

## Economic Sustainability and Creative Freedom among Youth in India: An Analytical Study

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The dynamic between creative expression and financial survival is gaining heightened salience for young people trying to forge professional identities in artistic fields. While creative work is considered to be emotionally nourishing, it is difficult for most people to sustain long-term engagement in the arts without reliable streams of income, conducive environments, and a pragmatic understanding of money management. This paper explores the various ways in which youth in India negotiate the troubling friction between creative ambition and economic imperatives. Drawing from previously existing scholarly work and survey responses of over one hundred youths engaged in a variety of creative practices, the study analyses the impact of financial literacy, family expectations, personal motivation, and institutional support in determining creative careers. It concludes that artistic freedom is not sacrificed at the altar of financial planning; instead, creativity thrives when people have the economic means and social support to do what they love.

**Keywords:** creative economy, cultural economics, financial sustainability, youth and arts, creative labour market, income instability, financial literacy, artistic autonomy, institutional support, societal pressure

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# 1. Introduction

Traditionally, art and economics have been seen as two different worlds, with the former representing imagination, emotion, and personal fulfillment, while the latter epitomizes responsibility, practicality, and survival. In contemporary times, the world of professional life blurs this division between the two. Young people in creative professions can no longer afford to be oblivious to economic compulsion, and sheer creative ambitions are not good enough to guarantee livelihood security. For budding artists in India, the pursuit of creativity takes on dimensions of income instability, competition, and strong societal expectations that lean toward more conventional careers.

Despite increasing access to digital platforms for the generation of content, most young creative workers do not identify artistic work as their main source of income. They consider artistic activity as a sideline or hobby and look for other forms of employment to generate household income. Some give up creative pursuits altogether because they cannot afford it or for reasons to do with cultural expectations. Accordingly, exploring how young people negotiate financial constraint in their efforts to sustain an artistic identity can yield insight into how creativity and economics intersect. This study investigates how youth in India understand the interconnections between financial stability and creative autonomy and which factors most powerfully determine whether and how young people are able to sustain an artistic career over time. Rather than framing creativity and economics as mutually antagonistic, the research places them as interdependent elements that define professional development and personal fulfillment.

# 2. Methodology

This research had a mixed-methods design that brought together a literature-based inquiry and a structured online survey. More than one hundred participants volunteered between the ages of 18 and 35 years. The survey was distributed through the university networks, creative-practice communities, and social media platforms. Responses were anonymized to encourage honesty without concern for reputation.

The questionnaire consisted of quantitative and qualitative parts. Quantitative items gathered general information, including demographic data, the level of engagement in creative work, perceived economic security, and perceived importance of financial independence for sustaining creativity. Qualitative questions invited reflections on personal obstacles, types of support that could enhance continuity in creativity, and opinions on the role of financial management in long-term artistic engagement.

Descriptive statistics were used to find main response patterns, and the thematic analysis grouped qualitative statements into recurring categories such as: financial instability, cultural pressure, intrinsic motivation, and access to institutional support. This methodological framework follows previous cultural-economic research in maintaining that numerical and narrative evidence needs to be combined to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the lived experience of creative labor (Throsby, 2010; Towse, 2019; Banks, 2017).

# 3. Results

## 1. Financial Stability of Creative Work

Analysis revealed that 57% of respondents considered creative income financially unstable. Only 24% reported that creative work generated reliable earnings. Research in cultural-economics literature has shown that creative labour markets are characterised by fluctuating income streams, project-based assignments and irregular demand (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Banks, 2017). The survey findings reinforce this documented pattern.

## 2. Creative Work as a Secondary Pursuit

A majority (57%) reported engaging in artistic work only as a hobby. Part-time or side-based creative work accounted for 29%, while only 4% identified as full-time creative professionals. The remaining 10% had exited creative fields due to challenges. The pattern supports the argument that creatives often divide their time between income-securing work and artistic projects to cope with financial volatility (Florida, 2012).

## 3. Belief that Financial Freedom is Essential for Creative Freedom

Seventy-six percent agreed or strongly agreed that financial independence is necessary to sustain creative activity.

The notion that reliable income contributes positively to artistic autonomy is consistent with the position that economic security expands, rather than reduces, creative potential (Throsby, 2010; Bakhshi & Cunningham, 2016).

#### 4. Social Pressure as a Primary Barrier

Thirty-eight percent cited family or societal expectations as the most significant obstruction to pursuing creative careers. Earlier scholarship has reported similar findings, emphasising that cultural norms often discourage artistic professions in favour of more socially prestigious and economically predictable occupations (Oakley & O'Brien, 2016).

