CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
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Statement of the Problem

Students' personality, attitudes, interest and perceptions of inner and outer academic environment relate to each other and change from one year to another during undergraduation.

The main Objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the differences in personality, attitudes, interest and the perceptions of inner and outer academic environment between university and college students, and between male and female students during the three years of undergraduation period.

2. To identify the direction and extent of relationships among personality, attitudes, interest variables and of these with perceptions of inner and outer academic environment variables.

3. To predict the perceptions of inner and outer academic environment variables by using personality, attitudes and interest variables as predictors.

The Hypotheses for the study were:

1. Students will differ significantly by institution and gender at three time points on personality, attitudes and interest.

2. Students will differ significantly by institution and gender at three time points on perceptions of inner and outer academic environment.

3. There will be different patterns of relations among personality, attitudes and interest variables during three years of undergraduation.

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4. There will be different patterns of relations between personality, attitudes, 
interest variables and perceptions of inner academic environment during 
three years of undergraduation.

5. There will be different patterns of relations between personality, attitudes 
and interest variables and perceptions of outer academic environment 
during three years of undergraduation.

6. The inner academic environment variables will relate differently to outer 
academic environment variables during three years of undergraduation.

7. Personality, attitudes and interest variables will predict the perceptions of 
inner and outer academic environment significantly at the three time points.

Sample

A total of 180 undergraduate students were selected from one central and 
largely residential university (N=132), and one affiliated college (N=48), of 
another central university. This included 120 male and 60 female students. All the 
180 students were tested in the first year (1997-98) in the second year (1998-99), 
and then in the third year (1999-2000) of their undergraduation.

Variables

The following exploratory variables were used.

1. Extraversion and Neuroticism (Personality Dimensions).

2. Life Goal and Freedom to Criticize Authority (Personal Attitudes).

3. Vocational Choice (Interest).

4. Inner and Outer Academic Environment Variables (Eleven dimensions 
each).
The classificatory variables were: (a) Institution (b) Gender and (c) Year of Undergraduation.

Tools

Three self-administered questionnaires to measure personality, attitudes, interest and perceptions of inner and outer academic environment in all the three years of undergraduation were used. These were: Maudsley Personality Inventory (Eysenck, 1953), the Questionnaire on Life Goal, Freedom to Criticize Authority and Vocational Choice, and the Inner and Outer Academic Environment Questionnaire (Singh and Sinha, 1997). A personal information sheet was also used. Along with the above scales some qualitative data were obtained on inner academic environment variables, through focused group interviews, during second and third year of undergraduation.

The three self-administered questionnaires, after necessary translation, were given to the students in the classrooms in their free time during first, second and third year. After they completed the questionnaires, small groups were formed on the basis of their responses to the inner academic environment variables. Group interviews (4-5 students in a group) were conducted using a structured schedule in the second and third year of data collection.

Data Analysis

Data were subjected to the analysis of variance, ‘t’ test, correlations, step-wise regression and percentages.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Extraversion scores were higher for college students than university students, (F=5.94, p<.01) and for university and college students at time 1 than at time
2 and time 3 (F=3.02, p<.05) over the undergraduation years.

2. Neuroticism scores were higher for males than females (F=4.67, p<.01), and for university males and females at time 1, time 2 and time 3 than college males and females (F=5.60, p<.01). Neuroticism scores decreased for both university and college students over the three years.

3. Clarity and seriousness of life goal was higher among male students, and in all the students at time 3 than those of female students (F=15.04, p<.01) and all the students at time 2 and time 1 (F=55.36, p<.01) respectively. University males and females at time 1, time 2 and time 3 scored higher on life goal than college males and females at time 1, time 2 and time 3 (F=24.17, p<.01). Scores on life goal increased among university and college students over the three years. A larger percentage of university students selected economic stability, whereas college students selected personal identity, though variation in percentages were seen over the three years.

4. University students, male students and all the students at time 1 perceived more freedom to criticize authority than those of college students, (F=3.89, p<.05), female students (F=58.56, p<.01) and all the students at time 2 and time 3 (F=217.26, p<.01) respectively. University males and females at time 1, time 2 and time 3 perceived more freedom to criticize authority than college males and females (F=112.27, p<.01). Freedom to criticize authority scores decreased among university and college students over the three years.

