Discussion

The main objectives of this research were to explore the internal and external factors influencing career maturity and career decision-making in adolescents. The objectives were formulated keeping in mind the need for research related to career development that is relevant to the Indian context. A mixed method design was used, and data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. This chapter will provide an interpretation and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the collected data. The relevance of the results of the present study and its relationship to existing research will be discussed.

This chapter has been organized into three parts. In the first part, the quantitative findings are discussed while in the second part the qualitative findings are discussed. The third part focusses on the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings. The results of this study reveal that both personal and extrinsic factors play a role in the career maturity and career decision-making of adolescents in this population.

Discussion of Quantitative Research Findings

The relationship of personality traits, metacognition and perceived parenting style with career maturity was explored. In addition, career maturity and its relationship with socio-economic status, gender, stream of study, decision status, and type of college were also investigated. The results are discussed below. Career maturity was assessed using the Career Maturity Inventory. Career maturity attitude and five areas of competency self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning and problem solving were studied.
Career maturity and personality. The relationship of big five personality traits with career maturity was explored. The significant negative correlation between neuroticism and career maturity attitude could be suggestive of the fact that a tendency to experience worry and anxiety may lead to lower ability to cope with developmental demands relating to career decision making and lead to less mature attitudes related to career choices. Individuals high on neuroticism are known to be anxious and vulnerable which may result in difficulties in decision making (Martincin & Stead, 2015). Similar findings have been reported by Lounsbury et al. (1999). Individuals high on neuroticism were also high on planning. This can be explained by the fact that such individuals may plan extensively to make sure that they are taking the right decisions.

The positive association between conscientiousness and attitude component of career maturity can be explained by the fact that individuals with attributes of orderliness, self-discipline, deliberation, and competence which are a part of conscientiousness are more likely to have higher career maturity and be disciplined about their career decision making. These results are in line with results reported by Chen and Liew (2015). However extreme rigidity and a tendency to make perfect choices may lead to some career decision-making difficulties. This was reported in the results of a meta-analysis of 21 studies by Martincin and Stead (2015). Individuals who are high on openness were seen to have more mature attitudes about career decision making and were high on self-appraisal in this study. Such participants may be more aware of personal abilities and may have more realistic expectations from careers.

Agreeableness and extraversion were not seen to have a significant correlation with any component of career maturity. This was also reported by Hartman (2006)
who found no association between agreeableness and career self-efficacy and Chen and Liew (2015) who reported no significant association between agreeableness and career decision-making difficulties.

These findings bring out the role of personality factors in career decision making. Awareness of the clinician about the relationship between personality and career decision making can help make the outcome of the counseling more effective. The contribution of the individual’s personality factors which may enhance or hinder effective choices may assist in resolving difficulties in the career decision-making process. However the small to moderate magnitude of the relationships needs to be kept in mind and warrants further research in this area.

**Career maturity and metacognition.** Research in the area of the relationship of metacognition with other phenomena has till now been limited to aspects of teaching and learning. This study attempted to explore if there was a relationship between metacognition and career maturity. No significant association was seen between career maturity and metacognition. The present results are contrary to previous research where metacognition was found to be positively related to career decidedness (Symes & Stewart, 1999; Kosine et al., 2008). However, research on the relationship between metacognition and career decision making is limited and inconsistent.

Several theories of career decision making and career development include the role of metacognitive aspects, and the results of this study propose the need to explore this relationship further. It also brings up the question if metacognition is a general skill or a domain specific skill as metacognition has been conceptualized as a multidimensional general set of skills (Schraw, 1998). The need to assess
metacognition as a general skill rather than a domain specific skill and the need to relate metacognition to various activities involving cognitive components like decision making has been stressed by Veenman, Van- Hout – Walters, and Afflerbach (2006). The research till date remains inconclusive.

Results of this study suggest that may be some aspects of metacognition is domain specific and may need tools tailored to assess the role of metacognition for specific domains. Difficulties in the assessment of metacognition have also been highlighted in literature as metacognition is not directly observable, and existing measures have a narrow focus (Lai, 2011). Hence the present results could have been influenced by this factor.

**Career decision making and parenting style.** Tables 11 and 12 show the relationship between career maturity and parenting styles. The results imply that parenting style is associated with the level of career maturity and also suggests the influence of family in the career decision-making process. This is further explored in the qualitative study. The results bring out the facilitative role of authoritative parenting and the inhibitive role of authoritarian parenting in career decision making. Studies in the western context have shown parenting style to be associated with aspects of career maturity and career decision-making. Indian society is considered to be collectivist in nature as compared to the individualistic focus of western cultures. An insight into how parent-child interactions, child rearing practices, and parenting styles affect career decision making in Indian adolescents can aid career counselors and lead to a better understanding of the career decision-making process.

