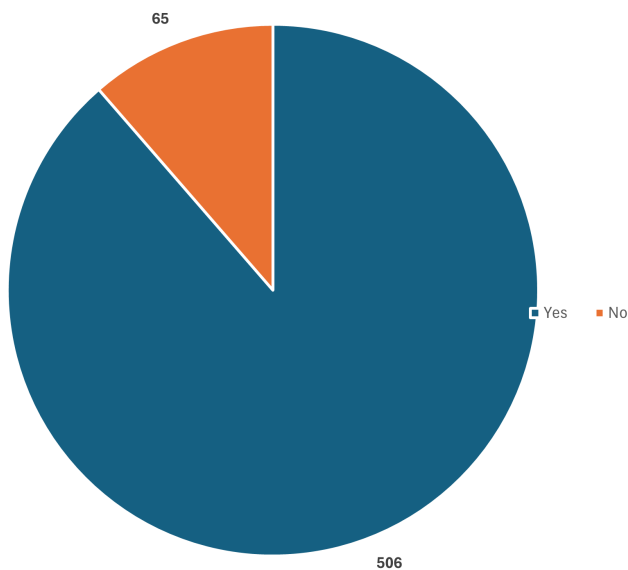
Do you think having a counselling service to overcome challenges in your personal life help you achieve your professional goals?



How does being unemployed make you feel around your family and friends?



Do you feel you have a support system (friends, family, community) to discuss the above challenges in your life?

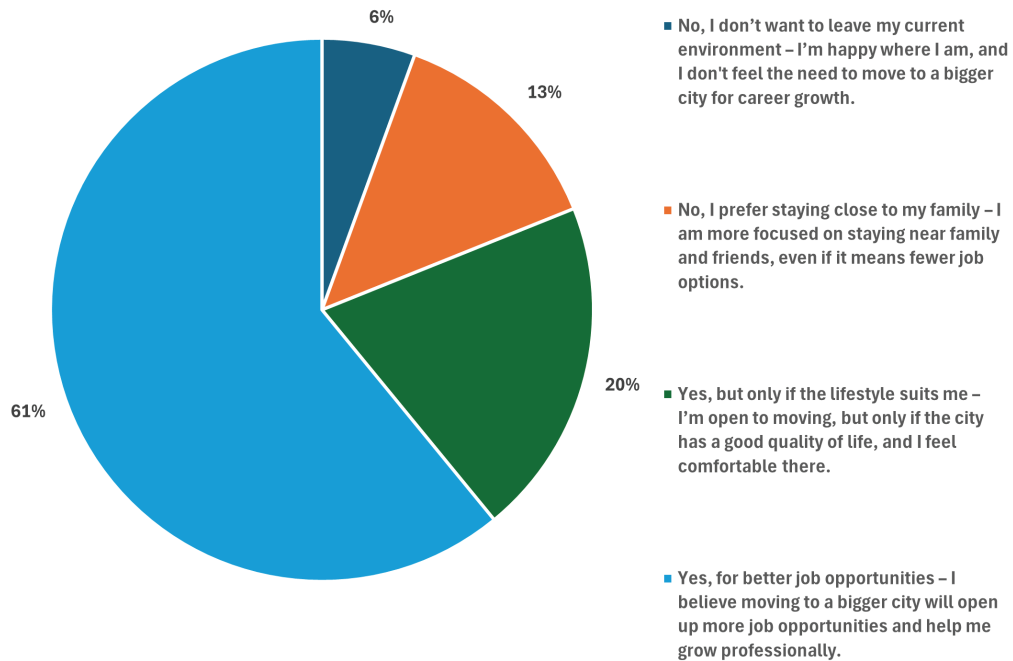


Familial support plays a vital role in protecting the mental well-being of unemployed youth. During periods of uncertainty, having the backing of family members can make a significant difference. It provides a sense of stability and reassurance, which helps young people maintain their confidence. This support often reminds them of their worth and abilities, even when job opportunities are scarce.

