



Vocational Maturity among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Vocational maturity, a concept introduced by Super (1955), is integral to understanding adolescent vocational development and refers to the cognitive, emotional, and psychological preparedness of an individual to make mature career decisions. Vocational maturity enables individuals to set realistic career goals, plan effectively, and adapt to workforce demands, fostering personal fulfilment and societal productivity. This study investigates vocational maturity among adolescents. Key conclusions include that adolescents' limited job awareness and frequent indecisiveness are often due to insufficient exposure to diverse career options, leading to uncertainty and fluctuating aspirations. Adolescents' reliance on networking and financial incentives as primary drivers in job selection points to the importance they place on practical success, often over intrinsic career interests. The passive approach observed in vocational aspirations suggests that adolescents may lack both guidance and the confidence to pursue their ideal careers independently. Adolescents demonstrate a high regard for social responsibility, yet this value is sometimes overshadowed by concerns about economic stability, indicating an inner conflict between societal contributions and financial security. Educational implications drawn from these findings highlight the urgent need for enhanced career counselling, targeted career-planning education, networking skills, exposure to various professions, and decision-making training. By integrating these supports into the educational framework, institutions can better equip adolescents with the skills, confidence, and self-awareness needed to make informed and independent career decisions. Such interventions can help adolescents align their career choices with personal values and aspirations, fostering a sense of purpose and satisfaction. Ultimately, these efforts will support adolescents' successful transition to adulthood, contribute to a skilled and motivated workforce, and optimize the utilization of a nation's human resources for maximum productivity and growth.

Key Words: Vocational Maturity, Adolescents, Career Counselling, Career planning, Career Decisions.

1.1 Introduction

Adolescence is a pivotal stage in human development, marked by significant cognitive, emotional, and social transitions. Among these transitions, career decision-making stands out as a critical aspect that shapes an individual's future. Vocational maturity, a concept introduced by Donald Super, in 1955, refers to the readiness and capability of individuals to make informed, realistic, and responsible career choices. It encompasses a range of attributes, including career awareness, decision-making skills, goal-setting abilities, and the adaptability to navigate evolving occupational landscapes (Bhandari & Lingzay, 2014).

In today's fast-paced and competitive world, the concept of vocational maturity has gained increasing importance, particularly among adolescents who are at a crossroads of educational and career paths. The ability to make well-informed vocational decisions not only influences an adolescent's career trajectory but also their overall psychological well-being and self-esteem. The integration of vocational maturity within the broader framework of life skills is essential for empowering adolescents to make choices aligned with their interests, aptitudes, and societal needs (Choudhury & Saikia, 2020).

However, the development of vocational maturity is influenced by a multitude of factors. The diversity in these factors often results in disparities in vocational readiness among adolescents, thereby necessitating a comprehensive understanding of the underlying variables that contribute to vocational maturity.

This paper aims to explore the concept of vocational maturity among adolescents, examining its determinants, implications, and strategies for fostering it. By delving into the dynamics of vocational decision-making during adolescence, the study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide insights that can inform educational practices and policy-making, ensuring that adolescents are better prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

1.2 Justification of the Study:

Choosing a vocation is a crucial task that brings satisfaction to an individual. In today's competitive world, this process has become increasingly challenging due to the multitude of career options available. Making the right choice is essential, as it can significantly enhance one's life, while a poor decision can negatively impact one's entire future. Vocational maturity plays a key role in this process, enabling individuals to make well-considered decisions that lead to personal fulfillment.

Studying vocational maturity among adolescents is crucial for several reasons, as this stage is often characterized by confusion and uncertainty, with adolescents navigating identity development and career exploration. Firstly, it aids in guiding their career development by providing insights into their abilities, interests, and preferences, allowing for informed decisions about future paths. Secondly, it assists educators and counsellors in tailoring educational plans to align with students' career aspirations, ensuring a smoother transition from school to the workforce. Thirdly, by enhancing decision-making skills, adolescents can make thoughtful choices about their careers, contributing to their long-term success. Moreover, understanding vocational maturity facilitates the personal development of young individuals, fostering self-awareness and a deeper understanding of themselves. Also, assessing vocational maturity helps identify potential gaps in workforce preparation, ultimately benefiting both individuals and society by ensuring a skilled and capable workforce. Overall, studying vocational maturity among adolescents is vital for their holistic development, successful transition to adulthood, meaningful contribution to society and optimal utilization of a nation's human resources, maximizing productivity and growth.

