Original article

Investigating the Relationship between High School Students' Self-Concept and Career Development Maturity in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Career development maturity has its source in the Super's developmental theory of career behavior, which predicts that selection of an occupation is a process with a leg on each side of a considerable number of years usually from late childhood to middle adulthood. Career development maturity explains one's ability to productively handle with vocational development tasks (e.g. crystallizing, specifying, and implementing career choice) that are encountered across the developmental continuum from exploration stage through disengagement. The present study is intended to investigate the relationship between self-concept and career development maturity in high school students. Additional, gender differences on both constructs were determined. After the gathering of information, Pearson product moment correlation and t-test was employed to scrutinize the data. The results supported the hypotheses. Results showed that there is a significant strong positive correlation between self-concept and career development maturity among high school students, while girls scored higher than boys on both self-concept and career development maturity. As a result, it can be concluded that in Bahir Dar, high school students' career development maturity is related to their self - concept. To improve the students self concept school career guidance and counseling professionals should be work with different stakeholders.

Keywords: Self-Concept, Career Development Maturity, High School Students, Gender.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time of life when the child is on the threshold of adulthood. It is a period of powerful and fast development and is characterized by numerous developmental tasks including gaining new and extra mature relationship with others, achieving emotional independence from parents and the cognitive and psychological resources to face the challenges of adult life (Hazen, Schlozman & Beresin, 2008). Therefore, this is the time when the responsibilities of mature adult are slowly becoming manifest in the child's mind. The adolescent mind is filled with dreams of future, and perhaps even some fantasy. Adolescents acquire the increasing ability to think abstractly and hypothetically. One of most crucial decisions a young adolescent must make is the selection of an occupation. Frequently, it is viewed by family and community as a mere start to workplace readiness; however, this decision plays a major role in the establishing youth in a career path that open as well as closes opportunities. In many societies, however, adolescence is narrowly equated with puberty and the cycle of physical changes culminating in reproductive maturity. In other societies adolescence is understood in broader terms that encompass psychological, social, and moral terrain as well as the strictly physical aspects of maturation. In these societies the term adolescence typically refers to the period between ages 12 and 20 and is roughly equivalent to the word teens. During adolescence, issues of emotional (if not physical) separation from parents arise. While this sense of separation is a necessary step in the establishment of personal values, the transition to self-sufficiency forces an array of adjustments upon many adolescents. Furthermore, teenagers seldom have clear roles of their own in society but instead occupy an ambiguous period between childhood and adulthood. These issues most often define adolescence in Western cultures, and the response to them partly determines the nature of an individual's adult years. Also during adolescence, the individual experiences an upsurge of sexual feelings following the latent sexuality of childhood. It is during adolescence that the individual learns to control and direct sexual urges. Some specialists find that the difficulties of adolescence have been exaggerated and that for many adolescents the process of maturation is largely peaceful and untroubled. Other specialists consider adolescence to be an intense and often stressful developmental period characterized by specific types of behaviour. Adolescence is a period of life with specific health and developmental needs and rights. It is also a time to develop knowledge and skills, learn to manage emotions and relationships, and acquire attributes and abilities that will be important for enjoying the adolescent years and assuming adult roles. All societies recognize that there is a difference between being a child and becoming an adult. How this transition from childhood to adulthood is defined and recognized differs between cultures and over time. In the past it has often been relatively rapid, and in some societies it still is. In many countries, however, this is changing. Age is a convenient way to define adolescence. But it is only one characteristic that delineates this period of development. Age is often more appropriate for assessing and comparing biological changes (e.g. puberty), which are fairly universal, than the social transitions, which vary more with the socio-cultural environment.

The most critical stage in the educational pathway is after middle school and high school, where a student stands at the crossroads of decision making regarding his career. At this age of early adolescence he lacks decision making skills along with various personal and social skill components. According to the period of social development, 13 -15 year old students', mostly falling in the high school age group in Pakistan, struggle with role crises while the acquisition of their personal identity is in process (Isiklar, 2012) and their self-concept is in development (Kuzgun, 2006).