Social support, whether from family or close-knit networks, does more than just provide emotional comfort. It helps youth manage stress and navigate the negative impacts of unemployment. By offering a safety net, it reduces the feelings of helplessness and despair that often come with financial instability. This support can be the key to sustaining hope and a positive outlook during challenging times.

Familial support during unemployment has a massive effect on the psychological well-being of the youth. Social support helps with maintaining self-value and a positive outlook while also allowing for a buffer for stress and negative moral consequences of unemployment. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

Are you open to moving to bigger cities for job growth and why?

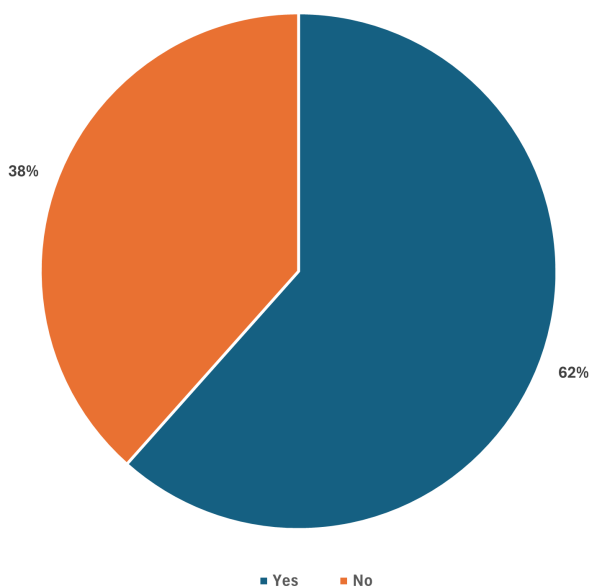


Youth migration from rural areas to cities is a common trend in India. Many young people move in search of better job opportunities and a chance to improve their quality of life. Rural areas often lack the resources and infrastructure needed to support their aspirations. Limited access to education, healthcare, and stable employment pushes them to seek opportunities elsewhere. Cities, with their promise of growth and prosperity, become a beacon of hope. For many, migration is not just a choice but a necessity driven by circumstances.

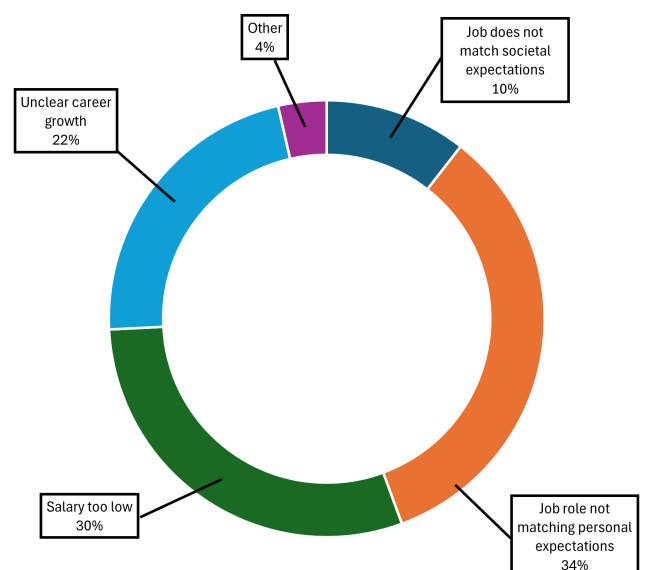
The move to cities, however, comes with its own challenges. Adapting to urban life can be overwhelming for young migrants. They face issues like housing shortages, high living costs, and competition in the job market. Many struggle to find work that matches their skills and qualifications. Despite these hardships, they continue to persevere, hoping for a better future. This migration is not just a personal journey but also reflects larger systemic issues in rural development and economic inequality.

The perception of the youth in this aspect is certainly reflective of the ground reality.