1.3 Review of Related Literature:

There are many studies in the literature examining the relationship between vocational maturity and various variables. Atli (2017) found that high school students with positive personality traits, such as openness, extroversion, adaptability, and responsibility, exhibit high vocational maturity, while students with neurotic, negative personality traits show low vocational maturity levels. Studies have also shown positive and significant relationships between high self-esteem and vocational maturity (Seo and Kim, 2019), high vocational decision-making, self-efficacy, and vocational maturity (Singh and Shukla, 2015), as well as proactive personality traits and career maturity (Park, 2015). Also, high career maturity increases motivation and study behaviour among high school students, while vocational indecision leads to decreased motivation and career maturity (Mabel and Nagarenitha, 2016). Research indicates that various factors, such as gender (Kumar, 2020), age (Yon, Chol, and Goh, 2013), academic and vocational stream (Kumar, 2000), parental involvement (Pandey & Manral, 2017), home environment (Pandey, 2014), academic achievement (Kumar, 2020 & Bae, 2022), vocational achievement motivation, socio-economic status (Kumar, 2020), academic performance (Romero & Villasmil, 2018), and school environment (Pandey, 2014), correlate with vocational maturity. Choudhury & Saikia (2020) found that most students had average vocational maturity and needed more vocational awareness and guidance to improve their level of vocational maturity. Dhillon and Kaur (2005), Gonzalez (2008), and Adegoroye et al. (2011) also reported a low level of vocational maturity among students. Self-determination, self-esteem, self-actualization, self-confidence, and psychological well-being are key factors influencing the professional maturity of general high school students. As these traits are largely intrinsic, it is essential for students to develop self-awareness and embrace self-reinforcement (Nurani, 2022). However, it was reported by Duru (2022) that students' career decision-making challenges often arise from a lack of readiness. To address this, psycho-education programs can be implemented to identify the causes of this lack of readiness, offer solutions, and equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills. Enhancing understanding of vocational maturity is crucial for promoting professional progress. While numerous studies have shown a significant relationship between vocational maturity and other variables, no study was found that specifically investigated adolescents' attitudes toward different factors of vocational maturity. This gap motivated the investigator to study the vocational maturity of adolescents.

1.4 Statement of the problem:

The problem undertaken by the investigator is briefly stated as:
 "Vocational Maturity among Adolescents"

1.5 Operational Definitions of the Key Terms Used:

- 1. Vocational Maturity:** In the present study, vocational maturity is measured by the scores obtained by IXth class students on Vocational Attitude Maturity Scale constructed by Dr. Manju Mehta (2021). The reliability of the tool was found to be .89 and factorial validity was established using factor analysis.
- 2. Adolescents:** In the present study, investigator has taken students of class IXth belonging to age group 14-15 years.

1.6 Objectives of the Study:

Following were the objectives of the study:

1. To study vocational maturity among secondary school students on the basis of various factors of vocational maturity i.e. vocational aspiration level, influence and money in job choice, lack of job awareness and change in job performance, indecisiveness in vocational choice, vocational understanding, lack of independence, and chance factor in vocational choice.
2. To suggest educational implications on the basis of findings of the study.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study:

Following were the delimitations of the study:

1. The study was delimited to the students of IXth class only.
2. The study was conducted in Jammu city only.
3. Only 10 schools affiliated to Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education were included in the present study.
4. The sample was delimited to 200 students only (100 boys and 100 girls).

1.8 Methodology:

The study was descriptive in nature and the survey method was used.

- i. Sample and Sampling Technique Used:** 200 students (100 girls and 100 boys) from 10 schools (05 private and 05 government affiliated to Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education) were selected using simple random sampling technique (for which lottery method was adopted).
- ii. Tool used:** Vocational Attitude Maturity Scale by Dr Manju Mehta (2021) was used. The scale has 20 items and response to each item is to be given on a 2-point scale.
- iii. Scoring Procedure:** As per the manual 1 mark was awarded to response 'Disagree' for item no. 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,12,13,14,16,17,18,19,20 and 1 mark was awarded to response 'Agree' for item no. 6,11 and 15.
- iv. Statistical Technique Used:** For the present study, percentages were used to analyse the data.

