CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of young people aged 18-25 years about transition to adulthood. A descriptive comparative design was used. The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase followed a quantitative approach using a survey questionnaire to identify the markers of adulthood considered important by youth. The aim of this phase was to obtain a descriptive picture of the Indian youth's perception. The second phase adopted a qualitative approach and used in-depth interviews with young people. The aim of this phase was to obtain insights about the experiences and feelings of youth in select urban areas in contemporary India.

Location of the Study

The study was conducted in two cities in India: (i) Delhi is the national capital located in Northern India wherein mainly students from the Delhi University\(^3\) were included, and (ii) Vadodara is a cosmopolitan city in Western India, wherein students from the Maharaja Sayajirao University\(^4\) of Baroda were included.

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\(^3\) Delhi University in particular is one of the most sought after universities in India with a vast range of courses available.

\(^4\) One of the largest universities in Gujarat with a variety of courses on offer.
Delhi is one of India's most developed metropolitan cities, with a diverse cultural environment which is a blend of traditional and modern outlooks. A significant impact of globalisation can be observed in the city, particularly in terms of focus on education with significant educational options being available for the youth in the city, and consumerism. Delhi is a city that attracts youth from across the country for educational opportunities. Such diversity in the participants group was expected to lead to interesting variances in the opinions of youth on transition to adulthood.

Vadodara is a cosmopolitan city in the Western Indian state of Gujarat (3rd largest city in Gujarat after Ahmedabad and Surat). The city is relatively close to the commercial capital of India, Mumbai. The city is often referred to as the “cultural capital” of Gujarat. The M. S. University is one of the largest universities in the state of Gujarat and offers a variety of courses attracting students from various parts of the country.

**Research Participants**

The total sample of the study consisted of 630 individuals. Below is an illustration describing the samples selected for the two phases of the research:

**Phase I.**

The sample comprised 600 participants, including 300 from Delhi and 300 Vadodara.

The sample description is illustrated below:
Phase I
Young Individuals
N = 600

Delhi
(n=300)

Boys
(n=150)

Girls
(n=150)

18-20  21-25  18-20  21-25
Years  Years  Years  Years
(n=75) (n=75) (n=75) (n=75)

Vadodara
(n=300)

Boys
(n=150)

Girls
(n=150)

18-20  21-25  18-20  21-25
Years  Years  Years  Years
(n=75) (n=75) (n=75) (n=75)

Phase II.

The sample consisted of 30 participants, 15 from Delhi and 15 from Vadodara distributed as follows:

Phase II
Young Individuals
N = 30

Delhi
(n=15)

Boys
(n=8)

Girls
(n=7)

18-20  21-25  18-20  21-25
Years  Years  Years  Years
(n=4)  (n=4) (n=3)  (n=4)

Vadodara
(n=15)

Boys
(n=8)

Girls
(n=7)

18-20  21-25  18-20  21-25
Years  Years  Years  Years
(n=4)  (n=4) (n=3)  (n=4)
Criteria for Sample Selection

City.

The study aimed to understand youth's perception of transition to adulthood in two cities located in two different regions of India, northern and western. India being a large and diverse nation in terms of culture and religion, it was expected that the youth from the two regions will portray variation in their perception of transition to adulthood. Hence sample groups were selected from these two cities, Delhi in the north and Vadodara in the west, to investigate the differences or similarities that may exist between the two regions.

Age.

In traditional Indian culture, young people in the age group 21-25 years are expected to perform all adult roles and considered adult in comparison to young people in the age group 18-20 years. To find out if there are such developmental differences in perceptions of early and late young people, the sample comprised young adults from two age groups; the early young people were in the age group of 18-20 years and the late young people were in the age group of 21-25 years, respectively.

Gender.

Gender is a significant variable shaping individuals’ views on different issues. In order to understand the influence of gender on perception of transition to adulthood, equal numbers of boys and girls from each age group have been included.
Sample Selection

The sample groups for both phases of the study consisted of young unmarried individuals belonging to middle, upper-middle and upper social classes. For phase I, stratified random sampling was used and for phase II, participants were recruited via personal contacts of the researcher using snowball and convenient sampling techniques. An attempt was made to include young people with varied educational backgrounds pursuing a variety of courses\(^5\).

Tools

**Phase I.**

In this phase, a questionnaire and rating scale were used, divided into three major sections as follows:

**Demographics.**

The participants were asked to provide demographic information that specified their age, gender, city, educational qualification, parent’s education as well as employment, living with parents, living away from parents, number of years lived away from the family and family income.