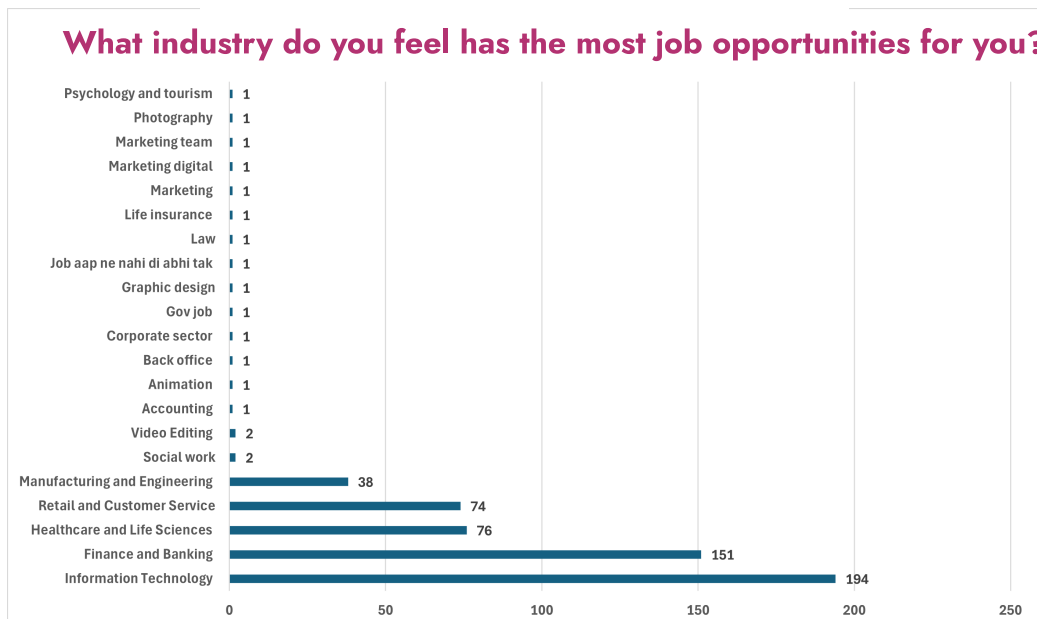
Have you ever turned down a job offer?