5. Clarity and seriousness of vocational choice was higher in all the students at time 1, than at time 2 and time 3 (F=239.23, p<.01). College male and female students at time 1, time 2 and time 3 scored higher on vocational choice than
university male and female students ($F=80.73, p<.01$). College and university students' scores on vocational choice decreased over the three years. Percentages on the selected vocational choices of media, academics, business and administrative were stable among university students, whereas college students showed variations on the selection of vocational choice over the three years.

6. The dimensions of inner academic environment, particularly the basic facilities and special facilities were perceived favourably by the university students and male students than those of college students and female students. The time differences on all the inner academic dimensions were significant. University males and females at time 1, time 2 and time 3 perceived favourably the conditions of teaching, institutional administration, method of examination, teacher-student relationships, basic facilities, special facilities, union's role, student consideration, and use of alcohol and drugs, whereas college male and female students at time 1, time 2 and time 3 perceived casteism among students and boys attitude towards girls. All F values were significant. University and college students' perceptions of inner academic dimensions deteriorated over the undergraduation years. Students during group discussion indicated the attribution of liked and disliked qualities in inner academic environment. The percentages on all the inner academic dimensions decreased from second to third year in general, and university students made more causal attribution for their favourable perceptions in comparison to college students. Students also indicated particularly about the good or bad characteristics of their institution, and
focused on the different aspects of institutional attributes that needed to be improved.

7. The law and order dimension of outer academic environment was perceived favourably by university students than college students. The time differences on all the outer academic dimensions were significant. All F values being significant. All the students at time 1 perceived improvement in political environment, economic conditions, corruption, modern technology, attachment to others, civic amenities and religious superstition, whereas university male and female students at time 1, time 2 and time 3 perceived communication factors and medical care more improved. University and college students’ perceptions of outer academic dimensions deteriorated over the undergraduate years.

8. The personality, attitudes and interest variables correlated positively and significantly with each other at second and third time points for university and college students. These also correlated positively and significantly with dimensions of inner and outer academic environment. Students during group discussion observed that their personality, attitudes and interest characteristics were affected by academic environment, although the attached favourableness of the academic environment to personal development was reduced in the third year compared to second year of undergraduate.

9. The dimensions of inner and outer academic environment correlated positively at the second and third time points for university and college students. Students during group discussion also indicated that the societal environment influenced highly the inner academic environment of their
10. Perceived freedom to criticize authority proved to be the most important predictor followed by life goal, of the perceptions of dimensions of inner academic environment for the entire sample ($\beta_s = -.44$ and -.17), and for the university sample ($\beta_s = .41$ and -.20) in the first phase. However, for the college sample, vocational choice ($\beta = .45$) and life goal ($\beta = -.26$) were relevant.

11. Neuroticism followed by extraversion and freedom to criticize authority were the meaningful predictors of perceptions of inner academic environment for the entire sample ($\beta_s = .54$, .41 and .18), and for the university sample ($\beta_s = .47$, .32 and .22), separately in the second phase. For college sample the important predictors were extraversion ($\beta = .71$), followed by neuroticism ($\beta = .36$).

12. Neuroticism ($\beta = .41$) followed by extraversion ($\beta = .17$) were the important predictors of perceptions of inner academic environment dimensions for the entire sample in the third phase. However, when predictions were made for the university sample, neuroticism ($\beta = .25$) was followed by vocational choice ($\beta = .19$). Neuroticism ($\beta = .65$) followed by extraversion ($\beta = .40$) and freedom to criticize authority ($\beta = -.29$) were the important predictors of perception of inner academic environment dimensions for college sample.

13. Vocational choice ($\beta = .54$), followed by life goal ($\beta = -.29$) were the important predictors of the perceptions of outer academic environment dimensions for the entire sample in the first phase; perceived freedom to criticize authority ($\beta = .47$) followed by life goal ($\beta = -.27$) for the university sample, and only vocational choice ($\beta = .72$) for the college sample.
14. Neuroticism ($\beta=0.54$) followed by extraversion ($\beta=0.39$) and vocational choice ($\beta=0.23$) in the second phase accounted for the maximum variance in the perceptions of outer academic environment dimensions for the entire sample; neuroticism ($\beta=0.50$) followed by freedom to criticize authority ($\beta=0.23$) and extraversion ($\beta=0.22$), for the university sample; and extraversion ($\beta=0.72$) followed by neuroticism ($\beta=0.44$) and vocational choice ($\beta=0.25$), for the college sample.

