

Evaluation of Career Competencies in Adolescent Students Based on their Stress Coping Strategies

Dr. Reshma Lakesh

Professor, Department of Home Science
Govt. Dr. W.W. Patankar Girls'
P.G. College Durg (C.G.)

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to assess career competencies among adolescent students by examining their utilization of stress coping techniques. The research involved 400 adolescent students aged 16-18, drawn from both government and private schools in the Durg district of Chhattisgarh. The study employed purposive sampling for data collection. The Indian version of the career maturity inventory was employed to gauge career competencies in the students. Additionally, a standardized test was utilized to evaluate the stress coping strategies employed by the students. Based on results, it was concluded that coping strategies namely problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions and social support develop good career maturity in 16-18 years age group adolescent students while coping strategies namely problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism and social withdrawal are detrimental to career maturity in 16-18 years age group adolescent students. It can also be concluded that stress-coping strategies in the form of problem solving, expressing emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring and social withdrawal can predict career competencies in adolescent students on a threshold of adulthood. By understanding the relationship between stress coping strategies and career competencies, educators, counselors, and policymakers can design interventions and support systems that foster adaptive coping skills and enhance students' readiness for the challenges of the workforce.

Keywords: Career competencies, stress coping strategies, adolescence

INTRODUCTION

Career development in the future is a critical component linked to career maturity, as it plays a pivotal role in determining an individual's success. Achieving maturity while planning a career is crucial, as it entails gaining a thorough understanding of potential career paths and preparing adequately during adolescence.

According to Hurlock (1980), decisions made during adolescence regarding pursuing further education or vocational training significantly impact future career trajectories. The period between 16 and 18 years marks a transition from childhood to adulthood, representing a crucial threshold. Adolescents in this age group often experience confusion when it comes to making career choices due to environmental pressures, parental expectations, and comparisons with peers.

During late adolescence, individuals actively explore various career prospects and make decisions regarding higher education or vocational courses based on their aspirations and interests. They become more self-aware and begin contemplating their career development. The major component of career maturity is career competencies. Career competencies play a crucial role in individuals' ability to navigate the complexities of the modern workforce and achieve success in their chosen career paths. Defined as the skills, knowledge, and attributes required to effectively manage one's career development, career competencies encompass a wide range of capabilities that are informed by various psychological theories. Holland's Theory of Career Choice (1959) proposes that individuals possess distinct personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional) and are most satisfied and successful in careers that align with their dominant personality type. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) emphasizes the role of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals in career development. Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) posits that setting specific, challenging goals leads to higher performance compared to vague or easy goals. Goal setting is a fundamental competency that influences individuals' ability to establish clear objectives and develop actionable plans for their career development. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes the role of observation and modeling in learning new behaviors. Communication skills and networking are competencies influenced by Social Learning Theory, as individuals learn effective communication strategies and networking behaviors through observation and practice.

Given the significance of career competencies as a major aspect of career maturity in future success, numerous researchers have investigated it from various angles, including personality traits, socio-economic status, age, and urban-rural backgrounds. The role of stress has also been examined, although findings are inconclusive and require further validation and clarification. Lazarus and Folkman

(1984) provided a broad definition of stress, characterizing it as the perception of environmental conditions as threatening and beyond one's ability to manage. Jones (1990) views stress as unmet demands prompting individuals to either flee or react against them. Stein and Cutler (2002) define stress as the process of dealing with internal or external pressures. White (2008) acknowledges stress as an inherent aspect of life, with coping strategies varying among individuals, encompassing problem-focused or emotionally focused approaches. Tobin (1984) outlines basic coping strategies, including problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, seeking social support, emotional expression, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, social withdrawal, and self-criticism. These strategies aim to alleviate tension associated with stressors. Elements common to both career competencies and stress coping suggest a potential link between the two and this study explored the possible association of career competencies in adolescent students with their stress coping strategies.

OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the association between stress coping strategies with career competencies in adolescent students.