In Ethiopia, students in 9-10th class (at age of 15-16 years) need clear understanding about their self so that they can be able to identify the most suitable subjects (whether science or arts, computer sciences etc.) to study as they get the chance to opt for their desired fields at this stage according to their aptitude, ability and available resources. This is possible only if they have mature career decision making abilities (Wasif, 2010).

It is widely accepted that no one can be successful in any career at any stage of his life until he has a certain level of career maturity. Generally career maturity is described as one's ability to effectively manage occupational development tasks that one comes across during the developmental path from the exploration stage through to the withdrawal stage; simply, the way in which career maturity corresponds to a person's level of approval to choose, to plan and to prepare for future vocations (Super, 1990).

Along with industrial revolution and increased market competition, the need to have a mature youth population with respect to their careers has been felt more than ever in the recent decades. Super (1990) has done extraordinary work in the field of career and occupational development in early 1950s, yet it has been and still is being extensively tested, extended, and improved. He has emphasized that career maturity is the degree to which a person can make personal career decisions independently without any external influences (1990). Levinson, Ohler, Caswell, and Kiewra (1998) state that people who have high levels of career maturity will be more able to attain a successful and satisfying career because they are: a) are more knowledgeable about the decision making process b) think about different career choices c) relate present behavior to future goals d) are committed to making a career choice e) are willing to cooperate to the demands of reality (Powell & Luzzo, 1998).

Salami (1999) while doing a study focusing on career selection of Nigerian adults detected certain underlying factors responsible for making incorrect career choices. These factors include ignorance and inexperience, peer pressure, parents influence, ill directed advice either from friends or teachers, and esteem associated with certain professions. While an adolescent's own behaviors and self understanding also play an important role in the subject selection and its future success, the opportunity to explore one's self-concept and its' relationship with one's career maturity is essential to be explored.

In reality, the idea of self-concept is an age-old phenomenon but formally this concept appeared in Principles of Philosophy, authored by Rene Descartes in 1644. He believed that doubt is a key requisite needed for any systematic analysis. In addition, Sigmund Freud (1900) emphasized the vital role of internal mental processes. Anna Freud (1946) his daughter, allotted the main role to ego development and self explanation (LA, 1991).

Albeit majority of the self-concept theorists worked persistently and further elaborated the concept during 1970's and 1980's, however, in general that interest gradually declined. However, now awareness is prevailing among professionals. There is a renaissance about the revival of the study of self-concept. Its' significance has been understood in several domains such as school dropout rates, lower self esteem, dysfunctional families, career decision making etc. that cannot be effectively tackled without paying due consideration to it (Shavelson & Bolus, 1981).

Research has made it clear that self-concept can be learned as it is found at the time of birth. It progressively appeared that in the initial phase of life and with time it is shaped and reshaped; with growing age and experiences, and predominantly with the feedback of those who have a significant presence in our lives. The main qualities of self-concept, which have caught the interest of counselors, are that it can be learned, organized and very dynamic in nature (as cited in Shavelson & Bolus, 1981).

SELF-CONCEPT AND CAREER MATURITY

The term Self-Concept has been described as the total of a person's perceptions about himself, whereby, perceptions are shaped through an individual's experience and interpretation of his environment where he is living. Shavelson and Bolus (1981) state that self-concept is hierarchical in nature where general self-concept further bifurcates into academic and non-academic self-concept; each further lead to many subareas of self-concept. Generally, self-concept is consistent but can be varied according to different situations.

Super's work in the field of vocational development and self-concept helps us understand the interactive nature of both domains. He considers personal description, by the elementary students, as one of the fundamental career development tasks. He summarized career as a fine blend between one's self-concept and the necessities of one's professional tasks, whereby, awareness of the capabilities of the self, such as interests, beliefs, ambitions, etc. increases progressively. As the individual becomes conscious of the above-mentioned traits, he in due course settles for an appropriate career selection (Super, 1957; 1990).

