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Study of Gender Difference in Career Maturity of Rural and Urban Students in India

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ABSTRACT

Career maturity is reflected by an individual's mature behavior in coping with the tasks of career development, compared with that of others dealing with the same tasks (Super & Bohn, 1970). It is generally accepted as comprising both cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component is consisted of decision-making skills; the affective component includes attitudes toward the career decision-making process. This study examined the gender difference in career maturity of rural and urban students. Sample consisted of 640 10th class students [320 Boys: 160 rural (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim) & 160 urban (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim) and 320 Girls: 160 rural (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim) & 160 urban (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim)] selected from government high schools of Darbhanga City. Tool for collecting the data included Crites' Career Maturity Inventory. Statistical analyses were performed using descriptive and inferential statistics to study the gender difference between students (boys & girls; rural & urban and Muslim & Non-Muslim) on the measure of career maturity. The findings of the study revealed that hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H7 and H9 are fully accepted while hypotheses H4, H5, H6 and H8 are partially accepted. The present findings suggest that research needs to be complemented by examining differences in the between-group experiences that families from various social status and locale are able to provide for their children. That is, what are the experiences and conditions that families from certain groups provide that allow their children's aspirations to be expanded into higher vocational and career attainment.

Keywords: *Gender, Sex, Vocation, Career maturity.*

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INTRODUCTION

"We cannot always build the future for our youth but we can build our youth for the future" (Franklin D.Roosevelt). Career education is very important especially in the context of recent changes in education system which aims to bridge the gap between work-oriented education and mature career choices. It enables the individuals to be realistic and competent to cope effectively with the career development tasks and prepare them for the world of work. Career mature individuals have the ability to identify specific occupational preferences and to implement activities in order to make an appropriate and realistic career choice and decision. They are expected to be emotionally intelligent, socially adjusted and intellectually capable of making congruency with his/her interest with his/her level of aptitude.

According to Jordaan and Heyde, (1979), a career-mature young person tends to have more career information, appears to be more realistic in career aspirations, and behaves more in keeping with own abilities and socio-economic circumstances. The focus of career maturity is on the manner in which "the individual responds to emerging demands, problems, challenges, and expectations" (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979). According to Super, (1957), vocational or career maturity is characterized by "(1) increasing orientation to vocational choice; (2) increasing amounts of vocational information and more comprehensive and detailed planning; (3) increasing consistency of vocational preferences; (4) the crystallization of traits relevant to vocational choices; and consequently, (5) increasing wisdom of vocational preferences". A person displaying these qualities in the early stages of career development is regarded as career-mature, and is therefore expected to be better adjusted in his or her career.

Although educational and vocational choices are made by an individual but they are certainly influenced and interacted by many social, psychological and environmental factors. An insight into the possible factors underlying career maturity would suggest the guidelines for planning various activities for the students. It may also help the teachers, parents and guidance workers for developing desirable attitudes in children. Keeping in mind the determinant and predictor variables of career

maturity, the present study is an endeavor to understand career maturity of adolescents in relation to their gender and locale. Earlier researches on the relationship between gender and career maturity have produced somewhat inconsistent results (Rojewski et al., 1995; Kerka, 1998; Naidoo, 1998). For example, some studies have found no significant differences (Alao, 1999; Salami, 2003). Still others have provided partial support for females having a slight advantage over male counterparts in some aspects of affective or cognitive career maturity (Super and Nevill, 1984). From the literature reviewed on the relationship between gender and career maturity, it could be concluded that the findings are inconclusive as some authors found significant relationship between gender and career maturity while others did not find significant relationship. This is an evidence of inconsistency which needs to be clarified and gaps that need to be filled.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Gender: Concept and Definition

The word gender has been used since the 14th century referring to ‘the state of being male or female’ but this did not become common until the mid 20th century. Although the words gender and sex both have the sense ‘the state of being male or female’, they are typically used in slightly different ways: sex tends to refer to biological differences, while gender refers to cultural or social ones. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. [It]--- includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes, and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). According to Oxford Dictionary, “Gender is the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones).” WHO defines it as, “Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.” Operationally ‘gender’ is defined as the state of being male or female of an individual.