15. Neuroticism ($\beta=0.46$) followed by extraversion ($\beta=0.29$) and vocational choice ($\beta=0.18$) were the important predictors of perceptions of outer academic environment in the third phase for the entire sample; neuroticism ($\beta=0.32$) followed by freedom to criticize authority ($\beta=0.20$), for the university sample; and extraversion ($\beta=0.70$) followed by neuroticism ($\beta=0.44$), for the college sample.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

The findings on the differences in students personality, attitudes, interest and perceptions of inner and outer academic environment by institution and gender during successive undergraduation years were helpful in understanding personal and institutional dynamics to some extent. From the theory point of view it revealed change than stability in personality traits and thus Eysenck’s (1953) conceptualization of personality proved true only partly. Extraversion and neuroticism did not emerge as orthogonal dimensions. The inventory (Eysenck-Maudsley Personality Inventory) developed to measure neuroticism was based purely on dispositional approach. It relied heavily on self-reports of subjects, and ignored the influence of situational variables, pressure from environment etc. This
indicated the need of a different kind of scale.

The content and self-regulation theories of personal goal were found useful in this research. Content theories highlighted the differences in goal-directed behaviour, in terms of what was specific as the goal for individual - as the content characteristics of the goal were expected to affect a person's successful goal pursuit. Similarly, self-regulation theories of goal striving focused on implementational problems. The overtime differences in personal goal selection and modification need to be incorporated in these conceptual frameworks.

Madison's (1968) argument that during adolescence, the achievement of greater autonomy and a clearer ego identity, the development of more integration, and control of the impulses were major developmental tasks was partially fit in present research. The impact of academic institution on different students varied with the congruence or fit between the students' initial values and perspectives and the values evidenced by various components of the institutional culture. The perceived freedom to criticize authorities declined during the academic years. Late adolescence was that phase of the life cycle during which many impulses and defenses were reorganized and where students needed more control on the environment. Thus, policy makers had a moral duty to understand the hidden meaning of work culture (students suggestions should really be valued), and to provide democratic and fearless environment for students' personal development and positive self-esteem. Pincoffs's (1972) view that each academician had a moral right to academic freedom, was not sufficient to take into account the situational contingencies on freedom to criticize authority. It needed adjustment/modification for institutional, gender and temporal differences.
Measures of vocational interests typically were not grounded in theory. Though the present findings indicated the need for more attention to the conceptual meaning of students' occupation choice. As recommended by UNESCO Report (1996) that one of the basic pillar of education: learning to be, should be fulfilled in the academic campuses, to develop one's personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility.

The students' perceptions of inner academic environment deteriorated over the academic years. Therefore educators needed to have development oriented framework to improve academic curriculum. The measure used to assess inner academic environment favourableness/unfavourableness (by Singh and Sinha 1997) needed some modification, perhaps, inclusion of sub-dimensions with the eleven inner academic environment dimensions.

The university student's perceptions of outer academic environment were not positive. They could be sensitized positively through the knowledge of valued history of society, and social reality. An interlink of education and culture was emphasized in order to promote the process of personality development of the youth in the Report (1990) of National Policy of Education. Reportedly, 22 Curriculum Development Centres (Out of 27, set up by UGC) have given the reports, and have circulated to universities and colleges for implementation. Though the problem of institutional differences and students' particular demands and expectations remained, it was needed that recommended implementation should be modified to suit the institutions. In the UNESCO Report (1996) on higher education it was highlighted that universities should also be able to speak out on ethical and social problems as entirely independent and fully responsible.
institutions exercising a kind of intellectual autonomy that society needed to help it to reflect, understand and act. It was needed that the educationists, practitioners and counsellors, should solve students queries on different aspects of society. As indicated by Jalaluddin (2000), the centres of higher learning and research have a great responsibility to the present situation to provide intellectual leadership, for rebuilding our historically inherited knowledge and understanding of man’s inner potential and capacity to create order in an apparently chaotic present and an unpredictable future. Therefore, the planners of academic organizations, if committed, could help potentially responsive students to build up their personal attributes in the challenges of extraneous forces. The measures (by Singh and Sinha, 1997) used in the research to assess favourable/unfavorable aspects of societal environment needed to add more dimensions like population status, poverty conditions and employment status.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS

