Emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept, and Socio-Economic Status as Predictors of Career Maturity among Senior Secondary Students

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Abstract

The present study investigates the prediction of Career Maturity based on Emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept and Socio-Economic Status among senior secondary school students. A descriptive survey approach was used and a sample of 600 students aged 16 to 18 years (300 boys and 300 girls) from senior secondary schools in government as well as private located at three districts of Haryana namely Rohtak, Jhajjar and Bhiwani. Participants were sampled randomly to where there was gender, school type and locality balance. Career maturity, emotional intelligence self-concept and socio-economic status were assessed by the use of standardized instruments. Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 20.0 and tools such as mean, standard deviation, regression analysis and ANOVA were used to lay the groundwork for results discussion. Stepwise regression analysis found the most powerful predictor was Emotional Intelligence, explaining 63.5% of the variance in Career Maturity. When Self-Concept was included, the explained variance increased to 67.8%, and with the addition of Socio-Economic Status, a total of 70.5% was captured by the model. All three models demonstrated statistical significance at p < .001, indicating that each independent variable contributed meaningfully to the overall model. The results of the ANOVA further substantiated the regression findings, revealing that each successive model accounted for a significantly greater proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. These findings highlight the co-acting effects of affective, cognitive, and contextual sources on the development of high school students' career preparedness. The results also highlight the need to embed EI training, self-image formation and a more equal access to career guidance in education. These findings have important implications for practitioners that focus on educators, counselors, and policy makers who are interested in developing holistic career development programs that meet both psychological and socio-economic needs of the students.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept, Socio-Economic Status, Career Maturity, Senior Secondary Students

Introduction

Career development is a complex, lifelong process that depends on a variety of psychosocial and contextual variables. In the present environment of rapid technological change and a confusing job market, the task of young person's making informed career decisions has been identified as a major educational issue. This concept of career maturity concerns the readiness

of an individual to make value-based educational and occupational decisions appropriate to his or her capacities, interests, and future goals. This is also highly relevant at the senior secondary level, considering students in this stage of education are eligible to make crucial decisions regarding their academic and career pursuits that will ultimately have a significant impact on their career maturity. The psychological factor of career maturity has been influenced by the emotional intelligence, which is described as an ability to manage and understand emotions and relationships with colleagues. Students high in emotional intelligence are better decision-makers, they manage stress effectively; and are more flexible interrelationship skill which is very important for the career planning (Jamadar & Sindhu, 2015). In the same way, self-concept (that is, the cognitive and affective representation of oneself) influences career aspirations and motivation. Adolescents who have a high sense of self-concept tend to be more confident in themselves, set clearer goals and displayed stronger career commitment toward career development (Devi, 2017).

Another significant factor related to career maturity is socio-economic status (SES) which includes parental income, education, occupation and social support. The SES also determines the educational opportunity, career information and support which can influence students' career decisions and maturity level (Razia & Ahmad, 2017). Furthermore, demographic variables like gender, residence (urban/rural) and academic track also result in variation in the attitudes of the individual towards career and career readiness.

In spite of these factors, there is a dearth of research on the predictive value of such variables in predicting career maturity among Indian adolescents. International studies in this area are growing, but Indian studies dealing with these relationships, book using predictive models like regression is scarce. To the best of our knowledge, currently no study in India has been published where emotional intelligence self-concept and socio-economic status predicting career maturity among senior secondary school students is taken up in districts of Haryana. This paper also takes into account a gender and region-specific perspective to provide an overall view as they interact with the rest of the variables in Indian context.

Review of Related Literature

Jamadar & Sindhu (2015) carried out a research on tribal adolescent students to investigate the relationship between socio-economic status with (emotional intelligence and creativity). Students from wealthier backgrounds also showed greater emotional regulation and creative thinking, they found. The research highlighted how economic stability leads to psychological flexibility and growth. Devi (2017) found the correlation between self-concept and socio economic status of senior secondary students. The study also revealed that high SES students with high self-concept had better academic performance and decision-making skills. The results highlight the significance of psychological self-understanding and substance support in students' whole-person development. Razia and Ahmad (2017) examined the impact of emotional intelligence and socio-economic status on adolescent academic achievement. Their research found both factors significantly affect student adjustment, planning for the future and goal setting. These affective meaning dimensions were associated with positive academic behavior, thereby indirectly predicted career