Perceived parenting style was assessed in this study as in the Indian context parents have a significant role in making educational and career plans of children. In
this study the more authoritarian the parents were, the lower was the career maturity in these aspects. This can be understood in terms of autonomy that the children have in such a family set up. Lower self-knowledge and difficulty in differentiation between personal and parental goals in such a context was reported by Kerka (2000). Way and Rossman (as cited in Kerka, 2000) also highlighted the presence of a poor fit between the individual and his final choice of career because children with authoritarian parents may take career decisions based on pressure to conform to parental choices. Authoritarian parenting style was hypothesized to be positively associated with career decision-making self-efficacy in collectivist societies (Wu, 2009). However, in this study, authoritarian parenting style was seen to have a negative relationship with career maturity. This is supported by findings from a study by Koumoundourou et al. (2011) who found that children whose parents exercised strict control over their behaviour had more career decision-making difficulties. Even in the results of the qualitative study participants whose parents had not discussed career choices with them and who had made choices because of parents’ force were not happy with their decisions.

Authoritative parenting style is known to increase career exploration (Kracke 1997 as cited in Kerka, 2000). The results of the present study show that authoritative parenting style is facilitative for increasing career maturity in adolescents. This positive effect could be due to the atmosphere of warmth, clear standards and independence in the family which enables effective exploration and decision making.

Permissive parenting style was not significantly related to career maturity. This is contradictory to findings that state that permissive parenting style negatively affected the career decision-making process (Koumoundourou et al., 2011). However, similar findings were reported by Chen and Liew (2015) where they failed to find a
significant relationship between permissive parenting style and career decision-making difficulties.

It is suggested that guidance counselors devise counseling programs that will advocate collaboration with parents in guiding their respective children towards building a healthy career developmental path. Parents who adopt an authoritarian parenting style may be sensitized about the same and work can be done to improve communication channels between the adolescent and parent to facilitate effective choice making. Similarly, permissive parents can be counseled regarding the need for involvement from their side in this aspect of their child’s life. Parents can be given tips on incorporating aspects of authoritative parenting in their interactions with their children.

**Gender and career decision making.** In the present study gender differences were seen in some aspects of career maturity while both male and female participants were found to be comparable on others. Gender differences may be attributed to gender role socialization from childhood which is seen to influence educational and career choices by narrowing the range of opportunities based on gender (McMohan & Patton as cited in Clutter, 2010; Adya & Kaiser 2005). It can lay the foundation for an individual’s perceptions of career options. Every society has its perceptions about careers for its male and female members. Traditional Indian societal structure was rigid, with male children being groomed for work outside the home while the female children were trained to take up household responsibilities. However, with changing times, this rigid differentiation of roles is reducing, and women have made a foray into occupations traditionally considered a male area. This shift is evident in the present results where female participants had higher scores in some aspects of career maturity. Gender roles in India have been changing especially in the urban middle-
class population (Natarajan, 2010). Both male and female children are treated similarly by a majority of parents, and many women have been successful in many professions. This may be the reason why male and female participants had similar attitudes towards career decisions. Gender differences were absent in their sample as reported by Bakshi et al. (2012).

**Socio-economic status and career decision making.** Socio-economic status of the family determines educational opportunities, parental support, and parental aspirations. In the present study career maturity attitude, competence and career aspirations differed between participants belonging to different socio-economic classes. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds showed greater career maturity than students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. These findings are in keeping with previous literature (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2006; Ferry, 2006) that indicates the role of socio-economic status in career decision making.

This could be due to wider exposure to career-related information available to students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Awareness and opportunities available may be higher for such students. The family atmosphere may also influence the process of career choice. Similar thoughts have been expressed by Soresi, Nota, Ferrari, and Ginevra (2014). They propose that students from higher socio-economic status backgrounds may have greater avenues for professional development and social contacts which may help directly or indirectly. Parents from lower socio-economic status families may also struggle with providing guidance regarding career development to their children, and such students may also have low exposure to effective role models whom they can look up to resulting in lower career maturity.

Socio-economic status and social class also influence the values and
expectations of parents which may then be passed on to the children. Therefore socio-economic status can influence both tangible aspects like finances, quality of schools and non-tangible aspects like attitudes about occupations (Clutter, 2010). Parents of adolescents from higher socio-economic backgrounds are seen to have higher aspirations and offer more support for educational and occupational goals of their children (Bandura et al., 2001). These findings also provide support to social cognitive career theory which advocates that financial constraints in the family can limit opportunities and experiences.

