A Qualitative Study of Career Decision Making and its Associated Difficulties in Indian Adolescents

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Abstract:
The current study titled 'A Qualitative Analysis of Career Decision Making and its Associated Difficulties in Indian Adolescents' was an attempt to understand the Career Decision Making Difficulties and Factors associated with it, for the Male and Female Participants from the Streams of Education (Arts, Science, Commerce & Management) in Bangalore, India. The study involved conduction of interviews with 23 Students from the above mentioned sample who answered the five constructs formulated by the researcher.
Results on the Qualitative Research showed that there were differences seen across Genders and Streams of Education on their responses with respect to Decisional Status and Confidence, Nature of Difficulties. While on Important Aspects that go into CDM process, Changes Incorporated in CDM saw gender Differences, the responses mostly overlapped for Streams of Education. Several suggestions for programs and interventional purposes were put forth by the Participants.

Keywords: Indian adolescents, gender, streams of education –arts, science, commerce and management, career decision making, career decision making difficulties, associated factors, qualitative method

1. Introduction

Career Decision Making which is understood as a process of making informed choices pertaining to an occupation involves several factors such as exploration, engaging in information seeking- acting on it behavior, cognitive capacities of understanding one's skills which are helpful in providing meaningful framework for one's occupational future. Adolescence, a period marked by several biological, social, emotional and cognitive changes. It also indicates that it is a "time of increased pressure for problem solving and personal decisions" (Worell & Danner, 1989).

An overview of adolescents' perspective shows that several factors influence their career related decisions. These are also supported by few studies- one study which found that 'decided' adolescents seemed to have more adaptive CDMP (Career Decision Making Profiles) than 'undecided adolescents'. Also here it was observed that more of internal locus of control, invested efforts in the process, quick final decision making, lesser tendency to procrastinate and consulting frequently with others characterized the 'decided' set of students. While willingness to compromise was not adaptive for decision making, high levels of aspiration were seen more adaptive to the decision-making process (Gadassi, R., Gati, I., & Dayan, A. 2012). A greater sense of control, supportive relationships, self-esteem, and positive outlook of future career in students related to career adaptability (Duffy, R. D.2010).

While Culture (Gati, & Saka, N. 2001) as well as curriculum offered and academic major choice (Hambourger, L. H. 2004) held significance with respect to decision making variables pertaining to career. A greater speed of final decision making, internal locus of control, less dependence on others and analytic information processing were found to be most significant predictors of positive career related outcomes (Tian, L et al). Career Maturity was also influenced by Self- Knowledge, Decision Making, Career Knowledge, Integration of Self- Information, Career Information and Planning (Mubiana, B.P. 2010).

Influences on Selection and Implementation of Career Choices depended on factors affecting choices, support or barriers to pursuing them and methods use to cope with barriers (Lent, R.W et al.2002). While coping behaviors pertaining to decisions being made largely depended on the style of parenting (Cheung, Y.H). Self- efficacy variables also correlated and predicted career exploration, of which verbal persuasion was the strongest predictor (Nasta, A.K. 2007). Another interesting finding showed that Parental Variables (Parent-Career Expectations and Adolescent- Parent Career Congruence) in a collectivist cultural setting played a vital role determining in career aspirations and actions of Adolescents (Dian, R. ., Peter, A.C., & Melanie, J. Z. 2014). Factors such as Lack of Motivation in 'undecided students' (Sonja,P., & Katja. 2007), lack of expectation, feeling of being unwanted were some of the psychological variables that made individuals aimlessly head on a career pathway with a sense of indifference regarding a 'career' or 'graduate job'(Buckham, L. 1988).

While factors influencing career decision making are important, some studies conclude on how certain factors can cause difficulties in deciding and making a career choice. Hijazi, Y. et al. (2004) in their study showed that individuals faced more difficulties in knowing additional ways of obtaining information, making choices between what is important to them versus what is important to their significant others. The idea of decision making being difficult is also supported by the findings of a study by Gaffner, D., & Hazler, R.J.2002, which indicated an association between indecisiveness, difficulty in decision making and lack of career related information received. Another study by Gati, I et al. 2011, showed EPCD difficulties i.e., higher levels of neuroticism, perfectionism, need for cognitive closure and lower levels of extroversion, openness to experience and lower CDMSE (Career Decision Making Self Efficacy), external locus of control (Lease, S.H. 2004) associated with career decision making difficulties. Career decisional difficulties attributed to internal cause were judged to be more severe than those that stemmed from external causes (Gati, I., Amir T., & Landman, S. 2010).

