



EVENT REPORT

5th - 6th September 2021

To Reimagine, Refine and Raise our Vision
of Supporting Employability of Youth

About Tech Mahindra Foundation

Tech Mahindra Foundation (TMF) is the corporate social responsibility arm of Tech Mahindra Limited, a Mahindra Group Company. The Foundation set up in 2007, as a Section 25 Company (referred to as a Section 8 Company in the Companies Act, 2013), has been working tirelessly in the areas of education, employability and disability, with a keen focus on corporate volunteering.

The Foundation works with the mandate that 50% of its beneficiaries are women and 10% are Persons with Disabilities. Over the years, the Tech Mahindra Foundation has impacted 290,425 direct beneficiaries across all the programs. Additionally, Tech Mahindra Foundation continues to serve the nation through the 572 COVID Relief Projects* across 17 states in India.

Our Focus Areas

EMPLOYABILITY

SMART (Skills-for-Market Training) is the Foundation's flagship employability program to empower youth from economically backward urban communities. It provides them with the requisite employability skills through structured training programs, ensuring that they are placed in suitable dignified jobs. The Foundation has been implementing the SMART program by establishing a network of SMART Academies and Centres – run both directly and through other partner implementing agencies.

EDUCATION

The Foundation works in Government schools through its ARISE (All Round Improvement in School Education) program with the objective of holistic development of children in these schools. Moreover, Shikshaantar is the Foundation's training program focusing on teacher empowerment and capacity enhancement through modern-day subject matter and pedagogical practices. The Foundation has also launched Mobile Science Lab, where a bus equipped with hands-on activities of EVS (Science) visits the Government schools to facilitate the learning of students from Classes 3 to 5.

DISABILITY

The Foundation believes that there is Ability in Disability. With the focus on creating an inclusive world and providing a life of dignity and confidence, we are working in the area of education and skill development for children and youth with disabilities, respectively. This is done through ARISE+ (All Round Improvement in School Education for Children with Disabilities) and SMART+ (Skills-for-Market Training for Persons with Disabilities). ARISE+ is a program that encourages children with disabilities to become a part of mainstream education. The SMART+ program focuses on providing employable market-related entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to youth with disabilities.

VOLUNTEERING

Corporate Volunteering lies at the heart of Tech Mahindra Foundation's ethos. Employees volunteer and contribute to driving positive social change while simultaneously enhancing their own capacities for empathy and compassion. This is how we *#RiseforGood!*

*As on 31 December 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Tech Mahindra Foundation expresses its great appreciation to our NGO Partners, SMART Centre Facilitators, Location Heads and Associates, Project Directors and Leaders for their support in planning and executing YuWaaz 2021. Your willingness to give time so generously has been very much appreciated. We are thankful to all the individual contributors for agreeing to help us organize the event. These vibrant sessions will surely help us to improve the way we work with youth and strategize the SMART program for the future.

A special thanks to all the interpreters and facilitators of the Speech and Hearing Impaired alumni groups sessions -

1. Ashok Bhoi, Youth4Jobs, Bhubaneswar
2. Poonam Kumari, Noida Deaf Society, Delhi
3. Satyabrata Banerjee, Youth4Jobs, Kolkata
4. Sunder Raju, DEF Secunderabad, Hyderabad

Most importantly, we acknowledge the efforts of the Core Team for making YuWaaz 2021 a success.

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YuWaaz - Voices of the Youth

At the outset, the question that comes to mind is, what is YuWaaz or why YuWaaz?

The past 1.5 years of COVID and its related aftermath has not left anyone unaffected. Individuals, businesses, livelihoods, families, health and everything has been impacted gravely. One such segment of the population that has been affected directly and indirectly is youth - the fresh college pass outs with dreams and hopes to achieve something for themselves, make their parents proud and improve their living standards. A whole generation witnessed a grey shadow over their dreams and hopes, leaving them in a vulnerable spot with no one to share their thoughts. This led to a range of mental health issues among the younger generation which is often neglected due to lack of awareness and lack of communication in many households.

YuWaaz 2021 aimed to answer the following:

1. What were the challenges faced by youth during the pandemic, and how did they overcome them?
2. Where do they see themselves growing professionally after the pandemic?
3. What are the sectors/industries they wish to pursue their career in?
4. What skills, according to them, they would like to improve or build in themselves?
5. What advice would they like to give the current batches of Tech Mahindra Foundation's SMART (Skills-for-Market Training) Centres or the young generation overall?
6. How do they see SMART being a constant companion in the journey of their dreams?

