Chapter V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Summary of the study:

Issues of distributive justice pervade social life. They occur not only at the societal level but also in intimate social relations. In schools, questions arise in connection with who gets the teacher's attention, who gets what marks and how much of school's resources are to be allocated for students who are socio-economically disadvantaged and physically challenged. Similarly, distribution of pay, promotions, and benefits are also quite common problems in work settings. Also issues related to distributive justice are involved in health care and medical practices. How scarce or expensive medical resources are to be allocated? Most of the time fair decision making is very difficult in all these situations. So the concept of distributive justice is a multifaceted issue which deserves extensive research. Most of the researches on distributive justice were conducted in organizational settings. Studies conducted on school students explored the effect of age and gender on distributive justice. Researches on distributive justice in Indian context are rare except few studies on age and distributive justice. In this research an attempt has been made to explore the pattern of distributive justice and its correlates in different groups of school going adolescents.

The present investigation purported to determine:

- The pattern of distributive justice of students with respect to different demographic variables such as age, gender, medium of instruction in schools, economic background, parental education, mother's and father's occupation & family type.
- The relationship of distributive justice of students with different dimensions of parenting style as perceived by them.
- The relationship of distributive justice of students with altruistic behaviour.
- The relationships of distributive justice of students with trait anger and anger control.
- The relationship of distributive justice of students with different dimensions of parenting style as perceived by mothers.
Agreement between distributive justice of students and distributive justice views of students as perceived by their mothers.

On the basis of the objectives of the study the research design was prepared incorporating relevant variables. The response variable was distributive justice of students. This variable included four developmental stages namely, stage 1 (equality), stage 1.5 (merit), stage 2 (need) and stage 2.5 (both need and merit). In the present study developmental stages of distributive justice of students were considered as both nominal and ordinal categories. Predictor variables were divided into three categories such as demographic variable, socio-cultural variable and personality traits. Demographic variables included age, gender, medium of instruction in schools, economic background, parental education, parental occupation and family type. Socio-cultural variable incorporated different dimensions of parenting style (authoritarian, authoritative and permissive). Personality traits included altruistic behaviour and anger (trait anger and anger control).

Several research hypotheses were formulated for the study. First five hypotheses (H1 to H5) were developed regarding students only and H6 and H7 were formulated relating students with their mothers.

The present study was conducted on school going adolescents aged between 13 to 15 years of age. Students (N=687; 331 boys and 356 girls) were selected from Bengali and English medium schools under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) by following the method of simple random sampling without replacement (SRSWOR). Apart from this, 400 mothers agreed to give response.

Students were administered several standardized measures to give their responses regarding their perception of distributive justice, parenting style, altruistic behaviour, trait anger and anger control. Along with students willing mothers (N=400) also provided responses regarding the perception of their own parenting style and the perception of their children’s distributive justice. After collecting the data several statistical analysis were carried out and the results indicated the following features:

(A) The pattern of distributive justice of students varies significantly with respect to age. Mid adolescents are more likely to coordinate between two principles of distributive justice instead of choosing a single principle. This result is partially supported by the findings of
Thompson and Jones (2005) which states that the coordination and consideration of more than one claim to the reward allocation increases with age. Other than choosing the combined principle (both need and merit) of distributive justice, mid adolescents also prefer equality principle. Interestingly, it is found that the percentage of preferring this principle is significantly higher among early adolescents. The result showing preference of equality over merit principle by adolescents is being supported by the findings of Krishnan (1987) which reveals the preference for equality over equity principle. Percentage of choosing other two principles of distributive justice such as need and merit is higher among mid adolescents than early adolescent. The probable reasons behind these findings are as follows:

- During mid adolescence, teens acquire greater abilities to see consequences of actions and able to show more thoughtful and responsible decision making process (Egbert, 2002).

- According to Kohlberg (1969) during mid adolescence, (after 13 years) children enter into post-conventional level of morality reasoning which make them mature enough to choose higher order (coordination between need and merit) justice principle.


(B) Gender plays an important role in the development of distributive justice of students. The percentage of choosing both need and merit principle is slightly higher in boys than girls. But the intriguing part of the finding is that other than choosing both need and merit principle of distributive justice, girls are equality oriented whereas boys are merit orientated. The possible explanation for this difference between adolescent boys and girls is that boys and girls differ with respect to their self-concept which makes girls more concerned in promoting interpersonal harmony and people-oriented while boys give emphasis on achievement and competence (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1975). The inclination towards achievement and competence make boys merit oriented whereas tendency to foster interpersonal harmony make girls equality oriented.