Gender, yet another variable surrounding the concept of career related decisional difficulties also saw differences such as sub-categories like 'lack of Motivation' 'General Indecisiveness', 'Lack of Information about Ways of Obtaining Additional Information' and 'External Conflicts' (Hijazi, Y. et al 2004). Male Participants faced fewer difficulties when compared to female participants on career decision making. Men obtained a higher score on Speed of final decision making while women consulted more often on their decisions (Gadassi, R. et al. 2012), women also engaged in information gathering, invested great efforts towards decision on career choices (Ginevra, M.C. et al. 2012).

Thus the purpose of this study conducted was twofold. One, was to understand if the career related decisional difficulties of the sample in consideration did exist and two, to know, what were the kind of the difficulties that were encountered by them and how did they go about resolving these issues which was undertaken by use of certain constructs in the preliminary interviews.

2. Research Method

2.1. Demographic Data of Sample Population
The sample population of the study consisted of male and female participants from different colleges offering Bachelors' Degree in main streams such as Science, Arts, Commerce & Management belonging to the urban city Bangalore, India.

Gender	Streams of Education			Total
	Arts	Commerce and Management	Science	
Male	3	6	3	12
Female	4	4	3	11
Total	7	10	6	23

Table 1: Showing the number of participants that were interviewed across streams in the Preliminary Interviews

2.2. Research Design
The study utilized qualitative approach to understand the career related decisional difficulties of the final year undergraduate students in Bangalore, India through the use of a Preliminary Interview Questions- Schedule.

2.3. Measures Used in study
A Preliminary Interview Questions Schedule was made by the Researcher based on prior interactions with students on career based decisional difficulties. The Questions were based on 5 constructs mainly- a) Decisional Status and Confidence b) Nature of Career Decision Pertained difficulties c) Important Aspects of Career Decision Making d) Steps Incorporated to ease Career Decision Making (CDM) Process and e) Students' Views and Suggestions for improving the CDM process.

2.4. Procedure: For Creating Constructs
The researcher first engaged in prior general discussions with a few students. This provided the researcher with an insight of having several constructs that targeted knowing the kind of difficulties students faced while deciding on career. Random number of questions were put forth, of which the rationale that supported questions on discussion with a panel were then included in the Schedule. This schedule containing 5 constructs were then utilized with the 23 participants in the Interviews.

2.5. For Conduction of Interviews
The researcher applied Purposive and Snowball Technique to choose the sample for Interview aiming at understanding the intricacies involved in career related decisions and its difficulties with respect to the use of the 5 constructs. Rapport was established at the beginning of each interview and a brief note was given regarding aim of the study along with obtaining the consent by the participant at the beginning of the interviews.

The Rationale helped in understanding themes that emerged from responses of interviewees.

2.6. Analysis
The rationale worked upon for the five constructs assisted in analyzing of themes that emerged for both i.e., Gender (male and female participants) and Stream of Education (Arts, Science, Commerce & Management). The rationale and responses were divided into --
- To analyze the similarities and differences in responses of Decisional Status and Confidence across the Genders and Stream of Education.
- To know if Career related decisional Difficulties existed and if so then if the nature of it differed across Genders and Streams.
- To interpret the nature of involvement of participants in the career pertained decisional process.
- To understand measures incorporated by participants' in easing the CDM process across Genders and Streams.
- Aimed at understand participants' views on interventional programs to enhance or improve the CDM process.

3. Results
The qualitative data was analyzed using 'Content Analysis Method' (Hancock. 2002), where themes and categories that emerged based on responses were analyzed at basic level and its interpretation at the latent level. For the current study, the raw data was analyzed using the rationale created by the researcher for the 5 constructs preset by the researcher before collecting data. The interview transcripts were analyzed in light of the rationale of questions. On close examination of them, the researcher was able to look at a pattern of responses based on the rationale across Genders (Male and Female participants) and the three different Streams of Education (Arts, Science, Commerce & Management). The frequency of similar responses across both variables for the constructs was noted based on which the discussion was written. This helped the researcher in establishing a pattern in responses across Genders and the three Streams of Education. The analysis of the data brought out certain similarities and differences for genders as well as the three different Streams of Education.

