

MAPPING THE FUTURE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN FASHION CAREER COUNSELLING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Fashion counselling in India is a growing industry that offers numerous career and business opportunities. With increasing fashion awareness, digital influence, and rising disposable incomes, there is a strong demand for professional styling services. Individuals with expertise in fashion counselling can build successful careers as freelancers, corporate stylists, or digital fashion consultants in this evolving field. In the context of education, fashion counselling refers to guidance for students on careers, courses, and opportunities in the fashion industry. This counselling helps aspiring fashion students select the right courses to shape their careers, enabling them to develop and showcase their talent and creativity. Furthermore, fashion counselling informs both students and their parents about the expanding career opportunities in the fashion industry. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, job opportunities across sectors—including multinational corporations, government, and both the public and private sectors—have drastically decreased due to advancements in artificial intelligence and a shortage of skilled professionals. In contrast, the fashion industry is expanding and requires skilled, creative individuals, giving students a significant advantage in securing jobs or pursuing independent work through business or freelancing.

Keywords: Fashion Career Guidance, Fashion Advisory Services, Fashion Education Counselling, Fashion Studies Consultation, Style & Design Mentorship.

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of fashion education demonstrates an increasing focus on design and its cultural significance within contemporary society. Fashion design is increasingly acknowledged as a legitimate art form, as evidenced by its inclusion in museums and state-sponsored fashion weeks. Retail entities such as H&M and Zara prioritize rapid production cycles and aesthetic appeal over necessity, leading to heightened consumer spending and a shift in consumer psychology. As the fashion industry confronts environmental sustainability challenges, educators are modifying curricula to equip students as "agents of change" who engage with pressing social and civic issues. Such programs emphasize the development of "designer-citizens," who possess the skills to navigate a globalized market while addressing ethical and cultural considerations. Interdisciplinary methodologies, as exemplified by the approach taken at Parsons the New School for Design, indicate a transition from traditional vocational training to a comprehensive framework centred on collaborative problem-solving. In the early 1980s, a significant generation of Indian fashion designers emerged, with Satya Paul playing a key role. Rohit Khosla (1958–1994) co-founded Ensemble in 1987 and collaborated with notable designers such as Tarun Tahiliani, Abu Jani, and Sandeep Khosla.

The Anarkali style, which was already in existence before this era, gained prominence after the 1969 film *Mughal-e-Azam*. In 1988, Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla introduced the floor-length Anarkali churidaar-kurta, which became synonymous with an Indian equivalent of a ball gown. The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) was established in 1986 by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, in collaboration with the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. By 2010, NIFT had expanded to 15 branches across India, promoting the growth of private fashion institutions. In 1987, Tarun Tahiliani and his wife, Shailja "Sal" Tahiliani, launched Ensemble, India's first multi-designer boutique in Mumbai, setting new standards for fashion retail. The economic liberalization of 1990 contributed to substantial growth within the fashion industry. In 1992, designer Suneet Varma introduced the corset blouse as a contemporary alternative to the traditional choli. While the 1980s emphasized haute couture, the 1990s witnessed a shift toward domestic retail and the emergence of prêt-à-porter collections. (Crane, D., 2000; Baeza, C., and Quinn, E. S., 2021).

1.1 Career Counselling

Career counselling is essential for helping individuals understand themselves and their career paths. It is designed to help students choose or change their careers, making it beneficial at all stages of life.

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A career counsellor can help students identify their strengths and overcome learning barriers, enabling them to realize which path to pursue. Fashion counselling in India is an emerging field that guides students interested in pursuing careers in fashion. This includes exploring career opportunities, understanding industry trends, and developing essential skills. The Importance of Fashion Counselling in Education is as follows:

- a) **Career Awareness:** Many students are unaware of the diverse career options available in fashion beyond design roles.
- b) **Course Selection:** Fashion counselling assists students in choosing the right courses, institutions, and specialisations that align with their interests.
- c) **Skill Development:** It advises students on essential skills needed in the industry, such as creativity, digital fashion expertise, relevant software, and business acumen.