Super, Starishevsky, and Matlin (1963) have also emphasized the crucial part of self-concept and regarded it as configuration of career development. With increase in age, individuals formulate an outlook of their personal roles, characters, traits and capabilities. As they are exposed to a myriad of

professions existing to afford distinctive character traits, they tend to equate their self view with different vocational concepts. Their career growth in turn is influenced by the discovery process experienced by every person and the desire to perform a prominent role. He (1966) argues that self-concept is based on an individual's accumulated physical and intellectual growth, job awareness, career classification and overall experience. The enlargement of an individual's knowledge and experience ultimately leads to the development of his career self-concept that leads to career maturity (Super, 1957).

When self-concept was compared with career maturity, Crites (1989) noted that the level of career maturity of a person is directly related to his career selection as it would assist in selection of more practical profession; the one that would correspond with his self-concept (as cited in Busacca & Taber, 2002). Similarly, career maturity has been discovered to be notably linked with many other career related constructs including self-concept or locus of control (Salami, 1999), career exploration and career information seeking behavior (Naidoo, 1998).

Few researchers believed that a youngster's self-concept and career maturity are interrelated (Holland, 1981; Munson, 1992). They have discovered that students having high self esteem achieved appreciably higher scores on occupational identity and career salience.

The correlation between career maturity and self-concept has been examined by Dillard (1976) through a research involving 252 sixth class black male students. Students from both suburban and urban areas belonging to middle and lower classes were selected from 42 schools. These schools were situated in different Counties of New York (Monroe, Erie, & Westchester), USA. Dillard showed a positive significant connection between career maturity and self-concepts.

Further, Holland, (1981) studied the relationship between vocational development and self-concept in 6th grade students. Results indicated a significant relationship between self-concept and career maturity, while Khan, (1983) found that higher career maturity inventory scores were associated with self esteem, internal locus of control and intrinsic work values. Results of Dhillon and Kaur (2005) also highlighted that career maturity has a significant positive relationship with self-concept. A significant relationship has also been found between career maturity, attitude and external locus of control. Achievement motivation and selfconcept were related in case of boys in government schools and between the construct of career maturity and achievement motivation in case of girls in government schools.

In another study Hasan (2006) examined the role of occupational aspiration, self-concept and gender on the career maturity of Indian high school students. Findings showed that all three constructs generated considerable variance in the career maturity level of the students.

Through survey method, Nasir and Lin (2013) designed a study where the main objective was to examine the correlation between self-concept and career related awareness. For this study, they selected

165 students from secondary schools. Through Pearson Correlation Coefficient they found a significant positive relationship between these two variables.

Nwachukwu (1983) found a positive relationship among self-concept, career maturity and gender. He further, noted that females have rather mature decision-making skills and proven to be more mature as they have better information of the practical job options as compared to their male counterparts. They also possess a superior positive self-concept than males. The outcome of the study pointed out that a person's self-concept is directly linked with the level of career maturity acquired, although the connection has turned out to be weak amongst the college going students. It has been forcefully advocated that career planning should be more emphasized during the initial academic years. Consistent career guidance is vital for students' whole course of studies.

Literature review suggests that when self-concept and career maturity are compared with reference to gender, girls generally perform better than boys in both domains. For gender, most studies have found that females have better career maturity than males (Luzzo, 1995; Rojewski, Wicklein, & Schell,1995). Similar results have been found in a study done by Busacca and Taber (2002) which shows that females possess high career maturity than males. A study done by Hasan in 2006 examining the role of occupational aspiration, self-concept and gender on career maturity of Indian high school students found that girls outperformed boys on career maturity and self-concept.

In some countries, for example in South Africa (Watson, 1984) and Nigeria (Achebe, 1982), males have been found to score higher than females, while other studies have failed to find any differences (Kelly & Colangelo, 1990; Watson, Stead & De Jager, 1995). There is further evidence that young women are better informed in relation to career related knowledge (Patton & Creed, 2001). Hence, gender can be affirmed as an important predictor.