#### 5. Importance of Financial Literacy and Structured Support

Respondents indicated that financial literacy (28%), family endorsement (30%) and government or institutional opportunities (25%) are key components of long-term creative sustainability. Research has similarly shown that emotional support, policy-based assistance and financial knowledge lessen precarity in the cultural labour market (Banks, 2017; Bakhshi & Cunningham, 2016; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

#### 6. Correlation between Money-management Confidence and Creative Persistence

Participants who continued creative work in any capacity consistently reported higher confidence in budgeting and income management. Individuals who discontinued creative activities frequently attributed their decision to inconsistent income and weak financial planning. The relationship aligns with arguments suggesting that the capacity to manage unpredictable creative earnings plays a decisive role in sustained creative engagement (Towse, 2019).

**Table:** Survey Results on Financial Stability, Creative Participation, and Support Needs Among Youth

Result Category	Survey Indicators	Percentage / Finding	Interpretation
Financial Stability of Creative Work	Respondents rating creative income as financially stable vs. unstable	57% reported not stable; 19% somewhat stable; 24% very stable	Majority of young creatives perceived artistic work as economically unreliable.
Nature of Participation in Creative Fields	Whether creativity is primary or secondary profession	57% hobby only; 29% part-time/side work; 4% full-time; 10% discontinued	Creative work is usually pursued alongside other income-earning activities rather than as a full-time career.
Link Between Financial Independence and Creative Autonomy	Agreement with "Financial freedom is necessary to sustain creative freedom"	43% strongly agree; 33% agree; 24% neutral; 0% disagree	Creative freedom is widely viewed as dependent on income stability and financial independence.
Primary Barriers to Creative Continuity	Main challenges faced in pursuing creative work	38% family/societal pressure; 25% lack of financial planning; 20% income instability; 17% personal factors	Social expectations and financial unpreparedness are the most dominant reasons for creative discontinuation.
Support Systems Needed Most	Forms of support considered most helpful	30% family support; 28% financial literacy; 25% grants/opportunities; 17% stable income supplementation	Both emotional and financial support systems are central to sustaining artistic engagement.
Behavioural Pattern of Career Persistence	Relationship between financial confidence and continuation of creative work	Respondents continuing creative work were more confident in money-management skills	Continued participation in creative fields is strongly associated with financial planning ability.

## 4. Discussion

The survey thus indicates that young creative workers in India confront challenges consistent with global trends of the cultural economy. It has indeed been shown in previous studies that creative labor markets combine intrinsic satisfaction with economic risk (Banks, 2017; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011),

and the current findings reinforce that financial instability remains one of the strongest predictors of disengagement from creative professions.

Rather than acting as a constraint, economic preparedness seems to enhance creative autonomy. A view that financial independence supports risk-taking, experimentation, and long-term artistic focus would support the claim that stable economic conditions enhance indirect creative productivity (Throsby 2010; Florida 2012). The notion of creativity thriving only amid strife runs in the face of findings, which point out that young artists consider a balanced approach: passion supported by sustainable financial planning.

Cultural expectations also emerged as a central influence. As with earlier discussions of inequality and occupational legitimization, the pressure to pursue conventional careers continues to shape decision-making among youth in emerging economies (Oakley & O'Brien, 2016). Emotional and social support thus become a crucial factor in whether people continue with or abandon creative pursuits.

A key mechanism for reducing precarity that appeared was institutional support. The recognition of grant structures and funding programs aligns with global cultural-policy arguments that advocate for public investment in the arts as a means of sustaining cultural labor (Bakhshi & Cunningham, 2016). Making such resources more accessible would directly address the economic deterrents identified by respondents.

## 5. Practical Implications

The analysis develops several strategies promoting long-term artistic involvement among the young creatives:

### 1. Financial-literacy programs for creative workers

Workshops on budgeting, income diversification, and investment literacy help alleviate anxiety created by irregular earnings (Towse 2019).

### 2. Awareness campaigns to reduce stigma surrounding creative careers

This will enable families to understand the legitimacy and value of artistic careers, supported through engagement initiatives in schools and communities (Oakley & O'Brien, 2016).

3. Expanding grants, fellowships, and platforms for early-career artists, accessible public and private funding systems, as considered in the literature of cultural policy, can reduce financial hurdles and open up professional opportunities for artists and creatives.

4. Development of mentorship and peer networks for artists, spaces of collaboration and knowledge sharing could enhance resilience and maintain motivation among early-career creatives (Banks, 2017).

## 6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that creative passion and economic survival are not opposing forces but interlinked factors in the career trajectories of young people in the artistic domain. While participants reported a strong emotional commitment to creative work, the majority of them were unable to sustain full-time involvement in the absence of financial security and stable support. As the findings demonstrate, economic resources, financial literacy, emotional encouragement, and institutional support determine directly the permanence of creative careers. Moreover, creativity can be more viable when individuals possess knowledge and means to navigate financial uncertainty rather than attempting to sharply divide artistic ambition from income realities. Supporting young artists requires a combined approach that takes both emotional fulfillment and practical economic conditions as cornerstones for long-term creative development.

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