Career Maturity: Concept and Definition

Career maturity describes one's ability to successfully cope with vocational development tasks (e.g., crystallizing, specifying, and implementing career choice) that are encountered across the developmental continuum from exploration stage through withdrawal. As a construct, it represents a repertoire of coping behaviors and one's readiness to employ these behaviors toward career-related events encountered at various life stages. Simply defined, career maturity provides a means of measuring the degree of affective and cognitive career development an individual has attained. Career maturity refers to the individual's degree of readiness to choose, to plan and to prepare for future vocation. It is a pre-requisite ability to make a wise choice towards particular occupation and represents development along a continuum. Greater the maturity, greater is likelihood that individual is able to cope with developmental tasks at different stages of vocational development. According to Super (1963) “career maturity is used to denote the degree of development, the place reached on the continuum of the vocational development from exploration to decline. The career maturity quotient may thus be conceived of as the ratio of vocational maturity to chronological age. It would indicate whether or not the vocational development of an individual is appropriate of this age.”

Operationally ‘career maturity’ is defined as the maturity of attitudes and competencies to make appropriate choices, including awareness of what are required to make a career decision and degree to which one choice are both realistic and consistent over time. In short, career maturity is known as the peak of one’s career. It is possible that there are several peaks or no peak at all for an individual.

OBJECTIVE

To study the gender difference between students (boys & girls; rural & urban and Muslim & Non-Muslim) on the measure of career maturity.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of literature and aforementioned objective the present study formulated the following hypotheses:

- H₁ There will be significant difference between total boys and total girls on the measure of career maturity.
- H₂ There will be significant difference between rural and urban students on the measure of career maturity.
- H₃ There will be significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslim students on the measure of career maturity.
- H₄ There will be significant difference between rural boys and urban boys and between rural girls and urban girls on the measure of career maturity.
- H₅ There will be significant difference between rural boys & rural girls and urban boys and

urban girls on the measure of career maturity.

- H₆ There will be significant difference between rural Muslim boys & urban Muslim boys and rural non-Muslim boys & urban non-Muslim boys on the measure of career maturity.
- H₇ There will be significant difference between rural Muslim girls & urban Muslim girls and rural non-Muslim girls & urban non-Muslim girls on the measure of career maturity.
- H₈ There will be significant difference between rural Muslim boys & rural Muslim girls and rural non-Muslim boys & rural non-Muslim girls on the measure of career maturity.
- H₉ There will be significant difference between urban Muslim boys & urban Muslim girls and urban non-Muslim boys & urban non-Muslim girls on the measure of career maturity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized survey techniques due to its descriptive nature. This section is comprised of sample, research tool and procedure of the data collection.

Sample

A random sample of 640 10th class students selected from Govt. high schools [320 Boys: 160 rural (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim) & 160 urban (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim) and 320 Girls: 160 rural (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim) & 160 urban (80 Muslim and 80 non-Muslim)] of Darbhanga city participated in the study. The ages of the students ranged from 15 to 17 years.

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE

Respondents			M.L.Academy, Laheria Sarai (Darbhanga)	Zila High School (Darbhanga)	Total
Boys	Rural	Muslim	40	40	80
		Non-Muslim	40	40	80
	Urban	Muslim	40	40	80
		Non-Muslim	40	40	80
Girls	Rural	Muslim	40	40	80
		Non-Muslim	40	40	80
	Urban	Muslim	40	40	80
		Non-Muslim	40	40	80
G.Total			320	320	640

TOOL USED

The researcher used the following tools for collecting the data to study the research in hand.

Career Maturity Inventory by J.O. Crites (1978).

The reliability coefficients of the inventory, as established by test – retest method were found to be varying between 0.70 to 0.92. The inventory has fairly high degree of content and constructs validities as claimed by experts.

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher collected the data personally with prior permission of the schools and concerned teachers. The administration of the test viz., Career Maturity Inventory by J.O.Crites (1978) was completed following the instructions given by the author of the inventory.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Descriptive analysis (Mean, Standard Deviations) were undertaken and the ‘t’ test was employed to compare the students in terms of significance of difference in mean scores of their career maturity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

COMPARISON OF THE SAMPLE ON THE MEASURE OF CAREER MATURITY

The comparison of the samples on the selected variable was done by testing the significance of difference between their means by using t-tests. The results are presented in the following tables:

Table 1. Comparison between Total Boys and Total Girls on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Total Boys (N=320)		Total Girls (N=320)		t -value
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	31.18	4.76	34.83	5.39	9.12 (.01)

Perusal of table-1 reveals significant difference between boys and girls favouring girls on the variable, career maturity. Thus it may be concluded that girls displaying significant levels of career maturity may be related to them being more psychologically mature than boys (Farmer, 1983). Consequently, girl students may have been more willing to explore future career paths than boys, thus resulting in more career insights and awareness. This finding is consistent with the earlier researches of Rojewski, Wicklein, & Schell, 1995.