AGENDA

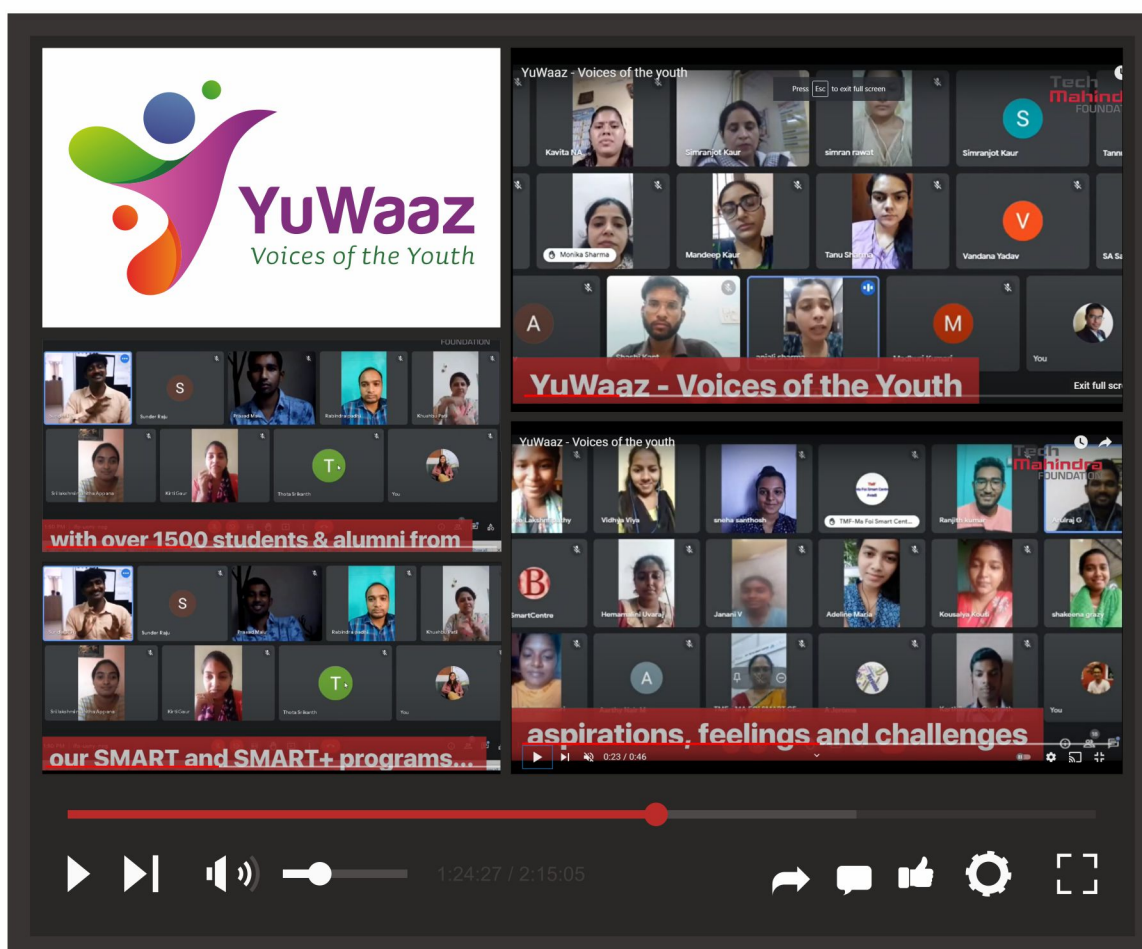
YuWaaz 2021 was a series of vibrant and interactive virtual sessions in which our alumni across locations connected with us and shared their views and answered the above questions. The dialogues helped us to understand and highlight what is going on through the minds of these youngsters along with their situation (financial and mental) during the pandemic. The virtual discussions helped us to integrate the perspectives of the participants while strategizing our SMART program for the future, and hopefully improving the way we work with youth.



THE EVENT

On 5th and 6th September 2021, we connected with our SMART alumni through an online platform (Google Meet) with the objective to make a statement about our focus on working with youth and enabling them to Rise. The event witnessed 1500+ students moderated by 40+ facilitators in a series of 100+ sessions over a span of 2 days. The discussion had two components:

- Google-form based quiz to understand the demographic, socio-economic and aspirational inputs from the participants. A total of 1259 participants responded to the survey form.
- The facilitators moderated the focussed group discussions to dive deeper into the challenges and aspirations. The sessions covered students from all four zones of the country i.e. North, South, East and West.



Moments from YuWaaaz - Voices of the Youth

RESULT & ANALYSIS



SURVEY RESULTS

Based on the survey conducted among the alumni, below given statistics indicate the demographic, socio-economic and aspirational diversity of the cohort.

A. Demographic Profile

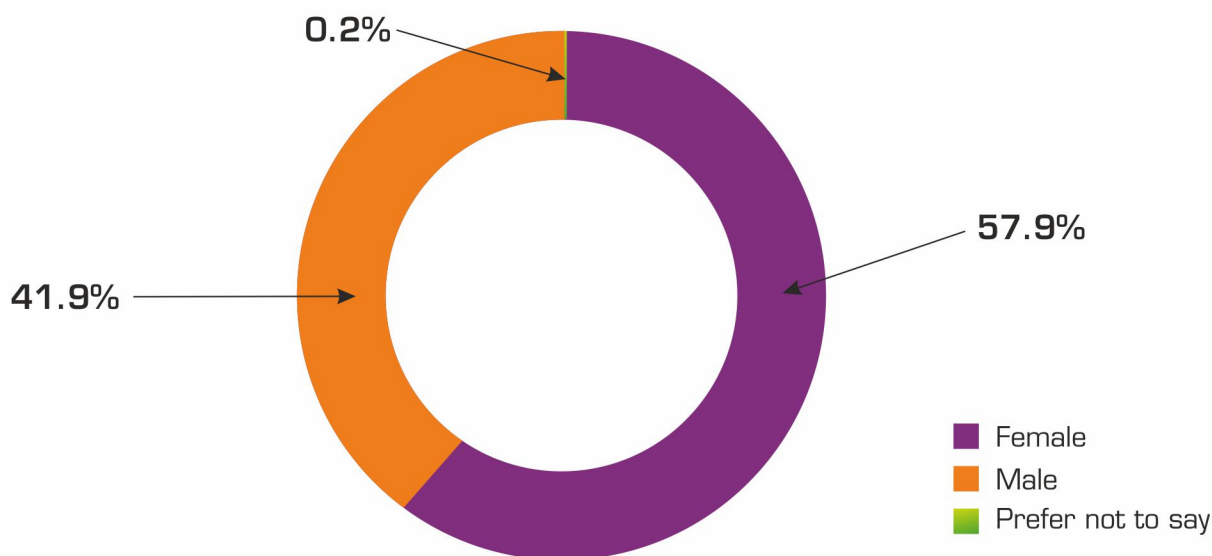


Figure 1: Gender-wise participant

The cohort saw participation from 58% females and 42% males, as shown in figure 1. The discussions also brought forth the gender-based challenges and stereotypes that both genders faced and mitigated. The challenge lies in making them prepared in a manner to enable them to circumvent these challenges with confidence.