Results on the personality, attitudes and interests dimensions indicated that students differed on these dimensions, and need different management. Scores on extraversion and neuroticism personality dimensions fell in the average category (ambivert and moderate on stability), though students’ scores decreased overtime on extraversion and neuroticism. Extravert students should be provided with tasks congenial to their impulses, like working together with peers. Those high on neuroticism should be sensitized through unstructured interactions, counselling and reinforcement techniques. It would be helpful to introduce these students with those who would not only respond to their words but also to their underlying feelings.
Students' life goal and freedom to criticize authority should be managed through systematic interventions in college campuses. The campus as important socialization agency must not conflict with overall personal development. It should help students in the formation of realistic life goal and freedom of expression to the attainment of ideals of independence, expression, justice, equity and human dignity. Students' decreased clarity and seriousness of vocational choice overtime indicated that choice of vocation should be based on careful assessment of students strong and weak points. Professional guidance and counsellors should be available to help with the choice of appropriate courses of study (taking into account the needs of labour market).

Development aimed at the full flowering of human potential, was the ultimate goal of both education and culture. It would be beneficial to the policy makers to focus mainly on students’ attitude management in the first year, and have personality development programmes in the second and third year. Students’ control on freedom to criticize authority, and clarity and seriousness of life goal may give students a sense of self-respect to be focused and progressive for future life. Management of extraversion and neuroticism dimensions may be helpful to improve students perceptions of outer academic environment.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS**

University students' favorable perceptions of most of the inner academic environment variables indicated the need for different intervention programmes and organizational development techniques. In colleges, academic curriculum should not be merely unsystematic completion of course work. Rote learning among students needed to be abolished, but students presence in classes and
monthly tests should be made regular. Moreover, the teaching styles and examination patterns should be improved through group-discussion, seminars, presentations, work shops etc. The curriculum should be structured in such a way that the learning of students be continuous and comprehensive resulting in complete growth of competence. These competencies could be developed in different areas, according to students needs - such as the language, the literature and culture of the people, interpersonal skills, journalistic observation and writing etc. Higher education was a liberating process that introduced the students to the whole range of man’s culture and knowledge, and turned him into a mature adult who understands the world and wants to participate significantly in it. Administrative functioning in academic institutions, particularly in colleges needed improvement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The holistic education must acknowledge the multiple dimensions of human personality, attitudes and interest, thus moving towards the perennial dream of integrated individual living. In the institutes of higher education the ideals of intellectual, emotional and spiritual development, and liberty, independence and human dignity should be fulfilled, which would obtain person-organization fit. Academic curriculum should be thought of primarily as a medium for individual growth, since the differences in students were accomplished in part through the students’ reaction to curriculum. It was the role of education to provide students with cultural background that would enable them, as far as possible, to be aware of the changes taking place. Overall, students and curriculum development needed a flexible path according to the students and curriculum demands over the three
years. The establishment of planned links between development and educational policy, with a view to strengthening the bases of knowledge and skills could be desirable.

LIMITATIONS

Like other studies in the applied social sciences, the present study had some constraints. The data were collected in one metro university and college only. It should be replicated in state universities and colleges etc. Metro-non metro, SES, social-category and rural-urban differences could not be examined, as there were only few lower and upper class (compared to middle class) unreserved category and rural background students.

The present findings were also limited to Art graduates. Graduates' perceptions and attributions across different disciplines needed to be investigated. Results suggested that the relations among personality, attitudes, interest and perceptions of inner and outer academic variables were more complex than readily acknowledged, and required replication.

Students self-perceptions regarding personal variables and perceptions of environment variables were included, but others perceptions of students' changing personal traits and perceptions: such as teachers, parents, peers etc. could not be included.

Group discussion could not be conducted in the first year, and though conducted in the second and third years, the time allowed was less. Since it was a time bound study, the researcher could not spend longer time with students which was desired.
SUGGESTIONS

1. More longitudinal studies should be undertaken to understand the differences in dynamics of students’ groups in terms of personality dimensions, attitudes, interest and inner and outer academic environment.

2. The future studies on students’ personal, and inner and outer academic environment variables should incorporate in depth analysis, and emphasize on parents, peers and teachers observations of stability/change in students.

3. Time span of longitudinal studies on students personal and perceived inner and outer academic variables should be extended.

4. SES, social category, rural-urban differences should be investigated.

5. The explanation of the obtained results if translated into empirical language may provide some vantage points to the future researchers.

6. It would be interesting for researchers to study as to how students’ personal and inner and outer academic environment variables relate to their psychological health.

7. Studies on the impact of students personal characteristics on organizational health, development and management could be framed.

8. Testing of the generality of findings and proposed model across university and college campuses in other parts of the country may give more concrete indications for educational policy makers.