It is being observed that mostly, it is being thought that career is the concern of adults and not the teenagers, but the fact is that the career's base is laid down in the early high school years. This is the time when students with clear self-concept have a better idea about their future career goals and which academic subjects they want to choose. Especially when students are about to choose subjects at the start of the ninth class then it is important about their own self-concept or not and whether there is any relationship to know their career decision making skills and whether they are clear between self-concept and career maturity.

In Ethiopian career counseling and guidance is almost absent in the government schools and nothing is done regarding students' better career and self image (Wasif, 2010), therefore this study is an effort to explore the existence of any relationship between high school students' self-concept and career maturity. Based on the literature it is assumed that there is a high positive correlation between self-concept and career maturity of high school students. Secondly, it is also assumed that girls will perform

better on both self-concept and career maturity measures than boys. Further based on this study's results a relevant career guidance program can be designed which caters to the career maturity and self-concept needs of the students.

Method

The present study is based on correlation study design in which the extent of the relationship between self-concept and career development maturity is investigated among high school students.

The responses of 62 randomly selected ninth class students comprising of 36 boys and 26 girls were used in this study. For research purposes, 2 government schools from Rawalpindi and Islamabad were chosen conveniently. The rationale for choosing government schools lies in the idea that the majority of the population in Ethiopia belongs to middle or lower middle class and government schools with their subsidized fee structure would be far more likely to show true representation.

The following measures have been used in the current study:

Self-concept Scale (Urdu Adjective Check List). The self-concept scale used in the present research highlights the perceptions and evaluations one has about his own self. Ansari, Farooqi, Khan, and Yasmin (1982) originally developed the Urdu adjective checklist which is also called the self-concept scale. This is comprised of 52 adjectives in the Urdu language and can be administered on adolescents. It has a five point rating scale that ranges from very much = 5, much = 4, moderate = 3, less = 2, very less = 1 for positive items while in case of negative items reverse scoring was done. High scores on self-concept scale depict the higher and positive self-image of that person and vice versa. Maximum scores on the scale range from 52-260. It is highly reliable and valid as a scale with the calculated internal consistency of the scale at 0.81, while the test retest reliability is 0.70.

Career Maturity Inventory. The Urdu translated version of the career maturity inventory (Zahra, 2017) was used to measure the level to which participants were ready to make practical career decisions, while the original English version of the Career Maturity Inventory - revised (CMI-R) was developed by Crites and Savickas (1996).

The Attitude Scale elicits the feelings, the subjective reactions, the dispositions that the individual has toward making a career choice and entering the world of work. It examines respondents' attitudes toward decision making such as decisiveness, involvement, independence, orientation, and compromise. It is based on 25 different statements whose scores range from 0 to 25, where 0 indicates no maturity and 25 shows full maturity in making the right career selection process. It is based on a two point rating scale that ranges from agree or disagree and is marked as 0 or 1 (Zahra, 2017).

Scores on the attitude scale can be interpreted as the respondents who scored above 20 are better equipped with career decision making skills while those who scored from 16-19 are seen to be

progressing at an ordinary rate whereas the participants who scored 15 and below are not ready to make their career selection independently and need to be a part of career exploration programs (Zahra, 2017). This career maturity inventory is a highly reliable and valid measure (Busacca & Taber, 2002) that is also evident in the present research which shows that its reliability is good enough (r=.75).

The collected data from the questionnaire and interview were organized quantitatively and qualitatively. Finally, the results obtained from each instruments that are organized both qualitatively and quantitatively are presented by comparing and contrasting to reach the conclusion and possible solutions were analyzed and discussed as follows in chapter four. The data collected were cleared, tabulated and made ready for analysis using appropriate statistical techniques descriptive statics mainly percentage and t-test wasused, qualitative techniques will be employed and use graphs to analysis the data.

