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A Study On Career Maturity Amongst 16-18 Years Adolescent Students Based On Stress Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Career development is dependent on career maturity and adolescence is an important period when students decide about an occupation. It is necessary to know the effect of stress coping strategies on the career maturity of 16-18 years adolescent students. The objective of the present study was to prepare a model for career maturity in adolescent students based on their stress-coping strategies. To conduct the study, 400 adolescent students between the age range of 16-18 years were selected from government and private schools operational in the Durg district of Chhattisgarh. Out of the total sample of 400, 200 were adolescent boys and 200 were adolescent girls. Purposive sampling was used for data collection. The Indian adaptation of the career maturity inventory developed by Nirmala Gupta (1989) was used to assess career maturity in adolescent students. To assess stress coping strategies of adolescent students, an inventory prepared by Tobin (2001) was used. It was found that the stress coping strategy in the form of problem-solving, expressing emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring and social withdrawal accounted for 41.2% variance in career maturity in adolescent 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

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social withdrawal can predict career maturity in adolescent students on a threshold of adulthood.

Keywords: Career maturity, stress coping, adolescence

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of life in which a child is standing at the doorstep of adulthood. Adolescence is characterised by rapid changes not only physical but also emotional, psychological and relational. During adolescence, the child starts dreaming about his future including preference towards a particular occupation. One of the most important parts towards the end of adolescence is making career choices. In modern times there are so many career options to choose and it is essential to have career maturity to choose an appropriate career option. It is rather difficult for an adolescent to choose a career from a large pool of options (Gottfredson, 2005). According to Super (1971), students belonging to 15-18 years age explore various career prospects and this is the time when prior career planning is essential. The students in the 16-18 years age group have no concrete idea about making vocational choices (Hashim and Amnah, 2006) and the majority of their career decisions are influenced by family and peers. In this scenario, career maturity helps an adolescent to opt for a career suitable to his/her liking and competencies. Super first coined the concept of career maturity and his definition is based on the age at which career choices are made. This definition of Super propagates the role of cognitive abilities in meeting the challenges to pursue a career choice at a given developmental stage. Career maturity is considered high if the career behaviour of an individual matches the norms of career behaviour at that particular age. Hence career development is affected by the closeness of students' career behaviour with what it is supposed to be in a particular age bracket. Career maturity in an individual can also be determined by the group of people from the same age group (Nasir, 2005). Savickas (1984) defined career maturity as career choices suitable for the age and capacity of an individual at a given time to develop a career in a particular field. Busacca and Taber (2002) opined that career choices and associated decisions are dependent on the level of career maturity of an individual. It is essential to have the appropriate level of career maturity to make good career decisions. In a way, career maturity affects career decision-making. Due to its importance, so many factors have been identified that affect career maturity. Researchers have found factors such as gender (Arshad, 2001), educational stream, socioeconomic status (Annamalai, 2000, Chin, 2003) and many more that have a significant influence on career maturity. Despite extensive research one area that has limited

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literature is stress coping strategies and their relation with career maturity. Dimsdale (2008) defined stress as our response to some challenging situation. Changes or challenging situations in life demand certain psychological, emotional and cognitive responses to cope with it. When an individual is unable to cope with it causes stress (Holmes and Rahe, 1967).

To handle the stressful/undesirable situations or challenges presented by life, some cognitive and behavioural patterns are used by us and these are known as coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) opined that coping strategies is a tools to either decrease or eliminate stress by using certain resources. They used ways of coping to identify factors to manage stressful situations. The use of coping strategies varies from person to person due to the interpretation of stress (Homes and Rahe, 1967). The coping strategy can be problem-focused or emotionally focused. Tobin (1985) described some of the basic coping strategies used by an individual to cope with stress. The problem-solving aspect of coping uses behavioural and cognitive strategies to eliminate the situation that is causing stress. Cognitive restructuring is used to look into a stressful situation from an altogether different perspective which is positive. Social support is another form of coping strategy commonly used in which an individual seeks help, advice and support from family members and friends. Another form of basic coping strategy is expressing emotions thereby releasing tension related to the stressful situation. Problem avoidance coping is neglecting, denying and avoiding a stressful situation. Wishful thinking is another form of coping in which individual hope for better outcomes in future or assumes that things will be better in future. Social withdrawal and self-criticism are two other forms of coping strategies used by individuals to reduce stress and tension.

