

**Assessing Career Decision-Making Difficulty:
A Cross-Cultural Study Among Indian and Foreign Adolescents**

(This research article is extracted from the thesis for PhD research of Dr. Priscilla Brighton submitted to the doctoral committee of Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore, India.

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Abstract

The 21st Century adolescents experience a wide array of career choices in their lives. There is a sense of urgency to support, educate and train the younger generation to make the right career choice. The choices they make today will determine their future. Therefore, the career decision should be made with utmost care. Any wrong decision leads to frustrating career life experiences. But every good decision directs a person to experience joy at work with an enriching work-life experience that boosts one's morale and confidence. All these start with examining the difficulties that adolescents encounter related to a career decision. The younger generation disclosed the fact that they are experiencing difficulty in making career decisions as they are influenced by internal and external factors with distorted career thoughts.

Research on vocational behaviour related to Career Decision Making Difficulty has been progressive in recent years; however, the questions on career decision-making difficulty experienced by native adolescents in India and migrant adolescents from foreign nations studying in India remain unanswered, both of which are addressed in the present research study.

The field study method was adopted to conduct the research study. The samples for the study constituted a total of 250 sample respondents from four universities in India, of the total 125 samples were native Indian adolescents studying in universities in India and 125 samples were migrant adolescents, who migrated from foreign nations to study in universities in India.

Ex-post Facto research design was used in the present study. The age group of the sample respondents was 18 to 25 years and the mean age was determined as 20.7 years. The samples were then administered the Career Decision Making Questionnaire. The responses were collected, and the data were subjected to statistical analysis. The independent 't-test was conducted to verify the significant differences existing between migrant and native adolescents in Career Decision Making Difficulty and the level of significance were verified at 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 levels whenever required.

The results indicated significant differences between Indian and Foreign adolescents in certain dimensions of career decision-making difficulty. Results suggest recommendations for further research and implication for vocational psychology.

Keywords: Career, decision-making, level of difficulty, universities in India, Indian (native), foreign (migrant), adolescents.

Introduction

Every career is unique and significant, so individuals have the flexibility to decide and train themselves to fit the job roles. However, with vast information available, it becomes a greater responsibility for adolescents to evaluate and review their career decision. Today's career opportunities offer freedom to adolescents to choose a career based on their own values, interests, skills, and abilities. Therefore, making the right career decision has become the need of the hour and that involves systematic career planning. Despite the fact that making a career decision is becoming more difficult and more attractive, exceptional, and significant career opportunities are also available. Right decisions lead to right choices while wrong decisions affect the course of life. The job market in today's world is looking for people with skills, abilities, resources, and talents. The nature of work changes over time. The career that is in demand today will soon become obsolete. The need for skill development among adolescents is essential to adapt to the changing work roles and to have satisfying work experience.

With the rapid advancement in technology, it is noted that worldwide organizations and industries offer a wide variety of career options. Internet access has opened multiple jobs that offer high perks and thereby attract the new generation to make effective career decisions. There

is a tremendous increase in self-employability across the globe creating more positions across the nation. Hence, reaching the heights of the career is highly challenging in this competitive world.

Review of Literature

Career decision-making studies confirm that adolescents lack clarity in making realistic career decisions. Subsequently, many adolescents experience episodes of career decision difficulty while choosing a career. Moreover, 52% of college students remain undecided about a career, out of which half of them were developmentally undecided and the other half were chronically undecided (Guay, Ratelle, 2006). It is a fact that career decision difficulty among adolescents is significantly correlated with career thoughts, parental support and career decision-making self-efficacy. Hence career decision difficulty was influenced by the adolescents seeking parental support; also, by those adolescents making efforts to improve their self-efficacy and decrease their dysfunctional thoughts (Fernandes, Bance, 2015).

Career decision-making difficulty among adolescents is especially influenced by many internal and external factors. Among undergraduate engineers, intrinsic reasons influence career decision-making more than extrinsic or interpersonal reasons. Men were influenced by intrinsic reasons and women were influenced by extrinsic reasons (Gokuladas 2010).

Accordingly, the intrinsic reasons for students choosing their career path have to do with career indecision that occurs due to a lack of personal insight, anxiety, difficulty related to the clarity of problems and difficulty related to resolving problems (Hollingsworth, 2015). In addition to this, the significant predictors for career decision difficulty in adolescence were neuroticism, academic self-esteem, and career locus of control (Cristina Elena 2012). Moreover, it was noted that an increase in dysfunctional career thoughts and procrastination would lead to an increase in career decision difficulty among university students (Jamali, Araqi, Kalantarkousheh, 2015). Further, the students from India indicated that abilities, skills, and competencies affect career choice with the predominant cultural value being collectivism (Agarwala 2008).

