Orientations of High School Students and Parents towards Career Decision-making

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Abstract

This study explored the orientations of high school students and their parents towards career decision-making. One of two qualitative techniques—focus group discussions and personal interviews—was used with each participant. The sample was constituted of 9 students from Grade 9 in a private school and 11 parents of these students. The non-probability technique of convenience sampling was used. Content and thematic analyses were carried out. Influences on career decision, challenges, attitudes, and expectations of high school students and the expectations that parents have regarding their child's career development were identified.

Keywords: career guidance/counselling, challenges, influences on career decision, parental expectations

Giving adolescents the opportunity and facility to realistically plan for their futures is an important goal of education. According to Erikson (1963), questions such as 'Who am I? What is the purpose of my life?' are pressing for the adolescent and need to be addressed at this stage of their development. Different people have different desires: to become successful, to make a lot of money, to make one's life count, to make a difference in this world, to help others, to find meaning and purpose, and so on. People want to be happy, but what is it that leads to lasting happiness? Research suggests that vocational identity achievement and job satisfaction are positively associated with life satisfaction (Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012; Rode, 2004). This could set up a positive spiral where satisfaction leads to better job performance. Hence, it is important for individuals to choose a career that brings out who they are. This would mean that they truly and deeply enjoy what they make a living out of and contribute to their family and society in their own unique way. People's work impacts their personal lives, relationships, families, and surroundings. It is also the sphere of life in which people invest maximum time and energy. Hence, making one's career count is a critical ingredient to long-lasting satisfaction.

The need for vocational guidance and counselling varies across cultures. Family businesses constitute a significant proportion of businesses in India (Ramachandran, 2012). Family businesses were considered as providing financial security and typically, the joint

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family system used to encourage the next generation to join the family business. Then there were government jobs which were considered to be a secure option. The last few decades have seen immense economic changes in India which have provided a platform for people to consider jobs other than family businesses or government jobs. Today, people have more options to explore different careers. However, during adolescence peer pressure is at its peak and youth are tempted to make choices that would be appreciated and admired by their peers, friends, parents, and others. Career development may not be optimised when the individual makes choices outside his or her area of interest or if he or she has a low aptitude to pursue a particular career that is deemed to be popular. Some Indian studies have pointed out that poor career planning can result in delayed decision-making with regard to career and cause long lags in career development (Arulmani, 2000; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004). An Indian survey on work orientations and responses to career choices showed that students who made career choices without professional counselling and guidance were likely to choose careers that were trending, instead of careers that might be suitable for them (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2006). These reports in the literature highlight how important it is for young people to engage in career planning. They need to understand themselves, their interests, their aptitudes, their context (e.g., family environment and economic resources) and set realistic goals for themselves. Dhillon and Kaur (2005) compared career maturity, self-concept, achievement motivation, and locus of control between students going to government schools (owned by the State government) and private schools (owned by a private trust). They found career maturity was higher, self-concept was better established, and achievement motivation was stronger amongst the private school students. It was also noted that private school students had a stronger internal locus of control. This was attributed to the possibility that a more conducive learning environment and access to a wider range

of extra-curricular activities facilitated the development of career maturity in high school students. Despite the finding that career maturity was higher amongst private school students in relation to those in government schools, Kaur and Dorga (2011) found that at senior secondary level, in both government and private schools, career maturity was inadequate to deal with the career development tasks of this developmental stage. Based on their research they attributed this finding to two possible reasons. Firstly, this could be because students are under the influence of their peers and parents and this influence is so strong that they are unable to make independent choices. Secondly, they are unaware of the opportunities open to them, due to the lack of information and counselling. The same group of adolescents had high scores on positive self-concept. The authors point out that positive self-concept could be utilised for success and improvement in career maturity, if combined with the provision of relevant career development material such as career information in school libraries. In another Indian study, Bakshi, Gandhi, Shah, and Maru (2012) found that youth from Mumbai aged 18 to 28 years perceived that they themselves had played a greater role in choosing their own specific career. In comparison, parents/other family members and teachers were cited as the next important influences on career choice. Career guidance services were hardly utilised when it came to career decision-making.