Career aspirations also differed between participants belonging to different socio-economic classes in this study. Participants from upper middle and upper classes had higher career aspirations and expressed plans to pursue post-graduate education. Most participants from lower middle and lower socio-economic status planned to start working immediately after undergraduate studies. This could be due to the financial need in the family and the necessity for the children to become financially independent as early as possible and contribute to the family income. These findings are in keeping with previous literature (Arulmani & Nag Arulmani, 2006; Ferry, 2006) that indicates the role of socio-economic status in career decision making. Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani (2006) found that perceived career barriers to career preparation were highest in lower socioeconomic status groups and lowest in upper-middle-class groups. Students’ career expectations and aspirations were also influenced by the prestige level of their parents’ occupation. Social class also influences the career options available to individuals which along with personality and developmental experiences, in turn, influences career choices (Metheny, 2009).

**College type, stream of study.** Career maturity was found to be significantly higher in students from private colleges in comparison with students from government
colleges on all aspects of career maturity. Similar findings were reported by Dhillon and Kaur (2005), Sivakumar and Sridhar (2016), and Sirohi (2013) whose research indicates that private school students have higher career maturity when compared to government school students. The environment in private colleges may be more conducive for development of skills and competencies that help in increasing career maturity. The activities conducted and the programs that students are exposed to in private colleges may help shape their attitude towards careers and academics which may be reflected in their career maturity scores. On the other hand, government colleges may not be having a similar atmosphere. Further students from government colleges may be coming from financially less privileged families which may limit their exposure and access to information and opportunities suggesting a need to increase exposure to government college students. This also brings out the need to tailor separate career guidance programs specifically for students studying in government schools and private schools. This can help increase career maturity to facilitate better career decision-making.

The results reveal that largely there was no difference in most aspects of career maturity between students studying in Arts, Science and Commerce streams. There is a tendency in our society to give preference to science stream related options in comparison to Arts. It is believed that students in the Science stream are more capable than students in the Arts stream. This stereotype was also expressed by the participants in the second phase of this study. However, the results of this analysis do not reveal significant differences with respect to career maturity. These results are contrary to the findings of Dahiya (2014) who found career maturity to vary between the streams and Science students to have higher career maturity than students from other streams. Measures can be taken to sensitize parents to reconsider stereotypes.
that are present to aid children to choose streams and careers based on personal interest and ability.

**Decision status and career maturity.** In the present study decided and undecided participants differed significantly on attitude and competence aspects of career maturity. Students who were decided were seen to have higher levels of career maturity. Indecisiveness regarding career plans is considered as a normal developmental stage. 51% of the participants in the present study reported that they had not yet decided on their career choice. Similar findings were also reported in a study conducted by Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2014) where 64% of the research sample had not made a career choice and where a majority of them who had made a choice had not investigated the same. Students also reported about worry regarding their indecision. However, this may lead to ineffective decision making and missed opportunities (Landine, 2013). Career indecision if not resolved appropriately can lead to sub-optimal career planning and development which has long term effects on the individual’s life. Hence vocational interventions need to focus on increasing career maturity and career decidedness of the adolescents to aid effective career development.

The results of the regression analyses showed poor to average predictability of variance in career maturity attitude and competence. The exact relationship between these combinations of predictor variables with career maturity is not explored in literature. Personality, parenting style, gender, socio-economic status, decision status and metacognition have been studied individually or in combination with other variables in relation to career maturity and other aspects of career decision making. The results reveal that these variables do influence career maturity to some degree while other variables not included in this research may also be influencing the same.
The results can impact change by encouraging further research to understand the role of these above factors in career maturity. The unexplained variability in this phase can be explained partially by the results of qualitative part of this research. Most studies have explored combinations of factors influencing career development (Arulmani & Nag- Arulmani, 2006; Bullock-Yowell et al., 2011; Creed & Patton, 2003; Datu, 2012; Ferry, 2006; Hasan, 2006). They have concluded that various combinations of factors are associated with career maturity at different levels. They advocate future research to explore other possible combinations of variables that influence career development.

Discussion of Qualitative Research Findings

30 participants participated in a semi-structured interview designed to explore career choices and factors influencing the same in adolescents. An in-depth analysis of the data revealed two global themes from the data. They are academic and career choices and factors influencing career choices. The global themes and sub-themes are discussed below.

Theme 1: Career and Academic Choices

Different aspects related to career and academic choices emerged from the data. The theme of academic and career choices are discussed under the sub-themes satisfaction with career choice, decision status, decision making as a process from eighth standard, tenth standard to 12th standard, sources of information about careers and career expectations.

