



Relationship between School Environment and Career Maturity of Higher Secondary School Students

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Abstract: The present study examines the relationship between **school environment** and **career maturity** of higher secondary school students. Adolescence is a critical stage in which students make significant academic and career decisions, and career maturity—reflecting readiness to make informed and realistic choices—is influenced by both personal and contextual factors. The school environment, including teacher support, peer interactions, academic climate, guidance and counselling services, and co-curricular activities, plays a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes, decision-making abilities, and career preparedness.

A total of **100 students** (50 males and 50 females) from various higher secondary schools in Dhamtari District, Chhattisgarh, were selected as the sample. Data were collected using the **Career Maturity Scale** constructed by **Nirmala Gupta (2013)**, based on five dimensions—self-evaluation, professional knowledge, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving ability—and referencing the **Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1973, 1974a, 1974b)**. The **School Environment Inventory** developed by **K. S. Mishra (2013)** was used to assess perceptions of school climate, including creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, acceptance, permissiveness, rejection, and control.

Analysis using **Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient** revealed a **significant positive correlation ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.01$)** between school environment and career maturity, indicating that students who perceive a supportive and resourceful school environment exhibit higher career maturity. The study highlights the need to foster positive school climates and structured guidance programs to enhance students' career development and decision-making abilities.

Keywords: Career Maturity, School Environment, Higher Secondary Students, Career Guidance, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

The higher secondary stage is a turning point in the life of students, as it marks the transition from adolescence to early adulthood. At this stage, students are expected to take decisions that shape their academic and professional futures, such as choosing specific streams, preparing for competitive examinations, or selecting vocational

alternatives. Making such choices requires readiness, awareness, and maturity in decision-making. This concept is described as career maturity, which reflects the preparedness of an individual to make suitable and realistic career choices.

While career maturity is influenced by several personal and contextual factors, the school environment is one of the most important external influences. Schools not only provide academic instruction but also act as social and psychological environments that shape students' interests, attitudes, and decision-making abilities. The quality of the school environment—including teacher-student relationships, peer support, guidance and counselling facilities, co-curricular activities, and overall learning climate—plays a critical role in fostering confidence and preparing students for career-related tasks.

Concept of Career Maturity

Career maturity has been defined as the extent to which an individual is able to deal with career development tasks that are expected at a given developmental stage. According to Donald Super's theory of career development, adolescents need to demonstrate competencies such as self-awareness, decision-making skills, occupational information, goal setting, and planning orientation to be considered career mature.

For higher secondary students, career maturity is crucial because they are at a stage where decisions cannot be postponed or left to chance. Career maturity ensures that students align their future plans with their abilities, values, and interests, thereby reducing the risk of indecision, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. Students with higher levels of career maturity are likely to make informed choices, show adaptability, and approach their career paths with confidence and responsibility. On the other hand, students with low career maturity may depend heavily on parents, peers, or chance circumstances, leading to poor alignment between their interests and chosen fields.

Importance of School Environment

The school environment serves as the immediate and most influential institutional context in the life of adolescents. It encompasses not only the physical infrastructure but also the psychological climate, teaching-learning processes, interpersonal relationships, and availability of career-related resources. A healthy school environment offers:

- Supportive teachers who guide students in both academic and career matters.
- Positive peer interactions that encourage motivation, competition, and cooperation.
- Career guidance and counselling services that provide information and clarity about opportunities.
- Extracurricular and co-curricular activities that nurture diverse skills, interests, and values.
- Academic climate that promotes curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking.

An unfavourable school environment, however, may hinder career maturity by limiting opportunities, creating stress, or failing to provide direction. For example, lack of exposure to career information, absence of counselling,

or a rigid academic climate can result in confusion and indecisiveness among students. Hence, understanding the nature of school environments is central to promoting career readiness among adolescents.

Rationale of the Study

In the present era of globalization and rapid technological advancements, the career world is becoming increasingly complex and competitive. Students are required to make quick yet sound decisions about their futures. However, the readiness to make such decisions cannot develop in isolation; it must be nurtured within conducive learning environments. Since schools play a pivotal role in shaping the aspirations and competencies of students, it becomes essential to study how the school environment contributes to career maturity.

