

Preparing For Career in Adolescence

Dr Kshetrimayum Bimolata Devi.

Asst. Professor., Ideal Girls' College, Imphal-East, Manipur
Corresponding Author: Dr Kshetrimayum Bimolata Devi.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of a career or choice of occupation begins right from the time children indulge in pretend play as a doctor, teacher and other professionals they see around them. Often children find themselves answering questions as to what they want to become when they are older. Although this process starts early, actual planning and decision making start in adolescence, the period between 13 and 18 years. It is a key developmental period characterized by several biological and psychological changes and requires the successful resolution of specific tasks like identity achievement. It is a stage where they struggle to find a balance between obedience and independence. Along with other skills, an adolescent needs to develop adequate decision-making skills as several important decisions that will have an impact on their future will be taken in this period.

This task was simple in the past when sons used to follow the fathers' occupation and daughter used to equip herself to be a good housewife. But the industrial revolution has opened vast number of career opportunities to the younger generation. Also, more and more women are coming forward to join the workforce.

One such important decision that needs to be taken is regarding academic and career choices. Career interests are developed, future career objectives are formed, and the foundation for one's future career is laid in adolescence. The main requirement at this stage is preparation for a career, increase in awareness about careers and occupations, exploration of life roles and knowledge of biases about specific occupations. Going through the stages of identity crisis and psychosocial moratorium in the context of having to make a choice from a plethora of career choices may be very confusing and challenging for the adolescent. They may face difficulties with gathering and analyzing self and occupational knowledge. This makes career decision making a complex process. The ability to make good career decisions is critical for success in life because these choices will have repercussions on the individual's entire life and future. A person's future achievements, income levels, standard of living, self-esteem, and social status are largely influenced by his career..

Career and Career Guidance- The Concept and its Evolution

A career means doing a job that gets you more money and authority besides giving you satisfaction. Career is defined in the Oxford dictionary as an "occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for his progress". Generally the word 'career' is linked to occupations that are associated with some form of prestige and formal qualifications.

The concept and understanding of the word 'Career' has changed tremendously in the last few years worldwide. What was once considered a family engagement has now evolved into a lifelong engagement which is seen as a means for personal and social growth and development. In today's scenario, the individual may need to equip himself with necessary skills and this may require professional assistance and career counseling.

However in the present world, in developing economies with their large workforce and changing concepts of career, there is a need to redefine the meaning of career in ways that are culturally appropriate and build theories and models based on this culturally sensitive understanding.

Context and Career Guidance

The concept of a career and career guidance is seen to be highly influenced by cultural, social and economic factors. Recent career management paradigms advocate that career development is a process that is the outcome of a complex interaction between the individual and the environment. The cultural preparedness approach to career counseling acknowledges the fact that a person's engagement with his work and career is influenced by cultural factors. It places high importance on the influence of contextual factors like family, parents, social practices, the religious, economic and political climate in shaping attitudes towards career choices and career development. Two main concepts in this model are social cognitions and career beliefs. Social cognitions refer to intricate patterns of thinking related to career decision making (work, occupations, and career) and planning that are shared by a social group and which is transmitted by social learning.

Career in the Indian context

Career choices in India are also guided by the demands of the labour market and external factors rather than being based on personal choice and interests. However, career psychology in India has not progressed to the extent needed, and career guidance programs are not accessible to many.

Career Decision Making

Career choice and planning has become important as globalization, and current vocational choices have created an unprecedented war for talent. Selection of the wrong career can affect achievement, contentment and mental health of the individual for life. It helps to identify individual differences and various factors involved in an individual's career decision making.

Theories of Career Development

Many models have been proposed to explain the process of career decision making.

Two categories of models of career development are:

1. Structural theories focus on individual characteristics and occupational tasks. They include trait and factor theories, personality theories and socio-economic theories.
2. Developmental theories apply development theory to the career decision making process. The choice process is seen as a series of stages that the individual experiences, works through and move to the next stage.
3. Theories based on social learning models are widely used in research.

Personal factors like personality and intelligence coupled with environmental factors like race and socioeconomic status have an impact on career learning experiences.

Several theories implicate the role of family in the career decision-making process. Family systems theory and an interactional perspective discuss the influence of family relationships on career development. Attachment theory has also been used to study the influence of parent-child interaction on career development

Career Maturity

"The degree to which an individual exhibits career behaviors and choices that are appropriate for his or her age". Development is assessed in relation to six career tasks of the degree of planning, use of resources, career decision making, career information, information about the world of work and information about one's preferred occupation.

Factors Influencing Career Decision Making

Career avenues open to an individual are influenced by several external (economy), personal (family background, attitude) and sociocultural factors. These factors also affect career decision making of people.

Classification of factors influencing career choice as given as follows

- Intrinsic (e.g. personal interest and satisfaction)
- Extrinsic (e.g. job availability)
- Interpersonal (e.g. influence of significant people)

The convergent and discriminant validity of the five-factor model for adolescents is as follows.