Satisfaction with career choice was seen to be dependent on other factors like the influence of family, practical constraints and personal factors. The key career task in adolescence according to Super’s developmental theory is exploration and tentative decision making. Career decidedness and indecision have been studied extensively in
literature. (Lounsbury et al., 2005; Lounsbury et al., 1999). Most participants in this phase reported of having reached a final or tentative decision regarding their academic/ career choice. This shows that they are in the expected stage of exploration. Tentative decisions and ideas about career are known to start in early adolescence. Decisions regarding career choices of participants were seen to have changed with decisions becoming more definite in twelfth standard than they were in tenth standard and eighth standard. Participants attributed this to increase in maturity level and knowledge. This can be explained by the concept of vocational self-concept crystallization. The older individuals get, the higher was their autonomy and vocational maturity. Vocational self-concept crystallization refers to the extent to which an individual has an idea about interests, abilities, traits and attitudes and it is known to increase with age (Landine, 2013). This was also reported by Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani (2006) who found that in their sample career awareness levels were higher in 12th standard students in comparison to 10th standard students though scores were lower than desirable for both age groups. Similarly, decisions were found to be not stable in a mixed method study conducted by Bakshi et al. (2012). They found that in their sample consisting of youth from Mumbai 38.5% had changed their decision at least once.

Theories like Cognitive Information Processing theory indicate the importance of self and occupational knowledge in decision making. Career exploration which involves active seeking of information about vocational choices is essential to developing career maturity and making the right choices. In the present study participants were asked about sources of information they had to help decision making. The results revealed that students tend to make choices based on information from one or two sources and may not indulge in an active process of information
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seeking related to potential educational and career choices. The main sources of information as seen were family members. Lack of adequate information increases career decision-making difficulties while correct and adequate exposure and awareness increases the possibility of informed and optimal career choices (Joseph, 2012). Only a few participants reported the use of media to gain information and aid them in the process of career decision making. This finding needs to be understood in the context in which the participants come from. In this age where technology has made an entry into every aspect of a person’s life, it is surprising that majority of the participants did not use technology to aid them in the process of career decision making. This finding can be used to encourage appropriate use of technology to facilitate awareness building about career options. Surprisingly even in a developed country like UK students reported minimal use of internet and formal sources like career counselling (4%) to gain information regarding occupational choices. 76% of students indicated that parental advice was influential in their decision making (Millward et al., 2006). These findings are also contrary to research which states that television is one of the main sources of information in the career choice process (Sharma, 2015). These results also suggest the need for provision of adequate career information to adolescents. This has also been suggested by Julien (1999) who highlighted the lack of knowledge about sources of information and careers in the participants of their study.

A career is looked upon as a means to fulfill a person’s material and psychological needs. The expectations a person has from his/her career will influence the choices that he makes. Hence in the present study, this was explored. Financial gain and financial security were the main expectations that participants had from their career. The expectation was that a career should help them look after personal and
family financial needs. Careers that did not have financial growth opportunities were not preferred by participants as well as their parents. Job security and work satisfaction were the other expectations that participants had from their careers. This can be seen as a valid point for consideration as the primary purpose of having a career is to earn a livelihood and support oneself and one’s family. In a similar a study conducted by the P.Hd Research Bureau (2014) on youth in India, they found that participants preferred jobs that gave them security, financial stability, and growth opportunities. These findings are also reflected in the results of a study by Koech et al. (2016) who found that career choices were influenced by career benefit factors like economic growth and stability, job opportunities, growth opportunities, and job satisfaction. Differences in expectations from careers were also reported by Millward et al. (2006) where boys placed more importance on financial aspects of a prospective job while girls reported considering the balance a job will allow between family and work. 72% of the sample expressed that pay was an important consideration when choosing a job and financial security was a major expectation that people had from their careers.

Awareness about these aspects of career choices may help career counselors be more sensitive and make the career counseling process individualized and more effective.

**Theme 2: Factors influencing career decisions**

Several factors were seen to influence career choice making in the present study. The sub-themes were internal factors, career related factors and external factors. The sub-themes are discussed below.

**Internal factors.** Factors intrinsic to the individual were found to influence career choices. Personal interest was one of the main factors. Choices made on the
basis of personal interest may lead to better satisfaction and productivity. The importance of the personal interest in one’s career has also been stressed by Anojan & Nimalathasan (2013). Many participants expressed that their personal interest and personal factors were an important factor in their career decision making. It indicates the presence of awareness about self and occupational knowledge. This finding is also supported by literature that states that the role of self as one of the factors rated highest in career choice decisions by youth in Mumbai (Bakshi et al., 2012) and also in a study by Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2014) where the most common reason for a choice was personal interest. This suggests a change in the society where caste based occupation selection was the traditional norm. Identity formation is one of the key developmental tasks of adolescence. The need to be different and value placed on personal freedom by some participants can be explained in the background of this developmental period. Some of the other personal factors that emerged from the data were liking, aptitude or lack of aptitude for a subject or field and future prospects.

