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A Study of Career Maturity of Students of Arts and Commerce Faculty in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

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Abstract

Career maturity refers to the readiness of an individual to make informed, age-appropriate, and realistic career decisions. It encompasses self-awareness, knowledge of occupational information, decision-making ability, planning orientation, and the capacity to deal with career-related problems. This study examines the level of career maturity among undergraduate students of the Arts and Commerce faculties in colleges affiliated with universities in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. A descriptive survey method was employed using a standardized Career Maturity Inventory administered to a sample of 200 students (100 from Arts and 100 from Commerce streams), drawn through stratified random sampling. The study investigated differences in career maturity based on faculty (Arts versus Commerce), gender, and year of study. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The findings indicate that Commerce students exhibit a marginally higher level of career maturity compared to Arts students, and that gender does not significantly influence career maturity, whereas year of study shows a positive association with career maturity scores. The paper discusses implications for career counselling services in colleges and recommends institutional interventions to strengthen career decision-making skills among students.

Keywords: Career maturity, Arts students, Commerce students, career decision-making, career counselling, Ahmedabad

1. Introduction

The transition from college life to the world of work is one of the most significant developmental tasks faced by young adults. Career maturity is a psychological construct that

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reflects an individual's readiness to engage in age-appropriate career development tasks, including self-exploration, occupational exploration, planning, and decision-making. The concept was first systematically developed by Donald Super as part of his theory of vocational development, which views career development as a lifelong process unfolding through distinct stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. According to this framework, late adolescence and early adulthood correspond to the exploration stage, during which individuals are expected to crystallize their vocational preferences, specify their choices, and begin implementing career plans.

In the Indian context, and particularly in a rapidly urbanizing and economically diverse city such as Ahmedabad, undergraduate students face a complex landscape of career options. Liberalization of the economy, growth of the service sector, expansion of higher education, and increased access to information technology have together widened the range of career possibilities available to students. At the same time, traditional expectations regarding 'respectable' professions, family business considerations, and social pressures continue to shape career choices, particularly for students in Arts and Commerce streams who often face the perception that their disciplines offer fewer well-defined career pathways compared to professional courses such as engineering or medicine.

Students of the Arts faculty typically pursue subjects such as psychology, sociology, economics, history, English literature, and political science, and may proceed toward careers in teaching, civil services, social work, journalism, or further academic research. Commerce students, on the other hand, study subjects such as accountancy, business administration, economics, and business law, with career pathways oriented toward chartered accountancy, banking, finance, business management, and entrepreneurship. Given these differing academic orientations and the differing labour market signals associated with each stream, it is reasonable to expect that students from these two faculties may differ in their levels of career maturity, their awareness of career options, and their confidence in making career-related decisions.

Understanding the career maturity levels of these students is important for several reasons. First, low career maturity has been associated with indecisiveness, career-related anxiety, and poor academic-to-occupation transitions. Second, colleges and universities are increasingly expected to provide career guidance and placement services, and an accurate diagnosis of

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students' career maturity levels can help tailor these services more effectively. Third, comparing Arts and Commerce students allows institutions to identify whether one stream requires more intensive career counselling interventions than the other. This study, therefore, aims to assess and compare the career maturity of Arts and Commerce undergraduate students in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, and to examine whether gender and year of study influence career maturity scores.

2. Review of Literature

A substantial body of research has examined career maturity among adolescents and young adults across different cultural and educational contexts. Super's developmental theory remains the foundational framework, emphasizing that career maturity is not a fixed trait but develops through experiences of self-exploration, exposure to occupational information, and practice in decision-making. Crites further operationalized career maturity through the development of the Career Maturity Inventory, which measures both attitudinal and cognitive dimensions of career development, including decisiveness, involvement, independence, orientation, and compromise, as well as competencies such as self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving.

Several Indian studies have explored career maturity among college students with mixed findings regarding gender differences. Some studies report that female students display higher career maturity due to greater conscientiousness and earlier engagement with academic planning, while others find no significant gender differences, suggesting that career maturity is influenced more by environmental and educational factors than by gender alone. Studies comparing students from different academic streams have generally found that students in commerce and professional courses tend to score higher on career maturity dimensions related to occupational information and planning, possibly because commerce education is more directly linked to identifiable career outcomes such as chartered accountancy or banking examinations, which require early planning and registration.