\(^5\) Including business administration, law, medicines, chemistry, physics, biology, bio-chemistry, family & community sciences, mass communication, accountancy, fine arts, psychology, sociology, Sanskrit, Hindi, and English
Criteria for Indian adulthood questionnaire.

The participants were surveyed on the Criteria of Indian Adulthood Questionnaire (CIAQ) which is an adapted and expanded version of Arnett’s Criteria for Adulthood Questionnaire (CAQ, 2003). The participants indicated their conception of transition to adulthood on the questionnaire. The CAIQ is based on CAQ and uses more simplified language and is also translated into Hindi for convenience of the participants. Specifically with respect to the Indian context, the CAIQ contains 10 additional criteria under the new domain "family related", that was understood as particularly relevant for Indian youth (e.g., “show obedience and respect towards elder”).

The questionnaire consisted of 49 items and asked two primary questions. In the first question, participants were asked to indicate whether or not they believed the listed criteria were necessary for transition to adulthood, using a yes (i.e., necessary for adulthood) or no (i.e., not necessary for adulthood) response code. In the second set of questions, participants were asked to opine on the importance of each of the listed characteristics in determining if a person had reached adulthood. Participants could rate each criterion on a 4-point scale ranging from “not at all important” to “very important”. The main domains on the questionnaire were: Independence, Interdependence, Role Transitions, Norm Compliance, Biological Transitions, Chronological Transitions, Family Capacities and Family Related (refer Appendix B).
Criteria for self-adulthood status.

To identify self-adult status of the participants, they were asked the question: “Do you think that you have reached adulthood?” The participants could respond in "yes", "no", or "in some respects yes, in some respects no". Participants were also asked using an open ended format, before giving the questionnaire to comment on “In your own words, please describe what you think are the most important characteristics in determining if a person has reached adulthood” (Badger, Nelson and Barry, 2006).

Cultural validation of the tool.

Field testing and pilot studies were conducted with a few participants prior to performing the study, in order to determine if all the items included in the tools were understandable by participants or if there was need for any clarifications or additions to the questionnaire in order to better reflect the Indian cultural perspectives. Moreover it helped the researcher to get acquainted with the tool and process of collecting data, to check the amount of time required for administering the tool and to understand the relevance of the term emerging adulthood in the Indian context.

Accordingly, a series of pilot studies were conducted using the self-administered questionnaire:

I. In first pilot, ten boys and ten girls were included. It revealed that the overall tool was applicable in the Indian context. Young people took approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire and were largely able to understand the tool.
However, there were a few items which needed to be presented in simplified language, for example, the item that was written as "married" needed to be clarified as “a married person is an adult”.

II. A second pilot was conducted with five girls and five boys. Open ended questionnaire with boys and focused group discussion with girls were held. The objective was to understand if there were any items which were missing from the tool to appropriately reflect Indian cultural perspectives. A new domain “Family Related” was added to the tool after this pilot phase. The new items were: “have ability to understand parental view”; “show obedience and respect towards elder”, “be able to support their parents in old age with social, psychological and economic needs”, “an adult is one who spends quality time with their family”, “an adult is one who has responsibilities towards home”, and "decide to marry a person of his/her choice ".

III. Yet another pilot was conducted with two boys and two girls to test the validity of the interview schedule for Phase II. They were asked open-ended questions with background information related to the domains discussed below. The pilot indicated that the interview guideline worked well with the young people.

Phase II.

In phase II, since the study focused on understanding the conception of adulthood among the Indian youth, it was important to take into account the subjective importance of self-
experience of young people. Hence an open-ended interview schedule was prepared to help the researcher to engage in interactive discussions with young people. It also helped to provide an insightful understanding of their perspectives about transition to adulthood.

The interview schedule was prepared based upon related literature (Macek, et.al, 2007; Molgat, M., 2007) as well as a pilot research conducted with two girls and two boys. This ensured the validity and clarity of the tool. There were six major domains in the interview schedule:

\textbf{Demographics.}

The participants were asked to provide demographic information specifying their age, gender, city, educational qualification, parent’s education and employment, living with parents, living away from parents, number of years lived away from the family and family income.