4. Discussion
With respect to the aim of the study which was to understand the presence and nature of career related decisional difficulties among Final Year Undergraduate Students, For Construct 1 i.e., Decisional Status and Confidence, it was seen that responses differed on the basis of Gender (Male and Female) - For Male Participants, decision included focus on choices of specialization, Awareness of Skills Set, Passion and Approaching things differently and Futuristic Thinking. While for Female Participants, Skill- Set, Practical Exposure, Confidence in oneself and financial status were important to decisions made.
Across Streams of Education (Arts, Science, Commerce & Management), it was seen that for Arts participants decisional status was dependent on own preferences, role models, practical exposure, passion, encouragement by others. For Commerce and Management Stream it was based on self-confidence, clarity in direction, planning and having specific associations of profession. And for Science Stream Participants it depended on personal inclination and spiritual guidance. Gender variable saw some responses overlap for Construct 1 while for Stream of Education the responses varied.
On Construct 2 which measures the nature of difficulties in the CDM process, Gender saw differences where for Male Participants- faced difficulties with regard to seeking information, awareness about benefits of certain courses, no proper guidance with respect to their choices and confusion between taking up a job vs. further studies after graduation. Female Responses were more on lines of external pressure like compromise on choices due to personal reasons, fear of competition, self- doubt, financial concerns, lack of information obtained on choices due and confusion.
Across Streams of Education, it was seen for Arts Students difficulties were more pertaining to assessing oneself without any influence and confusions in choice of Majors while for Science Students it had more to do with concern for scope of their choice of Majors in India due to the nature of Sciences. While for Commerce & Management students difficulties were experienced pertaining choice of specialization at graduate level and its impact at post graduate level.
Irrespective of gender of Stream most students felt that time played an important role in their decisions. And ' Resolved Status for a few was observed from responses such as interaction with teachers, realization of interest/ personal inclination in choices, encouragement from different sources and availability of short-term courses that were inter-disciplinary in nature at few institutions.
On Construct 3 which aimed at understanding thought processes of participants on aspects important to CDM process, largely responses were different for Gender while for Streams they overlapped. For Male Participants- realizing one's capacities, planning for future, engaging in groundwork. For some finance was seen primary while for others it was secondary, For Female Participants- receiving information pertaining to study and jobs, collection of information, locus of control, support from teachers, institutional information, confidence and knowledge of how world of work functions were important aspects that go into CDM process. Some common responses were prioritizing, recognizing interests, presence of opportunities, support from sources, finance, consultation with others and information receiving.
On Construct 4 which aimed at knowing measures incorporated to ease the CDM process gender differences were observed but not differences in Streams of Education, as for Streams the responses overlapped. For Male Participants changes made were – Investment in planning and speculation, attending seminars and quality workshops, part-time jobs for exposure, time management, recognition of personal interests and finding ways to build on them and increased online surfing. For Female Participants changes incorporated were- consulting with significant people, improvement in intuition, varied inputs, engaging in ground work, pursuing internships, conducting and being a part of workshops.
On Construct 5 which focused on receiving some insights into suggestion for intervention by students at college level to ease the CDM process found several interesting pointers that were overlapping for both Gender and Streams of Education. The responses were

– Internship needed to be made mandatory, institutions to play more of an advisory role in career choices of students, introducing guest lecturers from different fields of expertise to cater to boosting the thought processes that are academic as well as career oriented aspects, introducing varied short-term interdisciplinary courses, career guidance services cell and educational counselor in college premises, formation of departmental club and engaging in activities that are specialization specific, having talks for parents regarding their involvement in career choices and decisions made by their children, to introduce new streams/ combinations of subjects considering novelty in upcoming opportunities looking at current market scenario, narrowing down career related information aiding effective thinking in students and colleges to invest in resources to introduce programs that help in mapping skills and interests of students.

5. Conclusion

The current study is put forth keeping in mind that the study cannot have complete control over all aspects or cover all possible variables in study as there will be factors that are constantly at play influencing the results. While this study provides valuable and rich data, results cannot be generalized to the larger population. Some limitations of the study, thus are- the varied duration of the interviews, the extent of openness in sharing the information with researcher, interests in questions of the schedule shown by participants, may have affected the manner of interpretation. Despite the fact that the study has a few limitations that it had encountered so does it also have important implications that leave a trail of thoughts for further research in this area This study also has some implicational value like this study highlights on the fact that the nature of career related decisional difficulties can be studied in terms of specific factors on Career decisional difficulty dimensions and associated factors for college students looking at how factors like institutions and parents play a role in it. It can be used as a base for exploring difficulties of other streams of subject combinations offered at college like – Media Studies, Computer applications, Specifically Life Sciences, Physical Sciences or Human Science subjects. The study can also be extended by understanding the factors such as media, role-models, peer influences, employment markets in a qualitative manner to have a better picture of all possible factors that can be influential while talking of career related decision making process with this sample. It can be extended to involvement and enhancing counseling services of other interventional programmes to make better these career related decisional difficulties. The results obtained on the study, at a macro level can be base for conducting awareness programmes for the different sections of people such as –Parents, Teachers, Guides, Educational Institutions and Mentors pertaining to the role they play with respect helping students in career related decisions.

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