Table 2. Comparison between Rural and Urban Students on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Rural Students (N=320)		Urban Students (N=320)		t -value
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	28.76	4.60	31.36	5.01	6.86 (.01)

Significant result (Table No.2) favoring urban students on the measure of career maturity indicates that urban students may have a relatively more secure socio-psychological environment, economic vitality and meaningful employment options to prepare them for the educational, vocational and career alternatives, so that they may begin to set realistic goals for themselves that will help fulfill their future promise. They may have the greater chance to share their experiences with fellow urban students who may have similar experiences as they were defining their career path and thus develop their career maturity. This finding gets the support from the finding of Rojewski, 1994.

Table 3. Comparison between Muslim and Non-Muslim Students on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Muslim Students (N=320)		Non-Muslim Students (N=320)		t -value
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	27.33	4.40	31.07	4.82	10.38 (.01)

Result of table 3 indicates significant difference between Muslim and Non-Muslim students favoring the latter on the measure of career maturity. This difference may be accounted to the interventions designed to facilitate the maturing of abilities and experiences that aid them in reality testing and the development of career maturity. Poor socio-economic conditions may dynamically interact with biographic and psychological factors to influence career development of Muslim students which in turn restricts their career options and affects their career maturity.

Table 4. Comparison between Rural Boys and Urban Boys and between Rural Girls and Urban Girls on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Boys (N=320)				t -value	Girls (N=320)				t - value
	Rural (N=160)		Urban (N=160)			Rural (N=160)		Urban (N=160)		
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂		M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	26.51	4.18	27.36	4.30	1.79 (N.S.)	26.59	4.16	29.12	4.62	5.16 (.01)

The comparison between rural and urban girls, the urban girls show significantly higher level of career maturity. Their better performance on the said variable may be accounted to their better ability to make appropriate career choices, planning age –appropriate career decisions, willing to explore future career paths and utilizing the opportunities appropriately to career

exploration. Non- significant difference between rural and urban boys on the measure of career maturity may be due to similar extended/restricted opportunities available to them.

Table 5. Comparison between Rural Boys & Rural Girls and between Urban Boys and Urban Girls on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Rural (N=160)				t -value	Urban (N=160)				t – value
	Boys (N=80)		Girls (N=80)			Boys (N=80)		Girls (N=80)		
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂		M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	27.36	4.30	26.59	4.16	1.63 (N.S)	26.51	4.18	29.12	4.62	5.31 (.01)

Table 5 reveals that urban girls out perform their urban counterparts on the measure of career maturity. This result may be due to their self-reliant and effective problem solving skill in career decision making in its various dimensions: cognitive, affective /emotional and social. On the other, the non-significant result in case of rural boys and rural girls may be due to lack of economic vitality and meaningful employment options. Inability to connect to the world of work may be the other limiting factor in their educational and vocational development which affects their career maturity.

Table 6. Comparison between Rural Muslim Boys & Urban Muslim Boys and Rural non-Muslim Boys & Urban non-Muslim Boys on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Muslim Boys (N=160)				t -value	Non-Muslim Boys (N=160)				t – value
	Rural (N=80)		Urban (N=80)			Rural (N=80)		Urban (N=80)		
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂		M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	30.01	4.51	33.31	5.17	4.30 (.01)	31.12	4.97	32.23	5.03	1.40 (N.S.)

The comparison between rural Muslim boys and urban Muslim boys (Table No. 6), the significant difference favouring urban Muslim boys is witnessed on career maturity measure. This difference may be due to the guidance and support they get in developing strategies for decision making process (not only in the cognitive dimension, but also in emotional and social dimensions) and may also be effectively prepared in the transitioning from the stage of education to the world of work with definite and specific career plan. Rural Muslim boys, on the other hand, due to limited educational resources fail to access and utilise information about the different educational options (academic paths), professional options (career paths) and occupational options (socio-labor paths).