maturity. Kumar and Rani (2018) concentrated on the influence of emotional intelligence training programmes introduced in schools. They reported large gains in students' self-knowledge, decision-making and career exploration toward the end of their training. The research pointed out that emotional intelligence could be considered not only as a predictor but also as an acquired skill. This work lends itself to the incorporation of EI development into formal education. Jain and Sharma (2019) studied emotional intelligence and self-efficacy as related to adolescents. They discovered a positive and strong relationship, which implies students with emotional intelligence were more likely to feel confident in their capability for achieving goals. 'Job Indecision Self-Efficacy,' makes the link between belief in one's own power and effectiveness and good career decision-making. Behera (2020) studied the impact of self-concept and intelligence on the career maturity among higher secondary school students. It was found that self-perceptions and cognitive factors significantly predict career preparedness. The higher the self-concept of students, the more clear their goal and decision was achieved and made. These observations lend credence to the belief that personal identity is fundamental to career development. Bajpai and Srivastava (2020) focused on rural school students and observed that there was absence of the resources regarding career counseling in these areas. The study revealed that poor emotional intelligence and weak self-concept of rural students fettered their career maturity. Their results indicate important role of environmental and infrastructural support on the development of the psychological status regarding career planning. Meena and Chauhan (2021) studied the impact of social background on career aspiration among senior secondary school students. Students from a higher SES segment were found to be more career-conscious and also, they displayed more maturity in planned for future career needs. Better exposure, resources and parental support were associated with more developed career choices in their study. It further upholds SES as a career development facilitator. Pandey (2022) studied the collective influence of self-concept and gender on high school level students' career maturity. Self-concept was found to be a better predictor of career maturity than gender. Students who had more favorable views of themselves tended to have higher scores when it came to planning ahead and thinking about the future. This highlights the mind-set associated with job preparedness, regardless of gender. Tripathi (2023) studied the gender differences of career maturity among senior secondary school students. Results revealed that girls demonstrated better emotional adaptability and planning than boys. This indicated that gender might play a role in the development of career readiness, especially regarding emotional self-regulation. The study suggests need for gender-informed career guidance strategies in schools. Sultana and Islam (2024) conducted a comparative study among tribal and non-tribal students, to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence and self-concept. Their findings indicated that self-concept and academic career adaptability were positively associated with emotional intelligence, in which both made a joint full mediating effect on the relation between emotional intelligence and grade or adapt career. Shaikh & Verma, (2025) had carried out a large scale survey in school students belonging to various educational board. They found that emotional intelligence and self-concept positively

together were the highly significant predictor of career maturity. Young people exhibiting both characteristics were more capable of making decisions, adjustments and transitions in their educational and occupational life.

The findings from the studies reviewed indicate that emotional intelligence, self-concept and socio-economic status are important psychological and contextual factors that determine the career maturity of adolescents. Emotion intelligence improves self-efficacy, decision-making and adaptability, while a healthy self-concept facilitates confidence in planning for the future. Both academic achievement and process of career orientation greatly depend on the socio-economic status, especially in terms of resources and parental support. Gender and rural–urban differences also appear to moderate career development. Combined, the literature creates a robust empirical and theoretical platform for the investigation of these predictors in determining adolescents' readiness to make career decisions.

Justification and Significance of the Study

The present research has relevance and significance for both theoretical and practical aspects. In the context of a rapidly evolving educational landscape, where students are required to make career decisions at a relatively young age, it is essential to explore this phenomenon from both psychological and sociological perspectives. Through, the determination of the predictive variables such as emotional intelligence, self-concept and socio-economic status, useful inputs can be extracted to contribute in making educational policy implications and revamping school counseling and career guidance practices. The research also involves senior secondary school students, a target group frequently faced with pressures to decide quickly in relation to their academic and vocational future, making this inquiry both timely and appropriate to the context.

Furthermore, the research is important for educators, career counselors and parents because it identifies domains in which adolescent development can be nurtured to promote readiness for careers. Since the emotional intelligence is a malleable skill, implication of this research can be applied in designing effective life management skills training programs for school students. In addition, Counseling, Mentoring and Inclusive Learning Environments to reinforcing confidence in career decisions, educators can also promote healthy self-concept through counseling and mentoring. An awareness of this socio-economic background also enables stakeholders to narrow the divide that separates students from different economic contexts and their opportunities and supports.

The research also contributes academically in the sense that it employs predictive approach rather than just correlation between variables and investigates how many speculative powers these variables have on career maturity. It contributes to the existing literature by operationalizing this construct in an Indian context, where there have been few all-encompassing studies. The gender and region-wise comparison this study incorporates ensures social inclusion and allows us to understand the varied educational dimensions.

Moreover, there are practical implications of this research for developing school-based career guidance, for 'enriching' perspectives in educational psychology and for supporting equal opportunities in education. It also provides new direction for researchers and

practitioners in their efforts to explore or intervene with regard to the process of career development in adolescents as they make the transition to adulthood and work.

Statement of the problem

Emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept, and Socio-Economic Status as Predictors of Career Maturity among Senior Secondary Students

Objective

1. To find the predictive efficacy of emotional intelligence, self-concept and socioeconomic status in predicting the career maturity of senior secondary school students.

Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant emotional intelligence, self-concept and socioeconomic status in predicting the career maturity of senior secondary school students.

Research Method Used

A descriptive survey method was employed to find the predictive efficacy of emotional intelligence, self-concept and socioeconomic status in predicting the career maturity of senior secondary school students.