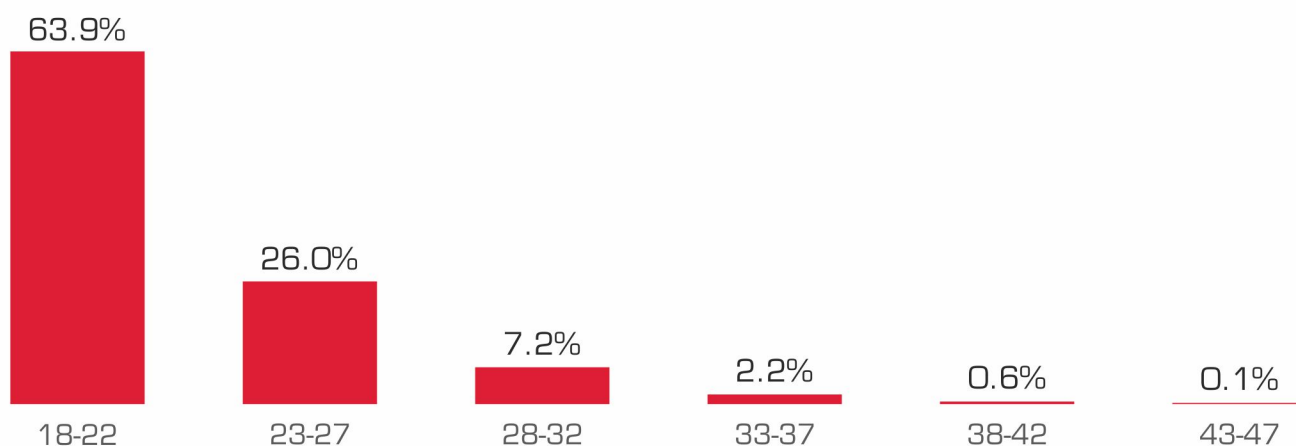


Figure 2: Age-wise participants

As per figure 2, the participants belonged to the age group of 18 to 47 with the majority of participants being between 18 to 22. This is also the age group that Tech Mahindra Foundation primarily targets through its employability initiative across 11 locations through SMART Centres and Academies.

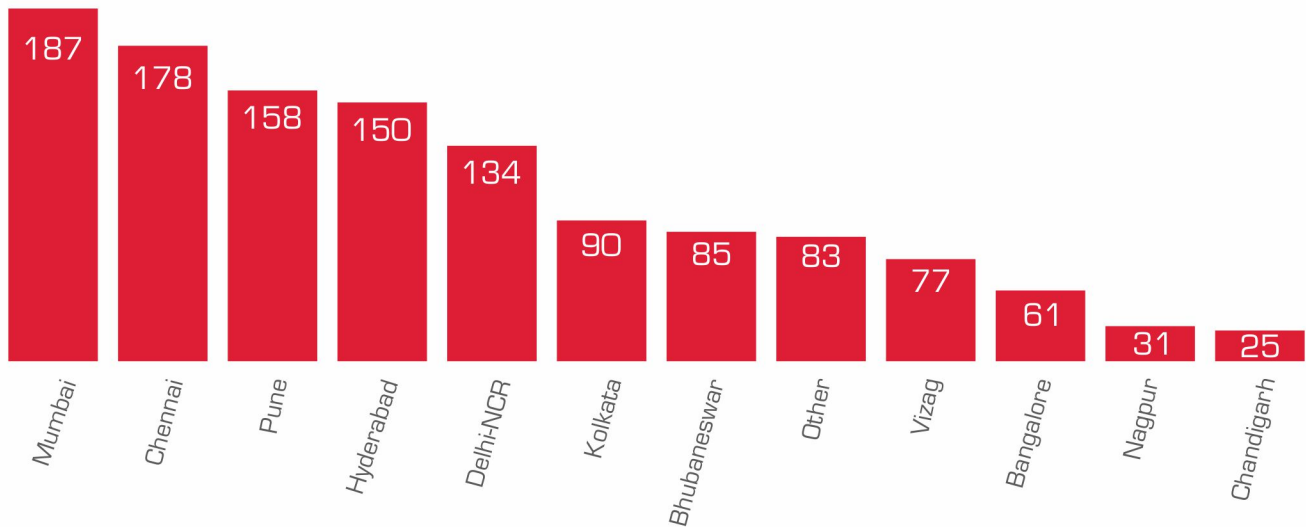


Figure 3: City-wise participants

Figure 3 depicts the number of participants from various cities.

B. Socio-Economic Profile

This event focused on understanding the participants from a socio-economic angle by observing their families' monthly income. The figure 4 depicts the average monthly family income of the participants.