Career related factors. The opportunities for growth, stability and ease associated with a profession were considered by participants when evaluating a future career. Careers with higher scope, opportunities, growth and ease were preferred. However, financial prospects were a big determinant. This is in line with findings reported by Agarwala (2008) and the results of the Youth Economic survey (Ph.D. Research Bureau, 2014). It also reflects the findings of a study by Koech et al. (2016) who found the influence of career related factors like opportunities for growth, financial stability, and job satisfaction to be significant and higher than the influence of family and peers.

The belief that being in a certain desirable profession will increase their status and respect in society was expressed by the participants in the interviews. This
influenced their future choice. The interest for or against a certain profession is guided by the attribution of prestige and respect to that occupation. Occupations are often more preferred or less preferred based on their position in a hierarchy of prestige. These beliefs and attitudes influence societal, personal and family attitudes which in turn influences the person’s inclination towards or against a profession. In the current study, this has been a strong theme that was observed. It was seen more in students from private colleges who mostly belonged to middle and upper socio-economic class. The prestige associated with occupations like engineering and medicine leads to many families’ pressurizing their children to choose these occupations at times even against their choice without taking into consideration their personal interest and aptitude. The presence of bias against professions associated with occupations associated with Arts streams was also seen. Parents did not desire their children to choose Arts stream as they believed that this choice had restricted scope and future opportunities. This was also reported by Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani (2006). In a list that they had made, doctors and engineers were on the top while blue collar occupations were seen to be in the bottom of the list. Parental approval was also highest for medicine and engineering and lower for vocational occupations and blue collar vocations. Regarding the choice of stream, science was the most preferred while Arts was preferred the least. They also found that students from middle and upper middle socio economic status were influenced more by factors of prestige and approval by parents. This has also been reported by Simmons (2008) where participants reported the presence of stereotypes attached to careers that are not perceived to be mainstream and financially lucrative. The role of attitudes of the extended family has been reported by some participants in this study.

**External factors.** Factors external to the individual also played a major role in
the decision making of the participants. The main sub-themes are family and social factors.

The results revealed that family had a major influence over the final choice of the individual. The influence was either facilitative or inhibitive. This has also been reported by Sands (2011). This is also supported by literature which proposes that Indians perceive parental regulation as expected behaviour of parents and as a sign of warmth and concern (Shalini & Acharya, 2013). Adolescence is an age of transition where adolescents are still dependent on their families for the fulfillment of needs both psychologically and physically. This applies especially to the Indian society where parents consider it their duty to provide for the children till they are settled career wise. This can explain the involvement that families have in the career decision making of their child in adolescence.

Parents and immediate family members play the role of facilitators to all the key decisions taken by an individual. Parental role in career decisions of children has been demonstrated in their research by Clutter (2010), Creamer and Laughlin (2005), and Hairston (2000). Parental influence is seen to be consistent across cultures and gender (Ferry, 2006). The role father’s play in shaping the career choices of their children is evident from some of the responses. This may be attributed to the patriarchal structure of the Indian society. If the father is the main breadwinner and decision maker in the family, it is natural for children to look up to them for guidance and support. Participants also considered their father as a role model. The active role that fathers play is elaborated by Joseph (2012). They may either be a role model or direct instructor to their children. The work patterns and social position of parents were seen to impact children’s career interests. Effective role models can provide a vicarious learning experience about professional careers. The prominent role of
parents as a role model for career choices has also been reported in other research (Ferry, 2006). Similar results are reported by Mohd et al. (2010) where 70% of 1436 students reported father as being most influential in their career planning. They may either be a role model or direct instructor to their children. Some participants also reported the inhibitive influence of a family structure where they felt pressured to make career choices that were acceptable to their parents but against their personal desires. This kind of negative involvement by parents may result in frustration and lower satisfaction and thereby lower productivity in future career life.