1.2 Techniques of Career Counselling

- a) **Academic Career Counselling:** This helps students explore and choose career paths that align with their interests, skills, and market trends. Students may decide on careers, higher education, or job opportunities. Tools used include aptitude tests, portfolio reviews, and industry insights to guide students.
- b) **Psychometric Assessments:** These standardised tests evaluate an individual's interests, aptitudes, and personality traits. They help align personal characteristics with suitable career paths. Standard tools include the Strong Interest Inventory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.
- c) **Narrative Counselling:** This approach encourages clients to construct and reflect on their personal and professional stories, facilitating self-awareness and clarity in their career aspirations. By understanding their narratives, individuals can identify themes and patterns that inform their career choices.
- d) **Life Design Counselling:** This method assists clients in viewing their careers as evolving stories, promoting adaptability and proactive management of their career development.
- e) **Integrative Counselling:** This combines career counselling with mental health support, addressing both professional and personal challenges. It recognises the interplay between an individual's career and overall well-being, aiming to provide comprehensive support.
- f) **Online Career Counselling:** Leveraging digital platforms, online career counselling offers accessibility and flexibility to those seeking guidance.
- g) **Academic Counselling:** It refers to the guidance and support provided to students to help them make informed decisions about their education, careers, and personal development.
- h) **Empathy & Rapport Building:** Establishing a strong foundation of trust through understanding and validating students' emotions is essential.
- i) **Questioning Techniques:** Employing open-ended and probing questions to encourage students to engage deeply with and reflect on their thoughts and feelings.
- j) **Cognitive Counselling (CBT Technique):** Assisting students in recognising and reframing negative thought patterns that may impede their career development.
- k) **Solution-Focused Brief Counselling:** Emphasizes strengths and solutions instead of problems.
- l) **Behavioural Techniques:** Support students in their academic, social, and emotional well-being.
- m) **Digital & Online Counselling:** Provides flexible sessions for online learners or remote interns. Tools: AI chatbots, video calls, and online mental health platforms.
- n) **Online Counselling for Hospitality Careers:** Aids remote learning and skill-building for hospitality students. Tools: Virtual career counselling, AI job recommendations, and online mentorship.
- o) **Career Counselling for Entertainment:** Assists students in exploring careers in filmmaking, music, production, and gaming.

1.3 Techniques Required in the Various Education Sectors

Table 1.3.1 outlines the types of techniques employed in various education sectors for career counselling.

Table1.3.1: Various Education Sectors with Career Counselling Techniques

Types	Fields	Areas of Counselling	Methodology
Medical	Hospitals, Clinics, Telemedicine	Health Counselling, Academic Counselling, Behavioural Counselling	Cognitive- Behavioral Counselling Technique
Education	Schools, Universities, E-Learning	Career Counselling, Academic Counselling, Behavioural Counselling	Empathy & Rapport Building, Questioning Techniques, Cognitive Restructuring (CBT Technique), Solution-Focused Brief Techniques
Fashion	Apparel, Luxury Brands	Career Counselling, Academic Counselling, Image Consultation Counselling, Brand Management Counselling	Creative Counselling Technique, Portfolio Development Guidance, Skill Development Workshops, Aptitude Test, Interviews
Business	Retail, Finance, Marketing, Manufacturing	Business Management Counselling, Stress Management Counselling	Aptitude Test, Interviews, Group Discussion Behavioral Counselling Technique,
Technological	Software, IT services, Artificial Intelligence	Career Counselling, Decision Making Counselling	Digital & Online Counselling Technique, Questionnaire
Hospitality	Hotels, Tourism, Restaurants	Customer Service Counselling, Emotional Intelligence Counselling	Digital & Online Counselling Technique for Hospitality
Entertainment	Films, Music, Gaming, Sports	Career Counselling, Creative Counselling	Portfolio Building, Academic & Behavioral Counselling Technique, Skill Development

1.4 Fashion Counselling in the Education Sector: Key Challenges

- There is a lack of awareness about fashion counselling as a professional service.
- High competition exists from self-taught stylists and influencers.
- Continuous learning is essential due to the ever-changing fashion trends.
- Fashion education institutes need to collaborate more with designers and brands to address the skill gap regarding practical knowledge for fashion graduates.

