

Navigating Career Challenges in Indian Classical Music: Emerging Opportunities and Evolving Roles in the Digital Age



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Abstract

This study examines the dual impact of challenges and opportunities for Indian classical musicians in the context of digital transformation, specifically focusing on M.A. graduates in music. The study addresses both aspiring musicians, many of whom face financial instability, and established professionals in teaching roles who encounter limited career advancement. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this research explores how digital platforms, online teaching, and mentorship programs can support sustainable careers. The findings reveal distinct challenges for each group and suggest tailored recommendations to aid both groups in leveraging digital tools and expanding career pathways.

Keywords: Indian Classical Music, Career Challenges, Digital Age, Emerging Opportunities, Evolving Roles

Research Paper

Introduction

The conventional Guru-Shishya (teacher-disciple) structure, which has served as the foundation for the teaching of Indian classical music, is having difficulties in the modern world. Debates concerning the relative merits of current educational systems and conventional teaching methods have arisen because of the move towards institutional education. The quality of instruction and the maintenance of the art form are affected by this shift. Schippers the various difficulties faced by both established and up-and-coming artists in India, especially in the domains of music and art. It draws attention to obstacles such a lack of funding, poor infrastructure, and the difficulty of striking a balance between customs and modern needs. The traditional Indian performing arts are highly categorized and developed forms of art education in a scientific and justified manner. (Chopra 45-60) The education system is based on the traditional "Guru Shishya Parampara," which is still in use today and has the capacity to teach and learn. Although the goals and purposes of

the modern educational system differed from those of the traditional teaching of these creative forms, it also attempted to incorporate these ancient themes. (Sujata, and Priya Sen 45-61) These subjects lose their Zeist because of changing policies and educational reforms. Due to current government and educational regulations, persons who are directly related to the disciplines are having trouble finding suitable job in the modern era. (Barodia) Employment and Policy Issues in University Education of Indian Classical Performing Arts). Today's musicians must deal with both opportunities and obstacles in their professions since the changing music industry necessitates flexibility and a wider viewpoint. Once restricted to traditional contexts, Indian classical music is today appreciated and recognized on a global scale. In addition to creating new opportunities, this worldwide expansion also comes with difficulties. While adjusting to global trends and incorporating Western ideas into their work, artists must preserve their cultural authenticity. Global genres like rock have been impacted by forms like ragas, and well-known musicians

like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Zakir Hussain have effectively crossed cultural boundaries to elevate Indian music on international music stages. (Dogra) This study focuses on M.A. graduates in Indian classical music who are facing significant career challenges. These graduates encounter difficulties adapting their skills to modern career paths while striving to sustain and grow their professional opportunities in a changing musical landscape. However, the integration of digital platforms and globalization has created both challenges and new opportunities. Aspiring musicians face career instability and financial hurdles, while established educators encounter limited growth potential and the challenge of adapting traditional teaching methods to digital environments. This paper aims to provide insights into these distinct challenges and offer guidance for sustainable career development in the digital age.

Problem Statement

The primary challenges identified among M.A. graduates in music include financial instability for those pursuing performance careers and limited growth for those in teaching and academic roles. This study investigates how digital tools, online teaching, and new media can support career sustainability and growth, especially for educators adapting traditional methods to digital formats.

Literature Review

Indian classical music has traditionally relied on the guru-shishya (teacher-student) model. Bakhle notes that this model, while culturally valuable, has limited economic support, particularly for aspiring musicians (Bakhle 338) Ranade and others have pointed out that financial stability remains a significant barrier due to dependency on patronage (Ranade 13). In teaching roles, Patel and Shankar observe limited funding and structural support, affecting educators' career progression (Patel and Shankar 15-30). Aruna Sairam, Emeritus Vice-Chairperson, Sangeet Natak Academy, and an established Carnatic vocalist says, "At the moment, there is no organized attempt to identify and develop musical talent. Selection frequently depends on unofficial referrals and personal relationships, where "someone said this" or "someone suggested that" ends up being the decisive element. (Charanya) This strategy emphasizes the necessity of a more impartial and inclusive procedure to find and nurture fresh talent. To guarantee that everyone has access to opportunities, music educators and institutions must actively participate