Among many situations, adolescent faces the issue of career choices and it is indeed a crucial decision because future perspectives are attached to it. While choosing a career, adolescents are likely to feel pressure or anxiety regarding choosing an occupation suitable to his/her liking but also for a flourishing career. How does this stress of choosing a career affect career maturity in adolescent students this issue is explored in the present study.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the association of stress coping strategies with career maturity among 16-18 years age group adolescent students.
- To prepare a model for career maturity in adolescent students based on their stress-coping strategies.

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HYPOTHESIS

1. The primary subscales of stress coping strategies namely problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions, social support, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism and social withdrawal will be significantly correlated with career maturity in adolescent students.
2. It was hypothesized that all the primary subscales of stress coping strategies namely problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions, social support, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism and social withdrawal will be added to the prediction model for career maturity 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. 100 adolescent class X students from govt. school and 100 adolescent class X students from private schools were selected. 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

The following methodological steps were taken to conduct the present study.

Sample

To conduct the study, 400 adolescent students between the age range of 16-18 years were selected from government and private schools operational in the Durg district of

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Chhattisgarh. Out of the total sample of 400, 200 were adolescent boys and 200 were adolescent girls. Purposive sampling was used for data collection.

Tools:

Career Maturity Inventory :

The Indian adaptation of the career maturity inventory developed by Nirmala Gupta (1989) was used. The inventory is an adapted version of the work of Crites (1973). It is divided into two parts. Part I consist of 50 items and is referred to as the attitudinal scale of career maturity while part II consists of 70 items and is referred to as the competency scale. A scoring stencil is provided by the author with the correct option visible in the circle and 1 mark assigned to the subject on that statement. For a wrong answer or unattempted statement, a 0 mark is awarded. The minimum score on this inventory can be 00 and the maximum score can be 120. The inventory enjoys high 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. It is based on ways of coping, developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1981). This is an open-ended inventory in which the response on each item needs to be given in five choices namely None, A little, Sometimes, Much and Very Much respectively. A numerical weightage of 1 to 5 is given for None, A little, Sometimes, Much and Very Much respectively. This inventory has a primary scale, four secondary scales and two tertiary scales. 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:

400 adolescent students between the age range of 16-18 years were selected from government and private schools operational in the Durg district of Chhattisgarh. The career maturity inventory and coping strategy inventory were administered to each subject in a manner prescribed in the manual. After scoring the data was tabulated and Pearson

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correlation along with step-wise regression was done for data analysis. The results are presented in table 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

RESULTS

Table 1

Value of Correlation (r) between Stress Coping Strategies and Career Maturity in 16-18 Years Adolescent Students (N=600)

Stress Coping Strategies	Career Maturity	
Problem Solving	'r'	.444*
Cognitive Restructuring	'r'	.398**
Express Emotions	'r'	.425**
Social Support	'r'	.390**
Problem Avoidance	'r'	-.243**
Wishful Thinking	'r'	-.159**
Self Criticism	'r'	-.205**
Social Withdrawal	'r'	-.131**

** Significant at .01 level; r(df=400) = 0.098 at .05 level; 0.128 at .01 level

A perusal of table 1 reveals the following association between variables:

- The correlation between problem-solving aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be positive and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r=.444 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.
- The correlation between the cognitive restructuring aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be positive and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r=.398 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.
- The correlation between expressing emotions aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be positive and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r=.425 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.
- The correlation between the social support aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be

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positive and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r=.390 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.

- The correlation between the problem avoidance aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be negative and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r=-.243 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.
- The correlation between the wishful thinking aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be negative and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r = -.159 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.
- The correlation between the self-criticism aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be negative and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r = -.205 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.
- The correlation between the social withdrawal aspect of stress coping strategies and career maturity in adolescent students between 16-18 years of age was found to be negative and statistically significant with the value of correlation coefficient r = -.131 proving to be statistically significant at .01 level.

To prepare a prediction model to find out the effect of stress-coping strategies on career maturity in adolescent students within the age range of 16-18 years, stepwise regression was carried out.

Results are given in table 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

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Table 2

Step-wise Regression - Career Maturity in 16-18 years adolescent students based on stress coping strategies

Model Summary

Model Predictors Variables Entered	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	R^2 Change	F Change
Problem Solving	.444[a]	.197	.195	.197	97.78**
Express Emotions	.514[b]	.264	.260	.067	36.08**
Problem Avoidance	.572[c]	.327	.322	.063	36.80**
Social Support	.600[d]	.360	.353	.033	20.38
Wishful Thinking	.626[e]	.392	.384	.032	21.05**
Cognitive Restructuring	.635[f]	.403	.394	.011	7.12**
Social Withdrawal	.642[g]	.412	.401	.009	5.80**