(C) Medium of instruction in schools is another deciding factor in the development of distributive justice concept in school going adolescents. The percentage of choosing both need and merit principle is higher among Bengali medium students than English medium students.
whereas reverse trend is evident in case of other three principles such as need, merit and equality principle. It may be partly due to experiencing conflict in the usage of language by Bengalee students who study in English medium schools. In this respect students who are studying in Bengali medium schools are in advantageous position that they can use their mother tongue i.e. Bengali language in both school and home as a tool of their communication. Study conducted by Karande & Kulkarni (2005) reveals that children are admitted to English medium schools as their parents believe that this would help them progress in life. But in most of the cases children face the added burden of "language barrier" as they come from non-English speaking families, which lead to many destructive outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and alienation (Trice, 2004) and consequently impairing ability to receive effective education and fair decision making regarding any social issue.

(D) Economic background of the family does not have significant impact on the pattern of distributive justice of adolescents.

(E) Parental education especially mothers' educational level plays a significant role in the development of distributive justice of adolescents. The percentage of choosing both need and merit principle is highest among adolescents whose mothers are well educated but fathers are less educated followed by those whose both parents are well educated and so on. This may be explained by the fact that well educated mothers provide better environment for their children by providing inspiring family resources (Carniero, Meghir & Parey, 2007). Another possible explanation for this finding is that education of parents contribute to the development of critical thinking ability of adolescents (Alpay-Altug, Ozkan & Alpay, 1998). Critical thinking helps adolescents to weigh between the two principles of distributive justice instead of preferring a single principle of distributive justice. Well educated parents, especially mothers may provide enriched cognitive stimulation and encourage verbal interaction that produce positive effect on children's cognitive development and thus improve the capacity of considering two principles of distributive justice simultaneously instead of choosing a single principle of distributive justice.

(F) The pattern of distributive justice of students is not found to be associated with family type such as joint and nuclear family.

(G) Father's and mother's occupation do not play any significant role in the pattern of distributive justice of school going adolescents.
Regression analysis also reveals that age, gender, medium of instruction in schools and parental education, especially mother’s educational level, are the most important predictors of the pattern of distributive justice of adolescents. The analysis suggests that mid adolescents are more likely (more than 1.5 times) to choose both need and merit principle than early adolescents. Critical thinking ability, cognitive processing and integration ability improve with increasing age in the period of adolescence (Alpay-Altug, Ozkan & Alpay, 1998). Boys are about 1.7 times more likely to prefer highest principle (both need and merit) of distributive justice. Bengali medium students are significantly more likely to consider both need and merit than English medium students. Mother tongue based education encourages active involvement of the learners, cooperation between teacher and learner, happy atmosphere in class and thus enhancing the capability of fair decision making. Students with educated parents especially mothers are more likely to integrate between two principles of distributive justice than those with less educated parents. Educated parents discuss different societal issues with their offspring and allow their children to take decisions on familial issues and thus enhancing the ability to harmonize between two principles of distributive justice.

The relationship of distributive justice of students with authoritarian parenting style as perceived by themselves is found to be negative and significant whereas the positive and significant relationship is seen in case of authoritative parenting style as perceived by adolescents. This result is partially supported by the findings of Maccoby and Martin (1983), Pratt et al., (1999), Steinberg (2001) which yield that authoritative parenting style tends to facilitate the development of moral reasoning more effectively than any other parenting styles. Students with high moral reasoning are capable to coordinate between two principles of distributive justice. This finding is also partially favoured by the finding of Pratt et al., (1999) which states that high responsiveness in mothers was linked to progression in moral reasoning. The possible reason for this finding is that authoritarian parents favour punitive, forceful disciplinary technique that restrict child’s autonomy. Authoritarian parents also do not encourage verbal give and take in parent-child relationship (Baumrind, 1966). As a result, children are not able to discuss with their parents any issue and become unable to show greater critical thinking and coordination ability. On the other hand, authoritative parents promote verbal give and take and recognize child’s individual interest and consequently, children are able to discuss possible pros and cons of an issue before taking any decision which increases children’s ability of coordination and better management of an issue.
(J) The relationship of distributive justice of students with altruistic behaviour and anger control is found to be positive and significant whereas the opposite trend is evident in case of trait anger. This result reveals that adolescents with high altruistic trait and anger control ability are more likely to synchronize between two principles of distributive justice whereas adolescents who are angry most of the time are less capable of harmonizing between two principles of distributive justice and hence, prefer a single principle of distributive justice. This result is partially supported by the findings of Blotner & Bearison (1980) which yields that subjects who are able to coordinate the relationship among several claims of justice i.e. at Level 2-B (Damon, 1977; 1980) showed significantly greater helping and sharing in all conditions than the subjects who prefer merit (Level 1-B) and self-interest along with physical characteristics (Level 0-B). The possibility of negative relationship with distributive justice and trait anger is due to the fact that people with trait anger generally report lack of control over behaviour, impairment in judgement and decision making ability (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Hepworth & Towler, 2004). Those who are able to conquer over their angry feelings and manage their anger expressions effectively are able to take fair decisions most of the time and this might be the probable reason behind the positive relationship between distributive justice and anger control.