1.9 Analysis of Data:

| a) Analysis based on Factor 1, i.e., Vocational aspirational level | | | |
|--|---|------------------|---------------------|
| Item No. | Statement | Responses | |
| | | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) |
| 1. | I guess everybody has to go to work sooner or later but I don't want to think about it before hand. | 130 (65%) | 70 (35%) |
| 3. | I don't know how to go about getting into the kind of work I want to do. | 140(70%) | 60(30%) |
| 6. | The level of aspiration of a person affects his occupation choice. | 42(21%) | 158(79%) |
| b) Analysis based on Factor 2, i.e., Influence and Money in Job choice | | | |
| 18 | It's whom you know, not what you know that is important in a job | 150(75%) | 50(25%) |
| 19 | I can't understand how some people can be so set about what they want to do | 148(74%) | 52(26%) |
| 20 | It doesn't matter which job you choose as long as it pays well | 170(85%) | 30(15%) |
| c) Analysis based on Factor 3, i.e., Altruism and passivity in job choice | | | |
| 10 | I really can't find any work that has much appeal to me | 120(60%) | 80(40%) |
| 15 | Choose an occupation which gives you a chance to help others | 128(64%) | 72(36%) |
| 16 | Why to try to decide upon a job when the future is so uncertain | 168(84%) | 32(16%) |

| | | | |
|--|--|----------|----------|
| d) Analysis based on Factor 4, i.e., Lack of job awareness and change in job choice | | | |
| 5 | I do not know what courses I should take for further studies | 150(75%) | 50(25%) |
| 12 | I keep changing my occupational choice | 160(80%) | 40(20%) |
| e) Analysis based on Factor 5, i.e., Indecisiveness in vocational choice | | | |
| 2 | I often daydream about what I want to be, but I really haven't chosen a line of work yet | 130(65%) | 70(35%) |
| 7 | I think that there is no occupation, which I like very much | 134(67%) | 66(33%) |
| 8 | When I am trying to study, I often find myself daydreaming about what it will be like when I start working | 128(64%) | 72(36%) |
| 9 | I am incapable of deciding about my occupation by myself | 170(85%) | 30(15%) |
| f) Analysis based on Factor 6, i.e., Vocational Understanding | | | |
| 11 | I know which work I can do with fully capacity | 82(41%) | 118(59%) |
| 14 | The best thing to do for choosing the job is to try out several jobs and then choose the one you like most | 120(60%) | 80(40%) |
| g) Analysis based on Factor 7, i.e., Lack of independence | | | |
| 4 | No one is capable enough to take decision about his occupation by himself | 150(75%) | 50(25%) |
| 13 | It is difficult job to take independent decision about occupational choice | 164(82%) | 36(18%) |
| h) Analysis based on Factor 8, i.e., Chance factor in vocational choice | | | |
| 17 | One gets into occupations mostly by chance | 170(85%) | 30(15%) |

1.10 Major Findings and General Conclusions:

- Majority (65%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I guess everybody has to go to work sooner or later but I don't want to think about it before hand".
- Majority (70%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I don't know how to go about getting into the kind of work I want to do".
- Majority (79%) of the adolescents did not agree with the item "The level of aspiration of a person affects his occupation choice".
- Majority (75%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "It's whom you know, not what you know that is important in a job".
- Majority (74%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I can't understand how some people can be so set about what they want to do".
- Majority (85%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "It doesn't matter which job you choose as long as it pays well".
- Majority (60%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I really can't find any work that has much appeal to me".
- Majority (64%) of the students agreed with the item "Choose an occupation which gives you a chance to help others".
- Majority (84%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "Why to try to decide upon a job when the future is so uncertain".
- Majority (75%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I do not know what courses I should take for further studies".
- Majority (80%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I keep changing my occupational choice".
- Majority (65%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I often daydream about what I want to be, but I really haven't chosen a line of work yet".
- Majority (67%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I think that there is no occupation, which I like very much".
- Majority (64%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "When I am trying to study, I often find myself daydreaming about what it will be like when I start working".
- Majority (85%) of the adolescents agreed with the item "I am incapable of deciding about my occupation by myself".
- Majority of (59%) adolescents did not agree with the item "I know which work I can do with fully capacity".
- Majority of (60%) adolescents agreed with the item "The best thing to do for choosing the job is to try out several jobs and then choose the one you like most".
- Majority of (75%) adolescents agreed with the item "No one is capable enough to take decision about his occupation by himself".
- Majority of (82%) adolescents agreed with the item "It is difficult job to take independent decision about occupational choice".

