

The new student anxiety: Hidden cost of early career pressure

Choosing at 16 and living with it at 30 is not just a phrase, millions across India experience it. Many are forced to pick a path early, driven by pressure from society and family, while the voices of students often go unheard.



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On the surface it looks like progress. Children today have more choices than ever, diverse career paths, booming tech fields like AI, flexible education models and global opportunities. But beneath that promise lies a growing unease. Increasing numbers of students report intense anxiety about choosing their academic and career path far earlier than their forebears ever had to.

"Students are under enormous stress because they feel like every decision will shape the rest of their lives," says Prof. (Dr.) Yogita Sharma, Dean of Students Welfare and Professor at the School of Business, Manav Rachna University. "This is compounded by social expectations and constant comparison with peers. In a world that moves fast, students feel they must get it 'right' early or risk falling behind."

This pressure is not merely academic. It embeds itself in the psyche of young people at a time when identity and self-confidence are still forming. "Adolescence should be a time of exploration, not examination," says Ruta Mhapankar-Shinde, Senior Counsellor at MIT-WPU.

"But instead, we frame it as a verdict. When students feel like their self-worth hinges on choosing the 'right' career early, it distorts how they see themselves and what they value," she adds.