

Causes Of Career Indecisiveness Among Adolescents In Institutional Care

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Abstract: Career related decisions often begin at the high school level and many adolescents face problems in this process, which are referred to as career indecision. Career indecision can be divided into two types, development indecision and career indecisiveness. It is crucial to bring out the difference between indecision that is a typical stage in life while choosing a career and indecisiveness which is an attribute exhibited in the person's failure in making decisions in diverse life situation because dealing with indecision of different types will require different measures. Many studies, both from India and abroad, have demonstrated that adolescents in institutional care face many emotional and personality related issues which may predispose them towards career indecisiveness. Therefore, it is especially important to distinguish between these two types of career indecision in case of these adolescents. Further, as career indecisiveness is more chronic in nature, a prolonged focused strategy is required to alleviate it. With a view to help adolescents in institutional care deal with career indecisiveness, this paper discusses the results of a study conducted to find out the causes of career indecisiveness in adolescents in institutional care.

Index Terms: Adolescents, Institutional Care, Career Indecisiveness, Career Indecision

1 INTRODUCTION

The decision of choosing a career is a crucial one. Since early career choices like the selection of academic streams have far-reaching effect on one's career path, it is essential that the students engage in the process of career decision-making (CDM) at the earliest. Such choices are more crucial for adolescents living in institutional care because if these adolescents do not find productive employment later in life, the danger of them being drawn to delinquency looms large. A family provides natural environment for upbringing of children. But unfortunately, adolescents living in institutional care are deprived of this natural environment. They do not receive the same sort of encouragement which well-versed parents supporting their own child would provide for studying well and for moving ahead in career-related endeavours. A wide array of studies spanning over time have found that all aspects of children's development are negatively impacted by institutionalization [1]. Thus, it is expected that adolescents in institutional care face greater career indecision. In view of the intricate nature of career indecision, prior studies in the field of CDM had proposed that different forms of career indecision may exist [2]. The difference between indecision and indecisiveness has been studied by many theorists in the field of vocational and educational research [3,4]. The word developmental indecision commonly refers to a normative stage in career development which is resolved with comparative ease for a majority of people [5]. Unlike developmental indecision which is viewed as a temporary phase of indecision, career indecisiveness is understood as a more persistent, severe and continuous difficulty in making career decisions [6]. Indecisiveness represents a chronic incapacity to take decisions which may manifest itself in varied circumstances [7]. It may be understood as extreme anxiety, self-doubt or overwhelming pressure caused by the act of making a decision regarding career [8]. Some researchers even call it generalized indecision [9]. As career counsellors consider problems regarding career indecisiveness as one of the most severe and one that calls for the longest intervention [10], taking notice of them can aid teachers and counsellors to plan and customize interventions more effectively by working on the sources of such difficulties.

2 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the causes of severe career indecisiveness among adolescents in institutional care?

3 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

3.1 Institutional Care

Institutional care denotes care provided in any non-family based group setting including orphanages, small group homes and children's homes. In this study, institutions meant exclusively for adolescents with special needs and juvenile delinquents were excluded.

3.2 Adolescents in Institutional Care

Adolescents in institutional care mean adolescents living in collective residential living arrangement in an institution, where they are looked after by volunteers or paid caregivers. Further, only those adolescents who had completed at least one year in institutional care were considered.

3.3 Career Indecisiveness

Career indecisiveness is a type of career indecision which is more pervasive and chronic. It is a trait generalized across decision-making situations and it is not expected to improve over time on its own. Career indecisiveness refers to a condition when a person is not able to arrive at a decision regarding career even if all requisite information regarding the process is provided to him or her. In this study, an adolescent in institutional care was understood to face career indecisiveness if he or she scored a mean of 6.34 or above on the dimension of indecisiveness in the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire.

3.4 Severe Career Indecisiveness

Severe career indecisiveness refers to a condition where a person cannot take a career decision because they face very high degree of emotional and personality related career indecisiveness. In this study, severe career indecisiveness was defined using the score on the EPSCI scale developed by the researcher. An adolescent was understood to be facing severe career indecisiveness if his/her score on EPSCI scale was above 373.

