

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND CAREER MATURITY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN INDIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract:

This study is focused on the stage of secondary education which is a critical period for the development of career maturity, when students are faced with ongoing academic and occupational decisions over the course of their study and these educational and vocational decisions pave the way for future decisions to be taken by any individual in the world of work. The present study aimed to examine the career maturity of secondary school students, by gender, type of school and vocational guidance provisions and know the perception of students about vocational guidance services in their schools. A sample of 160 students was drawn from eight secondary schools through stratified sampling technique. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of data revealed that females are found to possess higher career maturity than their male counterparts. Students of private schools show higher career maturity attitude as compared of students of government schools. Moreover, students in schools with vocational guidance and counseling provisions show high career maturity in self awareness and occupational information as compared to none from those schools which are deprived of these provisions, similarly in choosing a job, the students who are privileged to be exposed to the guidance and counseling programmes show much higher career maturity than their underprivileged counterpart. The findings of the study have strong implications for the policy makers and educationists for institutionalizing the vocational guidance and counseling programmes in secondary schools and delivering planned and systematic counseling interventions to increase the career maturity of secondary school students.

Key Words: Vocational Guidance, Career Maturity, Decision-Making

Introduction:

The problem of choosing, preparing and entering into careers have existed since the dawn of civilization. The process of vocational development denoting psychological, sociological, cultural and economic ingredients across time results in outcomes which are effective in vocational behaviour, decision-making ability and vocational maturity. Just as physical and intellectual development can be stunted if appropriate interventions are not applied, so can the normal developmental process of vocational development be stunted if appropriate interventions are not available in a planned, systematic way. There are specific skills that should be constructed and maintained throughout the life span in order to deal with career choice and management tasks at any given point in time (Super, 1996). A set of skills he proposed to develop include: knowledge of self-attributes (e.g., interests, skills/abilities, and work-related values), a well-defined self-concept, broad knowledge of the world of work, detailed knowledge and reality testing of occupations under consideration, awareness of the need to plan ahead, decision-making skill, knowledge and use of appropriate resources for career decision making. This set of skills, indicative of career maturity, can be used again and again in the changeable 21st century work environment.

Career maturity is a constellation of physical, psychological and social characteristics thus belonging to both the domains that of cognitive and affective. It is central to a developmental approach to understanding vocational behavior and involves an assessment of an individual's level of career progress in relation to his or her career-relevant development tasks. It refers, broadly, to the individual's readiness to make informed, age-appropriate career decisions and cope with career development tasks (Savickas, 1984). Fundamentally, Crites's (1971) model of career maturity consists of affective and cognitive dimensions. The cognitive dimension is composed of decision-making

skills; the affective dimension includes attitudes toward the career decision-making process. Similarly, focusing on the conative aspect, Coetzee & Roythorne Jacobs (2007) and Schreuder & Coetzee (2006) were of the view that career maturity refers to a person's ability to make career decisions that reflect decisiveness, self-reliance, independence, and a willingness to compromise between personal needs and the requirements of one's career situation. Moreover, it is not uncommon to find that students choose subjects of study which have little relationship with their vocational goals, with the result that many people get a traumatic shock when they find that they have not prepared themselves for the career which they wanted to enter. Often the mistake is realized too late in life. An organized programme of vocational guidance assists students in taking decisions wisely and realistically. Vocational Guidance may be seen as a process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself, and of his role in the world of work to test this concept against reality and to convert it into a reality with satisfaction to him and benefit to society. (Super, 1957).

Perusal of the extant literature reveals the influence of age, race, ethnicity, locus of control, socioeconomic status, work salience, and gender on career maturity. (Naidoo et al., 1998). The complex interaction of these factors affects individual's readiness to succeed in mastering the tasks appropriate to various stages of career development. It has been found to be influenced differentially in different culture, race and gender groups by certain psychological, educational and demographic factors (Lawrence and Brown, 1976; Pound, 1978).