(K) In case of relationship of distributive justice of students with different dimensions of parenting style as perceived by mothers, only authoritative parenting style is found to positive and significant. The possible reason for this is that if mothers understand the benefits of being authoritative especially with their adolescent offspring, and are able to control their children in an age appropriate manner and create warm, affectionate and conducive home environment where their children will be encouraged to participate in family decision making and will be mature enough to harmonize between need and merit while making justice decisions.

(L) The overall index of agreement between distributive justice of students and distributive justice as perceived by mothers regarding their children is found to be moderate. In this case students as well as their mothers are providing their opinion regarding a particular issue i.e. students' distributive justice and there is ample opportunity to disagree over the issue because review of research suggests that conflict between parents and students increases and peaks during the early years of adolescence (Holmbeck & Hill, 1991; Steinberg, 1988). Consequently, the index of agreement increases as students become mid adolescence. This result may also be explained partly by the issue of generation gap between adolescents and their mothers. The
generation gap also increases as a result of greater educational, social and cultural changes experienced by adolescents in contrast to their parents. From mid adolescence family relationship begins to improve because parents and other guardians recognize adolescent as an adult or near adult. The index of congruence is found to be slightly higher between mother and daughter than mother and son. This is favoured by the finding of Lanvers (2004) which indicates that mothers are likely to talk to girls more often and are likely to use more supportive speech with them and this superior quality communication between mother and daughter may pave the way for greater congruence on a wide variety of topics. The congruence between mothers and their children increases with economic background of students. Possibly high income group mothers help to build positive attitude among their children by discussing several issues with their children and thus increasing agreement between mother and children. Congruence between mothers and children is higher among students from nuclear families than joint families. This may be due to the fact that in most of the cases mothers of nuclear families value the opinion of children as they grow older and sometimes involve their children in the decision making of the family. The index of agreement increases between educated and non-working mothers and their children.

5.2. Conclusions drawn from the study:

The following conclusions are drawn from the major findings emerged from the present study:

(a) Early and mid adolescents vary significantly with respect to their pattern of distributive justice. Probability of choosing combined principle of distributive justice (both need and merit principle) is significantly higher among 15 years (mid adolescents) students with respect to 13 years (early adolescents) students.

(b) Gender plays a significant role in the development of distributive justice of students. Other than choosing both need and merit principle of distributive justice adolescent boys are merit oriented whereas girls are equality oriented.

(c) Medium of instruction in schools is another significant factor in the development of distributive justice of students.

(d) The pattern of distributive justice of students varies significantly with the parental educational level especially with mother’s educational level. Students with either well
educated mothers or both parents well educated are more likely to coordinate between need and merit principles of distributive justice instead of preferring a single principle.

(e) The relationship between distributive justice of students and the authoritative parenting style as perceived by them is found to be positive and significant.

(f) The relationship between distributive justice of students and the authoritarian parenting style as perceived by them is found to be negative and significant.

(g) The relationship between distributive justice of students and their altruistic behaviour is found to be positive and significant.

(h) Trait anger is negatively and significantly correlated with distributive justice of students.

(i) The relationship between distributive justice of students and their capability to control anger effectively is found to be positive and significant.

(j) The relationship between distributive justice of students and the authoritative parenting style as perceived by their mothers is found to be positive and significant.

(k) The overall index of agreement between distributive justice of students and distributive justice views of students as perceived by mothers is found to be moderate.

5.3. Implications of the study:

From implication point of view, the present study suggests the following points:

(a) Mid adolescence is the most crucial period of the development of distributive justice. Parents and teachers must be very careful in teaching mid adolescents fair decision making concepts.

(b) The present study reveals detrimental effect of ‘language barriers’ on the capacity of decision making of adolescents. It is to be kept in mind that adolescents must feel comfortable in going to schools, interacting with their peers and teachers and above all they should not face ‘language barrier’ which makes them anxious and perplexed. This study suggests that students should learn English because English, a language of prestige, is widely used in higher education. It is a most significant language for obtaining information and helps to build a bright career in any field. English must be taught in every school as a part of better education but not as a mother
tongue. This will help to build a positive attitude toward this prestigious language. In order to do that, mother tongue based bilingual educational program must be implemented in schools where mother tongue will be taught as a first language and English will be taught as a second language. This will help children to adapt with their school environment as children do not feel the pressure of 'language barrier' and at the same time they build a positive attitude towards studying English.