4 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The study adopted the participant-selection variant of the explanatory sequential design. It is a mixed method design wherein the researcher first gathers and examines quantitative data which is followed by a qualitative segment that helps to explain the preliminary quantitative results. The study comprised three sequential phases, two quantitative phases followed by one qualitative phase. The objective of the first phase was to identify adolescents in institutional care who face career indecisiveness. For this purpose, the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire developed by Gati, Krausz, and Osipow [11] was administered to adolescents in institutional care studying in Grade IX and X. On the basis of the results of the CDDQ, those adolescents who scored high on the dimension of indecisiveness were identified. As suggested by Gati and Levin [12], only these identified adolescents were considered for the second quantitative phase. The objective of the second phase was to identify adolescents in institutional care who face severe career indecisiveness. For this purpose, the Emotional and Personality related Sources of Career Indecisiveness (EPSCI) scale developed by the investigator was administered. This scale, which is based on the theoretical framework put forth by Saka et al. [13], measured the emotional and personality related sources of career indecisiveness under the dimensions of a. Pessimistic views b. Anxiety and c. Self-concept and identity. Thus, in the first quantitative phase, the CDDQ was administered to assess whether an adolescent exhibited CDM difficulties involving indecisiveness, and, then, in the second quantitative phase, the EPSCI scale was administered to further identify the reasons behind such indecisiveness. The second quantitative phase helped in assessing the participants' indecisiveness and the personality-related variables contributing to it. The objective of the third phase was to determine the factors which lead to severe career indecisiveness among adolescents in institutional care. In the third phase, qualitative analysis was undertaken. Case studies were used to present a holistic profile of adolescents who face severe career indecisiveness. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews with adolescents in institutional care, their peers and caregivers were organized. Further, observations of the adolescents living in institutional care were carried out so as to gain an insight into their personality and peer relationships.

5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants were selected by sequentially using probability and purposive sampling, i.e. probability sampling for quantitative strand and subsequently purposive sampling for qualitative strand [14] and the relationship between the strands was a nested one. In this study, nested relationship meant that participants of the first phase included the participants of the second and participants of the third phase include the participants of the third. This nested relationship between the strands has been depicted in figure 1.

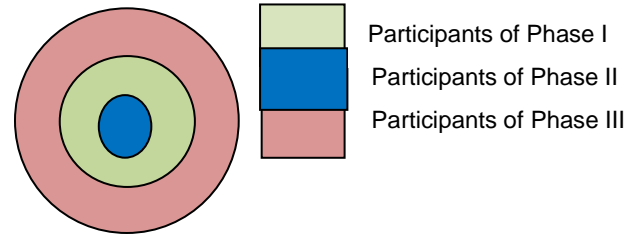


Fig. 1. Nested relationship between the strands

For the first quantitative phase of the study, a list of all states in North India was prepared. As per the Geological Survey of India [15] North India includes eight states, namely, Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. These eight states/UTs were then arranged in descending order of adolescent population and the top four states were selected for the study. The states so obtained were Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and the NCT of Delhi. The study was then delimited to the vicinity of the capitals of the states so selected. Child care institutions managed by NGOs in the vicinity of Lucknow, Chandigarh and NCT of Delhi were selected randomly and were then contacted telephonically and through e-mails. Thus, the participants of the study were from institutions where such adolescents were present and permission for meeting and interacting with them could be obtained. 150 adolescents living in institutional care participated in the first phase. For the second phase, the deviant case sampling was used. The presence of the trait of career indecisiveness, as assessed by the score on the indecisiveness dimension of the CDDQ, was the criterion used for selecting the participants of the second phase. Out of 150, 73 adolescents were identified with the trait of career indecisiveness. However, out of these, 30 randomly selected adolescents from the NCT of Delhi were included for the pilot administration of the EPSCI scale. These 30 adolescents were not included in the second and third phases of the study as it is not advisable to use common participants for both developing the scale and for the final study as it interferes with construct validity [16]. Thus, the remaining 43 adolescents who exhibited career indecisiveness were included in the second phase of the study. For the third phase, the deviant case sampling was used again. The criterion of interest was the presence of severe career indecisiveness. Therefore, this phase included those 11 adolescents who exhibited severe career indecisiveness as assessed by the score on the EPSCI scale.