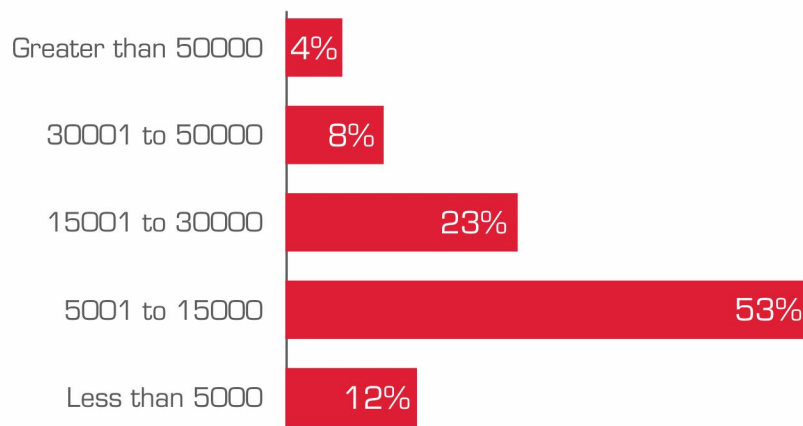


Figure 4: Average monthly income

At least 53% of respondents belonged to families with monthly income between ₹ 5000/- to ₹ 15000/- while 12% belonged to families with a monthly income of less than ₹ 5000/-. It is not hard to imagine how their daily struggles increased substantially during the COVID 19 lockdown. With increased inflation each year, rising prices of commodities and education, aspirations for the younger generation are bound to rise and maintain a decent standard of living, education and reach their dreams.

C. Aspirational Profile

This segment aimed to understand the aspirational profile of the participants, their aspirations in terms of willingness to study further or work post-training, the industries or sectors they want to work in and also self-awareness about the skills they aim to acquire. The composite information can define a long-term strategy for SMART and its way forward. The main idea behind SMART has always been to make youth employable and help them Rise. Hearing it directly from the main stakeholders of the program ensures its validity, reliability and usability.

i. Future Goal

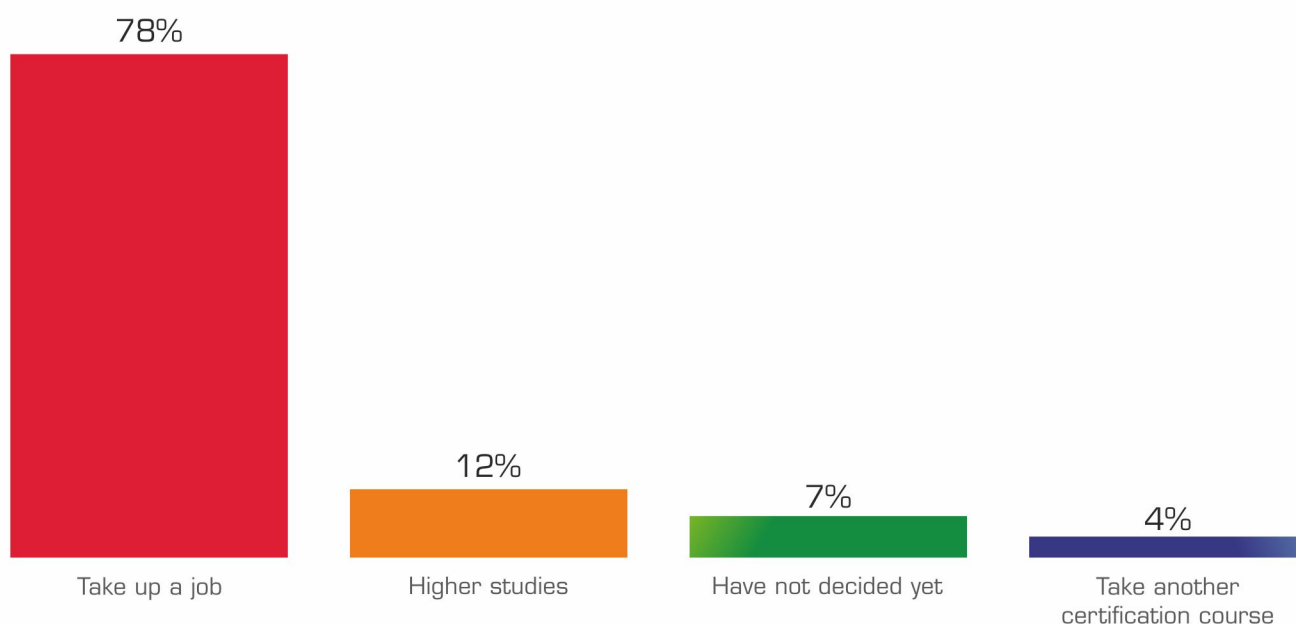
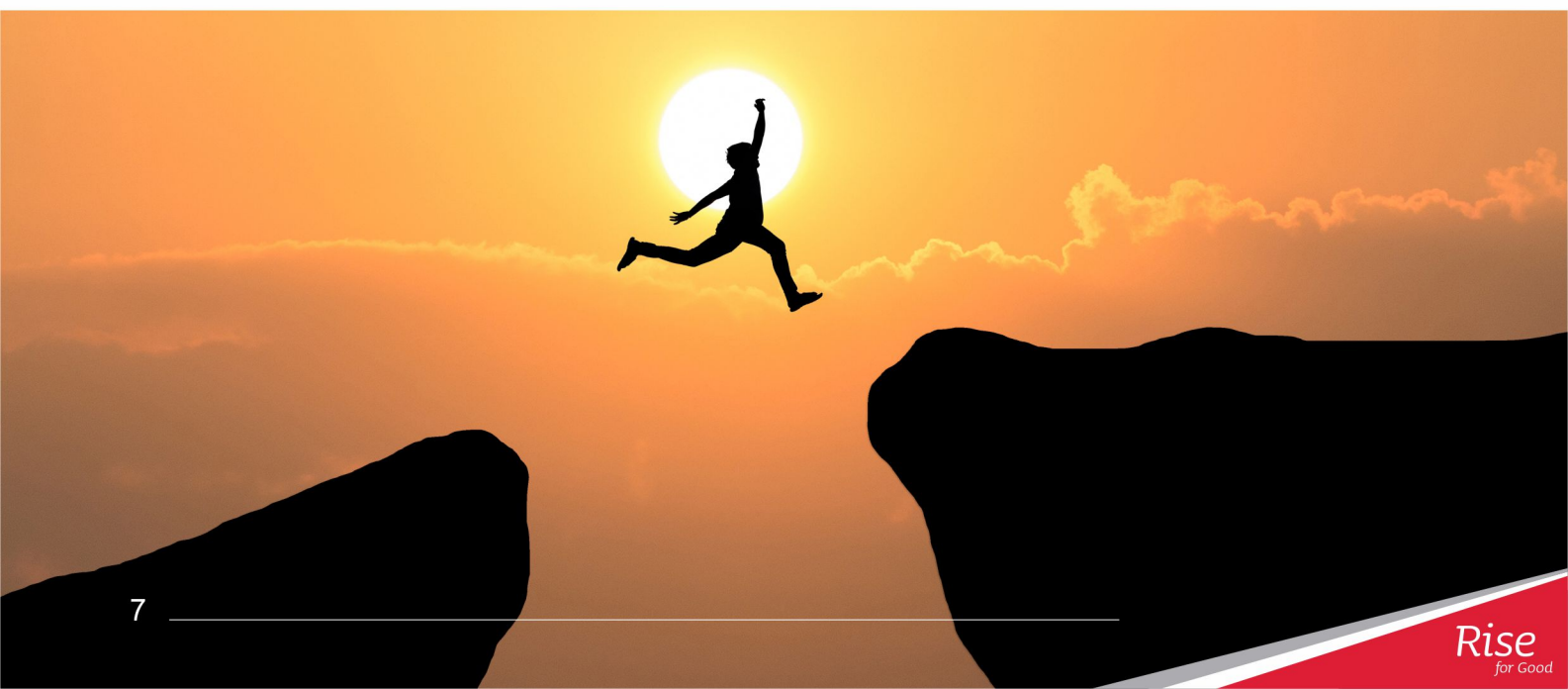