HYPOTHESIS

1. Stress coping strategies namely problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions, social support, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism and social withdrawal will show a significant association with career competencies in adolescent students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Bishnoi and Kumar (2014) investigated gender differences in career maturity in adolescent students. It was found that career maturity in female adolescents was higher than that of male adolescents. Ottu and Idowu (2014) reported that personality factors such as conscientiousness and gender have a considerable impact on career maturity. Sharma and Ahuja (2017) in their study assessed the career maturity of adolescent Indian students based on the nature of the institute, gender and type of family. It was found that career maturity in adolescent class X students from private schools was far superior to that of adolescent class X students from government schools. The impact of gender and family type was also observed on the career maturity of adolescent class X students. Manivannan and Venkataraman (2018) investigated the career maturity of secondary students and they found that the

majority of the subjects have high career maturity. It was also found that the career maturity of secondary students was influenced by urban-rural belongingness and type of school respectively. Kavita Rani (2022) in a study found a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and career maturity in senior secondary school students.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study included 400 adolescent students between the ages of 16 and 18, selected from various schools in the Durg district of Chhattisgarh. These schools represented diverse demographics in terms of school type, gender, cultural background, and educational history. Purposive sampling was used to gather the data for the research.

Tools:

Career Maturity Inventory

In this study, the Career Maturity Inventory used is an adaptation tailored for Indian contexts, developed by Nirmala Gupta in 1989, building upon Crites' original work from 1973. It consists of two sections: Part I, known as the Attitudinal Scale of Career Maturity, comprising 50 items, and Part II, the Competency Scale, containing 70 items. A scoring key, provided by the author, indicates the correct responses marked within circles, with each correct answer scored as 1. Incorrect or unanswered items receive a score of 0. Scores on Part II of the inventory range from 0 to 70. Notably, only the career competencies part of this inventory was utilized in the present study, known for its strong reliability and validity.

Coping Strategy Inventory

To assess stress coping strategies of adolescent students, an inventory prepared by Tobin (2001) was used. This inventory consists of 72 items and measures coping behaviour based on some particular stressors. A numerical weightage of 1 to 5 is given for None, A little, Sometimes, Much and Very Much respectively. The primary subscale consists of specific coping strategies namely problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions, social support, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self criticism and social withdrawal respectively that are used by an individual to cope with stressful situations. The reliability of this inventory is established through Chronbach alpha and it ranged between 0.71 to 0.94 giving it

substantial statistical reliability. Test-retest correlation coefficient also gives adequate reliability to this inventory. This inventory enjoys high face and content validity.

Procedure

Four hundred adolescent students aged between 16 and 18 were chosen from schools within the Durg district of Chhattisgarh. Each student was administered the career maturity inventory and coping strategy inventory according to the prescribed procedures outlined in the manual. Only the career competency dimension of career maturity was scored. Following scoring, the data was organized into a table and analyzed using Pearson correlation. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

RESULTS

Table 1

Value of Correlation (r) between Stress Coping Strategies and Career Competencies in 16-18 Years Adolescent Students (N=400)

Stress Coping Strategies	Career Competencies	
Problem Solving	'r'	.158**
Cognitive Restructuring	'r'	.107*
Express Emotions	'r'	.160**
Social Support	'r'	.113*
Problem Avoidance	'r'	-.054
Wishful Thinking	'r'	-.077
Self Criticism	'r'	-.073
Social Withdrawal	'r'	-.069

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; $r(df=398) = 0.09$ at .05 level; 0.12 at .01 level

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a significant and positive relationship between problem-solving subscale of stress-coping strategies and career competency of students. It shows that the more the students cope with stressful situations by using problem-solving methods i.e. they find a solution to a problematic situation to reduce or eliminate stress, the greater is their career competencies. The calculated $r = .158$ with statistical support at .01 level denotes a significant relationship between these two variables.

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a significant and positive relationship between the cognitive restructuring subscale of stress-coping strategies with career competency in students. The calculated $r = 0.107$ with statistical

support at .05 level of significance reveals that when cognitive distortion is controlled, career competencies invariably get enhanced.

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a significant and positive relationship between "express emotions" subscale of stress coping strategies with the career competency of students. The calculated $r=0.160$ with statistical support at .01 level denotes a significant relationship between these two variables. The

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a significant and positive relationship between the social support subscale of stress coping strategies and career competency of students. The calculated $r=0.113$ with statistical support at .05 level denotes a significant relationship between these two variables.