Results

This study was designed to find out the relationship between self-concept and career maturity of high school students in Ethiopia. Based on the collected data on both measures, first reliability estimates were calculated. Alpha reliability of the self-concept and career maturity scale on high school students (N=62) was r=.73 and r=.75 respectively which shows that the scales are good enough to measure the self-concept and career maturity of the Ethiopia high school students.

Correlation between the Self-concept and Career Maturity of High School Students

Results shows that the Pearson product moment correlation for the constructs of self-concept and career maturity in the sample of high school students is significant (p < .01) and positive, so this indicates that when self-concept is high, students will show more career maturity.

Gender Differences on Career Maturity

Results shows that there is a significant gender difference (p < .05) found on career maturity measures. Girls performed better (M = 16.76) and had high career maturity than boys (M = 14).

Gender Differences on self-concept

Result shows that the performance of girls over boys. There is a significant difference between boys and girls on measures of self-concept (p < .001). Higher mean scores of girls (M=160) show that they have a clear sense of a self and better self-concept than the boys (M = 146.13) and this difference is significant.

Discussion

In Ethiopia there is lack factual knowledge regarding the relationship between self-concept and career maturity in high school students; therefore, this study was designed keeping in mind this gap in

the literature. The results obtained supported all hypotheses and gave research-based evidence for the initial assumptions as discussed below.

The first hypothesis assuming that there is a positive correlation between self-concept and carrier maturity in high school students; was accepted showing that when a self-concept of a high school student improves then carrier then carrier maturity will also increase. A student who has a clear understanding about himself, regarding his likes and dislikes in careers/ academic who knows his strengths and weaknesses is at a better position to decide which career path to choose. This clear understanding about self leads to mature career decision-making which is difficult otherwise and this self understanding directly helps to understand the nature of work and work demands in correlation with mature career decisions (Nasir & Lin, 2013; Dhillon & Kaur, 2005).

Similarly, Osborn & Reardon (2006) also noted that when guidance was provided to adolescents about their self-knowledge and career knowledge, it ultimately resulted in improved identification of interests, professions, academic opportunities and decision-making strategies. Students were better able to connect their academic aspirations and self-interests with the job market conditions and career preferences. Their clear understanding about their self, lead them to better career choices in the long run.

Regarding gender differences on both constructs: self-concept and career maturity, girls performed better on both measures as compared to boys and supported our assumption that girls will perform better on self-concept and career maturity measure than boys. These results are in line with many previous researches which show that girls take life matters seriously and participate actively in taking conscious and careful decisions (Patton & Creed, 2001: Watson, Stead & De Jager, 1995; Busacca & Taber, 2002).

In countries like Ethiopia where girls and boys have different life trainings and have different life related expectations, they often have different levels of self understanding and career maturity. Girls have a clear understanding about their role in our culture at early age as compared to boys whose responsibilities are expected when they start earning. Therefore, their less serious life related attitude may give them less clear self-concept as compare to girls as early as at high school level (Nwachukwu, 1983). So it can be rightly said that in our culture where girls become independent earlier than boys and show more responsibility in each and every task of life it consequently might be responsible for giving them a better and clearer self-image as well as improved career maturity as compared to boys.

Conclusion

This study was designed to explore the relationship between self-concept and the career maturity of high school students. Based on the collected data of 62 ninth class students it can be concluded that positive relationship exists between career maturity and the self-concept of high school students along

with significant gender differences. As, significant gender differences found on both constructs of self-concept and career maturity; and girls performed better than boys. It can be rightly said that in order to improve the career maturity of the Ethiopia high school students, it needs to work on their self-concept as a better self-concept can lead to more mature career selection ability. It is hoped that this study will be helpful for teachers and career counselors to understand the interlinked role of self-concept and career maturity of the students.

Recommendations

Further it is recommended that the findings of this research can be used in curriculum design, career guidance programs, and in any career related policies. It is also recommended that teachers should put special emphasis on students' clear self-concept as it can lead to their mature career related behaviors.

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