1.5 Opportunities for Fashion Counselling in the Education Sector

- Employment opportunities for fashion guides and trainers are expected to increase.
- Providing the correct information along with proper knowledge and awareness will help future generations choose the right courses.
- Guidance in fashion career paths is essential in the rapidly growing demand of retail and globalization.
- As the demand for fashion advisors and professionals in the industry grows, fashion counsellors can illustrate the potential for individual growth and expansion in this field.

Fashion counsellors must be knowledgeable about the various career opportunities and challenges within the fashion industry to guide students toward appropriate career paths that align with their interests and skills. Given the fast-paced nature of fashion, counsellors in this field should also advise students on staying up to date with current trends, technology, and consumer behaviour, which may not be as emphasized in many other educational fields.

1.6 Success Rate and Outcomes of Career Counselling in Fashion Education

- Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) reports that 78% of its bachelor's graduates are employed, and over half of those are working in jobs related to their degree programs.
- The effectiveness of fashion education counsellors is closely related to their ability to align guidance with industry needs. Counsellors who emphasize both formal education and alternative

pathways, such as apprenticeships and networking, can potentially increase their students' success rates.

- c) The French Fashion and Luxury sector has been experiencing significant growth and faces challenges related to an unfavourable age demographic. Since 2012, this sector has aimed to recruit over 10,000 individuals annually, primarily for technical positions in product manufacturing and development, which account for 90% of demand. It's important to highlight that fashion plays a crucial role in the French economy. With a direct turnover of 154 billion euros, it accounts for 1.7 percent of GDP, surpassing the significance of the aerospace and automotive industries, as noted in the Strategic Contract for the Fashion and Luxury sector for 2023-2027. Due to these significant changes in Fashion Education, students and parents need a proper guide who can direct them to the right courses and help them navigate the latest opportunities and challenges.

1.7 Fashion Education: Bridging the gap between creativity and business

Fashion goes beyond clothing; it is a vital medium for self-expression, cultural representation, and a significant economic sector. Harsh Dalal, Director of the JD Institute of Fashion Technology, highlights the crucial role of fashion education in preparing designers and entrepreneurs for a competitive industry. In today's fashion landscape, creativity must be paired with business acumen, making education essential. Programs provide a solid foundation in design principles, covering key subjects such as sketching, pattern-making, textiles, and garment construction. Institutions in India, including NIFT, NID, Pearl Academy, and the Apeejay Institute of Design, play a pivotal role in addressing the rising demand for fashion professionals. Additionally, Bennett University has launched a School of Design, reflecting the growing competition in the fashion retail sector. As the industry evolves, education must adapt to include a range of management topics. Current curricula encompass Fashion Design, Visual Merchandising, Brand Management, Supply Chain Management, E-commerce, and Fashion Entrepreneurship, equipping graduates to thrive in the market.

2. NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020

India, renowned for its rich history of academic excellence, is at a pivotal moment, ready to transform its higher education system into a global leader. However, the current status of higher education in the country indicates that India is still far from achieving these ambitious goals. As of May 2024, India's gross enrolment ratio in higher education stood at 28.4%, with over 43 million students enrolled in nearly 1,200 institutions. This figure is significantly below the current global average of 36.7%. According to the Ministry of Education, almost nine lakh students travelled abroad for higher education last year, spending a collective \$60 billion (around ₹5.1 lakh crores). This figure has almost doubled from \$37 billion in 2019, before the pandemic, and is more than ten times the Union Government's higher education budget of ₹44,090 crores (\$5.2 billion) for the 2023-24 fiscal year. This trend indicates a strong preference among Indian students for studying abroad, given their resources. However, we also aim to become a preferred destination for international students in the future. (Advaita, 2024).

2.1 Key Impact of New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on Career Counselling & Education

- a) **Leveraging Technology in Education:** To empower Indian higher education for global leadership, we must embrace several key developments. The educational framework should prioritize the cultivation of transferable skills.
- b) **The need for Innovative Teaching Methods:** In a world overflowing with information, often obscured by misleading narratives, higher education must shine a light on the critical importance of thinking critically, solving problems, and communicating effectively.
- c) **Addressing Global Challenges:** Universities should rise as centres of both instruction and innovation, where collaborative efforts transcend disciplinary boundaries to tackle the intricate global challenges that lie ahead.
- d) **Transforming the Educational Landscape:** By forging robust partnerships in teaching and research with industry stakeholders and international collaborators, we can transform our educational landscape and inspire future generations.