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a negative non-significant relationship between the problem avoidance subscale of stress-coping strategies with career competencies in students. The calculated $r = -.054$ shows that the relationship between these two variables is statistically non-significant ($p>.05$).

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a negative non-significant relationship between the wishful thinking subscale of stress coping strategies with career competencies in students. The calculated $r = -.077$ shows that the relationship between these two variables is statistically non-significant ($p>.05$).

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a negative non-significant relationship between self criticism subscale of stress coping strategies with career competencies in students. The calculated $r = -.073$ shows that the relationship between these two variables is statistically non-significant ($p>.05$).

The correlation coefficient (r) given in Table 1 shows a negative non-significant relationship between the social withdrawal subscale of stress-coping strategies with career competencies in students. The calculated $r = -.069$ shows that the relationship between these two variables is statistically non-significant ($p>.05$).

DISCUSSION:

A significant and positive relationship found between coping strategies namely problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, emotional expression and social support with career competencies was observed while analysing the data. Social cognitive career theory, cognitive behavioural theory and stress buffering model can explain these findings. (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, Cohen & Wills, 1985, Beck, 1976) By effectively addressing and resolving stressful situations, students may

enhance their problem-solving skills, which are essential for career success and this comes from replacing negative thought pattern with more balanced ones. By seeking emotional support and expressing their feelings, students may strengthen their resilience and maintain their focus on career-related goals.

The non-significant relationships found between wishful thinking, self-criticism, social withdrawal coping strategies, and career competencies suggest that these maladaptive coping strategies may not directly impact students' career development positively. These findings align with theories of maladaptive coping, which suggest that avoidance-based coping strategies are associated with increased distress and impaired functioning (Carver et al., 1989).

CONCLUSION

Based on results, it was concluded that coping strategies namely problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions and social support develop good career maturity in 16-18 years age group adolescent students while coping strategies namely problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism and social withdrawal are detrimental to career maturity in 16-18 years age group adolescent students. It can also be concluded that stress-coping strategies in the form of problem solving, expressing emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring and social withdrawal can predict career maturity in adolescent students on a threshold of adulthood. By understanding the relationship between stress coping strategies and career competencies, educators, counselors, and policymakers can design interventions and support systems that foster adaptive coping skills and enhance students' readiness for the challenges of the workforce.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders*. International Universities Press.
- Bishnoi, M. and Kumar, M. (2014). Study of career maturity in relation to level of aspiration in adolescents. *Darpan Internat. Res. Analysis*, 1(8).
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(2), 267–283.

- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357.
- Holland, J. L. (1959). A theory of vocational choice. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 6(1), 35–45.
- Kavita, Rani (2022). Career maturity and emotional intelligence of senior secondary school students. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, Vol. 9, Issue 6, 755-762.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress Appraisal and Coping*. New York: Springer.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79–122.
- Manivannan, S. and Venkataraman, S. (2018). A study on career maturity of secondary students. *International Journal of Human Resource Management and Research*, Vol. 8, Issue 4, 65-76.
- Ottu, I.F.A. and Idowu, O.O. (2014). Openness to experience, conscientiousness and gender as personality indicators of career maturity of in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. *European J. Educational Studies*, 6(1).
- Sharma, P. and Ahuja, A. (2017). A study on career maturity of Indian adolescents with respect to their educational settings. *Advance Research Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, 157-161.
- Hurlock, E. (1980). *Psikologiperkembangan: Suatu pendekatan sepanjang rentang kehidupan* (fifth edition). (Istiwidayanti & Soedjarwo, Translator: publication year 1998). Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Stein, F. and Cutler, S. (2002). *Psychosocial occupational therapy: A holistic approach* (2nd ed.). San Diego: Singular Publishing.
- Super D. E. (1957). *The Psychology of Careers*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Tobin, D. L., Reynolds, R., Garske, J. P., Holroyd, K. A., and Wigal, J. (1984). Collecting test-retest reliability data on a measure of coping process: The problem of situational effects. Paper presented at the meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, New Orleans.
- White, G. A. (2008). Levels of stress and mechanisms of coping among male freshman athletes. Unpublished Master thesis, West Virginia University.