

STUDY ON GEN Z ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA: CREATING STARTUPS BEFORE GRADUATION

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ABSTRACT

India has witnessed the trend of startup culture among students in the recent past, but particularly among the Generation Zers born between the period of January 1, 1997, and December 31, 2012. With enhanced exposure to technology, the virtual world, and venture creation, people are setting up businesses even before graduation. This research explores the reasons, issues, and culture of the Gen Z entrepreneurs who begin working on their startups before graduation. The research attempts to understand the reasons for the same and whether the current institutional and policy changes are prepared to serve this young and ambitious generation.

Keywords: Gen Z, Entrepreneurship, College Startups, Student Founders, Startup Ecosystem, India, Business Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship in India has been linked with experienced professionals or postgraduates in the past; however, over the past decade, a revolutionary change has been noticed. New generations of young entrepreneurs, i.e., those in the age group of Generation Z (1997–2012), are making their entry into the entrepreneurial space even while studying for undergraduate degrees. They are digitally native, socially aware, and innovation- and autonomy-focused. Entrepreneurship for them is not merely making bucks—it's about mission, passion, and impact creation.

Social media, e-learning platforms, and the ability to track global trends have brought down the previously restricting factors for entrepreneurship. Students are now able to initiate a digital business from the confines of a college dorm with little more than a laptop and an internet connection. From developing mobile applications to initiating handmade product startups on Instagram, these student businesses are gradually giving shape to the contours of India's startup ecosystem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, there has been a keen interest among researchers and players in the industry to research youth entrepreneurship, especially in emerging economies like India. Various studies indicate that Gen Z, unlike previous generations, is more technology literate, risk-taking, and value-driven rather than money-driven (Agarwal, 2023; Kapoor, 2022). The availability of tech, social media, and virtual networks has greatly eased access of entry for young entrepreneurs (Seth, 2024).

Studies by institutions like NASSCOM and TiE Delhi-NCR also point out college incubators and entrepreneurship clubs as the major ones for nurturing startup ideas among students (NASSCOM & Zinnov, 2021; TiE Delhi-NCR, 2023). Further, policy initiatives like Startup India have significantly contributed in encouraging youth to build a startup venture at a young age (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2022).

But while these are positive trends, most young entrepreneurs are still facing the challenge of juggling school and business, restricted access to capital, and absence of mentorship (YourStory, 2023). Several qualitative studies appreciate the value for additional specialized support structures that cater to specific demand of Gen Z entrepreneurs while in school (Agarwal, 2023; Startup India, 2023).

This literature offers that as the ecosystem changes, the path of student entrepreneurs is multi-layered and complicated, encompassing not only business acumen but also social integration. Drawing from these findings, this research aims to explore further the motivations, concerns, and support systems surrounding Gen Z entrepreneurs in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the primary reasons Gen Z students start businesses before graduation.
2. To investigate the difficulties student entrepreneurs experience balancing business startup and academic life.
3. To determine the effect of government and institutional support on Gen Z entrepreneurship.

4. To explore whether the Indian startup environment is open and approachable to student entrepreneurs.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although India's Gen Z students are highly entrepreneurial in their interests, they have huge challenges in front of them, including juggling studies with entrepreneurship, scarce resources for financing and support, and social pressures. There is limited overall knowledge about these challenges and how far existing support systems are addressing their needs. This research seeks to investigate these gaps so that support can be built up for young student entrepreneurs.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study highlighted Indian undergraduate students belonging to Generation Zers (born between 1997 and 2012) and involved in entrepreneurship or had attempted to be an entrepreneur before graduation. It focuses on different streams such as emerging business in technology, e-commerce businesses, service businesses, and creative industries. The study uses qualitative and quantitative survey data, interview data, and secondary data from start-up data collection and findings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

Primary data collection supports the quantitative research design used in this study. A structured questionnaire with primarily multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question to capture individual viewpoints served as the primary tool. The purpose of the questionnaire was to evaluate the entrepreneurial goals, inclinations, and difficulties encountered by Gen Z students who intend to launch a business prior to graduation.

Target respondents

College students enrolled in second-, third-, and final-year undergraduate programs made up the target population. Although participants from science, the arts, and other disciplines were also included to maintain dataset diversity, the majority of respondents were from the commerce stream.

Method of Sampling

A non-probability sampling method—more precisely, a mix of convenience and random sampling—was used in the study. In addition to randomly disseminating the survey link among college communities, participants were chosen from the researchers' academic and personal networks.