Research has also highlighted the role of year of study in shaping career maturity. Final-year students, who are closer to the transition into employment or further studies, tend to exhibit higher career maturity scores than first-year students, reflecting increased exposure to career-related information, internships, and discussions with seniors and faculty. Additionally, studies

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conducted in urban Gujarat have noted that access to coaching institutes for competitive examinations, family business backgrounds, and regional economic opportunities particularly influence the career orientation of Commerce students, who often have early exposure to business operations through family enterprises.

Despite this body of literature, relatively few studies have specifically compared Arts and Commerce students within the city of Ahmedabad, which has a distinct socio-economic profile characterized by a strong entrepreneurial culture, a large textile and trading economy, and an expanding services sector. This gap provides the rationale for the present study, which seeks to contribute regionally specific data on career maturity that can inform career guidance practices in local colleges.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of career maturity among undergraduate students of the Arts and Commerce faculties in Ahmedabad.
2. To compare the career maturity scores of Arts students with those of Commerce students.
3. To examine the influence of gender on career maturity among the sampled students.
4. To examine the relationship between year of study and career maturity scores.
5. To suggest measures for improving career counselling services based on the findings.

4. Hypotheses

H1: There is no significant difference in career maturity between Arts and Commerce students.

H2: There is no significant difference in career maturity between male and female students.

H3: There is no significant difference in career maturity across different years of study.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for assessing the prevailing level of a psychological construct within a defined population and for examining group differences without manipulating any variables.

5.2 Sample

The sample consisted of 200 undergraduate students drawn from colleges affiliated with universities in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Of these, 100 students were from the Arts faculty and 100 from the Commerce faculty. The sample was further divided to include

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approximately equal numbers of male and female students, and students from the first, second, and third years of their undergraduate programmes. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across faculty, gender, and year of study.

5.3 Tools Used

The Career Maturity Inventory (CMI), adapted for use with Indian college students, was used to measure career maturity. The inventory consists of items measuring attitudinal dimensions (such as decisiveness, involvement, and independence) and competence dimensions (such as self-appraisal, occupational information, and planning). Responses were obtained on a Likert-type scale, and total scores were computed for each respondent, with higher scores indicating greater career maturity. A demographic information sheet was also administered to collect data on faculty, gender, age, and year of study.

5.4 Procedure

Permission was obtained from college administrations to administer the questionnaire during regular class hours. Students were briefed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and informed that participation was voluntary. The inventory and demographic sheet were administered in a single sitting, and completed responses were collected immediately.

5.5 Statistical Analysis

The collected data were scored according to the manual of the Career Maturity Inventory. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were computed for the total sample and for sub-groups based on faculty, gender, and year of study. An independent samples t-test was used to examine differences between Arts and Commerce students and between male and female students. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine differences across years of study.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Career Maturity by Faculty

Table 1 presents the mean career maturity scores of Arts and Commerce students along with the results of the independent samples t-test.

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Faculty	Mean	Standard Deviation
Arts (n=100)	62.40	8.65
Commerce (n=100)	65.10	8.12

The results indicate that Commerce students obtained a slightly higher mean career maturity score (M = 65.10) compared to Arts students (M = 62.40). The t-test revealed this difference to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($t = 2.27$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the first null hypothesis. This finding suggests that Commerce students demonstrate somewhat greater readiness in career decision-making compared to their Arts counterparts. A plausible explanation lies in the structured career pathways associated with Commerce education, such as chartered accountancy, company secretaryship, and banking sector examinations, which require students to engage in career planning relatively early in their academic life. In contrast, Arts students may perceive a wider but less clearly defined range of career options, which can contribute to lower scores on dimensions such as decisiveness and planning.

6.2 Career Maturity by Gender

Table 2 presents the comparison of career maturity scores between male and female students.