Family support was another major theme that emerged from the data. The presence or absence of family support influenced career choice and made a difference to satisfaction levels with their choice. Children look up to their parents for guidance and material or emotional support in making career plans. Since they are still dependent on parents for emotional and financial support, adolescents will have to consider the choices and preferences of parents in this matter. This is also supported by results of a survey consisting of 3000 Indian students where 73% of students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses were financially dependent on their parents (Ph.D. Research Bureau, 2014). Bakshi et al. (2012) in their paper have discussed the results of a study by Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani in 1995 on 654 young Indian professionals, and it was reported that 70% of their sample stated that parents had influenced their career choice. Keller (2004) has also indicated that students with support and love from parents are more skilled in thinking about career choices and make more effective career decisions. Family support was also seen to be linked to perceived barriers in a study by Hill et al. (2003). Lack of support can also result in pressurizing a child to make choices against their personal desire and can be detrimental to effective decision making and satisfaction with their careers in the
future. Parental approval and support were linked to future career prospects and status associated with certain professions as seen in the present study. Simmons (2008) found parental approval to be high for well-defined and financially lucrative careers. The influence of parental approval and attribution of prestige for different occupations on the development of career interests has been highlighted by Arulmani (2013).

The socio-economic background of the family influences the family environment, attitude, and opportunities that are available to an adolescent. Many participants reported of financial constraints being the reason they were not able to make a choice that interested them. This observation was also made by Sands (2011). Further, the career plans of students coming from financially privileged families were seen to be markedly different from those from lower income families. Students from government college background and those coming from lower socio economic status, lower-middle socio economic status had more financial constraints than students from private colleges. This is supported by literature which states that in the Indian context financial barriers and family responsibilities were perceived as a major barrier to career preparation in the low socio economic status group (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2006). Financial barriers are the barriers commonly expressed by people to pursue their choice of a career (Clutter, 2010). Difficulties of students from lower socio economic status homes to continue studies and encouragement from parents from middle and upper classes has been highlighted by Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014). Also, parents of adolescents from higher socio-economic backgrounds are seen to have higher aspirations and offer more support for educational and occupational goals of their children (Bandura et al., 2001). This was also seen in the results of the present study.

Participants from upper-middle and upper classes had higher career aspirations
and expressed plans to pursue post-graduate education. Most participants from lower-middle and lower socio-economic status planned to start working immediately after undergraduate studies. This could be due to the financial need of the family and the necessity for the children to become financially independent as early as possible and contribute to the family income. Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani (2006) found that perceived career barriers to career preparation were highest in lower socio-economic status groups and lowest in upper-middle-class groups.

Family attitude towards an occupational or academic choice was a major theme that emerged. In the Indian society preference for careers is decided by the level of prestige associated with each career, with careers associated with technology and science scoring high on the prestige list (Adya & Kaiser, 2005). Generally, most careers are seen to lie somewhere on a continuum of prestige associated with it. This was also seen in the present study. The prestige associated with occupations like engineering and medicine leads to many families’ pressurizing their children to choose these occupations at times even against their choice without taking into consideration their personal interest and aptitude. The presence of bias against occupations associated with Arts streams was also seen. Parents did not desire their children to choose Arts stream as they believed that this choice had restricted scope and future opportunities. The family also looked at desirable occupations as a means to increase their social status and placed importance on society’s views about the same. This influenced their future choice. This finding was also reported in another study where in a list that the researchers had made doctors and engineers were on the top while blue collar occupations were seen to be in the bottom of the list. Parental approval was also highest for medicine and engineering and lower for vocational occupations and blue collar vocations. Regarding the choice of stream, science was
the most preferred while Arts was preferred the least. It has been reported that students from middle and upper middle socio economic status were influenced more by factors of prestige and approval by parents (Arulmani & Nag- Arulmani, 2006). Similar results have also been reported by Simmons (2008) where participants reported the presence of stereotypes attached to careers that are not perceived to be mainstream and financially lucrative narrowing career choices. The relationship between societal, family and personal attitudes and its impact on career choice is highlighted in the results of the present study.

Open family communication was seen to be linked to higher satisfaction with choices and more planned decision making in participants. The importance of open communication in the family has also been stressed by Keller (2004). Openness in communication, exchange of information and attempt to understand children’s desires leads to more career exploration in adolescents (Vondracek & Hartung as cited in Soresi et al. 2014). However, some participants reported the absence of effective communication related to career choice making in their families due to various reasons. This may be detrimental for effective career decision making and can be very frustrating for the adolescent. Hence career counselors may need to be sensitive to communication patterns in the family and encourage open and clear means of communication.

Parental expectations both explicit and implicit also guides career choices of adolescents as they communicate the same indirectly or directly to their children (Sands, 2011). Parental expectations in adolescence generally center around desires related to their child’s academic performance and career ambitions and can influence decisions that are taken (Sasikala & Karunanidhi, 2011). Participants in this study reported that mostly there was a match between expectations from a career of parents
and themselves. However, in some instances, the specific career choice plans and the means to fulfill those plans differed between parents and children. Simmons (2008) reported that in many cases where parents are supportive and offer guidance, students reported a basic match between expectations and explained the difficulties associated with non-alignment with parental expectations. Similarly, Sawitri et al. (2014) found higher confidence in adolescents regarding their career tasks when there was adolescent- parent career congruence.