\textbf{General concept of adulthood and perception of one’s own adulthood.}

This domain focused on questions relating to the features and characteristics deemed important for an adult person, and the advantages and disadvantages of being an adult. Furthermore, they were asked to describe their self-adult status (i.e., if they considered themselves adults or not).
Experiences in the present life stage versus earlier times.

Participants were asked about their perceptions of important markers of adulthood in the current scenario in comparison to earlier times and how the life period they were experiencing was different from earlier times.

Views about parent’s expectations and marriage.

This section focused on the participants’ perceptions of their parents' ideas of transition to adulthood and their expectations from an adult son/daughter. Additionally, they were also asked to provide their views about marriage and to discuss what they think as the right age for getting married.

Feeling of autonomy and commitments.

These questions concentrated on the notions of independence and self-reliance as explained by the participants and also when would one attain independent status. In addition, they were asked to mention about obligations and responsibilities that they regard to be important in relation to their future (refer Appendix C).

Procedure

Phase I.

In phase I, the data was collected from the students of different colleges in the two cities, Vadodara and Delhi (medicine, family and community sciences, fine arts, psychology,
sociology, architecture; management and arts). Prior to approaching students, consent was taken from the respective heads of the departments and deans of the faculties (in written) as well as from the students (orally) to conduct the survey (refer Appendix A). They were provided with information stating the purpose of the study and procedure for completing the survey.

All tools were self-administered in the presence of the researcher and the students were asked to give their own responses and not to get influenced by their peers or friends. Clarifications were made by the researcher if participants had any queries. The students took about 30-40 minutes to complete the survey. The entire data for phase I was gathered over four months allocating two months for each city.

**Phase II.**

In phase II, young people were individually interviewed. The researcher first contacted a few young people known to her in both the cities and the remaining participants were sampled through snowball technique. Prior to the interview, the participants were explained the topic of the study, its purpose, its output and then their oral consents was obtained. An appointment for the interview was fixed with each young adult who agreed to participate in the study. The detailed interview was conducted at the participants’ department or any other place convenient to both, participant and the researcher with no outside interruption. Being in the similar age group, the researcher could establish a good rapport and level of comfort with the young people which were helpful to conduct the interviews.
The interview was conducted in English or Hindi as per the participant’s convenience. Most of the interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes, but a few took longer. All the interviews were tape recorded as well as field notes were taken. It took one month in each city to conduct all the interviews.

During the data collection phase, the researcher came across some unique and interesting experiences while interacting with the youth. For example, some of them really appreciated the form and its novelty, they also mentioned that it is an insight for them to think about this issue; some were curious to know why the researcher was conducting this survey and its ultimate use; why the researcher traveled to Delhi specifically for this survey and how research on this topic will benefit the society? In general most of the participants had not thought of anything like this before. Lastly they requested if the researcher could share the results of the study with them.

Analysis

Phase I.

Statistical Analysis.

- Self-adult perceptions of the participants were analyzed by calculating frequencies and percentages.

- Chi-square was computed to know the relationship between self-adult perception and background variables such as age, gender, city, participants’ education, parents’
education and occupation, living with parents and living away from parents and participants’ employment status.

- Means and standard deviations were computed to evaluate the relative importance of the markers of adulthood.

- To test for differences in scores on the eight domains (Independence, Interdependence, Role Transitions, Norm Compliance, Biological Transitions, Chronological Transitions, Family Capacities and Family Related) based upon the city, age and gender as three independent variables, multivariate general linear modeling (GLM) was computed.

**Phase II.**

*Qualitative Analysis.*

- The interviews with young people were transcribed and translated into English.

- Typical key words and phrases were retained in the local language of the participants to retain the original meaning.

- Data reduction charts were prepared to get the summary of the interviews.

- The data was coded by sorting through data and attaching short words or phrases (Miles & Huberman, 1994), for example
  - Re-Adt: Reasons for being an adult
  - Ch-Adt: Characteristics for being an adult
• The conceptual categories of qualitative responses were formulated. For instance, an exhaustive list of all the coded responses for reasons for being an adult was prepared. Then similar responses were clustered together (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

• Salient themes were elicited after carefully going through the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). For example, while analyzing the responses of young adult for the characteristics of being an adult, two broad themes emerged namely ‘self-focused’ and ‘family and society focused related’ These two broad themes were further divide into sub-themes. For instance, ‘self-focused’ included sub-themes such as responsibility, self-sufficiency, maturity etc.

• The major themes were presented in the form of matrices, graphs, and frequency tables to provide a summary of the emerging themes.