6 PARTICIPANTS

A total of 12 child care institutions were visited. A total of 55 adolescents and 20 caregivers were interviewed. The details of the adolescents included in all three phases of the study are given in table 1.

Table 1. Details of the participants

S. No.	Name of institution	No. of Participants		
		Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
1	Lilavati Munshi Bal Grah	11	8	1
2	Don Bosco Ashalayam, Lucknow	15	6	2
3	Snehalaya, Lucknow	5	2	0
4	Ehsaas, Lucknow	2	0	0
	Zone 1	33	16	3
5	Bal Sadan, Panchkula	6	1	0
6	Ashiana, Panchkula	11	5	2
7	SOS, Rajpura	21	13	2
	Zone 2	38	19	4
8	Bal Sahyog, Connaught Place, New Delhi	20	0	0
9	Don Bosco Ashalayam, Palam Gaon, New Delhi	18	2	1
10	Bal Vihar, Mahavir Enclave, New Delhi	10	3	1
11	SOS, Faridabad	19	1	1
12	Snehalaya, Palam Gaon, New Delhi	12	2	1
	Zone 3	79	8	4
	Total	150	43	11

7 CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

The researcher employed cross case analysis to discover the similarities and dissimilarities amongst the various cases on multiple factors identified as probable causes of severe career indecisiveness among adolescents in institutional care. Cross-case analysis facilitates in outlining factors that might have affected the outcomes of the case. It also provides a justification for similarities and differences between cases and provides a rationale for unique findings [17]. Table 2 presents the cross-case analysis of students who exhibited severe career indecisiveness. The factors or sub-themes on which the cases have been compared were brought to fore by thematic analysis. The new themes that emerged during thematic analysis were school-related factors, institution-related factors and career-related factors. These emergent themes were in addition to the pre-figured

themes of personal factors, peer-related factors and caregiver-related factors. For ease of presentation, the following notations have been used in Table 2:

A=Average, Al=Alive but no contact, Av=Avoidant, B=Boys, D=Dependent, Di=Diffused, F = Frequency, Fr=Foreclosure, G=Good, Gi=Girls, Go=Government, High=H, I=Intuitive, In=Indifferent, L=Low, Lo=Long, M=Moderate, MC=Multiple caregivers, Mo=Moratorium, NI=No information, NS=Not supportive, NT=Not traceable, O=Open schooling, P=Poor, Pv=Private, S=Supportive, SC=Single caregiver, Sh=Short, U=Unrealistic, V=Insistence on Vocational Education only.

After comparing cases across the various factors contributing to severe career indecisiveness among adolescents in institutional care, this data was quantized [18] to find out the relative contribution of each factor to career indecisiveness. Therefore, numerical codes were derived from qualitative data in order to facilitate statistical representation [19]. Table 3 presents the relative contribution of each factor to severe career indecisiveness. Personal factors emerged as the most important factors contributing to severe career indecisiveness followed by family-related factors, caregiver-related factors, career-related factors, institution-related factors, peer-related factors and school-related factors, respectively. However, it is reiterated that each individual is different and the extent to which one adolescent is affected by a particular factor may vary greatly with the extent to which another adolescent is affected by the same factor. This has been depicted in table 4 which shows the relative percentage contribution of each category for each case. The last column depicts the frequency of each category as key factor. The figures in brackets show the count of number of factors in each category affecting each case. It is evident that personal factors were the key factors in most cases followed by caregiver and family related factors while other factors despite being instrumental were not the chief factors associated with severe career indecisiveness.

Table 2 Cross case analysis of students exhibiting severe career indecisiveness

Case → Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	F
	Personal											
Pessimistic views about the world of work	M	L	H	H	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	3
Pessimistic views about the process	H	H	M	M	H	M	M	M	H	M	M	4
Pessimistic views about one's control	H	H	H	M	L	H	M	H	H	M	M	6
Anxiety about the process	M	L	L	H	L	M	M	H	H	M	M	3
Anxiety about uncertainty involving in choosing	M	H	M	M	M	H	L	M	H	M	M	3
Anxiety about choosing	L	H	M	H	M	M	H	H	H	M	M	5
Anxiety about the outcome	M	H	M	M	M	H	H	M	M	M	H	4
Self-esteem issues	L	H	M	H	M	H	H	M	M	M	H	5