The rationale of the present study lies in its attempt to bridge the gap between educational climate and career development outcomes. By exploring the relationship between school environment and career maturity, this research seeks to provide insights that will help educators, policymakers, and counsellors in designing interventions aimed at:

- Creating supportive and inclusive school environments.
- Strengthening career guidance programs.
- Encouraging activities that promote self-awareness, decision-making, and planning among students.
- Reducing disparities between students from different school settings.

The findings of this study will not only enrich the theoretical understanding of career development but also offer practical guidelines to improve the educational environment in ways that enhance students' career maturity. Ultimately, this will contribute to preparing higher secondary students for meaningful, satisfying, and productive careers.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the correlation between school environment and career maturity of higher secondary school students.

HYPOTHESIS

- There will be no significant correlation between school environment and career maturity of higher secondary school students.

TOOLS:

- **CAREER MATURITY:** For collection of data with respect to career maturity of the students, career maturity scale constructed by Nirmala Gupta (2013) was used. This scale consists of five dimensions—self-evaluation, professional knowledge, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving

ability—are operationally described as career maturity. The purpose of the professional Maturity Inventory (CMI) (Crites 1973, 1974a, 1974b) is to assess the level of maturity of attitudes and competences that are essential for making practical professional decisions. The Competence Test and the Attitude Scale are the two types of measurements offered by the CMI to evaluate the maturity of these career habits.

- **SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT:** For collection of data with respect to School environment school environment inventory developed by K.S. Mishra (2013) was used. SEI contains 70 items related to the six dimensions of school environment, which includes six dimensions namely creative simulation, cognitive encouragement, acceptance, permissiveness, rejection and control.

RESEARCH DESIGN

POPULATION

For the present study, the population includes all boys and girls studying in Classes XI and XII in Government and Private Schools of the four identified blocks during the academic session 2022–23.

SAMPLE

A sample of 100 students (50 males and 50 females) studying in various higher secondary schools of Dhamtari District, Chhattisgarh, was selected for the present study.

ANALYSES OF DATA AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULT

H₀₋₁ There will be no significant correlation between school environment and career maturity of higher secondary school students.

The objective of the present study was to study the correlation between school environment and career maturity of higher secondary school students. Data collected with respect to this study was analysed using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient. Summary of this analyses has been presented in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1
CORRELATION BETWEEN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
AND CAREER MATURITY

VARIABLE	N	MEANS	SD	r
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT	100	96.72	52.63	0.519**
CAREER MATURITY	100	37.55	5.90	

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

From table 1 above it is evident that the correlation coefficient employed between School Environment and Career Maturity was found to be 0.519, which is positive and significant at 0.01 level of significance. This concludes that there exists a significant correlation between School Environment and Career Maturity of higher secondary school students. Therefore, null hypothesis formulated as “There will be no significant correlation between school environment and career maturity of higher secondary school students” is rejected.

It can therefore be concluded that as the level of school environment improves the level of career maturity also improves and vice versa.

RESULT

There exists a significant correlation between School Environment and Career Maturity of higher secondary school students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study reveal that there exists a significant correlation between the school environment and the career maturity of higher secondary school students. This indicates that a positive, supportive, and resourceful school environment contributes substantially to enhancing students' career maturity, enabling them to make informed, realistic, and confident career choices. Conversely, an unfavourable school environment may hinder the development of essential career-related attitudes and decision-making skills. Thus, the role of schools extends beyond academic instruction to shaping students' career readiness, highlighting the need for educators and policymakers to foster environments that promote career awareness, guidance, and holistic development.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offered to strengthen the relationship between school environment and career maturity of higher secondary school students:

- Schools should create a positive, supportive, and inclusive environment that nurtures students' academic and personal growth.
- Career counselling and guidance programs should be regularly organized to help students make informed career choices.
- Teachers should receive training to provide effective guidance and maintain a motivating classroom environment.
- Parents should be involved in career awareness programs to strengthen home–school collaboration in career development.
- Schools should integrate co-curricular and extracurricular activities that enhance decision-making, leadership, and problem-solving skills.
- Opportunities such as workshops, seminars, and field visits should be provided to expose students to diverse career paths.
- Psychological counselling and mentoring facilities should be made available to address students' career-related anxieties and uncertainties.
- Educational authorities should establish career guidance cells in higher secondary schools to ensure systematic support for career maturity.

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