Research findings exploring the impact of gender on vocational maturity are also far from equivocal. Most studies conducted over two decades have found that females in several age groups have higher scores on career maturity measures than males (Alvi & Khan, 1983; Herr & Enderlein, 1976; King, 1989; Lokan, 1984; Luzzo, 1995 Westbrook, 1984). In other studies (Fouad, 1988), females were higher on some subscales only. However, Achebe's (1982) study in Nigeria reported that males scored higher than females. Again, the complex interaction of other influences may make vocational maturity development different for women and men. Although women in Luzzo's (1995) study had higher career maturity scores than men, they were more inclined to perceive role conflicts and barriers as obstacles in their career development process.

Shifting the focus of study on individual variables like self concept, aspirations, identity and the like, Hasan (2006) examined whether self-concept, occupational aspiration and gender are capable of generating variance in career maturity of Indian adolescents studying in class X. It was found that all the three variables were potential enough in generating variance in career maturity. On similar lines, focussing on personality variables, Salami (2008) investigated the relationship between identity status and career maturity of secondary school adolescents. The findings indicate that the identity status significantly predicted career maturity of the adolescents but gender did not. No significant differences were found between the males and females in their career maturity and identity status.

Keeping in view the differences in the social and educational milieu of the schools, Dhillon & Kaur (2005) tried to study career maturity among the students of public and government schools. The results clearly indicate that the students of public schools possess a higher career maturity attitude, career maturity competence, as well as self concept and achievement motivation. Significant relationships have also been obtained between career maturity attitude and career maturity competence, internal locus of control and achievement motivation in case of boys in public schools and between career maturity attitude, achievement motivation and self concept scale in case of girls in public schools. On the other hand significant relationship has been found between career maturity attitude and external locus of control, achievement motivation and self concept in case of boys in government school and between career maturity competence and achievement motivation in case of girls in government schools. The present study aims to examine the career maturity of secondary school students by gender, type of school and provisions for vocational guidance and know the perception of secondary school students about vocational guidance services in schools.

Method:

A sample was drawn from eight Secondary Schools of South and South West District of Delhi. A total sample of 160 X grade students were selected through stratified sampling technique, according to gender, type of school and vocational guidance provisions. Indian adaptation of Career

Maturity Inventory (CMI) was administered to study the level of career maturity among secondary school students and focused group discussions were conducted in each school to know the perception of students about the vocational guidance services in schools. The data was analyzed quantitatively by computing percentage and the salient trends were identified through qualitative analysis.

Results:

The career maturity inventory attitude scale helped to know the conative aspects of the career decision making and entering the world of work. The level of career maturity of the x grade students in terms of decisiveness, involvement, independence, orientation and compromise in career decision making was assessed through the attitude scale.

Table No.1: Showing level of career maturity on Attitude Scale among secondary school students with vocational guidance provisions by gender and type of school

Gender	Type of School	Level of Career Maturity (%)				
		High	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Low
Male	Private	0	20	70	10	0
	Government	0	5	80	15	0
Female	Private	0	25	60	10	5
	Government	5	20	60	15	0

Analysis of the data on the attitude scale for schools with vocational guidance provisions (Table no.1) indicate that irrespective of the type of school (government or private) most of the males (80%) and females (60%) show average level of career maturity in term of decisiveness, involvement, independence, orientation and compromise in making career decisions. Gender wise variation in the level of career maturity is found with respect to the type of school. In case of females, high level of career maturity (5%) is found in government schools and similar proportion of females show low level of career maturity in private schools. Whereas in the case of males, larger proportion (20%) of students of private schools show above average level of career maturity as compared to 5% of those studying in government schools. So, at both the extremes high and low level of career maturity female students are more prominent. However, more variation in the level of career maturity in terms of decisiveness, involvement, independence, orientation and compromise in decision making is observed among female students then in male students.