in talent scouting. Establishing channels and venues that enable musicians and students who are struggling to demonstrate their skills is essential. (Schibber) The development of the upcoming generation of musicians and the preservation of the art form depends on the unprejudiced promotion of youthful talent. Social media and digital platforms provide avenues for both aspiring musicians and educators to reach broader audiences. According to Nair, digital platforms serve as a cultural bridge, but traditional musicians may find it challenging to adapt their art forms to appeal to broader audiences (Nair 34-47). Digital adoption often requires content adaptations that some educators feel conflict with their traditional methods. Studies show that traditional music teaching methods, particularly in the guru-shishya style, are difficult to adapt for online platforms. Menon highlights the challenges in creating engaging and interactive virtual environments that can replicate the traditional depth of music instruction (Menon 65-78). Established educators struggle with balancing these expectations while adapting to the constraints and possibilities of online teaching. Many musicians now take on diversified roles to sustain their careers. Bennett explains that musicians are increasingly involved in online education, content creation, and cross-genre collaborations to attract new audiences (Bennett). Bose discusses fusion music as a strategy that helps classical musicians attract younger audiences, blending genres to meet contemporary preferences (Bose 40-45). Many traditional art forms are currently going through a phase where the artists involved must choose between sacrificing their own interests to preserve the traditional values of the arts or letting the arts be left to the whims of "market forces." Many artists working in various fields must at least occasionally encounter the conundrum while pursuing their careers. This essay is an attempt to pinpoint the issues that musicians primarily associated to Hindustani music are facing as they struggle with the "to do or not to do" decision and are, for one reason or another, swept along with the powerful current of market forces. (Gadikar)

Methodology

Using a mixed-methods approach, survey data was collected from 100 individuals with an M.A. in music, split between aspiring and established professionals. Demographic data, including age and years of experience, was collected to provide a clearer picture of the participant pool. Quantitative data were collected using Likert scales for questions related to satisfaction,

financial stability, and digital engagement. Qualitative responses from open-ended questions provided additional depth, particularly in understanding teaching challenges and adaptation to digital platforms.

Findings

Quantitative Analysis

1. Career Satisfaction Levels

According to a study of respondents, there is a 50/50 split between those who are having difficulty launching a career in music and those who are already employed in positions like assistant professors, music teachers, or similar professions. There are conflicting patterns in different groups' career satisfaction. Teachers frequently report feeling stable, but many also voice concerns about the lack of prospects for promotion. Many educators point to inadequate financing, a lack of defined career trajectories, and a lack of institutional support as major obstacles to their professional development. This situation is indicative of a larger problem in the music business, as conventional career paths are either dwindling or not keeping up with the needs of the modern world. Long-term professional development is hampered by the lack of structured mentoring, sponsorship, and well-defined progression frameworks, which causes stagnation even for people in stable positions. Ideas for Enhancement. Clear career progression frameworks, including defined responsibilities, skill-development initiatives, and merit-based promotions, should be implemented by institutions for instructors and performers.

More Funding and Grants: To provide financial support for musicians and educators, public and private institutions should increase their funding for research initiatives, scholarships, and cooperative possibilities.

Platforms for Talent Development: Create specialized venues to find and develop fresh talent. Aspiring musicians can gain exposure and chances through regular contests, talent hunts, and showcases.

Professional Development Programs: Provide training, certification courses, and workshops to give teachers and musicians the tools they need to integrate technology, teach effectively, and perform.

Collaboration & Networking Opportunities: To promote information sharing and performance opportunities for musicians, support collaborations between academic institutions, cultural institutions, and international platforms.

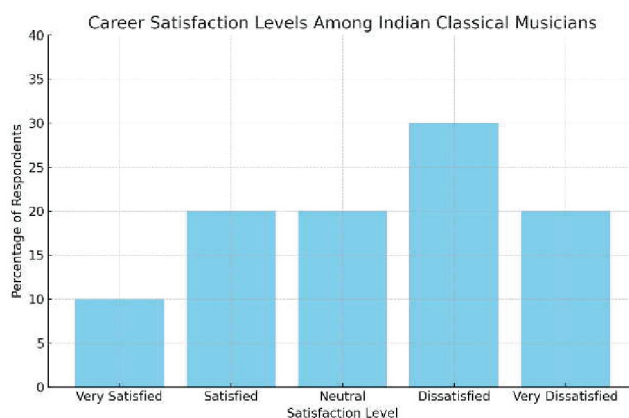


fig 1: Career Satisfaction Levels

Financial Stability

One major obstacle still facing Indian classical music is financial stability. Aspiring musicians, who are frequently just starting out in their professions, deal with severe financial instability as a result of few performance chances, irregular income, and a dearth of support networks. On the other hand, people who work as teachers—such as assistant professors or music educators—report feeling rather secure in their financial situation. Even these positions, though, provide difficulties. Financial limitations are commonly mentioned by educators as impediments to professional development, research, and program development. Even if their jobs provide a reliable income, their capacity to grow in their professions and make creative contributions to the field is constrained by a lack of institutional financing and resources. A more sustainable ecosystem can be achieved by addressing financial instability at all levels, for both educators and aspiring artists. The discipline of Indian classical music can flourish with improved funding and organized assistance, promoting both personal development and group cultural enrichment.