Developing a vocational identity is an integral part of the process of overall identity development (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989; Vondracek, 1994), and as Erikson (1963) has pointed out, individuation is an integral feature of identity formation. Hence, the family and its relationship to the individual emerge as an important factor. Research has shown (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1988; Rice, 1990) that the process of individuation-separation and emotional bonding to the family predicts the exploration of identity. Based on his research, Blustein (1997) made three important observations: (a) There is a positive relationship between

individuation-separation and self-efficacy in vocational exploration, (b) children's ability to explore the world and make choices with regard to their vocation depends on the security of family relations, and (c) parental encouragement and support has a positive impact on children's exploration behaviours and reduces the tendency to foreclose prematurely. Young, Friesen, and Borycki (1994) found that families with controlling, rigid parents blocked opportunities to explore, while family atmospheres with well-balanced control and discussion on different points of view promoted vocational exploration. With regard to socioeconomic status (SES), students from low SES homes underwent more confined vocational moratoria. In other words, searching, exploration, and introspection were limited. This could be related to economic limitations which could have diminished professional aspirations (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005).

Objectives

The literature reviewed shows that variables such as career maturity, self-concept, achievement motivation, and similar variables have been researched in the Indian context. These are mainly person-related variables. There seems to be lesser information available on contextual variables such as family support, attitudes, perspectives, and expectations in the Indian context. It also seems that much of the research has been quantitative in nature. This study was designed keeping in view the possibility that understanding the situation through qualitative research would add meaning to the existing quantitative data. Hence, the following objectives were framed.

1. To explore the orientations of high school students from a school in Chennai with respect to career decision-making. The benefits of career guidance and counselling for high school students are evident in literature. This study explored the perceptions of high school students in

order to gain an understanding of the contextual influences and expectations from career guidance and counselling.

2. To understand the expectations of parents, of the children in the study, about their children's career choices. As seen in the literature reported earlier in the paper, parental support facilitated an improvement in career maturity among adolescents. Hence, it was assumed that exploring the attitudes and expectations of parents in the Indian context would make a further contribution to the literature and perhaps to the development of suitable interventions for parents.

Method

The Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach was selected for the following reasons. Firstly, standardised and culturally validated tools relevant to the Indian context to measure the variables identified for this study could not be identified. Secondly, the few studies that have focused on career development in India are mostly quantitative in nature. Hence, it was felt that non-numerical, more microscopically-analysed data would make a unique contribution to the literature. It was also assumed that studying the needs of high school students qualitatively could open a different dimension to understanding their needs and expectations with regard to vocational guidance and counselling, as quantitative methods do not go into person-specific, finer details.

Sampling and Sample Characteristics

This is an exploratory study and its objective is not to generalise findings but to provide a platform for a more detailed analysis at a later stage. Hence, the non-probability sampling technique of convenience sampling was used. Participants were selected based on ease of access and proximity of the school to the researcher.

Nine students from Grade IX (six boys and three girls), studying in a private school in Chennai city, Tamil Nadu, participated in the study. These students were fluent in English and were from homes with middle socio-economic status. Socio-economic status was ascertained based on family income and educational status of father and mother. The norms for family income were extracted using the formula from the Kupuswamy Socio-economic Scale Modified (Ghosh & Ghosh, 2009) and the National Urban Consumer Price Index for 2014 (i.e., the base year when study was conducted). The mean age of the students was 12 years and 8 months ($SD = 0.67$ years).

Eleven parents from the same school comprised the parent sample (four were mothers only, three were fathers only, and four sets of both parents). In the case of couples, though both parents participated, the responses were consolidated into one. All parents were South Indians and employed. The main occupations were administrative services, business and teaching.

All participants were approached through the school after obtaining permission from the school principal. Their participation was based on willingness, and allocation to the focus group discussion (FGD) or personal interview was based on their choice.

Table 1
Distribution of the sample across the two data collection methods

Participants	Focus group discussion	Personal interview	Total
High school students	8	1	9
Parents	9	2	11
Total	17 (2 FGDs)	3	20

Measurement

One of two methods of data collection was used with each participant, namely, focus group discussion (FGD) and personal interview. The tools for both the methods had the same open-ended items comprising five questions each. That is, the same items were used as discussion points for the focus group and as questions in the interview schedule. The students and the parents had different questions to answer.

The questions were validated by two experts in the field of education (in private schools): One was the principal of the school where the study was conducted and the other was a headmistress in another school. Both the educationists had over fifteen years of experience in the education system, and were chosen to validate the questions because of their rich experience with students and parents and their understanding and knowledge of current trends. The experts were asked to scrutinise every question and comment on its difficulty level and relevance to the study. The questions were also given to three parents and three high school students from the school under study (these students did not participate in the final study) for face validation. Based on the feedback obtained, changes were incorporated into the final interview schedule.