Trait anxiety	H	H	M	L	M	H	M	M	H	M	M	4
Uncrystallized identity	M	L	H	L	M	M	L	H	L	L	M	2
Conflictual attachment & separation	M	H	M	H	H	M	H	H	L	H	M	6
Shyness	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	3
Procrastination	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	7
Aggression	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	3
Self-awareness	L	M	M	L	M	M	M	L	M	M	L	4
Special needs	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	2
Overage for Grade-level	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	6
Peer related												
Difficulty in making friends	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	4
Reciprocity of friendship	L	L	H	H	H	M	L	H	L	L	H	5
Discussion of career issues with peers	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	7
Career exploration by peers	L	L	H	L	L	L	M	M	L	H	L	7
Reliance on peers for studying	H	L	H	H	L	M	H	L	L	L	H	5
Jealous of peers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	7
Caregiver related												
Care-model	MC	MC	MC	MC	SC	SC	MC	MC	MC	MC	SC	8
Attachment to caregiver	L	L	L	L	H	M	L	L	L	H	H	7
Discussion of career issues with caregivers	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	8
Caregivers' view regarding career goal	NS (U)	NS (In)	NS (In)	NS (In)	S	NS (In)	NS (In)	S	NS (U)	S	S	7
Caregivers' view regarding participation in activities	L	H	L	L	H	L	L	L	L	L	M	8
Autonomy in career choice allowed by caregiver	L (V)	L (V)	L (V)	L (V)	H	L (V)	L (V)	L (V)	L (V)	L (V)	H	9
Trust in caregivers	L	L	L	L	H	M	H	M	M	H	H	4
Gender-bias by caregiver	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	2
Institution related												
Provision of early career counselling	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes but irregular	10
Infrastructure at the institution	M	P	M	M	G	M	M	M	P	P	G	3
Internet connectivity	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	4
Space for outdoor play	Yes	No	Limited	Limited	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	No	Yes	5
Type of institution	B	Gi	Both	Both	Both	B	B	B	Gi	Both	Both	6
Transferred from one institution to another	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	2
Sponsors	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	9
Family related												
Mother	NT	No	No	AI	NT	No	AI	No	Yes	No	No	10
Father	NT	AI	No	AI	No	No	AI	No	Yes	No	No	10

Siblings	NI	Stay- ing with her	Yes	Yes	NT	No	AI	No	Yes	No	No	7
Extended family	NI	No	grandmom	AI	No	aunt	AI	No	Yes	No	No	8
Visit to families during vacations	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Sometimes	No	No	10
Duration of separation from family	Lo	Lo	Lo	Sh	Lo	Lo	Sh	Lo	Lo	Lo	Lo	9
Career related												
Choice of academic stream	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	8
Career Goal	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	5
Self-reporting of career difficulties	H	H	H	H	H	M	L	L	H	M	H	7
Career exploration	L	L	H	L	M	L	L	L	L	L	L	9
Rational CDM style	No (I)	No(I)	No(D)	No(D)	No(I)	No(Av)	No(D)	No(D)	No(I)	No(Av)	No(I)	11
Career identity achievement	No (Fr)	No (Fr)	No(Mo)	No (Fr)	No (Mo)	No (Di)	No (Di)	No (Fr)	No (Fr)	No (Di)	No (Fr)	11
School related												
Regular school (Type)	Yes (Go)	Yes (Go)	No (O)	Yes (Pv)	Yes (Pv)	Yes (Pv)	Yes (Pv)	Yes (Pv)	Yes (Pv)	Yes (Pv)	Yes (Pv)	1
Academic Performance	P	A	P	A	G	P	P	A	P	A	A	5
Participation in school activities	L	L	L	L	H	L	L	L	L	H	L	9
Social relationships in school	P	P	P	P	M	P	P	P	P	G	M	8
Interest in studies	L	M	L	L	H	L	H	M	L	M	H	5