Figure 5: Future Goal

The figure 5 represents the future goals of the participating youngsters. A total of 78% of candidates wanted to take up a job, while 12% decided to pursue higher studies and 7% were unsure. Only 4% wanted to go for another certification.



ii. Industry/Sector of Interest

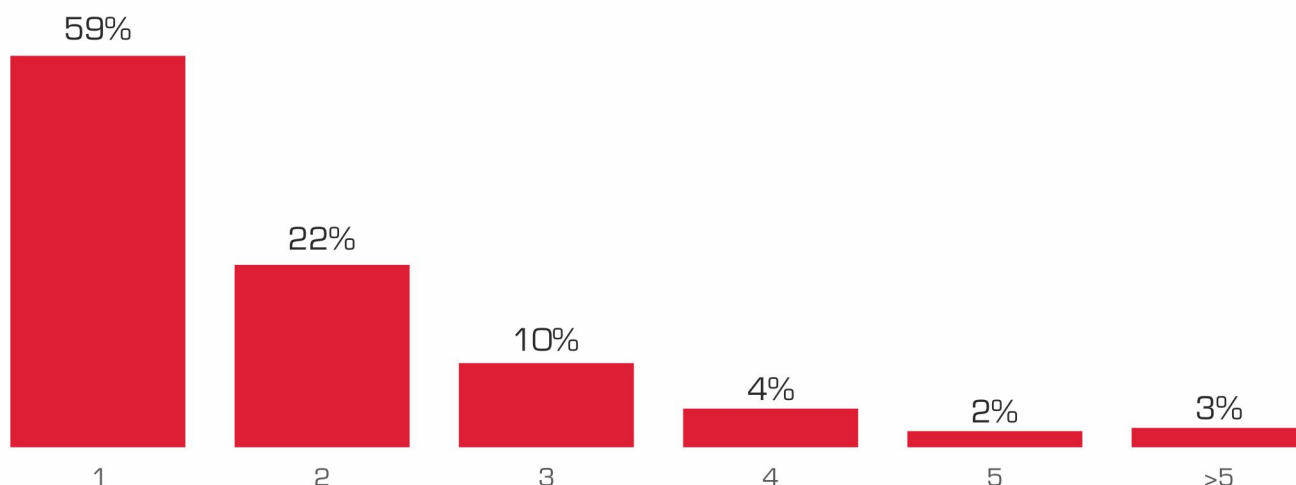


Figure 6: Number of sectors chosen by participants

When asked about their sector/industry of choice in which they would like to work, 59% choose only one sector, as shown in the figure 6. This highlights how the generation is focused on their goals and career objectives. What they essentially require is a mentor guiding them towards their dream career.

The figure 6 also depicts that 9% of the candidates chose 4 or more sectors as their career choice. This segment of students needs more support and guidance to create better awareness amongst themselves about the career avenues in various sectors, and most importantly, better awareness about themselves. A focussed and directed approach is required to grow in their career. A scattered approach towards career can make youngsters jump from one job to another without any destination in hindsight.