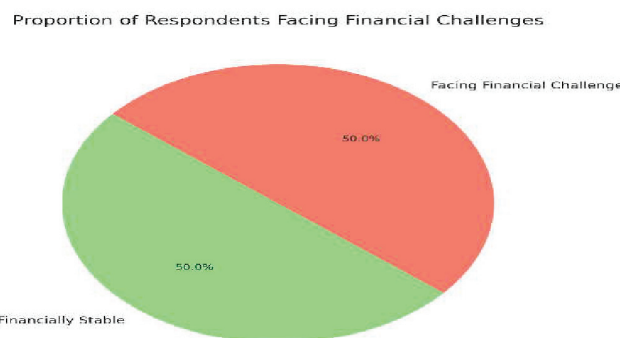


fig 2: Financial Stability



Adoption of Digital Tools

Social media sites like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are used by aspiring musicians to get recognition and a fan base. These platforms offer a venue for sharing personal narratives, showcasing performances, and interacting with audiences throughout the world. Social media gives musicians the opportunity to take part in online performances, contests, and team-ups, all of which help them become more well-known and visible. The emphasis is on branding and audience growth because these are essential for landing sponsorships and performance opportunities.

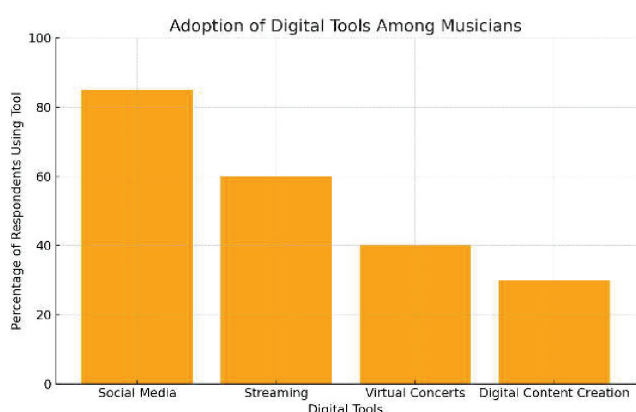


fig 3: Digital Tool Adoption

The path is not without difficulties, though; it takes constant work and ingenuity to stand out in a crowded digital world and turn visibility into financial stability. Without a doubt, digital tools have given educators and musicians new opportunities to reach and interact with a larger audience. But these developments also present special difficulties that call for creativity and adaptation. Aspiring musicians prioritize social media presence and career advancement, but educators must find ways to improve their teaching strategies and maintain the depth of conventional traditions in the digital age. Maximizing the advantages of digital tools in Indian classical music would require striking a balance between these needs.

Career Diversification

Achieving financial stability through performances alone continues to be difficult for many aspiring musicians because of the lack of opportunities and irregular income. They frequently use teaching as a supplemental source of income in order to deal with

this. In addition to offering financial assistance, teaching enables them to establish a solid reputation in the music industry. They frequently impart their knowledge through online tutorials, group classes, and private lessons. Aspiring musicians can combine their love of performance with a reliable source of money thanks to this dual focus, which also helps to preserve and spread the traditions of classical music. In contrast, seasoned educators have taken on a range of responsibilities in order to stay influential and relevant in the digital age. To reach students worldwide, many have dabbled in online teaching using tools like Zoom, Google Meet, and specialized music learning applications. In order to interact with wider and more varied audiences, they also hold seminars, masterclasses, and brief training courses. Some educators work with musicians from many musical genres on fusion projects in addition to teaching. In addition to fostering their artistic expression, these initiatives help Indian classical music reach a wider audience. Fusion projects show how classical music is adaptable and can change without losing its core qualities.