- e) **Importance of Faculty Quality in Education:** Faculty are very much essential to be upgraded, and more hiring of skilled and talented people is required.
- f) **Holistic & Multi-disciplinary Education:** NEP empowers students with flexible learning, enabling them to choose from arts, sciences, sports, and vocational studies. This approach fosters exploration and allows counsellors to provide personalized guidance tailored to each student's unique interests and strengths.
- g) **Integration of Vocational Education:** Starting in grade 6, vocational subjects provide practical skills and real-world applications, expanding career options and allowing counsellors to guide students towards hands-on professions.
- h) **Early Career Guidance:** The policy highlights the importance of early career counselling, helping students make informed educational and professional decisions through timely guidance.

3. NEED OF THE STUDY

Fashion Counselling in the Indian Education Sector places great emphasis on raising awareness of the Fashion Industry and its impact on future employment, career opportunities, retail trends, and its substantial contribution to the country's economy. It is crucial to select the right students for the right courses where they can grow, develop, and use their creative skills. Additionally, students should be able to distinguish between managerial and creative skills. Given the considerable demand for talented and skilled individuals in the Fashion Industry, the education sector has expanded its focus on hands-on training, providing a work-like environment that emphasizes practical experience over theoretical knowledge. Fashion institutions and universities primarily focus on practical work, offering industrial training or internship programs to enhance students' skills and experience within the Fashion Industry. Career guidance across various areas of the Fashion Industry helps students analyse their cognitive abilities. Fashion counselling plays a vital role in raising awareness of the different topics offered by the Fashion Industry to support growth & career opportunities. The demand for fashion counselling has significantly increased in recent years due to the growth of the retail market and globalization. The fashion industry is evolving rapidly, driven by new technologies, sustainability concerns, and digital innovations. This report highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by fashion counsellors in the Indian education sector. Fashion counsellors play a crucial role as advisors and require comprehensive training on various career opportunities related to fashion courses. This training ensures that they can provide accurate guidance to students and their parents regarding potential career paths after completing these courses. Several private fashion institutions in India have gained prominence by equipping students eager to pursue careers in the fashion industry. These institutions are committed to producing well-trained, qualified graduates who can contribute effectively to the fashion sector nationwide. Many of them have also begun participating in fashion weeks, organizing their own fashion shows, and collaborating with designers to provide students with valuable industry exposure. Fashion counsellors also collaborate with educational institutions, Brands, retail stores, and e-commerce platforms to align with customer needs, emphasizing clothing and accessories that suit individual styles and body types. The emergence of new fashion trends has created more job opportunities in both retail and online platforms, making fashion counselling an appealing career path.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sala, K. (2019) argues for the application of transformative learning theory in fashion education to promote change-oriented practices in his study titled *Revisiting Fashion Education: Inspiring Transformative Learning Experiences for Fashion Design Students*. This study highlights a case study involving a collaboration between the London College of Fashion and Nike, demonstrating how integrating transformative learning can encourage students to reflect critically on the current fashion system.

The study *Evaluation and Trends in Fashion Design Research: Visualization and Analysis* (2022) systematically reviews the relevant literature, classifying the status, hotspots, and frontier trends in the academic field of fashion design. It provides insights into the evolution of fashion design research and its educational implications.

The study *Fashion Design Education and Sustainability: Towards an Educational Framework (2021)* discusses the role of fashion design education in promoting sustainability. It suggests that education should equip aspiring designers with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement sustainable fashion practices, reflecting the industry's shift towards more responsible approaches.

Baeza & Quinn (2021) explore in their study titled *The Evolution of Design and Merchandising Education*, how integrating ethics and entrepreneurship into fashion design and merchandising curricula can better prepare students for the evolving landscape of the fashion industry. It emphasizes the necessity for educators to address ethical implications and social responsibilities in their teaching.