Table No.2: Showing level of career maturity on Attitude Scale among secondary school students without vocational guidance provisions by gender and type of school

Gender	Type of School	Level of Career Maturity (%)				
		High	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Low
Male	Private	15	20	40	25	0
	Government	0	5	50	35	10
Female	Private	15	70	10	5	0

	Government	0	15	75	10	0
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Table No 2. Show the data pertaining to schools without any vocational guidance provisions. It is found that irrespective of gender, the high level of career maturity amongst secondary school students favour private schools more than the government schools, as equal proportion of males and females (15%) show high level of career maturity in private schools. However, 10% of male students of government school fall in the category of low level of career maturity as compared to none in private schools. Gender difference is found to be in favour of females in above average level of career maturity in both private and government schools. In case of private schools, the proportion of the females is much more (70%) than the proportion of males (20%). Similarly, in government schools the proportion of females is three times more (15%) than males (5%).

Table No.3: Showing level of career maturity on Competency test among secondary school students with vocational guidance provisions by gender and type of school

Gender	Level of Career Maturity	I (Knowing Yourself)		II (Knowing about jobs)		III (Choosing a Job)		IV (Looking Ahead)		V (What Should They do)	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Government School	High	15	25	10	30	0	0	20	15	30	25
	Above Average	5	15	30	35	25	60	35	45	20	45
	Average	40	50	45	30	55	25	45	40	40	30
	Below Average	10	10	15	5	20	15	0	0	5	0
	Low	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Private School	High	20	40	10	10	0	0	5	15	20	10
	Above Average	25	55	45	65	35	20	45	35	20	50
	Average	50	5	40	25	60	75	45	50	55	40
	Below Average	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	0	5	0
	Low	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

An analysis of the data on competency test of career maturity inventory, show that in private schools with vocational guidance provisions most of the males (60%) show Average level of career maturity in the competence of 'choosing a job' in terms of aptness in matching personal characteristics to occupational requirements whereas none show high level of this competence. However, in domains like 'knowing yourself' and 'what should they do' only 20% of them show high level of maturity. On the other hand, almost half (45%) of the males in these schools show an average maturity level in 'knowing about jobs' and 'looking ahead', however none show low maturity in any of the components. In case of females most of them (75%) show average maturity level on 'choosing a job' and none show high maturity level on this domain on the other, 40% of the females show high maturity level and 55% show above average level on 'knowing yourself'. Half of the female students show above average level of maturity on 'what should they do?' or problem solving and 65% show above average maturity on 'knowing about jobs'. However none of the female students show low maturity level on any of the components of this test. The data shows that both males and females possess above average maturity in knowing about jobs. Maximum proportion of males and females show average maturity in 'choosing a job' and none show high maturity. This is a pointer for interventions to be made to push the student's maturity to a higher level in this domain. In case of males, 'knowing yourself' needs to be taken care of in counseling sessions as only a quarter of them

show above average maturity this domain. In Government schools in case of males, none figure on the higher and lower extreme in the competency of 'choosing a job' and 55% of them show average maturity in this domain. Whereas in planning and problem solving almost similar proportion of male students show above average and high level of maturity respectively. In case of females, none show high maturity in 'choosing a job', but more than half of the females show above average maturity. Whereas 30% show high maturity on 'knowing about jobs', and half of them show average maturity in self appraisal. It may be suggested that counseling interventions may be required for 10% of those who show below average maturity in self appraisal and 15% of those in choosing a job or goal selection. Huge difference of thirty five percentage points is found between males and females showing above average maturity in the domain of goal selection.

Table No.4: Showing level of career maturity on Competency test among secondary school Students without counseling provision by gender and type of school

Gender	Level of Career Maturity	I (Knowing Yourself)		II (Knowing about jobs)		III (Choosing a Job)		IV (Looking Ahead)		V (What Should They do)	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Government school	High	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	10	5	5
	Above Average	5	5	30	25	10	30	20	15	15	15
	Average	30	50	40	65	55	65	65	65	65	50
	Below Average	35	20	25	10	25	5	5	5	10	25
	Low	30	25	5	0	10	0	5	5	5	5
Private School	High	10	0	10	15	0	0	10	20	15	10
	Above Average	15	25	30	25	0	20	40	30	10	30
	Average	25	35	40	30	60	65	45	40	65	60
	Below Average	35	35	10	30	40	5	5	10	10	0
	Low	15	5	10	0	0	10	0	0	0	0