There are many other intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence career decision-making difficulty among adolescents. This is evident in the responses given by the medical graduates in a medical college in South India to the question ‘Why they chose to become a doctor?’ 45.3% of graduates decided based on personal interest and passion for the profession, 43.5% on financial stability and 35.8% chose medicine to fulfil their parents’ wish (Seetharaman, Logaraj, 2012). Among Indian students who chose their career, the role of teachers and counsellors accounted to 65%, students’ personality for 55%, self-motivation for 60%, aspiration for 65%, job opportunities for 55%, family support for 55%, own interest and attitude to 60% (Ojha and Ghadei 2015). Besides these, family, teachers, media, web information, unplanned events etc influenced the career decision of the students (Bright, Pryor and Harpham 2004). It is further confirmed that a high percentage of students from India experience crises related to careers, and they relied on friends, spouses, and self when making major decisions while entering a career (Bakshi, 2011). Likewise, Wolfe and Betz (2004) found that parental relationship was related to both career decision-making self-efficacy and career indecisiveness.

Another important factor influencing career decisions is student-parent interaction in academic and career decisions. Research has shown that young adults speak most frequently about career issues with their parents (Otto, 2000), and name parents as a major influence during educational and career transitions (Mortimer, Zimmer, Gembeck, Holmes, & Shanahan, 2002) and the choice of a vocation. It is seen that students rely on parents for general support and advice. Hence parental guidance needs to be strengthened (Simmon, 2008). Moreover, the study conducted by Antara Gosh (2015) shows the parental and social influence on career choice. It was identified that boys experience maximum parental influence on career choice due to prestigious professions, stability of the job, future benefits and fulfilling their parent’s expectations. As a result, the parental role influences the career decision of Indian students proving “father” as the most significant individual influencing their career choice (Agarwala 2008).

On the contrary, girls experience social influence related to career choices such as proper identity, role models, the opinion of teachers and seniors and the present scenario of the society. Thus, parents can potentially influence adolescent occupational choices through the way they

present information about occupations and values as well as through the experiences they provide adolescents (Hargrove, Creagh, and Burgess, 2003).

Gender and cultural differences also influence career decision-making. Particularly the Indian boys and girls showed significant differences in career decision-making (Sharma 2014).

Research Methodology

Purpose of the study:

The research study aimed to determine the career decision-making difficulty of Indian and Foreign adolescents in relation to different aspects of career decisions.

Research Questions:

1. With a wide range of career opportunities available, do adolescents experience difficulty while they decide on choosing their careers? If so, what are the aspects that lead to difficulty in career decisions?
2. Does career decision-making difficulty vary between Indian and Foreign adolescents?
3. What are the areas that need to be focused on to make effective career decision-making among adolescents?

Research Method & Research Design

The present study uses a field study method to study the migrant and natives in India. This is a cross-cultural research study that is widely applied in psychology to examine the scope of human behaviour, culture and the relationship of traits. It is a scientific method of research that compares culture to cultural aspects that work towards the objective of answering questions about cultural variations (Ilesanmi, 2009). The Ex Post Facto Research Design was used for the present study.

Samples

The samples for the present study were students studying in residential universities in three cities namely Chennai, Coimbatore and Vellore in the State of Tamil Nadu, India. Residential universities were identified, as students studying in these universities represented different parts of India.

Sampling Method

This is a form of nonprobability sampling. The samples were from those who were interested and willing to participate in the study. Samples were selected because of their availability and easy access due to time constraints. A total of 250 samples were selected, 125 native students representing Indian samples and 125 migrant students from foreign nations studying in universities in Tamil Nadu based on the demographic details provided by the respondents.

Selection Criteria

For the purpose of the present study, foreign adolescents were those individuals who were born outside Indian nationality and migrated legally to pursue their higher studies in Tamil Nadu, India. Further, the migrants from foreign nations would have spent the majority of their lives outside India and the natives were those born in India and spent the majority of their life in India.

Data Collection

The mode of data collection for the present study was through the questionnaire method. A questionnaire was used in the present study because questionnaires can determine 'beliefs, attitudes, opinions, levels of knowledge, or intentions of the subject', distributed to large samples and the consistency of question presentation reduces the opportunity for bias compared to an interview (Burns & Grove, 2004).

Research Tool

The Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) measures the three categories of difficulties such as lack of readiness, lack of motivation, indecisiveness, dysfunctional beliefs, lack of information namely lack of information about the decision-making process, self, occupations, ways of obtaining information and inconsistent information as unreliable

information, internal conflicts, and external conflicts. The questionnaire was developed by Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996). The CDDQ consists of 34 items. The internal consistency reliability of the present test was established using the method of Cronbach Alpha reliabilities and Test-Retest Reliability. The median correlation between the counsellor's judgments and the counselee's self-reports in the ten difficulty categories of CDDQ was 0.49 (range 0.27 to 0 .67).

Ethical Considerations

The present cross-cultural study attempts to test the knowledge of human behaviour by comparing two or more cultures. The researcher ensured that appropriate ethical guidelines are followed for the successful conduct of the study by the inclusion of "ethics of care." The researcher exhibited cultural sensitivity by avoiding questions related to religious beliefs or political views. Getting consent from the participants is very important in a cross-cultural study. The present study ensured that the respondents were aware of the purpose of the study and that only those who were interested participated in the research study.