Table 3 Relative contribution of factors to severe career indecisiveness

Factors	Frequency	Total number of factors	Total number of cases	Relative frequency	Percent frequency
Personal	70	17	11	0.212	21.2%
Peer-related	35	6	11	0.106	10.6%
Caregiver-related	53	8	11	0.160	16%
Institution-related	39	7	11	0.118	11.8%
Family-related	54	6	11	0.164	16.4%
Career-related	51	6	11	0.155	15.5%
School-related	28	5	11	0.085	8.5%
Total	330	55	11	1	100

Table 4 Relative contribution of factors for individual adolescents

Factor	Case												Key Factor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
Personal	16.2% (6)	25% (9) K	17.6% (6)	24.2% (8) K	11.8% (2)	25% (8) K	18.2% (6) K	31% (9) K	20.6% (7) K	15.4% (4)	25% (5)	6	
Peer-related	13.5% (5)	8.3% (3)	8.8% (3)	9.1% (3)	11.8% (2)	9.4% (3)	15.2% (5)	0% (0)	14.7% (5)	15.4% (4)	10% (2)	0	
Caregiver-related	19% (7) K	16.7% (6)	20.6% (7) K	21.2% (7)	5.9% (1)	12.5% (4)	18.2% (6) K	17.2% (5)	17.6% (6)	11.5% (3)	5% (1)	3	
Institution-related	13.5% (5)	19.4% (7)	11.8% (4)	9.1% (3)	5.9% (1)	9.4% (3)	9% (3)	10.3% (3)	17.6% (6)	15.4% (4)	0% (0)	0	

Family-related	16.2% (6)	13.9% (5)	11.8% (4)	12.1% (4)	35.2% (6) K	15.6% (5)	15.2% (5)	20.7% (6)	3% (1)	23.1% (6) K	30% (6) K	3
Career-related	10.8% (4)	11.1% (4)	14.7% (5)	15.2% (5)	29.4% (5)	15.6% (5)	15.2% (5)	13.8% (4)	14.7% (5)	19.25 (5)	25% (5)	0
School-related	10.8% (4)	5.6% (2)	14.7% (5)	9.1% (3)	0% (0)	12.5% (4)	9% (3)	7% (2)	11.8% (4)	0% (0)	5% (1)	0
Total	100 (37)	100 (36)	100 (34)	100 (33)	100 (17)	100 (32)	100 (33)	100 (29)	100 (34)	100 (26)	100 (20)	

8 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The following factors were found to be responsible for severe career indecisiveness among adolescents in institutional care:

8.1 Personal factors

Apart from Pessimistic views, anxiety, and, self-concept and identity, the cross-case analysis underscored some other personal factors responsible for severe career indecisiveness which were procrastination, being over-age for the grade level, low self-awareness, shyness, aggression issues, and having special needs.

8.2 Peer-related factors

Feelings of envy towards peer/s, low career exploration by peers, lack of career-related discussions with peers, high reliance on peers for studying, lack of reciprocity of friendship and difficulty in making friends were the peer-related factors responsible for severe career indecisiveness.

8.3 Caregiver-related factors

Lack of autonomy in career choice, low level of participation in caregiver's opinion, lack of career-related discussions with caregiver, adoption of multiple-caregivers model of care, low attachment to caregivers, indifference or non-supportive view of caregiver regarding career goal, low trust in caregivers and gender-bias by caregivers were the caregiver-related factors that contributed to severe career indecisiveness.

8.4 Institution-related factors

Lack of early career counselling, lack of sponsors, lack of opportunities for interaction with the opposite gender, lack of space for outdoor play, no internet connectivity, poor infrastructure and lack of stability in institutional life were the institution-related factors responsible associated with severe career-indecisiveness.

8.5 Family-related factors

Absence of visits to home, lack of contact with parents, siblings and extended family along with a long duration of separation from family were some family-related factors emphasized by the cross-case analysis.

8.6 Career-related factors

Failure to achieve career identity, failure to adopt the rational CDM style, low career exploration, undecidedness about academic stream, high perceived CDM difficulties and undecidedness about career goal were some career-related factors linked to severe career indecisiveness.

8.7 School-related factors

The prime school-related factors identified were lack of participation in school activities, poor social relationships at school, poor academic performance, lack of interest in studies and absence of regular schooling.

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