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male (n=100)	63.55	8.71
Female (n=100)	63.95	8.34

The mean scores of male and female students were found to be very close (63.55 and 63.95 respectively), and the t-test did not yield a statistically significant difference ($t = 0.33$, $p > 0.05$). This finding supports the second null hypothesis, indicating that gender does not play a significant role in determining career maturity among the sampled students. This result is consistent with several studies that suggest career maturity is more strongly shaped by educational stream, exposure to career-related information, and family environment than by gender alone, particularly in urban settings where both male and female students have relatively similar access to educational and informational resources.

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6.3 Career Maturity by Year of Study

Table 3 presents the mean career maturity scores across the first, second, and third years of study.

Year of Study	Mean	Standard Deviation
First Year (n=66)	60.10	8.40
Second Year (n=67)	63.85	8.20
Third Year (n=67)	66.95	8.05

The results show a clear upward trend in career maturity scores from the first year to the third year of study. The one-way ANOVA confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ($F = 9.84$, $p < 0.01$), leading to the rejection of the third null hypothesis. Third-year students demonstrated the highest level of career maturity, followed by second-year and first-year students. This pattern aligns with developmental expectations, as final-year students are closer to making concrete career decisions and have had greater exposure to internships, placement activities, career counselling sessions, and discussions with seniors who have already entered the job market or pursued further studies. The lower scores among first-year students suggest that career guidance interventions may be particularly beneficial if introduced early in the undergraduate programme rather than concentrated only in the final year.

6.4 Overall Discussion

Taken together, the findings of this study indicate that career maturity among undergraduate students in Ahmedabad is influenced primarily by academic stream and stage of education, rather than by gender. The relatively higher career maturity of Commerce students may reflect both the structured nature of commerce-related career pathways and the entrepreneurial culture prevalent in Ahmedabad, where many students come from business families and are exposed to financial and commercial decision-making from a young age. The absence of significant gender differences is encouraging, as it suggests that career guidance interventions need not be differentiated by gender but should instead be tailored to the specific needs of each academic faculty and year of study.

The significant increase in career maturity scores across years of study underscores the developmental nature of this construct and highlights the importance of longitudinal exposure

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to career-related experiences. However, the relatively modest mean scores even among third-year students (66.95 out of a possible higher maximum) suggest that there remains considerable scope for improvement. This indicates that even students who are close to graduation may not have fully developed the competencies required for confident and informed career decision-making, reinforcing the need for systematic career counselling throughout the undergraduate years rather than only at the point of graduation.

7. Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for colleges in Ahmedabad and similar urban centres in Gujarat. First, career counselling cells should be established or strengthened within Arts and Commerce faculties, with trained counsellors available to guide students from the first year onward rather than concentrating services in the final year. Second, given the lower career maturity scores among Arts students, targeted interventions such as workshops on occupational information, exposure visits to workplaces, and interactions with alumni working in diverse fields could help broaden students' understanding of available career pathways and improve their decision-making confidence.

Third, since first-year students show the lowest career maturity scores, orientation programmes at the time of admission could include modules on self-assessment, goal-setting, and introduction to various career options relevant to their chosen stream. Fourth, given the relatively similar scores between male and female students, career guidance programmes can be designed in a gender-neutral manner, focusing instead on stream-specific and year-specific needs. Finally, collaboration between colleges and industry bodies, professional associations, and alumni networks can provide students with practical exposure and mentorship opportunities that are likely to enhance career maturity over time.

8. Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The sample was drawn from a limited number of colleges in Ahmedabad and may not be fully representative of all Arts and Commerce students across Gujarat. The use of a self-report inventory may be subject to response biases, including social desirability. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not allow for tracking changes in career maturity within the

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same individuals over time, and a longitudinal design would provide more robust evidence regarding developmental trends across years of study.

9. Conclusion

This study examined the career maturity of Arts and Commerce undergraduate students in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, and found that Commerce students exhibit significantly higher career maturity than Arts students, that gender does not significantly influence career maturity, and that career maturity increases significantly with progression through the years of study. These findings highlight the importance of stream-specific and stage-specific career counselling interventions in higher education institutions. As the employment landscape continues to evolve and diversify, equipping students across all academic streams with the skills and information needed to make confident and informed career decisions remains a critical responsibility for educational institutions, and the present findings provide a useful starting point for designing such interventions in the local context of Ahmedabad.

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