The participants also mentioned a wide range of job roles and sectors while answering this particular question. This indicates that there seems to be a lack of clarity amongst candidates between job functions and sectors. For the purpose of analysis, various job roles have been grouped under the specific sector based on its function.



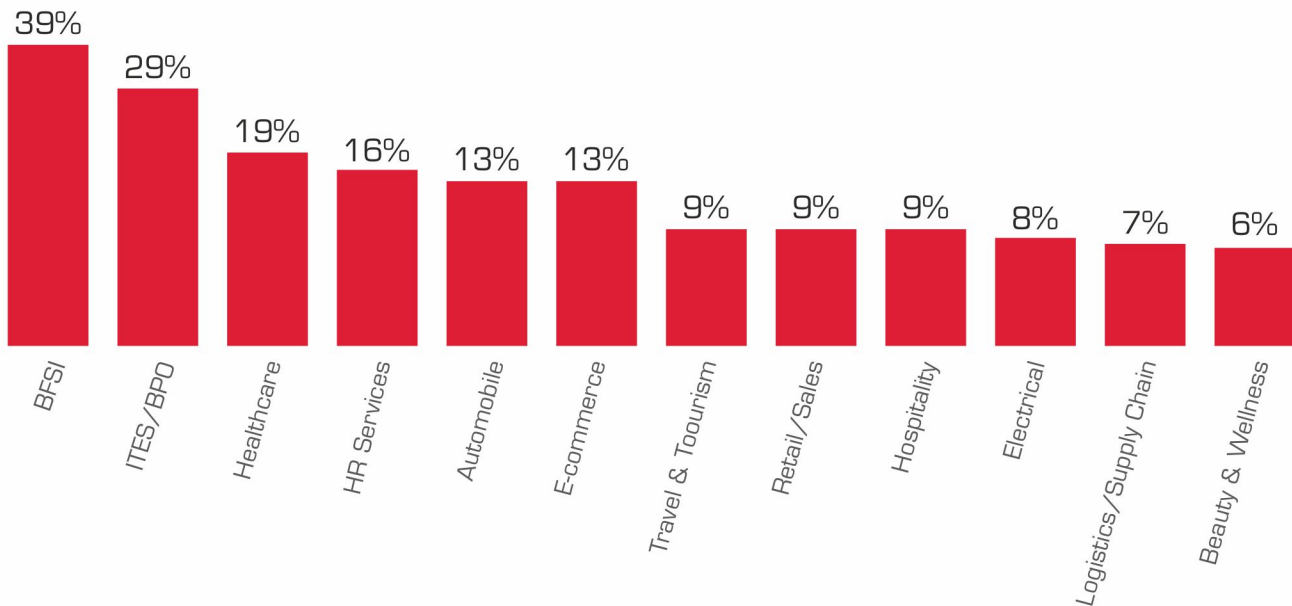


Figure 7: Top sectors by respondent

The figure 7 depicts the sectors chosen by our alumni as their choice for career. Banking, Financial Service and Insurance (BFSI), IT Enabled Services (ITES), Healthcare, Automobile, e-commerce, Logistics, Travel and Tourism, Retail/sales, Hospitality and Electrical are the common sectors featured among the choices. Out of these, Banking and ITES have topped the list. The other common core industries/domains that the students were interested in were Graphic Designing, Digital Marketing, Teaching and Management.

Some of the off-beat choices amongst respondents were agriculture, event management, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, literature, content writing, painting and dancing. Also, many youngsters aspired to go for government services like the Indian Police Service (IPS), Defence.



iii. Skill Development

This section aimed to understand their awareness and clarity in terms of the skills they think would be required to achieve their career goals. Our targets are not just candidates who want to take up jobs immediately, but also the ones who plan to go for higher studies. Eventually, they will form part of the employable youth working for themselves and their nation by large.

Over 1200 youngsters mentioned an entire list of skills they wanted to acquire and for analysis, we have grouped them into measurable categories. As given in figure 7, requirement for domain related skills tops the list, followed by communication, IT and workplace-related skills.

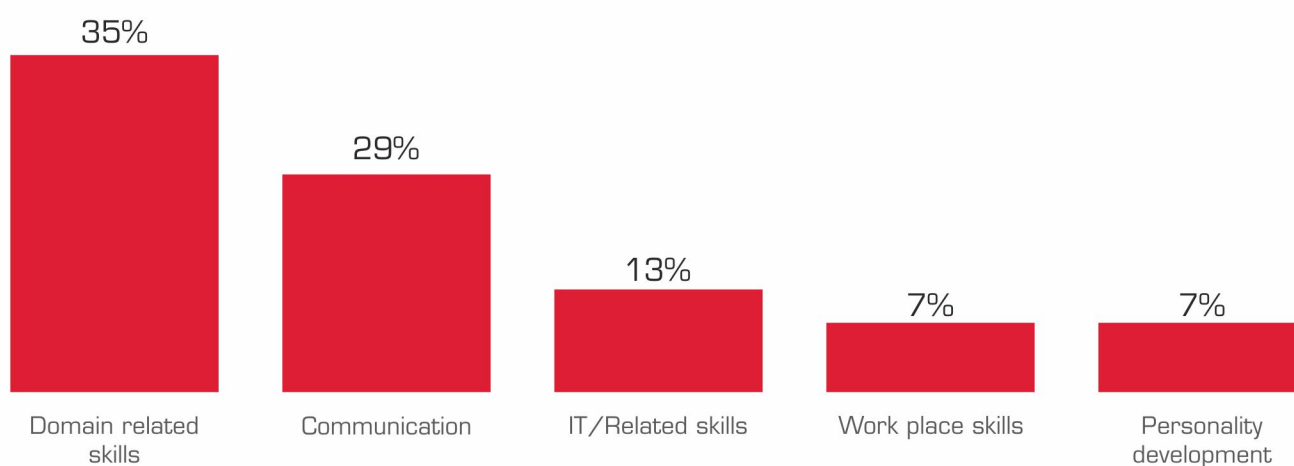


Figure 8: Skill requirement of candidates

Apart from the above list of skills, there were a few more that the respondents mentioned. It includes cybersecurity, typing, analytical skills, management, entrepreneurship.