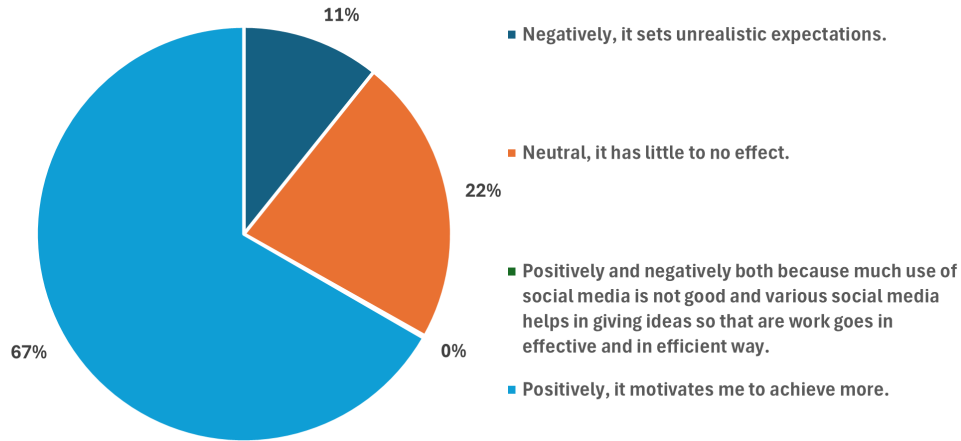
Primary reason to turn down the offer



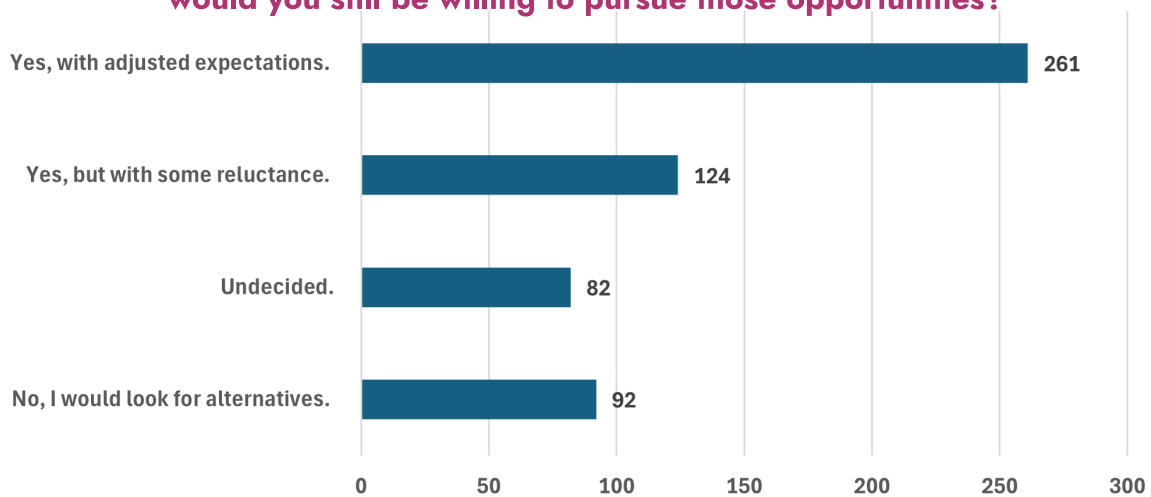
Despite widespread poverty and high unemployment rates, many youths at Samarth show hesitation in accepting jobs offered through recruitment programs. This reluctance has been one of the most puzzling and challenging aspects of the initiative. Even with the stress and anxiety that often come with unemployment, young people are not quick to embrace these opportunities. Several factors contribute to this hesitation. Some youths feel the jobs do not align with their aspirations or qualifications, making them question their long-term value. Others are concerned about relocation, low wages, or the lack of growth prospects in these roles. Cultural and familial expectations can also play a role, as some families discourage certain types of work or prefer that their children stay close to home. These barriers highlight the gap between available jobs and the expectations or circumstances of the youth. Addressing these issues requires a deeper understanding of their needs, as well as efforts to improve job offerings and communicate their benefits more effectively.



How do you think social media impacts your career goals and aspiration?



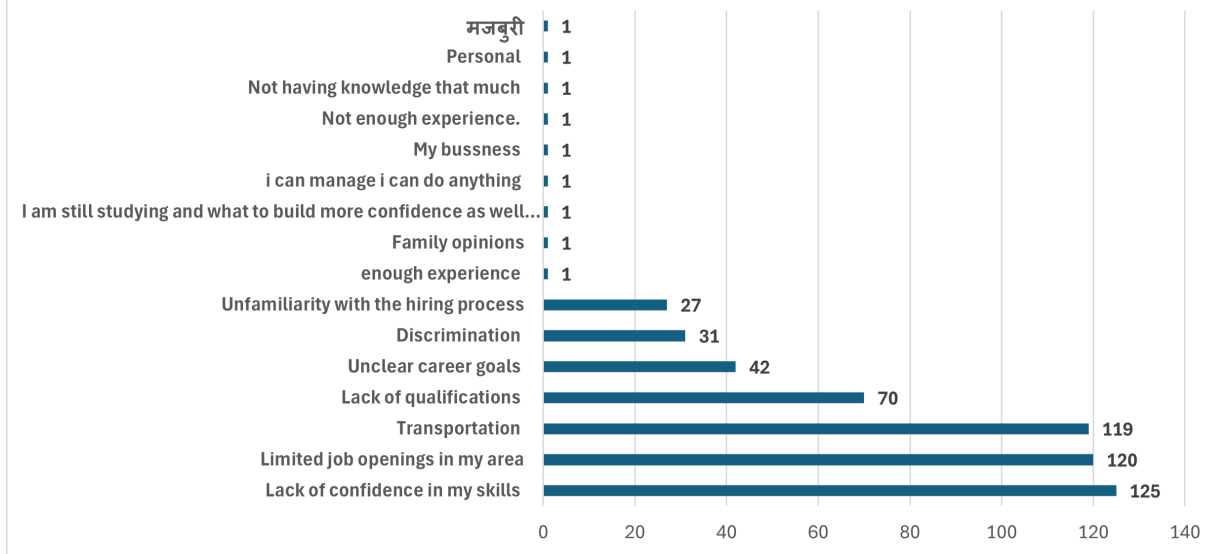
If you found out that many job roles don't offer the lifestyle portrayed online, would you still be willing to pursue those opportunities?