Participants whose career plans were consistent with those of their parents seemed more confident to go ahead with their plans. This could be due to the collectivist nature of our society where much onus is given to group harmony and acceptance. This suggests the need for career counselors to be aware of perceived parental expectations and presence/absence of congruence regarding career plans between adolescents and parents in the process of career counseling.

Few participants expressed the presence of family expectations and pressure in the area of career choice. Parents were seen to steer and motivate children to study hard and stressed on the need to make the right choices. This was more seen in students coming from middle-class families where it is inevitable that the vocational success of the adolescent in later life is entirely dependent on his efforts. This is also seen in literature where parents pushed their children to perform well academically (Hairston, 2000; Olaosebikan, & Olusakin, 2014). Parents may view the importance of academic excellence as the first stone to vocational success but may be perceived by children as pressure from the parents. However, it was also seen in some cases where high expectations from parents motivated children to work harder and set high expectations for themselves. So the expectations of parents and children need to be given due attention when trying to understand career development in adolescents.
The influence of society in the form of social cognitions or beliefs held in the society regarding careers and its influence on the individual and family was seen in the present study. Prestige value for occupations, beliefs regarding gender and career options in society and its influence was expressed by participants. In the Indian society preference for careers is decided by the level of prestige associated with each career, with careers related to technology and science and medicine scoring high on the prestige list (Adya & Kaiser, 2005). In many cases, societal attitudes have influenced family attitudes which in turn has had an effect on the final choices of participants. Differential attitudes towards careers for men and women in society was present in the traditional Indian societal structure which pictured certain occupations as the domain of men while certain other occupations as a more favourable choice for women. Though this mindset is changing the presence of these stereotypes can be felt in the results of the present study and therefore needs to be kept in mind when trying to understand the position of participants and their families in the career guidance process.

Gottfredson’s theory of occupational choice highlights the role of gender in shaping career choices. The role of gender stereotypes held by participants and their family members was explored in this study. The aim was to see if gender stereotypes were present and if yes how they influenced the career choices of participants. The results show a mixed influence of gender on career decisions. Some participants reported the presence of differences in attitude towards careers for boys and girls in their families. They had higher expectations from careers for boys than girls. Certain occupations were also considered more suitable for a particular gender. Similar findings were reported in a study by Millward et al. (2006) where they reported the influences of gender stereotypes on adolescents’ career choices. The issue of marriage
of girl children and of them becoming a part of another family may be one reason why parents have more expectations from male children and expect them to take over financial responsibilities of the family. This finding was also reported in a study where they found the presence of gender biases. Families were keener on making the right choices for their sons but were more liberal with their daughters (Bakshi et al., 2012). At the same time, however, many participants indicated that their family had similar career expectations for children irrespective of gender. This is indicative of a shift in attitude where girls are now encouraged to study, work and be independent. Personally also they reported no difference based on gender. Female participants also expressed keenness in pursuing a professional career. This is similar to findings by Julien (1999) where female participants also showed career commitment and aimed to work outside of home. This understanding of factors like gender and the influence they have on career choices and working with these social cognitions may help facilitate effective decision making which is acceptable to the individual and family.

Cross analysis of themes revealed relationships across themes and sub-themes. The following propositions were drawn from the data.

1) Individuals who had freedom to make a preferred career choice were satisfied with their career choice.

2) Individuals who had family support and guidance were more satisfied with their career choice than participants whose choice was forced.

3) Individuals who felt that there was open family communication, were more satisfied than people whose choice was forced.

4) Individuals whose choice was based on personal interest were more satisfied with their choice than participants whose choice was forced.
Figure 6. Factors aiding satisfaction with career choice.

5) Individuals whose choice was not based on personal interest were seen to be less satisfied with their choice.

6) Individuals whose choice made due to practical constraints were seen to be less satisfied with their choice.

7) Individuals whose choice was made due to parental force and family pressure were seen to be less satisfied with their choice.

Figure 7. Influence of family pressure and forced choice on satisfaction with choice.
8) Individuals with freedom to make a choice were seen to have a supportive family with open communication.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 8.** Relationship between supportive family, open communication, and freedom for choice.

9) Family financial condition influences family attitude towards a career choice.

10) Family financial condition influences family pressure to make particular career choices and family support for personal career choice.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 9.** Relationship between family financial condition, family attitude, family pressure and family support with career choice.
11) Family support for choice is influenced by family attitude for or against certain professions, family financial conditions, and future career prospects of the choice.

![Diagram showing factors influencing family support.]