20. Majority of (85%) adolescents agreed with the item "One gets into occupations mostly by chance".

1.11 Discussion of Results:

a) For factor 1. i.e. Vocational aspirational level it was seen that majority of adolescents responded in favor of item "I guess everybody has to go to work sooner or later, but I don't want to think about it beforehand". Similar results were found by Adegoroye (2011) who reported that majority of youth displayed traits of not spending time to think of possible employment in society. The reason may be that they find the transition to the workforce intimidating and prefer not to dwell on it yet. Adolescents also responded in favour of item "I don't know how to go about getting into the kind of work I want to do" maybe due to uncertainty about career paths and a lack of guidance or exposure to various professions. Adegoroye (2011) reported that youths do not consult adults on the demands of the world of work leading to confusion in their minds. However, they did not respond in favour of item "The level of aspiration of a person affects his occupation choice" maybe because they feel their aspirations are often constrained by practical issues like financial needs, family expectations, or limited opportunities, and that immediate circumstances have more influence than personal aspirations. It can be concluded that Adolescents' vocational aspirations are often overshadowed by practical constraints and immediate circumstances, with a noticeable lack of proactive career planning and guidance. Shamshad (2022) reported that vocational aspiration is an important variable to predict career maturity and variation due to vocational aspiration will cause significant and positive change in the career maturity of students.

b) For factor 2. i.e. Influence and Money in Job choice most adolescents responded in favor of item "It's whom you know, not what you know, that is important in a job," believing that personal connections and networking are crucial for job opportunities. This belief may come from observing societal emphasis on networking and advice from influential figures in their lives. They also responded in favour of item "I can't understand how some people can be so set about what they want to do," reflecting frustration or confusion about making long-term career decisions and difficulty understanding how others can have clear career paths while they feel uncertain about their own. Contrary results were reported by Antonescu and Virban (2015) who found that students were motivated for success. Also, they responded in favour of item "It doesn't matter which job you choose as long as it pays well," prioritizing financial stability, possibly due to economic concerns or societal and familial emphasis on financial success. Adolescents prioritize networking and financial rewards over personal passion or clear career goals, indicating that they view job opportunities and satisfaction through the lens of connections and salary.

c) For factor 3 i.e. Altruism and passivity in job choice most adolescents responded in favour of item "I really can't find any work that has much appeal to me". Similar results were reported by Adegoroye (2011) who found that maximum youth displayed traits of not having a specific vocation in mind. The reason maybe that due to limited exposure to career options, uncertainty about their interests, and external pressures affecting their motivation. They also responded in favour of item "Choose an occupation which gives you a chance to help others" maybe because they often feel a strong sense of empathy and social responsibility, wanting to align their careers with their values and passions. But majority of them also respond in favour of item "Why try to decide upon a job when the future is so uncertain" maybe because they feel that the rapidly changing world makes it hard to commit to a single career path. This indicates that adolescents demonstrate altruism and passivity in job choice, valuing careers that help others while feeling disinterested in current options due to uncertainty and external pressures.

d) For factor 4 i.e. Lack of job awareness and change in job choice majority of adolescents responded in favour of item "I do not know what courses I should take for further studies" due to a lack of clarity about long-term goals and career paths. They also responded in favour of item "I keep changing my occupational choice" as they are in a period of self-discovery, experimenting with different possibilities to find what excites them. Changing choices can be seen as a natural part of figuring out their career path. This indicates that adolescents experience a lack of job awareness and frequently change their career choices as they explore various options and seek clarity about their future paths. Choudhary and Saikia (2020) also reported that there was need for vocational awareness and vocational guidance for improving emotional maturity of students.