Social media has become a powerful tool for inspiring unemployed youth and motivating them to aim higher. It offers a window into stories of success, resilience, and growth, showing them that setbacks can be temporary. Platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube are filled with examples of people overcoming challenges and achieving their dreams. These stories create a sense of hope and possibility. Social media also provides access to free resources like online courses, job postings and skill-building content. It connects youth with mentors and communities that encourage personal growth. By fostering a sense of belonging and offering guidance, social media helps young people stay focused on their goals and work towards a better future.



What are the challenges that prevent you from working or finding a job?



The findings highlight a diverse range of needs that must be addressed in skill training programs and recruitment initiatives to effectively empower youth. One critical area is the development of soft skills which are essential for building confidence and fostering effective communication. These skills not only enhance self-assurance but also equip young individuals to navigate professional environments with poise. Training programs focusing on interpersonal communication, teamwork and problem-solving could significantly boost their readiness to engage with established professionals across various domains. Such interactions would provide invaluable insights into career trajectories, industry expectations and opportunities for growth.

Skill-building workshops and short-term certification courses also play a pivotal role in bridging the gap caused by limited formal qualifications. These programs can be tailored to address specific industry needs, equipping youth with practical job-oriented skills that enhance their employability. For instance, technical training in fields like digital literacy, data management or vocational trades could open doors to diverse career paths while niche courses in areas like creative arts or sustainable practices could cater to their varied interests and aspirations.

Moreover, interview preparation sessions are an essential component of comprehensive training programs. Many young individuals remain unfamiliar with hiring processes which leads to anxiety and a lack of preparedness during recruitment. Workshops that simulate interview scenarios, provide feedback on body language and articulation, and teach strategies for effectively presenting one's skills and experience could demystify the process and empower them to approach opportunities with confidence.

Incorporating mentorship programs into these initiatives would further enhance their impact. Pairing youth with industry professionals or alumni from similar backgrounds could create pathways for inspiration, guidance, and practical advice. Mentorship not only strengthens professional networks but also instills a sense of possibility, showing the youth that success is within their reach.



CONCLUSION

The youth of India are not just the architects of tomorrow but also the builders of today's foundation. Their dreams, struggles, and aspirations reflect the heartbeat of a nation poised for transformation. As Swami Vivekananda once said, *"The youth are the pillars of the nation, the creators of its destiny."* To neglect their needs is to ignore the very essence of progress.

This study illuminates the profound importance of aligning opportunities with the aspirations of young individual. Employment is not just about financial stability; it is a pathway to dignity, empowerment and the realisation of one's potential. For these youth, navigating the delicate balance between familial expectations, societal pressures and personal ambitions requires courage and resilience.

The findings of this report underscore a fundamental truth: employment is more than a job title or a paycheck. It is about creating spaces where young people feel valued, supported and inspired to grow. As Mahatma Gandhi observed, *"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."* In this context, empowering youth with meaningful work revitalises entire communities and lifting families out of poverty.

Our youth are not seeking shortcuts to success; they are yearning for opportunities that resonate with their values, offer clear growth and allow them to contribute to a cause greater than themselves. By addressing their unique challenges—be it financial constraints, emotional barriers, or misaligned job roles—we can unlock a vast reservoir of untapped potential that is waiting to bloom.

The time has come to move beyond viewing youth as beneficiaries of policies and instead embrace them as co-creators of progress. Every job opportunity, every supportive workplace and every avenue for skill development is a step closer to realizing the full promise of India's demographic dividend. As we invest in their future, we invest in a stronger, more resilient and inclusive India.

Let us then remember Eleanor Roosevelt's words, *"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."* Let us ensure that every dream has a chance to flourish. This is not just about building careers; it is about building lives, nurturing hope and crafting a brighter equitable tomorrow for all.