Table 4.4: Various Literature Review

S. No.	Features of Key Points	Key Literature on Fashion Career Counselling	Source
1.	Career aspirations and background of students opting for fashion education courses in India	The motivations and backgrounds of students pursuing fashion education in India shed light on their career aspirations and the factors influencing their educational choices.	G. Chiranjeevi Reddy, Dr. N. J. Rajaram, 2014
2.	Bridging the gap between fashion design curricula and industry requirements	The misalignment between the expectations of fashion students, educators, and the industry highlights the challenges in preparing students for successful careers in fashion.	Nguyen, Q. & Hahn, K. H., 2025
3.	Developing fashion design vocational career guidance modules	The development of tailored career guidance modules emphasizes the importance of aligning educational curricula with industry needs to enhance counselling in fashion design.	Khanza Azizah Abas Karend, Yeri Sutopo, Dwi Widjanarko, December 2020
4.	Challenges facing career counselling and guidance service delivery in India	The challenges in providing career guidance services in India and strategies to overcome them.	Sudha Bhogle, December, 2022
5.	Over 80% students benefit from career counselling, 40% lack access	Over 80 per cent of school students are utilising AI tools like ChatGPT for career guidance, while at least 40 per cent of them have never interacted with a career counsellor, according to a report.	Education Desk, The Indian Express-Journalism OF Courage, October 25, 2024

4.1 Research Gap

- a) **Fashion Counselling v/s Other Career Counselling in the Education Sector:** Fashion counselling has a significant impact on students, more so than any other area of counselling in the educational sector. Various studies emphasize the distinct characteristics of fashion education, highlighting the specialized nature of counselling within this field. Unlike other sectors such as medical, engineering, or management, fashion is a field of creativity and self-expression where art, culture, and innovation converge to shape styles and trends. Additionally, it integrates elements of business and technology.
- b) **Fashion Design Education & Sustainability:** A study published in MDPI highlights the significance of incorporating sustainability into fashion design education. It suggests that educators should provide aspiring designers with the knowledge and skills necessary to adopt sustainable practices in fashion. The study emphasizes the need for specialized guidance in this area and underscores the importance of sustainability in fashion education.
- c) **Fashion Psychology - The Relationship between Clothing & Self:** This article discusses the systematic influence of law, culture, society, & self on the relationship between a person & their clothing. It highlights how personal identity, societal factors, and culture influence clothing choices, indicating the need for counsellors to address both creative & psychological aspects in fashion education.
- d) **Building a Runway to Subjective Happiness - The Role of Fashion:** This research has shown that flow experiences in fashion-related activities positively affect subjective happiness, and boost confidence in fashion & appearance satisfaction. Unlike general career counselling, fashion counselling helps students understand fashion-related careers such as fashion design, merchandising, styling, textile technology, & sustainable fashion. Fashion career counselling provides students with guidance on both creative design skills and aesthetics, as well as technical aspects such as fabric science, production, and digital fashion tools.

Unlike other career counsellors, fashion counsellors emphasize the importance of building strong portfolios for job applications and essential fashion school admissions. For design students, their portfolios essentially serve as professional resumes.

5. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

Research on career counselling within fashion education aims to achieve several critical objectives that significantly enhance student outcomes and align educational programs with the industry's dynamic demands. These objectives include:

- To identify career opportunities in the fashion industry.
- To identify key gaps and challenges in fashion career counselling in India.
- To understand best practices in fashion career counselling and those in different industries.
- To create a best practice model for career counselling.
- To propose a contextual and scalable career counselling framework for fashion education.

By focusing on these essential objectives, research in career counselling within fashion education aims not only to bridge the gap between academic preparation and industry expectations but also to empower students to pursue thriving, fulfilling careers in the vibrant fashion sector.

6. METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis
- Surveys and Interviews with Fashion Counsellors and Educators
- Case Studies of Successful Fashion Counselling Practices

7. RESULT & DISCUSSION

7.1 Growth of Fashion Career Counselling (2015-2030)

Figure 9.1 illustrates the rising demand for fashion career counselling services from 2015 to 2030, reflecting the industry's expansion and the need for professional guidance. The sector has seen notable growth driven by increased awareness of the diverse opportunities in fashion.