Data Gathering Instrument

Google Forms was used to gather the primary data, enabling the survey to be disseminated digitally to different student groups.

Time Spent Gathering Data

The information was gathered in July and August of 2025. For the purposes of this study, a total of 77 valid responses were received and examined.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

The data was collected using the following questions:

1. What is your age group?

Through the data collected, it has been observed that the majority of people were of age 18-20. From 77 people, 49 belonged to the age group of 18-20 and 20 belonged to 20-22.

2. What is your academic background?

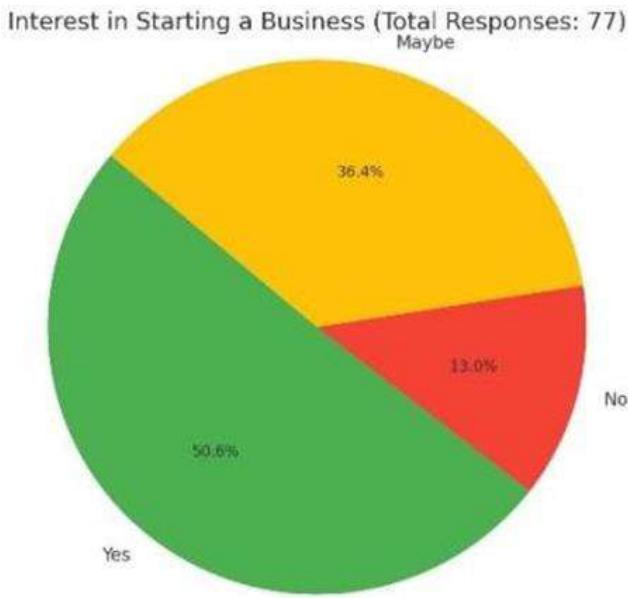
Science	13 (16.9%)
Arts	3 (3.9%)
Commerce	58 (75.3%)
Others	3 (3.9%)

It has been observed that majority were from management and commerce background which is been followed by science students. The data reveals the diversity from all the backgrounds.

3. Which year of college are you in?

1 st year	6 (7.7%)
2 nd year	4 (5.1%)
3 rd year	45 (57.7%)
Final year	23 (29.3%)

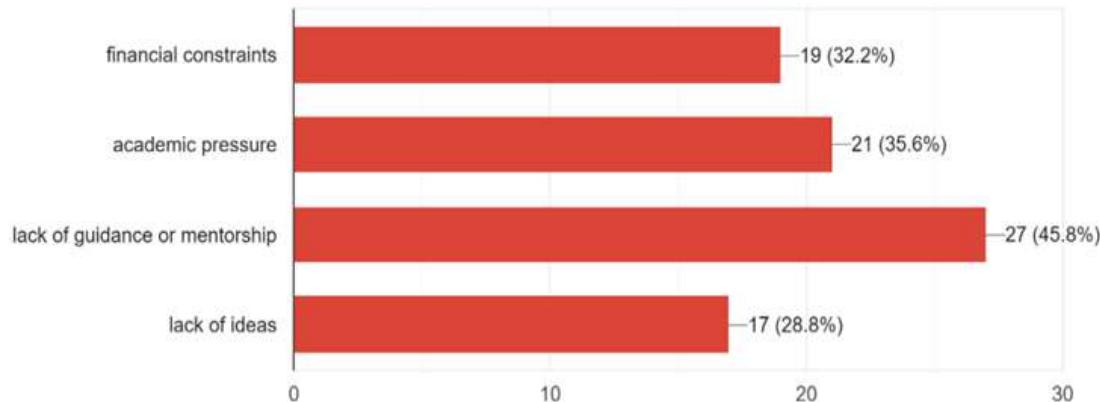
4. Are you interested in starting your own startup?



The data shows the genZ are more interested in starting their own business. 50.6% young are more into startups and 36.4% are still not sure. But from the data its clearly visible only 13% of the student's don't want to start their own business.

5. If yes when would you prefer to start your venture?

From this question we got to know that around 14% students are willing to start their startup even before completing their ug course. 18% of the student are ready to start their business while studying in pg program. This shows that todays youth want to start with their career as soon as possible. While many students still want to complete their graduation first and then start their own startups.