(c) Teachers must give some extra attention to the students whose parents are less educated. Side by side some programmes to teach parents to enhance the home environment must be implemented. Parent education includes home visit by parent educators, group sessions led by already trained and educated parents workshops and courses taught by experts such as educators, psychologists etc. Parental education programme teach parents to improve the quality of home environment, parent – child communication and provides parents proper guidelines to monitor their children out of school time. Proper guidelines foster mature moral reasoning and thus mature sense of distributive justice.

(d) Parents and teachers must not be too much authoritarian in nature rather they must encourage their students to express opinions.

(e) Another important finding of this study is that parents and teachers should use authoritative disciplinary technique that focus on open supportive communication and thus encouraging adolescents to express their opinions regarding the fairness concept. Too much restriction on adolescent’s behaviour may have some negative impact on the development of distributive justice.

(f) The study also implies that every school should introduce some anger management techniques such as Anger Management Programme, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to reduce the level of angry feelings of students. Anger Management Programme consists of three stages- cognitive preparation, skill acquisition and application training. This programme aims not at eliminating anger but at lowering the incidence of aggressive behaviour through increase self control over angry feelings. CBT is a type of counseling aims at teaching the client how to become healthier and experience a more satisfying, fulfilling lifestyle by modifying certain thought and behavior patterns. Counselors and psychologists are appointed in schools to reduce subjective anger experiences and aggressive bahaviour and to improve social skills of students.
(g) Some social welfare programs must be introduced in schools in order to foster altruistic and helping attitudes in students, which will in turn help them to become more mature individual regarding their concept of fairness.

(h) Healthy relationship between parents and their adolescent children must be maintained. In order to do that parent must encourage open communication and show a genuine interest in the adolescent and their school and social life. Parents must be understanding and learn to accept that their adolescent children may feel differently from themselves. It is important to show acceptance and approval of adolescent children, even if their choices are disappointing to the parent. If there is open communication, different points of view can be shared. Parents must provide their adolescent children a happy home where there is both discipline and guidance. It is also important to overcome conflict between adolescent and parents. If adolescents know what is expected of them and are free to express themselves and make decisions, they are less likely to become rebellious or sullen and aggressive.

5.4. Limitations of the study:

In spite of having all these implications, the present study suffers from the following limitations:

(a) The participants of the present were only selected from the different schools of Kolkata. Considering the diversity of the Indian culture, inclusion of participants from other metropolis and from rural areas may have yielded different results. In this respect cross-cultural study is the best way to assess the pattern of distributive justice.

(b) The present study only considers early and mid adolescents. Incorporating participants below adolescence and above mid adolescence and comparing students of different age groups such as childhood, adolescence and adulthood may give more enhanced and useful findings.

(c) In the present study only the participants were selected only from Bengali and English medium schools under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE). Selecting participants from ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) and CBSE (Central
Board of Secondary Education) schools and comparing all these group of participants may provide some different results.

(d) Incorporating missionary schools (both Bengali and English medium) may give some enriched findings as the present study deals with distributive justice, a pivotal theme of moral development.

(e) The present study only deals with school going adolescents (normal population). Inclusion of deviant group such as juvenile delinquents may give more interesting results.

(f) The present study only deals with mothers of the selected students in order to obtain the perception of their own parenting style and distributive justice of their children. Responses from fathers may provide more intriguing results.

5.5. Scope for future research:

➢ The generalizability of the current findings is somewhat restricted as it dealt with school students residing in urban Kolkata only. Exploration of the sample to include other social and cultural contexts such as individualistic and collectivistic culture would give it a broader perspective.

➢ It would be worthwhile to explore other age groups such as below teenage i.e. below 13 years and above 15 years.

➢ Comparative study of WBBSE, ICSE and CBSE school students may bring about intriguing results.

➢ The present study is entirely based on self report of participants. Even if the possibility of direct distortion is refuted, there still remains the fact that there is a gap between reality and perception of the participants. Especially in case of variables like resource allocation, anger expression and altruistic behaviour, there may be an incongruity between actual behavior and that of reported behavior. Comparative study of resource allocation, anger expression and altruistic behaviour in actual and hypothetical situation may provide some interesting findings.
Incorporation of *participant paradigm* (subject has to divide reward between himself/herself and a fictitious partner who work on an identical task) and *negotiation paradigm* (the subject is asked to distribute reward that is acceptable to both members of the dyad) along with *supervisor paradigm* (subject is asked to allocate rewards among others) may produce some fascinating findings.