Questions for students. The questions addressed students' perceptions of influences on their career choice, the challenges they may face, and their feelings and thoughts about the future. Table 2 presents the questions that were used with students, both for the FGD and the personal interview.

Table 2
Questions used for the focus group discussion and personal interview with students

No.	Question
1	Have you decided about what you want to become in the future?
2	Who/what will influence you in making your choice?
3	What are your feelings towards making a choice of what you want to study next?
4	What difficulties do you anticipate (or face) in making your choice?
5	What would you expect from career counselling?

Questions for parents. The questions addressed parents' expectations of their child's career choice, the freedom they would give their child and their dreams and concerns for their child. Table 3 presents the questions that parents were asked.

Table 3
Questions used for the focus group discussion and personal interview with parents

No.	Question
1	Would you allow your children to choose their field of study (career)?
2	What are your concerns about your child's future career?
3	What are your dreams for your child?
4	How would you react if he/she chooses a field that you do not like?
5	What would you expect from career counselling for him/her?

Execution of the Study

Focus group discussion. Two FGDs were conducted, one for each of students and parents (see Table 1). The FGDs were facilitated by the first author. A notetaker, who was a postgraduate student of psychology and trained in qualitative methods (in particular was skilled in conducting FGDs), was present to record the points being said. Whereas the student FGD was of 50 minutes, the parent FGD was of 70 minutes.

Personal interview. A face-to-face individually administered interview was conducted with a male student from Grade IX. Likewise two personal interviews were conducted with parents: one with a mother of a female student and the second with both parents of a male student. The interviews were recorded in audio format with the permission of the participants. Verbatim transcripts were created after the interview.

Ethics and Informed Consent

The tools and design of the study were presented to the principal of the school and the necessary clearance was obtained to conduct the study in the school. The purpose of the study, matters related to confidentiality, the fact that the participant could opt out of the study at any time, and that the findings of the study would be shared with the participants were explained to the participants. Written informed consent was obtained from the students and parents.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using content analysis through the following steps.

- The first author read through all transcripts and made brief notes in the margin whenever an idea or a concept emerged and lists were created.

- The lists were then organised into categories, each containing words and phrases with similar meaning.
- The categories were examined more closely and themes were identified under each category.
- A frequency analysis was conducted and themes were arranged in descending order of frequency under each category.

Findings and Discussion

Findings from the Student Sample

Four categories emerged from the content analysis of the student data with specific themes linked to each category. These are summarised in Table 4 and then discussed in detail with illustrations.

Table 4

High school students' orientation towards career guidance and counselling

Category	Themes
Influences on career decision-making	Personal preference Media Role models Family preferences
Attitudes and emotions	Hope/confidence Anxiety
Anticipated challenges in career decision-making	Parents' objection Finance Future scope Uncertainty
Expectations from Career Guidance	Self-Understanding Parental counselling Direction/ideas Information

Influences on career decision-making. Four sub-themes emerged under this category. Interests, expressed as activity preferences, were a central element and characterised seven responses.

Examples:

"I love to play criket [*sic*] *and I can play for the full day. I wish I can become a cricket player." (Male [M]/14 years).*

"I love to draw. I want to sell my drawings in the future." (Female [F]/13).

It is important for individuals to enjoy what they do. Some of the most well-known theories in career psychology focus on identifying interests when it comes to career counselling (e.g., Holland, 1959). Bakshi et al. (2012) found that (privileged, Mumbai) youth perceived their own self as

the most important influence on their career choice (followed by parents and teachers); their explanations for rating the self as the most important influence included making a career choice based on their interests, likes and dislikes, strengths and the match of these with the requirements in a particular occupation. Concerning adolescents, the findings of Vondracek and Skorikov (1997) suggest that school, work, and leisure interests of high school students are closely interrelated and, most likely, all represented variation in the general interests of adolescents. In this study as well it was found that interests played a significant role in career decision-making among high school students.

Five students shared responses that indicated that their career interests were influenced by the media. Television programmes, movies, documentaries, and

internet resources were reported as being strong sources of influence and information.

Examples:

"Watching documentaries on scientists has made me want to become one and I love science." (M/13).

"I love to watch National Geographic and Discovery. I want to become a wildlife adventurist." (M/14).

