SUMMARY

Career decision making is an important aspect of career choice and career development (Miller, 2005) and career-related choices are among the most important decisions people make during their lifetime. These choices have significant long-term implications for individuals’ life styles, emotional welfare, economic and social status, as well as their sense of personal productivity and contribution to society. Therefore, it is natural that individuals at different stages of their lives are preoccupied with career choices (Campbell and Cellini, 1981; Gati, Saka and Krausz, 2001, cited by Gati et al., 2008). While the career development process is life long, choices made during the college years are particularly significant in setting the foundation for future professional options. Making a career decision is a complex task and the deliberation involved often leads to discomfort, anxiety and confusion (Osipow, Walsh and Tosi, 1980, cited by Gati and Ashar, 2001). This in turn may lead to negative and dysfunctional career thought.

According to Seligman (1998), if students do not understand and adept to their occupational environment, their misconceptions may lead them to dysfunctional ways of thinking and poor choices regarding work. To succeed in today’s environment students need a clear understanding of their “goals, interests, and talents” (Holland, Gottfredson and Power, 1980) and an accurate way of thinking about themselves in relation to career decision.

When career thoughts are negative they are referred to as dysfunctional career thoughts which are expressed through their behavior, emotions, and negative verbal expression (Corbishley and Yost, 1989).

The detrimental impact of dysfunctional career thoughts are expressed as anxiety (Dryden, 1979; Sampson et al, 1996a), decreased sense of well-being (Judge and Locke, 1993), increased vulnerability (Sampson et al., 1996 b), self defeating behaviors (Gati and Saka,
2001; Hornak and Gillingham, 1980), and a lack of self-clarity (Sampson et al., 1998).

Dysfunctional career thoughts and beliefs have also been characterized as dysfunctional cognitions, self-defeating assumptions, faulty self-efficacy beliefs, low self-esteem and decrease in life satisfaction (Lustig and Strauser, 2003). Individuals express their dysfunctional career thoughts through their behavior (Incomplete task), emotions (anxiety) and verbal expression (negative statements). Dysfunctional career thoughts have also been related to distorted and biased career beliefs that generally remain unnoticed and lead to self-defeating behaviors and experiences (Kinner and Krumboltz, 1986). Since higher level of anxiety and low self esteem are responsible for dysfunctional cognitions and perceptions resulting in failure to realize individual’s career potential (Herr and Cramer, 1996), it is important to minimize dysfunctional thoughts and to enhance healthy and appropriate career thoughts if one wishes to successfully realize one’s career potential.

PRESENT STUDY

In view of above, the present study is aimed at helping the University students get rid of their dysfunctional career thoughts and the associated anxiety with it. Since it had been noticed that the dysfunctional career thoughts result in low level of life satisfaction, self-efficacy, self esteem, achievement motivation and higher level of anxiety. It was expected that, any attempt to change dysfunctional career thoughts would also have a positive impact on the above mentioned variables. In the present study the efficacy of these interventions was established on these dependent variables along with dysfunctional career thoughts and three subscales (i.e., decision making confusion, commitment anxiety and external conflict).

Higher levels of anxiety and low self esteem (Betz and Hackett, 1981; Herr and Cramer, 1996) can lead to dysfunctional cognitions and perceptions that not only result in failure to realize individual
career potential, they may often cause the individual to avoid it altogether.

Anxiety is an important factor to consider regarding issues related to dysfunctional career thoughts. Anxiety has shown to be a prominent feature of career indecision (Newman, Fuqua and Seaworth, 1989). Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon and Saunders (1996) have noted a direct correlation between anxiety and dysfunctional career thought.

HYPOTHESIS

1) Pre to post and post to follow up decrease due to interventions will be evident on dysfunctional career thoughts (including three subscales i.e., decision making confusion, commitment anxiety, external conflict), as well as state-trait anxiety and increase in life satisfaction, self-efficacy, self esteem and achievement motivation at all the four levels of dysfunctional career thinking for both male and female students.

2) Under control condition no pre to post and post to follow up changes will be evident on dysfunctional career thoughts, life satisfaction, state-trait anxiety, self-efficacy, self esteem and achievement motivation scores at four levels of dysfunctional career thinking for both male and female university students.

METHODOLOGY

a) DESIGN

(2X2X4X3) (AXBXCXD) four factor RPMANOVA design with repeated measure on four factor, has been used Factor A (Gender) consists of two levels with equal number of (A1) males and (A2) females in all the groups. Factor B (Condition) consists of two levels-intervention condition (B1) and control condition (B2).Factor C (4 Levels of dysfunctional career thoughts) consisted of CTI scores less than 40 (C1), 40 to 50 (C2), 51 to 60 (C3) and greater than 60 (C4). No intervention has been given to the control condition and factor D
(trials of assessment), consists of 3 levels pre-intervention assessment (D1), post-intervention assessment (D2), and follow-up assessment trials (D3). The follow up assessment was taken after one month of intervention.

b) Sample

Based on CTI total scores out of 400 university students (200 boys and 200 girls) equal number of students (80 boys and 80 girls) experiencing four different levels of negative career thoughts were selected (20 boys and 20 girls at each level). This sample was further divided into groups, intervention and the control group, each with equal number of boys and girls (10 each) at all the four different levels of negative career thoughts.