Under the umbrella of workplace related skills, some key skills mentioned by the respondents were convincing ability, handling people, positive attitude, talking to seniors, Strategy, problem solving, prioritising work, people management, project management and empathy.

Personality development was another important skill mentioned by the respondents which encompass positive attitude, hard-work, diligence, adaptability, confidence, being able to talk to strangers, public speaking, soft skills, emotional intelligence, being more social, improving presentation, dressing sense and talking politely.

This list in itself is indicative that the kind of awareness these youngsters have about what they require to succeed is quite remarkable. There were 40 students who either could not understand the question or were unaware of the skills required to improve. This segment requires the very first development of skill which is self-awareness.

DISCUSSION - STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

A. Impact of COVID 19 and Coping Strategy

The event started with discussions to understand the feelings, fears, strategies and aspirations of the youth during the pandemic and use them to improve the way we work with them.

This made students open up to moderators and share their experiences. There were floods of emotions from fear to grief to sadness but with a pinch of hope. Highlights from the discussion are shared below:

- **Job-Loss:** Most immediate impact of COVID 19 induced lockdown was the loss of jobs across the nation. More than 80% of students mentioned one or the other family members losing a job to COVID. In some cases, students themselves lost their jobs. Few students who graduated in March 2020 and already had offers in hand were either cancelled or put on hold due to the pandemic.
- **Financial Crisis:** Loss of jobs and no alternate source of income led many families go through a financial crisis. Most families were unable to afford meals for even twice a day and had to depend on their savings, borrowings or help from neighbours and relatives. In many cases, ration support given by Tech Mahindra Foundation helped them to steer through the worst. Inability to pay EMI's and unaffordability of school/college fee were other issues faced due to the pandemic-driven financial crisis that led to increase in the number of drop-outs from the formal education system.

"I was even unable to get milk for my baby during the pandemic, and I felt helpless when I saw my baby crying."

- **Career Crisis:** Inability to pay the school/college fee led to many students to drop out from the formal education sector. Along with the cancellation of exams, delay in the announcement of exam results and loss of job offers created insecurity among youngsters. In the absence of formal education and guidance, they found themselves lost. Even in cases where students joined online courses like SMART, mobile data and having a smartphone was a challenge.
- **Psychological Distress:** Death in the family due to COVID or other reasons like - financial troubles, insecurity about career, social restrictions and fear of COVID itself led to stress, depression, low self-esteem and anxiety. In one such case, a woman lost her husband to COVID leaving behind two kids to look after and with no job in hand. This is only one of the many such incidents shared by youngsters.

"We worked online part-time and switched to online preparation as well for the exams."

All the quotes are by SMART Students/Alumni from the event.

Despite the challenges, the youth with support from their family and friends continued to fight through this situation. Many students started taking tuition to earn a little extra while others went to prepare for competitive exams, online skilling courses like SMART and others. To deal with the psychological distresses, there was heavy reliance on social media, YouTube videos and mental wellness sessions of SMART. The entire situation was looked at from a positive angle with hope for new beginnings.

“

Our parents were at our aid and never let us down. We also took help from our friends and relatives to overcome the financial crisis.

”

B. Professional Journey in next 5-7 years

In this segment, the discussion was more to understand where our students and alumni see themselves in future and how they envision it to be. It can be closely linked with the aspirational profile of respondents as detailed in section C of the survey results wherein the future goals and industries/sectors of respondent's choice were discussed. Some of the key highlights of this section are:

- **Reaching Heights:** More than 90% students mentioned that they want to reach a higher position in the sector and work of their choice. People management, leading teams and being at a respectful position are some of the key indicators as mentioned by the respondents.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship is one area that garnered a good number of responses wherein the students mentioned that they first want to work for some time to earn money and gain skills to start their own business eventually.
- **Financial Independence:** A good number of students mentioned that being financially independent is one of their main goals so that they can deal with situations like COVID in near future. Many students also dream of supporting their parents by meeting their financial needs, building a house for them, etc.



C. Skills learnt at SMART Academies and Centres

Continuing from the previous discussion of future career plans, this section aimed to understand how SMART is bringing these youngsters closer to their dream job. The SMART program is designed to create employable youth who can be an asset to the community and nation by large. These youngsters are the main stakeholders of SMART and knowing their opinion about how the program is shaping their career is of utmost importance. Some key highlights from the discussions were:

- **Improvement in Communication Skills:** More than 90% of students mentioned that they overcame their fear of speaking English in public and now they can communicate confidently with strangers, customers and put their thoughts across firmly.

“

Now, we are confident that we will be able to face the situations better, handle the fear of speaking to strangers, analyse our strengths and weaknesses by participating in the interactive sessions, group activities/discussions and jam sessions.

”

- **Better Clarity:** SMART helped them gain clarity about themselves by creating better self-awareness, clarity about different career avenues and motivating them to reach heights.