Table No.4 shows the data on career maturity on different domains in school who have counseling provisions. In case of private schools none of the males show high and above average maturity in goal selection, however, more than half of the male students show average ability in this domain and in problem solving. In components like self appraisal and choosing a job 35% and 40% of the students show below average maturity respectively. Critical areas of intervention may be in the domains of self appraisal and choosing a job or goal selection. With respect to females, none show high on self appraisal and goal selection, whereas, the proportion of students showing average ability in goal selection and problem solving are similar to the proportion of males and almost the same proportion (35%) of the females students to that of males students show below average maturity in self appraisal. So again the critical areas for intervention are self appraisal and choosing a job or goal selection. It may also be said that females are better than their male counterparts in problem solving. In Government schools without counseling provisions none of the males show high maturity level in any of the components except planning and problem solving where the figure is only 5%. More than half of the males show average maturity in goal selection, (55%), Planning (65%) and problem solving(65%). Almost similar proportion of males show below average maturity(35%) and low maturity (30%) in self appraisal, whereas a quarter of them are of below average maturity in knowing about jobs and goal selection so in this case, critical areas of concern is self appraisals and choosing a job. On the other hand, in case of females none show high maturity in any of the components, except planning and problem solving (10% and 5%). A quarter of them show above average maturity in occupational information and 30% in goal selection and more than half of the females (65%) show

average maturity in knowing about jobs, goal selection and planning. Whereas half of them show average maturity in self appraisal and problem solving. Since 20% of the female students show below average maturity and 25% show low maturity in self appraisal with a quarter of them showing below average maturity in problem solving, these areas need more interventions programmes.

Hence, in the private schools self appraisal and problem solving are common areas of concern in males irrespective of whether they study in schools with counseling provisions or without counseling provisions. Whereas choosing a job or goal selection is an area of concern only for those males who study in schools without counseling provisions. On the other hand goal selection is a common area of concern for females irrespective of the counseling provisions in schools however, self appraisal is an area of concern only for those females who are studying in schools without counseling provisions. In government schools, without counselling provisions, in case of males and females, the critical area to be focused on is what should they do? In case of females, in the domain of knowing yourself and knowing about jobs, interventions need to be made in schools which do not have counseling provisions.

Table No.5: Excerpts from focused group discussions of secondary school students

Questions	Counseling Provision		No counseling Provision	
	Government school	Private school	Government school	Private school
Q No.1 Do you think there is any need of providing vocational guidance services in your school?	Yes, there is a Need for Vocational guidance services	Yes, there is a Need for Vocational guidance services like: Exploring talent, Developing confidence, Staying fit and Active , Exploring out new dimensions related to education	Yes, there is a Need for Vocational guidance services like: Bringing a change from daily routine, Develop skills, Explore talent, Effective decision making, Knowledge enhancement	Yes , there is a Need for vocational guidance services in order to Remove Confusion, Develop clarity, To enhance job opportunities
Q No. 3 Are you satisfied with the vocational guidance services provided in your school (in terms of duration per week etc, information given & expert counselor effectiveness)?	Not Satisfied with the vocational guidance services	Yes completely Satisfied with the vocational guidance services/activities as Counseling sessions takes place frequently	Not Satisfied with the vocational guidance services/activities	Partially satisfied with the vocational guidance services/activities
Q No.6 What suggestions would you provide for improvement in vocational guidance services in your school so that you get the maximum benefit out of it?	Career fairs, workshops to be organized, Experts from various fields should come to give counseling sessions ,	Only career Guidance	Proper counseling and guidance, Improving Quality of education	Provision of a counselor, Conducting workshops, seminars etc.

	Proper guidance from the teachers			
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The salient trends that emerged from the focused group discussion of the students in Table no. 5 are that irrespective of gender, type of school and counseling provisions in school, all the secondary students felt the need of vocational guidance services in school for various reasons like exploring talents, developing skills, effective decision making, remove confusion, develop clarity and enhance knowledge and job opportunities. It was also revealed that although counseling provisions existed in some government schools, the students were not satisfied with the services being provided to them. However, in schools where counseling provisions did not exist as a regular programme of the school curriculum, little efforts were being made in terms of seldom inviting experts from outside to address the students which did not serve the purpose, as is clear from the students' dissatisfaction. Suggestions for improving the vocational guidance services through various seminars, workshops and career fairs were put forward by the student which is a strong indicator for the needs of the secondary school students and the quality of the vocational guidance services provided in the schools.