The power of the media is well known. While it is a strong influence it can also be a powerful tool to reach young people in today's world. Studies have suggested that the media's effects on adolescents are the result of social learning (Brown, 2002). Despite the common notion that media negatively influences youth in this study the students identified it as a positive resource. Exposure to professions that are not seen in everyday life through media can be an opportunity for adolescents to explore careers beyond the usual.

The influence of role models on vocational choices was reflected in four of the responses of students. In similar vein, the influence of family preferences was seen in four responses.

Examples:

"I want to become an IPS officer like my uncle." (F/13).

"My dad wants me to become a civil engineer so this is my dream."(M/14).

This is reflected in the findings of Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani (2006) who reported that significant others in the career aspirant's life play a vital role in his or her career development behaviour. In the Bakshi et al. (2012) study, where 80% of the youth identified their own self as having played a more or most important role in their career choice, as many as 68% identified one or more family member as having had an impactful role in their career decision-making.

Parents, especially fathers, had an influence on what the child may choose: three of four students (who stated family preference) reported this while one reported the influence of her mother. This could reflect deeper cultural processes whereby the father carries the ascribed role of "head of the family" (Arulmani, 2014). However in the Bakshi et al. (2012) study the percentage of youth who stated that their mother had played a more or most important role in the youth's career choice was comparable to that obtained for father's influence (i.e., 42% vs. 43% respectively).

Three students admired great people (e.g., the former President of India) and were motivated to emulate them. This again could be a function of social learning where the adolescent tries to replicate behaviours that they admire. Bandura (1989), for example, describes vicarious learning and verbal persuasion as having a formative influence on social cognitions.

Attitudes and emotions. Two themes emerged under this category. Six students felt happy, confident, and eager when thinking about making vocational choices.

Examples:

"I feel that whatever I do, I can do it well because I will work very hard. So I feel happy about my future."(F/14).

"I feel excited when I think [about] *becoming a pilot." (M/14).*

As a sense of hope develops, it enables one to orient oneself toward the future and to expect that one's desires can be attained (Erikson, 1968, 1982). With hope, an adolescent will search for identity and explore various alternatives, fully believing that choices will be found (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993). As Erikson (1963) stated, a feeling of hopefulness facilitates making choices; therefore, it is important to motivate and encourage students with the idea that they all can have bright futures. Creating access to career information and

to counselling services could reduce unnecessary anxiety and stress with regard to future plans.

Two students reported feeling anxious and/or directionless.

Example:

"I have no idea of the future." (F/13).

"I am afraid that I may not get a good job because I can't get more marks." (M/14).

It was observed that anxiety about the future came along with a lack of competence. Two students scoring below average in their school examinations stated that their fear was based on their inability to compete with their peers. This could also be due to the existing education system in India which gives undue priority to marks (Jeyaraman, 2015). Students who do not score high marks tend to feel hopeless and afraid of the future. Career guidance can help reduce this anxiety by focusing on the strengths of each individual. Wachtel (1993) pointed out how focusing on strengths and minimizing a focus on negatives in the career counselling process promoted optimal functioning. Self-exploration could reveal such strengths, and such self-awareness could help the adolescent feel more competent. This could help reduce fear and build confidence.

Anticipated challenges in career decision-making. Four themes emerged in this category. The primary difficulty that this sample of high school students reported was objections from parents and society. Over half of the students anticipated that parents would not accept their choice.

Examples:

"I like fashion designing but my parents won't allow me." (F/14).

"They don't want me to become a reporter." (M/13).

Parents' desires for their children, when enforced, could create stress in the child. An important aspect of holistic career guidance is to build parents' awareness of the importance of recognising the suitability of the child for a particular career. This could facilitate healthy choices as seen in the reports of other researchers (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1988; Rice, 1990). This could also be a factor in developing the person's self-concept.

Four students stated that their parents may not be able to afford giving them an education if they made their choice.

Examples:

"My parents can't pay to make me a doctor." (F/14).

"If I don't get a merit seat, I can't do engineering." (M/13).

When considering higher education, affordability becomes an important factor. As pointed out in the literature, economic limitations could be associated with diminished professional aspiration (Hartung et al., 2005). Exposing adolescents to useful information can address this issue and can help the student to not lose out on opportunities. This may be overcome with adequate career preparedness.

It was also found that four students rejected considering certain career options because of their negatives opinions and beliefs about these careers.

Examples:

"I like to write, but I can't do it as a career, then money?"(F/13).

"Studying history has no scope, but I like it."(M/14).