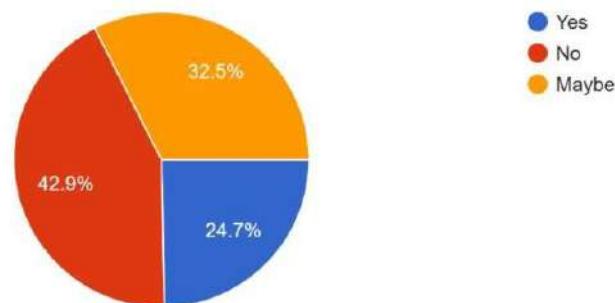


From the above data, it shows that around 45.8% of the students are facing the problem of guidance from mentors. The students want to start building their career but are facing the problem of mentorship from their college. And the data also reveal that many are not able to start their business because of academic pressure and financial constraints.

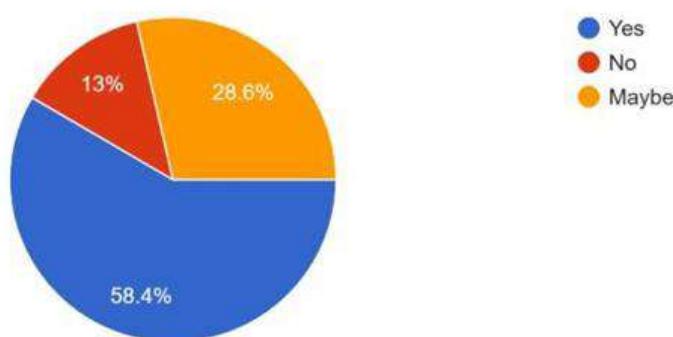
6. Do u have a startup idea but haven't taken action due to fear of failure?

The survey shows that many are still with no ideas even thought they want to start their own business. The other side of the survey also says many have ideas ready with them, and have not taken action because they still fear of failure

Do u have a startup idea but haven't taken action due to fear of failure?
 77 responses



Would you consider joining a startup instead of working at a corporate job?
 77 responses

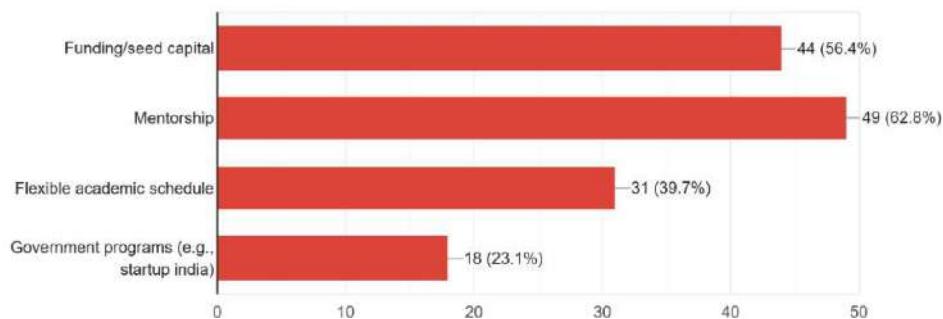


Today the genz are more interested in starting their own business are not in much fair of corporate world. This reveals that the upcoming youth is much interesting in creating the jobs rather than doing the jobs. 58.4% of students are not interesting in working under someone else.

7. Do you believe that Gen Z is more entrepreneurial than previous generation? why or why not?

This was the open ended question in our survey to study what students think about entrepreneurship. Almost everyone thinks that todays youth is much more creative and are more into starting something new rather than following the old same cycle like the previous generations.

What kind of support would help you become a student entrepreneur?
 78 responses



CONCLUSION

The entrepreneurial spirit of Generation Z college students in India is positive and encouraging. These technology natives do not hesitate to leverage technology and trends to disrupt business models. Their ride is not smooth, however. There is a very real need for greater institutional support, networks of mentors, and more adaptable academic frameworks. If India is to join the global startup culture, it must begin empowering its youngest entrepreneurs who stay in college. With adequate resources and guidance, Gen Z can be the force behind a new wave of sustainable and meaningful businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to support student entrepreneurs, universities should improve their mentorship programs by connecting student founders with accomplished businesspeople who can guide them through challenges in the real world.

If credit-based projects or electives tailored to entrepreneurship are offered, student entrepreneurs could feel less pressured to perform well academically. Colleges could also increase the availability of grants and seed money for student-run enterprises. Teaching pupils the principles of business, money, and law is essential to laying a strong foundation. Universities should be encouraged to set up incubation facilities and host startup boot camps in order to provide practical assistance. If educational institutions and government programs like Startup India collaborate more successfully, students will have access to the full range of resources. Young entrepreneurs can use yearly student startup fairs as a platform to advertise their businesses and raise capital. Finally, in order to assist student entrepreneurs in managing stress, pressure, and the difficulties of juggling business and academics, mental health services are crucial.

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