INTERVENTION

The interventions were given to the students according to their respective levels of dysfunctional career thoughts:

I. Level 1:

At this level of dysfunctional career thoughts each item was discussed individually with the subject and the subjects was made aware of his/her dysfunctional career thinking.

II. Level 2:

At this level the degree of dysfunctional thinking was addressed in order to make the subject progress through the CASVE problem solving and decision making cycle. An individual action plan (IAP) was also prepared for the subject so that he/she can have a concrete plan of action with specific deadline.

III. Level 3:

At this level individual items were discussed and the subject actively rehearsed the reframed statements. Three to five statements were selected at one time and the practice session also consisted of reviewing a set of flash cards having the dysfunctional thought on one
side and the subject's own reframed one on the other side of the card. The talk aloud and think aloud protocol was used.

**IV. Level 4:**

At this level of dysfunctional career thoughts progressive relaxation and guided imagery was practiced on daily basis. Through paired associate learning the subject was helped to turn his/her dysfunctional statement into a more functional one. The dysfunctional statement was paired with a negatively reinforcing image connoting confusion and anxiety and a restructured statement was paired with a positively reinforcing, calming image such as waterfall or a beach scene.

**INSTRUMENTS USED**

(1) **Career thought inventory (CTI) Sampson et al., (1996)**

Sampson et al., (1996) prepared the career thoughts inventory (CTI) to measure the dysfunctional career thoughts. It is a well designed theoretically based, reliable and valid measure.

The inventory consists of 48 statements all worded negatively to represent the dysfunctional career thoughts. Besides the CTI total score three subscales decision making confusion (DMC), commitment anxiety (CA) and external conflict (EC) provides with an accurate picture of career thoughts of the individual.

(2) **Hindi version of STAI (Spielberger, Sharma and Singh, 1973)**

The Hindi version of state-trait anxiety inventory developed by Spielberger, Sharma and Singh (1973) provides an internally consistent, reliable, and valid and relatively brief self report measure for both A-Trait and A-State.

This scale consists of 40 items that assess the state-trait anxiety of the University students. Higher score indicates greater degree of
state-trait anxiety. The respondents respond on a four point rating scale almost never, sometimes, often and almost always.

(3) **Self-esteem inventory**

The self-esteem inventory prepared by Coopersmith (1975) consisting of 25 items was used to measure evaluative attitudes towards the self in social, academic, family and personal areas of experience which indicate the extent to which a person believes him/her self competent, successful, significant and worthy. The items are to be scored in terms of being like me or unlike me.

(4) **General self-efficacy scale-Hindi**

The generalized self-efficacy scale-Hindi developed by Sud, Schwarzer and Jerusalem (2002) is a ten item scale. Each item has four choice response pattern ranging from Not at all true which score 1 to Exactly true which score 4, The scale has a minimum score of 10 to a maximum score of 40.

(5) **Hindi version of Costello achievement motivation scale**

The Hindi version of achievement motivation scale constructed by Costello was adapted by Mishra and Srivastava (1990) is an adequate measure of achievement motivation. It consists of 24 items to be responded as yes or no. The test-retest and split half reliability coefficient were found 0.80 and 0.82 respectively.

(6) **Life satisfaction scale**

Life satisfaction developed by Alam and srivastava (1971) consists of 60 items related to six areas viz. health, personal, economic, marital, social and job. Every item is to be responded either in yes or no. The scores ranged from a minimum score of 15 to a maximum score of 60.

**PROCEDURE**

After selecting the sample, prior to the intervention, in group setting rapport was established. The university students were asked to
fill all the Questionnaires in the following order: Career thoughts inventory (CTI), Life satisfaction Scale, state-trait anxiety Questionnaires (STAI), Hindi self-efficacy scale, self-esteem Inventory (SEI) and Costello’s Achievement motivation scale. The intervention was given to the intervention group according to the level of the dysfunctional career thoughts individually. The control group was not given intervention. After the intervention all the groups including the control group were asked to fill the same Questionnaires again. A follow-up assessment was taken after one month for both the control condition as well as the intervention condition.

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

A four factor mixed design (2x2x4x3) measures over trials (the fourth factor) was carried out on the scores of each of the dependent variable to study the effect of the intervention.

**MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

a) Intervention is effective in reducing dysfunctional career thoughts, state-trait anxiety and enhancing life satisfaction, self-efficacy, self esteem and achievement motivation of the university students (both male and female).

b) As expected, no changes were perceived over the three trials in the scores of control condition on all the dependent variables assessment of the study, for both males and female university students.