Effective career counselling could break such stigma. Such statements also reflect a lack of confidence and knowledge of various opportunities. It could also be

associated with stereotypical beliefs of what a career is expected to be.

One-third of the students expressed uncertainty and felt that their career development would be influenced by factors beyond their control (e.g., economic environment, the job market, and getting a seat in a desired college).

Examples:

"If I become an engineer, I don't know if they will pay me well at that time."(M/13).

"Will I get a job if I become an animation artist?" (M/13).

Every adolescent aspires to do well in life and be successful. Financial success is one of the key motivating factors behind choosing a career. An individual cannot have control over external factors such as macro-economic trends and changes in the labour market cycles. Economic pressures could underlie the tendency to neglect one's passion and pursue a path that offers imagined future financial success. Youth need to be motivated to excel in whatever they do. Underlying effective career guidance is the principle that excellence will eventually contribute to financial success.

Expectations from career guidance and counselling. Four themes emerged in this category. Many of the students (6) expected to gain self-understanding through career guidance and counselling.

Examples:

"I want to find out more about myself." (F/13).

"I want to know what I can do well and see my hidden talents." (M/14).

It was observed that the students yearned to understand and discover themselves. One of the key goals of development of an adolescent is to construct his or her identity. According to Phillips and Pazienza (1988), in a wise choice of a vocation, a clear understanding of oneself, one's aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes is essential. These are all essential aspects of one's identity. Self-discovery in itself can be a motivation for the future and aid in the process of development.

Four students also insisted that parental counselling was important.

Examples:

"My father wants me to become a doctor and my mother wants me to be a lecturer. They really confuse me. I wish they stopped confusing me."(F/13).

"My father will let me do what I want but my mother wants me to become an IAS officer." (M/14).

This indicates that parents ought to be part of their child's career counselling and parental support could be facilitated. This is in line with Blustein's (1997) findings that a supportive family environment encouraged exploration.

Five of the nine students indicated that they expected future direction and guidance. They believed that they had different interests and needed guidance to be more certain and confident.

Examples:

"Different people tell me I can do different things. I need help to choose correctly." (F/14).

"I feel so confused I want someone to tell me what is best for me."(M/13).

As Erikson (1963) pointed out, adolescence is a stage where confusion could lead to crisis. Adolescents require clarity. They are in search for the right answers and that is why they are confused by "different voices" telling them what to do. Career counselling can tap into this curiosity and attempt to clarify doubts and blind spots.

Findings from the Parent Sample

Two main categories emerged from the content analysis of the parent data with specific themes linked to each category. This is summarised in Table 5 and then discussed in detail with illustrative thick description.

Table 5
Parents' perceptions of their children's career choices

Area	Themes
Expectations from children	Freedom of choice Financial stability Happiness in life Service to society
When choices contradict expectations	Convince Analyse/debate Moral obligations/objections Permit

Expectations from children. All 11 parents in the study stated that they would give their children the freedom to choose their own career. This was because they wanted their children to be happy in life and they believed that their children knew their own strengths and weaknesses.

Examples:

"My son knows best what he can do and what he can't, so it's best for him to decide." (Mother[Mo]/Male[M]).

"Only if she chooses what she is comfortable with, she will be happy." (Mo/F).

However, this finding contradicts the children's opinion of parental influence on their career choice. Discussion with the students consistently indicated that their primary challenge was to deal with parents' objections and expectations. While it is possible that parents here are giving socially acceptable responses, it is also clear that the very need to give such a response is an interesting finding that needs further investigation. It is possible, for example, that while contemporary Indian parents wish to give their children greater freedom of choice, deeper cultural factors and concerns related to financial security affect this desire.

Parents did seem to set limits. These limits were in terms of their expectations of their child's future. The main concern of eight parents was the suitability of a particular profession for the child and whether or not it was sufficient for a comfortable living.

Examples:

"I do not expect my daughter to make lots of money but she should have sufficient to be happy and independent. Also, the role she plays should be suitable to her. I don't want her to become stressed out with work in the future. She should enjoy work and life." (Mo/F).

"Today people work under too much stress. This should not be so with my son." (Father [F]/M).

Considering the stress that is associated with work these days, parents seemed wary of their children going through work-related stress and its consequences. However, six (especially those parents with sons: five of the six) emphasised financial stability and growth.

Examples:

"He has to live up to the family status." (Couple/M).

"He should earn well to be happy" (Fa/M).

There was a strong underlying theme in parent responses that financial success determined happiness. Here we see that though parents perceive it as freedom, there are strings attached.