Agreeableness reflects individual differences in concern with cooperation and social harmony and extent to which he is pro-social and altruistic. Individuals high on this trait tend to be affectionate and cooperative.

Conscientiousness concerns the way in which we control, regulate, and direct our impulses. People high on this trait are seen to be hardworking, ambitious, dependable and organized. They may have conventional interest orientations.

Extraversion is characterized by a pronounced engagement with the external world and is the extent to which an individual is gregarious, assertive, and sociable. Such people may be energetic and outgoing and may prefer enterprising careers.

Openness to experience distinguishes imaginative, creative people from down-to-earth, conventional people and refers to the interest in new experiences.

Individuals high on openness may have a desire to explore, enjoy novel experiences and may have investigative career interests.

Neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative feelings and moodiness. Facets of this trait include hostility, impulsiveness, depression and anxiety. It has been associated with lower career maturity.

Extrinsic/ Contextual factors. Contextual factors may act as supportive factors or barriers to career aspirations and final career choices

Family. The family is a major influence on career development of individuals as it is the reference point for many decisions and attitudes that the adolescent develops. Family members play several roles in the life of an adolescent from being an educator to a decision maker. Family may have direct influences like financial and material support, and indirect influences through transmission of values and expectations on the career of an individual. Family influence and family circumstances can be facilitative or inhibitive to exploration which is a key task in adolescent career development. Families aid the initial phase of career decision making by providing support and guidance for activities like building awareness about careers, suggestions, access to facilities, and resources and a conducive atmosphere for optimal decision making.

Parenting style. Parenting style has been defined as “broad patterns of child rearing practices, values, and behaviours”. Parents were categorized on two dimensions of control (demandingness) and warmth (responsiveness). The degree of parental control varies among the parenting styles.

The three parenting styles are described as follows :

□ Authoritarian parenting style is where parents are high on control but low on warmth. Authoritarian parents are seen to be restrictive, rule-bound, disciplinarian and place importance on perceived control rather than on autonomy. They insist on unquestioning obedience and may be punitive.

□ Authoritative parenting style is where parents are seen to be high on control and high on warmth. There is a balance between clear expectations and control.

Autonomy and discussion are valued along with the optimal amount of control.

Parents are stable, clear and there is freedom for decision making within boundaries and limitations.

□ Permissive parents are seen to be high on warmth but low on control. Lack of behavioural control by parents is seen, and children regulate their own behaviours. They are non-punitive and non-controlling.

Parenting style has been studied in relation to vocational development as the role of family has been highlighted in theories of career development.

Factors Influencing Career Choice:

Parent’s encouragements: Many a times, it is through direct inheritance. Adolescents interest in particular field can be developed by parents providing supportive environment. Encouragement of hobbies, providing stimulating toys and activity materials are some examples. Home environment also influences the adolescents educational aspirations.

School, the type of educational experiences one gets can affect the choice of a career. The school environment and the teachers can shape the future of the students by recognizing their talents, interests and ambitions.

Societal expectations: adolescents are strongly affected by societal expectations as to the type of work women and men should do. However, these expectations are also fast undergoing changes. Equal career opportunities are now available to both sexes.

Personal traits: Different vocations require different abilities and aptitudes. For example, some jobs require special talents like musical, artistic or orational skills, while certain jobs require higher mental abilities. Hence the adolescents must look into their abilities, aptitude and interests before making career choices.

Interests; Job opportunities: Being interested in a vocation does not mean that jobs are available. Adolescents need to have more choices to be able to pick up alternative careers.

Socio-economic status: The kind of home they belong to, the occupation of parents, the norms of the family contribute towards the choice of future career and profession. The child often makes a sincere attempt to achieve goals higher than that of his parents.

Issue of Prestige: It is not uncommon to find adolescents opting for vocations simply because it sounds glamorous or has high prestige.

Influence of Media and Global trends: Influence of media on today’s youth cannot be under estimated. Television, Internet and Mobile smart phones have emerged as the most important trends. With these facilities being available to adolescents, the world seems to have shrunk.

II. CONCLUSION

A multitude of factors influence career development. It is important as it can help effective career, their future but also the productivity in their career thereby influencing the entire societal structure. Hence the focus of the current research will be to identify the role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence this important decision in the life of a student in the Indian context.

The adolescents must critically explore all the avenues available to them by collecting the necessary information required for different professions. For preparing a career plans, adolescents can work out small

exercises on the following lines: List of strengths and weaknesses, list of job options, evaluating the options and examining whether the adolescent possess the essential and desirable support for pursuing them; putting in serious efforts to gain wider knowledge by attending career talks, lectures organized by the school counseling sections; Keeping track of topics in media, and above all, speak to the people in the field of choice.

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