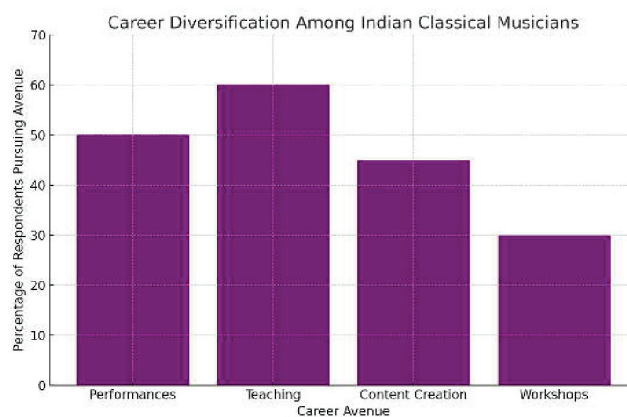


fig 4: Career Diversification

Opportunities and Evolving Roles in the Digital Age

Social Media and Global Reach

Social media enables musicians to build global audiences, benefiting both early-career musicians and established educators by expanding their reach. Educators, however, note that adapting content for these platforms may require shifts that sometimes conflict with traditional teaching values.

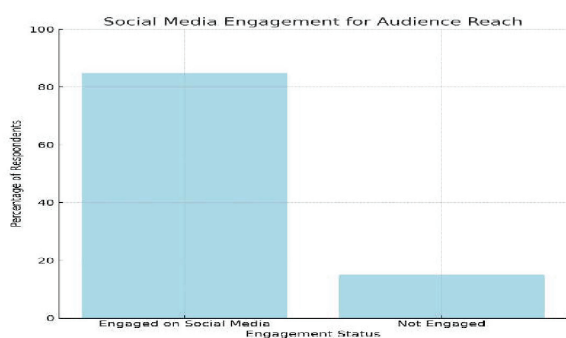


fig 5: Social Media Engagement

Virtual Performances

Virtual concerts are an essential tool for emerging musicians looking to expand their fan base and increase their visibility. Without the practical limitations of live performances, they may display their talent to audiences around the world through platforms like Facebook Live, Instagram Live, and YouTube.

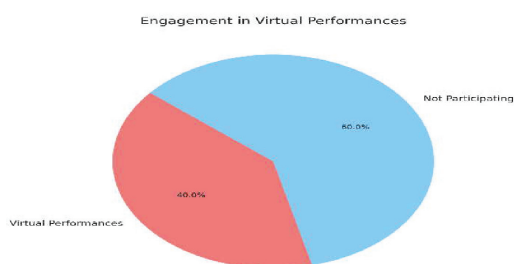


fig 6: Virtual Performances

These online platforms provide an affordable means of connecting with a wide range of listeners, taking part in online contests, and working with other musicians. Aspiring artists can use these platforms to establish themselves as serious performers in a cutthroat market in addition to gaining fame. Educators, however, emphasize the need for developing digital abilities to enhance the quality and impact of their virtual performances. It takes more work to make the experience interesting and culturally relevant on virtual platforms than in traditional venues, where the atmosphere and human contact inherently improve the performance.

Discussion

Teachers of Indian classical music have unique difficulties, especially in the digital age when it has become essential to modify conventional teaching

techniques for online learning environments. Face-to-face interactions have long been a key component in teaching classical music, as the guru-shishya (teacher-student) relationship allows for individualized instruction, subtle corrections, and the transfer of delicate artistic aspects. But this dynamic is upset by the shift to virtual instruction. Online platforms offer new teaching opportunities and access to a worldwide student body, but they also necessitate a significant modification of conventional teaching techniques. Concerns about diminishing the rich pedagogical elements that constitute Indian classical music arise because educators frequently find it difficult to retain the depth and rigor of their instruction in digital formats. Significant obstacles for educators in this sector are also presented by a lack of financing and possibilities for career progression. Their capacity to invest in professional development, research, and program creation is frequently hampered by financial limitations. Despite their efforts to preserve and promote the art form, many instructors feel that their career mobility is further limited by the absence of organized career routes in music education. On the other hand, aspiring musicians deal with a distinct set of difficulties, one of which is financial instability. They find it challenging to concentrate entirely on their trade due to irregular performance chances and a lack of funding. Teaching is a common supplementary source of income for aspiring artists, which can be beneficial but frequently takes them away from developing their performance careers.

Recommendations

1. Professional development in digital pedagogy for music educators to help effectively adapt traditional methods.
2. Create structured career paths in educational institutions with pathways for digital teaching recognition.
3. Mentorship programs for aspiring musicians to foster sustainable careers and networking opportunities.

Conclusion

Indian classical musicians with an M.A. face diverse challenges based on career stage. Teaching professionals require support in digital adaptation and career growth. Digital tools offer pathways for visibility and engagement, and targeted support can aid both aspiring and established professionals in achieving sustainable careers.

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