Table 7. Comparison between Rural Muslim Girls & Urban Muslim Girls and Rural non-Muslim Girls & Urban non-Muslim Girls on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Muslim Girls (N=160)				t -value	Non-Muslim Girls (N=160)				t – value
	Rural (N=80)		Urban (N=80)			Rural (N=80)		Urban (N=80)		
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂		M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	28.06	4.45	31.69	5.07	4.82 (.01)	32.30	4.86	33.91	5.42	1.98 (.05)

Significant results favouring urban Muslim and urban Non-Muslim girls in comparison to their respective rural counterparts may be due to their similar acknowledgement to career development as a key element in the process of career maturity development. Certain other contextual factors such as parental involvement in the career choice process and social & emotional assistance provided may also affect affective & cognitive skills in their career maturity. The relationships with teachers and peers may also play a critical role in the accumulation of information about the world of work and receive emotional and social support in their career maturity process.

Table 8. Comparison between Rural Muslim Boys & Rural Muslim Girls and Rural non-Muslim Boys and Rural non-Muslim Girls on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Rural Muslim (N=160)				t -value	Rural Non-Muslim (N=160)				t – value
	Boys (N=80)		Girls (N=80)			Boys (N=80)		Girls (N=80)		
	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂		M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	
Career Maturity	30.01	4.51	28.06	4.45	2.75 (.01)	31.12	4.97	32.30	4.86	1.52 (N.S.)

Rural Muslim boys out performing rural Muslim girls may be due to the prevailing sex-role stereotype where facilitative environment are provided to boys with hopes and dreams of better tomorrow. Consequently, they may have been more willing to explore future career paths better than girls, thus resulting in more career insights, awareness and maturity.

Table 9. Comparison between Urban Muslim Boys & Urban Muslim Girls and Urban non-Muslim Boys and Urban non-Muslim Girls on the Measure of Career Maturity

Variable	Measure of Career Maturity								t - value	t - value	
	Urban Muslim (N=160)				Urban Non-Muslim (N=160)						
	Boys (N=80)		Girls (N=80)		Boys (N=80)		Girls (N=80)				
M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂	M ₁	σ ₁	M ₂	σ ₂				
Career Maturity	33.31	5.17	31.69	5.07	2.00	32.23	5.03	33.91	5.42	2.03	(.05)

Urban Muslim boys, it seems, are more likely to be receptive to and benefit from family help about how to keep themselves motivated to utilise their ability to achieve self-growth, place greater emphasis on intrinsic value to make appropriate career decision, feel less anxious and be more willing to explore diverse career options resulting into mature career development in comparison to urban Muslim girls. On the other hands, urban Non-Muslim girls out performing their urban male counterparts may be due to their more focused and balanced career preferences & career exploration that characterizes career maturity rather than random and serendipitous world-of-work.

CONCLUSION

The study supports the notion that family social status and locale combine to provide varying educational experiences which in turn affect vocational aspirations and career maturity. It is crucial to consider career education as a key curriculum addition to adolescents’ schooling, and work experience as an intentional component of all young people’s adolescent experience. Such experiences not only increase students’ focus on their career paths, but also contribute to fostering maturity in general. Targeting programs to improve career maturity may have beneficial results as research has demonstrated that low career maturity scores can be improved through systematic intervention (Carpenter, 1993; Dunn & Veltman, 1989; Trebilco, 1984). However, a mature attitude toward work and the competence needed to address vocational tasks will not suddenly blossom when rural youth enroll in career preparation courses, but rather gradually develop in response to appropriate nurturing, instruction, and experience. A conscious effort must also be made to avoid problems of portraying males and females in stereotypical occupations or programs. Instead, educators must strive to provide equitable opportunities to all students. Perhaps equally important, professionals must be sensitive to and work with rural community to ensure that bias or stereotypic thinking does not guide vocational interventions or training placements. Professionals must remain sensitive to the critical role they may play in career choice and occupational preparation. Through a concerted educational effort, marginalized and rural adolescents will be better prepared, both affectively and cognitively, to select and attain their career aspirations. The present findings suggest that research needs to be complemented by examining differences in the between-group experiences that families from various social status and locale are able to provide for their children. That is, what are the experiences and conditions that families from certain groups provide that allow their children’s aspirations to be expanded into higher vocational and career attainment.

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