Other unique responses included the desire for their child to excel, gain knowledge, and wisdom.

Examples:

"I don't mind whatever my son chooses but he should excel and be of some use to others. I cannot get him a payment seat either, so his studies should not be too expensive and he should study well." (Fa/M).

"She should excel in whatever she does." (Mo/F).

When choices contradict expectations. The parents were questioned on how they would react if, hypothetically, their child made a choice that they did not like. It was noted that seven parents stated that they would try to convince the child. This again contradicts their own perception of giving their children the freedom to choose their future career.

Examples:

"We know the world better so we should try to make him to obey us." (Mo/M).

"We certainly are trying to convince her to become a doctor as she studies well but she wants to study mathematics." (Couple/F).

It was seen that in most cases parents underestimated the child's capacity to choose for himself or herself. This might be detrimental to the adolescent's development. The literature indicates that parents' poor collaboration with their children's decision making is associated with low levels of vocational identity (Hirschmann & Renker, 1989). Curbing exploration could contribute to premature foreclosure. Once again this points to the importance of parental counselling.

Five of the parents said that they would analyse and debate over the issue.

Examples

"I will assess the practicality of the decision." (Fa/F).

"We can weigh the pros and cons before arriving at a decision." (Fa/M).

Four of the parents were also concerned that their child's choice should not offend their family or community's moral and religious sentiments.

Example*:*

This girl was passionate about fashion designing:

"In our culture, we don't support such a kind of career."(Mo/F).

This girl's father was a professional dancer and she was passionate about dancing:

"Her father being a dancer is fine but not her. It is against our family." (Mo/F).

Here again, while contemporary Indian parents say that they will allow freedom, underlying motivations and values seem to continue to influence the process.

Only three of the parents mentioned that they would accept whatever career their child chose.

Examples:

"We have no right to control our growing children. Ultimately they have to be taught how to make decisions and bear the consequences. So I believe that my son will learn by making his own choices but I want him to be guided by an expert." (Fa/M).

"We love her and no matter what, we will accept her choice." (Fa/F).

These parents seemed to give their children freedom to make their choice without any conditions. As seen in Erikson's (1963) developmental theory, one of the features that characterise adolescence is the beginning of independent thought and action. Allowing the individual this freedom may facilitate resolution of various issues related to identity formation. From a career guidance point of view, parents who accept and understand this are likely to become facilitators of their children's career decision-making.

Conclusion

This paper has juxtaposed the career development orientations of a small group of middle class, high school students' with parents' orientations to the career development of their children. A salient trend in the findings is that while the parents in this study asserted that they give freedom to their children, their other clarifications contradicted their perception of freedom provision. This is congruent with collectivistic cultures in which dependence on parents is socially sanctioned and expected much beyond adolescence. However, positive interventions that address the concerns that parents may have (e.g., with regard to financial security and moral obligations), may facilitate parental support and reduce unhealthy control.

The preliminary findings about student perceptions indicate that encouraging students to engage in activities of their interest could facilitate effective career decision-making. Using the media to make information available and provide exposure to various professions could help students broaden their ideas of options available. It was seen that though parents assumed they gave their children the freedom of choice, this was contradicted by their concern about whether the child's career choice allowed adequate status and financial stability, and whether it met cultural expectations. These are genuine concerns that require attention. However, they need not stifle the child's engagement with opportunities. Intervening with parents to help clarify their doubts and create awareness of various options, could alleviate their fear about their child's future.

Going back to the students, the two strong emotions that were strongly expressed were: confidence/hope and anxiety. Further research could investigate these opposed yet frequently co-occurring emotions more deeply. The challenges that the students anticipated with regard to career choice were objections from parents, financial constraints, scope of the career, and uncertainty due to external factors.

The contradiction between parents' views of giving their children freedom and the children's view of accurately perceiving this lack of freedom as a challenge is an interesting finding. In line with this finding, career counsellors could facilitate interaction between parents and children on the issue and discuss the reasons for such a contradiction. Further research can also help understand the dynamics involved between parents and adolescent children that bring about this contradiction.

The challenges of financial constraints and external factors can be dealt with by individual counselling and making adequate information available. Individual counselling could take into account the contextual factors such as affordability, which can help an adolescent realistically plan for the future.

This was an exploratory study on the orientations of students and parents towards career guidance and counselling. The themes that emerged can be used as pointers for further investigation both for the development/modification of interventions as well as for more comprehensive research.

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