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12) Family attitude for or against certain professions is influenced by societal attitude for the same.

![Diagram showing influence of attitude of society on family attitude towards careers.]

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13) Gender influences attitude towards a career with higher expectations for boys and restrictions for girls in many families.
Figure 12. Gender and career choice.

These were some of the relationships that were observed in the data. The results of the second phase of the study brought out the perceived role of individual factors, career related factors and family and social factors in the career choice making of the participants. It also highlighted some aspects related to career decision making.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Participants’ final choices with respect to their career in many cases may have been due to personal choice or external reasons. Career maturity, one aspect of career decision making and its relationship with personality, metacognition, perceived parenting style, socio economic status, gender, college type, stream of study and decision status was investigated in the quantitative phase. In extension, the qualitative phase explored various other aspects of career choices and influences on career decisions.
The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of data in the current study reveal that individual factors like personality, gender, and personal interest influenced career choices along with factors like family socio economic status, family support, attitude towards careers, communication, parental expectations and parenting style. Social factors and career related factors also played a role in this aspect. The findings from the qualitative interviews expand the quantitative results in several areas.

The statistical analysis revealed the association between some personality traits and career maturity. The interviews highlighted other personal factors like personal interest, personal career expectations and personal satisfaction that was taken into account by participants when choosing a tentative career option. The quantitative results also revealed the association between socio-economic status, gender, and college type with career maturity. The data from the semi-structured interviews explored and explained these associations further. Career maturity was higher in participants from higher socio-economic status and private colleges. Similarly, it was seen in the qualitative findings that career aspirations of students from private colleges were different from students from government colleges. These associations explain the way in which socio-economic status influences the opportunities and career options available to individuals. Though no differences in career maturity were seen between students studying in the Arts, Science and Commerce streams differences in attitude of family and society about these streams of study and careers associated with them was seen in the data from the interviews. Participant’s views expressed the occupational stereotypes and biases for or against occupations.

The quantitative phase also explored only one aspect of family and parental influence on the adolescent’s career maturity, i.e. perceived parenting style. Other
aspects of family and society like key people in the family, guidance and support from family, family financial conditions, family attitude, family communication, parental expectations, societal attitudes that influenced career decision making were highlighted in the qualitative findings. The semi-structured interviews helped to explain the role that these factors play in an in-depth manner.

Thus, the results bring out the complexity of the career decision-making process itself. It also highlights the complex interaction between personal and external factors in career decision making. Indian youth are now exposed to western values which encourage independent thinking and decision making. These choices however in the present sample were more or less within the acceptable category by the family and society. Though some participants cited personal freedom to choose as a major factor the question remains whether the onus of the choice would still be the same if the profession/course chosen was radically different from general family or societal norms because the traditional values of obedience to the family was also seen to be a significant influence.

The family according to family systems theory provides opportunities, resources and regulates activities of their children (Bakshi et al., 2012). It is within this framework of parental and societal expectations that children use their own decision-making skills and make choices. Therefore adolescents have a role to play in their development. However, their “free will” operates in the context of a family and a larger context of society. This was seen in the present study. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Bakshi et al. (2012) who found that both self and family were important influences on career choice making in young adults. This highlights the role of both family and personal factors in the career decision-making activity. This can be explained by Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription, developmental contextual
theory and action perspectives which advocate the reciprocal influence of individual and his context on each other and their combined influence on career development (Bakshi et al., 2012). Other researchers like Ghosh (2016) and Millward et al. (2006) have also found the interaction of personal and family factors in career decision making.

The study aimed to understand the psychosocial factors associated with career decision making of adolescents. The quantitative phase highlighted the associations between career maturity and individual factors like personality and gender, and contextual factors like socio-economic status, type of college, parenting style. The results of the qualitative phase expanded the findings of the quantitative study by highlighting the role of family and social factors, individual factors like personal interest and career related factors that influence career choices of adolescents. Together these results provide an understanding of the varied aspects of and factors influencing career decisions in adolescents. The need for a comprehensive understanding of the multiple factors that influence one of the most important decisions in an individual’s life has also been highlighted in literature.

The results reveal that internal and external factors together influence career choices and career maturity. Adolescents play an active role in their decisions but are influenced by their contextual factors. Internal factors like personality traits and personal interest were seen to play a role along with family, social and contextual influences. The importance of the relationship between parents and children has emerged in the results of this study. Career decision making can be construed as a joint child-parent activity drawing on the idea of Young et al. (as cited in Koumoundourou et al., 2011). Therefore career counselors need to understand various aspects of an adolescent’s life before formulating an intervention plan. They need to
work with parents and children to formulate and achieve common career goals.