ABSTRACT

Emerging adulthood is a stage which covers the gap between adolescence and adulthood. Researches have revealed that culture plays an important role in shaping the conceptions of emerging adulthood. Non-western cultures are inclined to place greater emphasis on practices that lead to an early transition to adulthood, thus there may be a shortened period of emerging adulthood or no emerging adulthood at all. India is a diverse country where 40% of total population constitutes youth. Presently, the Indian society is experiencing a flux of social change, and young persons are particularly vulnerable to the powerful global and western influences. Factors such as increasing access to higher education, increased age for marriage and enhanced career aspirations are bringing about changes in life goals. These social and economic changes along with strong cultural beliefs and practices will influence young people. With this scenario, variations in the criteria of adulthood are expected. The study focused on Indian college students’ in the age range of 18-25 years from Delhi and Vadodara cities in the northern and western regions of India respectively to find out whether the phase of emerging adulthood exists in the present day Indian context and the perspectives of young people regarding adulthood. The study is conducted in two phases. Phase I employed a quantitative approach using a survey questionnaire which was administered to 600 college students. Phase II adopted a qualitative approach wherein interviews were conducted with 30 college students. In both phases, the participants were equally divided by city, age and gender. Results revealed that half of the participants felt that they have not achieved adulthood and are in-between. Family focused categories were given most importance for being adult, nevertheless self-focused categories along with norm compliance were also emphasised. Overall the study enhances the understanding of how “emerging adults” in urban Indian society interpret this phase of their lives and how this may be influenced by socio-cultural orientations.