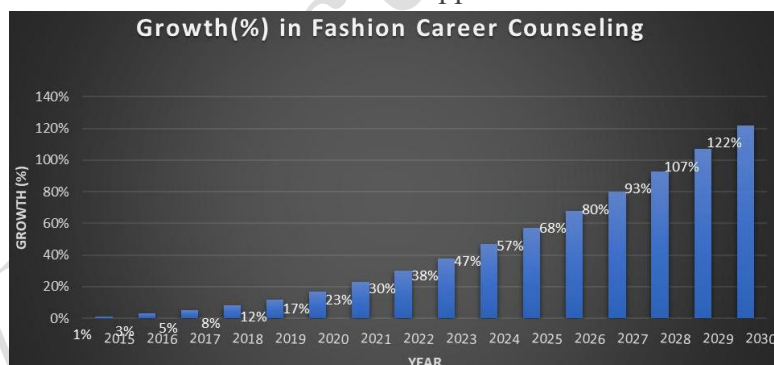


Fig. 9.1: Growth in Fashion Career Counselling

From 2015 to 2030, the fashion career counselling sector is poised for significant growth driven by increased awareness, government initiatives, and industry expansion, underscoring the importance of guidance in navigating emerging fashion opportunities.

7.2 Global Perspective

In 2024, the global career education counselling market was valued at approximately \$2.66 billion, projected to reach \$3.52 billion by 2028, growing at a CAGR of 7.3%. This growth is driven by globalization and the rising demand for international job placements.

7.3 India-Specific Insights

India's large youth population has heightened the demand for career counselling. In 2019, the country needed about 1.5 million career counsellors to serve 400 million young people, but fewer than 5,000 trained counsellors were available. Government initiatives like the Skill India campaign aim to bridge this gap by training over 300 million people in various skills.

7.4 Fashion Industry Growth

The fashion industry in India is also growing rapidly, with the fashion textile market valued at \$81.88 billion in 2022 and projected to reach \$162.04 billion by 2030, reflecting a CAGR of 8.9%. This growth underscores the need for specialized career counselling to help individuals explore a range of career paths in fashion.

7.5 Key Observations

- a) **Gradual Increase (2015-2020):** Career counselling services experienced moderate growth and rising demand.
- b) **Accelerated Growth (2021-2025):** Growth surged due to initiatives like Skill India and increasing demand from the fashion industry.
- c) **Significant Expansion (2026-2030):** By 2030, fashion career counselling is expected to grow by over 122% from 2015, driven by digital transformation and globalization.

8. CONCLUSION

This study urges the creation of a structured career counselling framework for aspiring fashion professionals in India. By examining current practices and analyzing industry needs, the research reveals key gaps in guidance and mentorship. The proposed framework combines academic, practical, and industry-focused strategies to equip students with the tools for informed decision-making and professional readiness. This model systematically improves student career outcomes and aligns fashion education with industry expectations.

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Annexures-I

Top Famous Career Counsellor

1. **Amrita Singh:** Ms. Amrita Singh has moved her passion forward with 'Edu Career Wise', her own initiative that caters to students from diverse backgrounds and age groups.
2. **Anuradha Kishore:** Growth Axis believes that success comes from proper support. With a focus on comprehensive training programs and communication skills workshops, Growth Axis aims to guide students seeking direction in their lives.
3. **Rahul Dasondi:** He is the founder of Career Achiever 360, Kothri, MP.
4. **Padmavathi Devarakonda:** She is a passionate traveler in the tennis circuit, bringing energy to her career counseling. Aca Sports is committed to helping students achieve their career goals.
5. **Jagadish Kund:** RiteWay Career Solutions, led by Jagadish Kundu, believes that each student has unique talents shaped by their personality, interests, and abilities.
6. **Preetika Sharma:** Dream Ahead offers unbiased counselling to help students take good career decisions.
7. **Sonila Mishra:** Sonila's expertise and experience in making assessments, organizing workshops, and advising on a career roadmap for students prompted her to start her career counselling venture, Latitude.
8. **Bharati K Trivedi:** Nurture Minds believes in providing Career Counselling services across the globe.
9. **Pooja Bhatia:** Pooja started Career Mantran to help students realize their dreams.
10. **Neetu Agarwal:** She has successfully set up her own Career Counselling venture called 'The Bridge', located in Surat, Gujarat.