e) For factor 5 i.e. Indecisiveness in vocational choice majority of adolescents responded in favour of item "I often daydream about what I want to be, but I really haven't chosen a line of work yet" maybe because they are exploring various possibilities and imagining their future without the pressure of immediate decisions. A majority of adolescents also responded in favor of item "I think that there is no occupation which I like very much". The reason maybe that they feel uncertain about their passions and find it challenging to connect with a specific career path. They might believe no single occupation fully aligns with their diverse interests and values. They also responded in favour of item "When I am trying to study, I often find myself daydreaming about what it will be like when I start working" maybe because it helps them stay motivated by connecting their current efforts to future goals and provides an escape from study-related challenges. However, majority of adolescents did not respond in favour of item "I am incapable of deciding about my occupation by myself" maybe because they feel they lack the necessary experience or information to make an informed career decision. This reflects that adolescents show considerable indecisiveness in vocational choices, characterized by exploration of various options, uncertainty about fitting into a specific career, and a lack of confidence in making independent decisions.

f) For factor 6 i.e. Vocational Understanding majority of adolescents did not respond in favor of item "I know which work I can do with full capacity" maybe because they are still exploring their abilities and interests, lacking confidence or clarity about their strengths and how their skills will translate into a specific career. Majority of adolescents responded in favour of item "The best thing to do for choosing the job is to try out several jobs and then choose the one you like most". The reason maybe it allows them to explore various options and align their career choices with their interests and skills, reducing the risk of later regret. The responses suggests that adolescents have limited vocational understanding, as they are still exploring their abilities and prefer trying out various jobs to make informed career choices.

g) For factor 7 i.e. Lack of independence majority of adolescents responded in favour of item "No one is capable enough to take decision about his occupation by himself". Adolescents might also favour this view because they might feel that career decisions are shaped by a range of factors such as market trends, societal expectations, and family opinions, making it hard for anyone to make such decisions independently. Also, majority of adolescents responded in favour of item "It is difficult job to take independent decision about occupational choice". Adolescents generally feel that making independent decisions about their occupational choices is challenging and believe that they lack the capability to make such decisions on their own.

h) For factor 8 i.e. Chance factor in vocational choice majority of adolescents responded in favour of item "One gets into occupations mostly by chance". Adolescents might favor this view because they often observe that many people find their careers through serendipitous events or connections rather than through a planned or intentional process. They may feel that luck and chance are significant factors in how people end up in their jobs.

1.12 Educational Implications:

The vocational uncertainties and indecisiveness observed among adolescents align closely with the challenges of their developmental stage, characterized by indecisiveness, limited self-awareness, and reliance on external factors such as chance or influence in career decision-making. Their lack of proactive planning and uncertainty about career paths suggest that they are still in the exploratory phase of vocational development. Enhancing vocational maturity through targeted guidance, exposure to career options, and fostering decision-making skills is crucial to helping them transition toward informed and confident career choices. Based on the findings of the results, several educational implications can be drawn:

1. **Enhanced Career Counseling:** Schools and educational institutions should provide comprehensive career counseling and guidance to help adolescents better understand and navigate their vocational options.
2. **Career Planning Education:** Implementing programs that emphasize proactive career planning and decision-making skills will enable students to set clear career goals and explore various paths intentionally.
3. **Networking Skills Development:** Offering workshops or courses on networking and personal branding will help students to build connections and understand the role of professional relationships in job opportunities.
4. **Real-World Experience:** Encouraging internships, job shadowing, and real-world experiences will give students practical insights into different careers and enhance their job awareness.
5. **Decision-Making Training:** Integrating decision-making skills into the curriculum will build students' confidence in making independent vocational choices and address their concerns about career decision-making challenges.
6. **Exposure to Various Careers:** Providing exposure to a diverse range of professions and career paths will help students better understand their options and reduce uncertainty about their future.
7. **Emphasis on Personal Passion and Goals:** Schools should promote the importance of aligning career choices with personal interests and passions, emphasizing altruistic careers rather than solely focusing on financial rewards or external pressures.

By focusing on these areas, educational programs can help adolescents make proper career choices. Educational planners and administrators can develop policies that integrate career education into the curriculum. Teachers can use this insight to provide individualized support, while students can benefit from tailored resources to explore career options and strengthen decision-making skills. Future research could explore the impact of socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and cultural factors on vocational maturity among adolescents. Comparative studies across educational boards or genders, along with intervention programs to enhance vocational maturity, could provide deeper insights. Longitudinal studies tracking changes over time would also be valuable.

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