Results

This section presents the analysis of career decision-making difficulty and its dimensions between migrant and native adolescents.

Table A: Shows the differences in career decision-making difficulty and its dimensions between Foreign and Indian adolescents.

(Foreign, N=125; Indian, N=125)

ITEMS	Foreign Migrants		Indian Natives		't'	Sig
	M	S.D	M	S.D.		
CDD	118.46	47.8	151.06	39.6	5.86	0.001*
ROC	45.46	13.2	52.39	13.0	4.16	0.001*
Rm	9.59	6.3	13.42	6.2	4.78	0.001*
Ri	14.62	6.2	16.55	5.8	2.52	0.01**
Rd	21.25	8.0	22.42	6.8	1.24	0.21
LOC	40.04	24.3	55.02	20.9	5.21	0.001*
Lp	10.62	7.1	14.65	6.4	4.68	0.001*

Ls	12.78	8.9	17.71	8.4	4.47	0.001*
Lo	10.53	7.0	13.60	6.2	3.63	0.001*
La	6.11	4.4	9.06	4.0	5.46	0.001*
IOC	32.95	18.5	43.65	15.9	4.88	0.001*
Iu	9.60	6.5	12.70	5.6	3.99	0.001*
Ii	17.40	10.0	21.98	8.7	3.84	0.001*
Ie	5.95	4.6	8.97	4.9	4.96	0.001*

*0.001 level of significance, **0.01 level of significance

Career Decision Making Difficulty (CDD), Readiness to Career (ROC) - Lack of Motivation (Rm), General Indecisiveness (Ri), Dysfunctional beliefs (Rd);

Lack of Information (LOC) - Stages of Career Decision-Making Process (Lp), Self (Ls), Occupations (Lo), Ways of obtaining additional information (La);

Inconsistent information (IOC) - Unreliable Information (Iu), Internal Conflicts (Ii), External Conflicts (Ie);

The results of the study proved that Indian adolescents showed an increased level of career decision-making difficulty than foreign adolescents in all three dimensions of difficulty readiness to career, lack of information and inconsistent information. Through this finding, it can be interpreted that the Indian adolescents lacked ways to relate career with education, lacked direction for a career path and had conflicting opinions on their own self and occupation. On the contrary, the findings also proved that foreign adolescents had effective ways to relate career with education, they had adequate knowledge of steps involved in the career decision-making process and they lacked conflicting opinions on their own self and occupation.

Moreover, significant differences existed between the foreign and Indian adolescents on all the sub-dimensions of career decision-making difficulty except dysfunctional beliefs. Thus, Indian adolescents in comparison to foreign adolescents showed an increased lack of motivation, general indecisiveness, lack of information on stages of career decision-making, self, occupation and ways of obtaining additional information, unreliable information, internal conflicts and external conflicts.

Based on the above findings it was interpreted that Indian adolescents lacked willingness and initiative to make a career decision; they made unrealistic career decisions, they lacked knowledge regarding the specific steps involved in career decision-making, oneself, career options and alternatives; they lacked adequate information that facilitated career decision making; they had more contradictory information about oneself and occupations; they had high state of internal confusion when making career decision and their career preferences were more affected by other's opinion.

On the contrary, the foreign adolescents were willing and took initiative to make a career decision; they made realistic career decisions; they had adequate knowledge regarding the specific steps involved in career decision-making, oneself, career options and alternatives; they had adequate information that facilitated career decision making; they had less contradictory information about oneself and occupations; they had low state of internal confusion when making career decision and their career preferences were less affected by other's opinion.

Implications of the Research Study

1. Based on the findings of the present research study, native-born Indian adolescents experience high career decision-making difficulty. This creates a sense of urgency among the school counsellors, teachers, and administrators to immediately implement the career development courses as a part of the higher education system in India.
2. Career counselling services should be made mandatory for higher-grade students in all schools and colleges.
3. School counsellors need to address the internal conflicts that adolescents experience while making career decisions. It is also important for counsellors to offer vocational guidance to parents as they play a significant role in influencing career decisions.

Recommendations for further study

- Developing a structured career decision-making profile and curriculum exclusively designed for the Indian population to be adopted by Schools and universities and colleges.

- As there are limited cross-cultural studies in India exploring career decision-making difficulty, future research work can explore the cross-cultural comparison of adolescents of India with adolescents of many other nations to further validate the study.
- The initial diagnosis for career counselling can be conducted using the Career Decision Making Difficulty among adolescents and the results can be used to offer career counselling to college students.

Conclusion

Thus, this research study creates a sense of urgency among school counsellors to focus more on offering career guidance to adolescents. The study clearly shows that Indian adolescents lack clarity and are unclear about the career decision process, hence opportunities should be provided regularly by schools or colleges to explore different career fields. Counsellors need to specifically address the parents and educate them on different career opportunities as parents influence students' career decision-making to a great extent. Further parents should be informed not to pressurize their children to fulfil their unfulfilled career dreams. Thus both parents and counsellors need to explore the career interest of the students and give knowledge and directions based on the student's interests.

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