Discussion:

The finding of the present study pertaining to the gender disparity with respect to career maturity confirms the findings of Alvi & Khan (1983); Herr & Enderlein (1976); King, (1989); Lokan (1984); Luzzo (1995) Westbrook (1984) that females have higher scores on career maturity measures than males. Similarly study Luzzo (1995), Rojewski, Wicklein, & Schell (1995) too have revealed that young women have significantly higher levels of career maturity than young men. In another research, Hasan (2006) found that self-concept, occupational aspiration and gender were potential enough in generating variance in career maturity of Indian adolescents studying in class X. A possible explanation of the gender differences may be hypothesized to be related to gender differences in the rate of overall maturation, which generally occurs earlier in females than males, thus suggesting a specialized approach to career guidance and counseling for girls as viewed by Herr & Enderlein (1976) and Omvig & Thomas (1977). Naidoo et al. (1998) also found out that not only are there gender differences in career maturity, but female students indicate more commitment to the work role and possess higher value expectations from work. In contrast to the above results, some studies have however reported males scoring higher than females as in Achebe (1982) in Nigeria, Watson (1984) in South Africa and Gupta (1987) in India. These contrary gender differences may be expected to manifest in countries where women are traditionally seen to be dependent on men, and where the concept of a career is a relatively new for women as viewed by Watson, Stead & De Jager (1995). Overall, it may be said that development of career maturity differs for females and males. Keeping in view the differences in the social and educational milieu of the schools, the finding of this study that private school students show higher career maturity as compared to their counterparts in government schools align with the findings of Dhillon & Kaur (2005) which clearly indicate that the students of public schools possess a higher career maturity attitude, career maturity competence. However, the role of counseling in improving the career maturity as suggested by Egner and Jackson (1978) after conducting a counseling intervention programme for teaching career decision-making skills is substantiated by the results of the present investigation which revealed that students in schools with vocational guidance and counseling provisions showed high career maturity in self awareness and occupational information as compared to none from those schools which are deprived of these provisions, similarly in choosing a job, the students who were privileged to be exposed to the guidance and counseling programmes showed much higher maturity than their underprivileged counterpart. Moreover, the study of P.K. Tulsi (1983) on the differential effects of career guidance strategies on vocational maturity patterns revealed that treatment in both self-awareness and occupational information proved to be beneficial in realizing vocational maturity, which endorse the

positive role of the guidance and counseling interventions in improving career maturity of secondary school students.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study suggest some pointers for the counseling interventions, where the counselors may engage to more adequately address the career decision making needs of the secondary school students. Instead of assuming that career maturity may naturally increase with age or higher grades, counselors may develop and plan for systematic interventions which may be an integrated component of the curriculum to provide the students with abundant opportunities and learning experiences to develop more mature career decision making attitudes and competencies. This planned and systematic programme aiming at increasing the career maturity of students, should also be constantly reviewed and monitored to assess the effectiveness of the interventions and mold the strategies in align with the received feedback.

Education policy makers, planners and counselors need to recognise the relevance of vocational guidance and counseling programme for school students irrespective of the class, gender, type of school and the like and the need for such programmes have been expressed quite strongly by the students themselves during the focused group discussion in the study. There is need to institutionalize such programmes, improve the quality of already existing programmes and continuous evaluation for assessment of effectiveness and revisiting our planning whenever required. Vocational guidance and counseling needs to be introduced as an integrated component of the curriculum at all stages of school curriculum with diverse objectives depending upon the needs of the students in each stage of education. This would ensure a strong foundation to make career decisions appropriately at secondary and senior secondary stages of education. Moreover, during the secondary stage well-formulated and realistic concepts about self and the world of work need to be developed which would make for easier transition from school to work.

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