“

Though we did not want to go to our jobs, the teachers motivated us and explained the importance of being financially independent.

”

- **Better Skills:** A good number of students mentioned skill improvement as the main outcome of joining our SMART program. Personality development, leadership skills, IT skills-domain specific knowledge are some of the key things highlighted by the participants. Skills equipped through SMART and given placement support have motivated and encouraged them to plan for a business of their own in a few years down the line.

“
The technical, English communication and soft skills made me a different person. I was able to present and aim to reach the next level in my career.
”

- **Better Guidance:** As per the participants, SMART has guided them to improve their professional as well as personal life. One of the students mentioned that the practice of meditation and gratitude improved their quality of life. Teachers at the Centres and Academies are genuinely willing to help students learn and grow and ensure they have a joyful learning experience.

“
Hope for a better tomorrow. There is a lack of awareness of the placement opportunities, but the SMART program is helping students to think big about the future.
”

“
The biggest advantage I would say is that the teachers were always supportive and helped us improve our skills and our lives.
”

“
The assistance from the placement team was our biggest advantage as it is really difficult for us to find a job all by ourselves.
”

D. Advice for Current Students

Continuing with the group discussion, this particular question was for students who have already graduated and are currently employed. We requested them to address the present batches and share career advancement tips. Highlights from the session shared are given below:

- **Make the best use of Opportunity:** A majority of the alumni mentioned this particular advice - To make the best use of time and knowledge that they are getting at the Academies and Centres to improve their skills, gain knowledge and get maximum information.
- **Communication is the Key:** A total of 80% of students stressed on having good communication and presentation skills along with punctuality to effectively navigate through any interview and job.
- **Move out of Comfort Zone:** Growth always happens outside the comfort zone and these youngsters have stressed hard on this point. A first job is always difficult but if one continues to work hard and does not give up, they can easily move through it and bring their career on track.
- **Never Stop Learning:** Another important piece of advice these youngsters have is to constantly strive to improve themselves with proper planning and go for the best. They also advised on giving as many interviews as possible and never missing any opportunity to grow.



E. Recommendations

Here, we discussed the students' expectations from Tech Mahindra Foundation (TMF). Also, how do they envision TMF to be their guiding light in their journey towards success? Few of the key recommendations coming directly from students are shared below:

- **Increase outreach:** More than 60% of the batches mentioned that TMF should spread its wings and increase its outreach to reach more vulnerable sections and people in need of employment and support. TMF should continue to upgrade its courses and programmes to support the young generation in realising their dreams.

Most people are unaware of SMART. It should be advertised and marketed more vigorously in its functioning locations to increase awareness among youth.

- **Course Alignment & Tenure:** Aligning courses with the interest and goals of students and market requirements would create better opportunities for students. It also needs analysis and community mapping to help create better-aligned courses for students.

Adding to the above, they also highlighted that TMF should increase the course tenure of the SMART program. This will give them more time to enhance their skills and understanding of the subject. Few requested to introduce new short-term courses for Computer/IT related programming, Arithmetic and Logical Reasoning while some suggested to linking the courses to additional skills that might be required to getting a job in that particular sector/industry.

“

If institutes like the SMART Academies are located near our places, it would be much easier to do the course with a nominal fee to rise in our career/workplace.

”

- **Apprenticeship/Internship:** Students mentioned that there should be more and better opportunities in large scale industries for on-job training as this will help them to prepare better for the real world. Students from the Digital Marketing program mentioned that internships should start at least 3 months after the theory sessions as it equips them with enough skills to sail through the challenges faced in the work environment.
- **Career Counselling Sessions:** More than 80% of students recommended TMF to conduct regular career counselling and self-awareness sessions to help choose the right career. These kinds of sessions will help them to focus on career building and also give better exposure to markets, company etiquettes and the courses for higher studies.

Few students lack clarity while choosing the career for themselves. Hence, they foresee confusion and indecisiveness as an obstacle. According to them, TMF can help them by providing one to one sessions for choosing the best career for themselves.

Counselling will also help to create better equipped youngsters, able to deal with any kind of societal stereotypes, challenges and limited thinking. Owing to gender stereotypes, many girls lose the opportunities to grow professionally. Counselling and guidance to help overcome this very situation is the need of the hour.

- **More Focus on Soft Skill Development:** TMF should focus more on soft skill development i.e. leadership, time management and people management. This is linked to the Skill Development section in the survey results wherein respondents were asked what skills they would like to improve in themselves. Sessions on financial literacy and the stock market are also on the list suggested by the students.
- **Financial Support for Business:** Entrepreneurship was the first choice of career for most students. However, owing to financial constraints many of them have to put their plans on hold. They suggested that if some kind of financial support/guidance from TMF will be of immense help to put their plans into action.
- **More Post Placement follow-up for Persons with Disabilities (PWD's):** Discussion with PWD candidates revealed that there is need for more post-placement hand-holding and support to ensure that students do not give up on jobs due to pressure at workplace or home. Many a time, non-accessibility of the workplace makes them quit. Increasing awareness among the employers regarding productivity of PWD's or data loss due to Screen Reader software is the need of the hour.



CONCLUSION

YuWaaz gave a free platform to the youth to share their experiences, struggles and aspirations. The discussion kicked off with a great start as students were able to self-reflect and define the transformation in their life, some past experiences which left a strong footprint in their minds and some feasible aspects of growth in professional life. The discussion with all the students was bounteous which helped to understand each of their struggles and needs during the pandemic. It has created a constructive conversation to improve the program by implementing the suggestion and advice recorded in the “Voices of the Youth”.

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