** Significant at .01 level

[a] Predictors : Problem solving

[b] Predictors : Problem Solving, express emotions

[c] Predictors : Problem Solving, express emotions, problem avoidance

[d] Predictors : Problem Solving, express emotions, problem avoidance, social support

[e] Predictors : Problem Solving, express emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking

[f] Predictors : Problem Solving, express emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring

[g] Predictors : Problem Solving, express emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring

Excluded variable - Self criticism

Table 3

ANOVA : Final Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9494.465	07	1356.352	39.19	.01
Residual	13565.113	392	34.605		
Total	23059.578	399			

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Table 4

Coefficients for the Final Model

Model Variables Entered	Standardized Coefficient	't'	Significance
Constant		56.377	.01
Problem Solving	.225	4.50	.01
Express Emotions	.248	5.59	.01
Problem Avoidance	-.146	-3.37	.01
Social Support	.185	4.03	.01
Wishful Thinking	-.189	-4.27	.01
Cognitive Restructuring	.139	2.71	.01
Social Withdrawal	-.104	-2.40	.01

Results shown in table 2, 3 and 4 reveal that stress coping strategies in the form of problem solving, expressing emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring and social withdrawal were found to be significant predictors of career maturity in adolescents students. The F = 39.19 for the final regressional model was statistically significant at .01 level.

The R^2 for the final regression model was .412 which indicate that stress coping strategy in the form of problem solving, expressing emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring and social withdrawal accounted for 41.2% variance in career maturity in adolescent students

A perusal of entries shown in table 1, 2 and 3 also reveals the additional facts:

- Problem solving as a stress coping strategy emerged as the single best predictor of career maturity in adolescent students while creating a 19.7% variance (R square change = .197). The F Change = 97.78 ($p<.01$), $\beta=.225$ and $t=4.50$ also support this finding statistically at .01 level.
- Expressing emotions as a stress coping strategy added a 6.7% variance in career maturity in adolescent students (R square change = .067). The F Change = 36.08 ($p<.01$), $\beta=.248$ and $t=5.59$ also support this finding statistically at .01 level.

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- Problem avoidance as a stress coping strategy added a 6.3% variance in career maturity in adolescent students (R square change = .063). The F Change = 36.80 ($p<.01$), β= -.146 and t=3.37 also support this finding statistically at .01 level.
- Social support as a stress coping strategy further added a 3.3% variance in career maturity in adolescent students (R square change = .033). The F Change = 20.38 ($p<.01$), β=.185 and t=4.03 also support this finding statistically at .01 level.
- Wishful thinking as a stress coping strategy further added a 3.2% variance in career maturity in adolescent students (R square change = .033). The F Change = 21.05 ($p<.01$), β= -.189 and t=4.27 also support this finding statistically at .01 level.
- Cognitive restructuring as a stress coping strategy further added a 1.1% variance in career maturity in adolescent students (R square change = .011). The F Change = 7.12 ($p<.01$), β=.139 and t=2.71 also support this finding statistically at .01 level.
- Social withdrawal as a stress coping strategy further added 0.9% variance on career maturity in adolescent students (R square change = .009). The F Change = 5.80 ($p<.01$), β= -.104 and t=2.40 also support this finding statistically at .01 level.

Hence the regression model includes problem solving as the single best predictor of career maturity while expressing emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring and social withdrawal further added with self criticism being excluded from the model.

VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESES:

Results indicate that the primary subscales of stress coping strategies namely problem solving, cognitive restructuring, express emotions, social support, problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self criticism and social withdrawal were significantly correlated with career maturity in adolescent students. Hence hypothesis 1 is accepted.

The result indicates that stress coping strategies in the form of problem solving, expressing emotions, problem avoidance, social support, wishful thinking, cognitive restructuring and social withdrawal accounted for 41.2% variance in career maturity in adolescent students with self criciticm being excluded from the final model. Hence hypothesis 2 is partially accepted.

DISCUSSION:

It was observed that problem focused coping measures such as problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, expressing emotions and social support have a positive impact on the career maturity of adolescent students while increased use of emotion focused measures such

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as problem avoidance, wishful thinking, self-criticism and social withdrawal leads to inferior career maturity. A study conducted by Larson and Heppner (1985) reveals a significant association between problem-solving career decision-making. Rismawan and Gading (2020) in their study reported a positive influence of cognitive behaviour training on the career decision making of students enrolled in high school. A study conducted by Savickas et al. (2002) revealed that higher social adjustment is associated with better career maturity. Onen and Kocak (2012) found that professional maturity levels are adversely affected in secondary school students who choose to use wishful thinking as a coping strategy.

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.

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