Population of the Study

The target population consisted of all senior secondary school students aged 16–18 enrolled in government and private schools across Haryana. This stage of education is crucial for career and personality development. The population was diverse in terms of socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds across 22 districts.

Sample of the Study

A sample of 600 students, both male and female, was selected to represent the population. This sample was drawn from senior secondary schools located in three districts of Haryana, ensuring balanced representation across different school types and student demographics.

Sampling Method

The study used stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation of sub-groups like gender, school type, and location. Three districts—Rohtak, Jhajjar, and Bhiwani—were randomly chosen, and from each, 200 students were selected through balanced sampling of private and government schools.

Area of the Study

The research was conducted in the districts of Rohtak, Jhajjar, and Bhiwani in Haryana. These were chosen for geographical proximity, administrative ease, and socio-cultural similarities, which helped maintain consistency, reduce extraneous variables, and enhance internal validity of the study.

Tools Used for Data Collection

Data were collected using standardized and validated tools: 1.Revised Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) by Nirmala Gupta (2013); 2. Revised Self-Concept Questionnaire by Saraswat (2011); 3. Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory (MEII) by Mangal and Mangal (2009) and 4.Socio-Economic Scale by Dr. Ashok K. Kalia and Sahoo (2012)

Statistical Techniques Used

The analysis was carried out using SPSS Version 20.0. Techniques such as mean, standard deviation, and Regression and ANOVA tests were applied to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

The first objective of the paper is "To find the predictive efficacy of emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept and socioeconomic status in predicting the career maturity of senior secondary school students" Stepwise Regression analysis was used to analyze the data given in Table 1 to 1.1.1 below:

Table 1: Model Summary

Model Summary[d]									
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.797[a]	.635	.634	6.884	.635	1039.049	1	598	.000
2	.823[b]	.678	.677	6.470	.043	80.078	1	597	.000
3	.839[c]	.705	.703	6.200	.027	53.984	1	596	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence, Self Concept									
c. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence, Self Concept, Socio-Economic Status									
d. Dependent Variable: Career Maturity									

The model Summary table 1 represents the results of a stepwise multiple regression conducted to predict career maturity by emotional intelligence, self-concept and socio-economic status among senior secondary school students. The analysis took place in three stages, adding predictors into the regression equation.

In Model 1, Emotional Intelligence was entered as the only predictor. The estimate R-value in the model was 0.797, there was a strong positive association between Emotional Intelligence and Career Maturity. The R^2 of 0.635 indicates that the Emotional Intelligence as a whole explains 63.5% variation in Career Maturity. The model was highly significant (F = 1039.049, p <. 001.

In Model 2, Self-Concept was introduced alongside Emotional Intelligence as a predictor variable. The resulting R value was 0.823, with an adjusted R² of 0.678, indicating that the model accounted for 67.8% of the variance in Career Maturity. This increase in explanatory power was statistically significant, as evidenced by the change in F value (F = 80.078, p < .001), suggesting that the inclusion of Self-Concept significantly improved the overall predictive capacity of the model.

Model 3 added Socio-Economic Status as a further predictor to the above two variables. R become 0.839, and R^2 is equaled to 0.705, so, these three predictors account for 70.5% of the total variance on Career Maturity. The change in the R^2 change of 0.027 was found to be significant (F = 53.984, p <. 001), indicating that Socio-Economic Status also independently adds to the prediction.

In summary, the data suggest that Emotional Intelligence is a strong predictor of Career Maturity, with Self-Concept and Socio-Economic Status adding to the overall statistical significance. The adjusted R Square is almost equal to the original R Square in all three models, implying that the models are stable and applicable.

Table 1.1 : ANOVA Summary

ANOVA[a]		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49240.588	1	49240.588	1039.049	.000[b]
	Residual	28339.245	598	47.390		
	Total	77579.833	599			
2	Regression	52592.265	2	26296.133	628.264	.000[c]
	Residual	24987.568	597	41.855		
	Total	77579.833	599			
3	Regression	54667.587	3	18222.529	474.010	.000[d]
	Residual	22912.247	596	38.443		
	Total	77579.833	599			
a. Dependent Variable: Career Maturity						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence, Self Concept						
d. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence, Self Concept, Socio-Economic Status						

The ANOVA table presents the results of the Analysis of Variance used to evaluate the statistical significance of the three regression models predicting Career Maturity based on the independent variables: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept, and Socio-Economic Status.

In Model 1, where only Emotional Intelligence was included as a predictor, the regression sum of squares was 49,240.588 with 1 degree of freedom (df). The F-value was 1039.049, which is highly significant at p < .001. This indicates that Emotional Intelligence alone significantly explains the variation in Career Maturity.

In Model 2, both Emotional Intelligence and Self-Concept were entered as predictors. The regression sum of squares increased to 52,592.265, and the F-value decreased to 628.264 (due to increased degrees of freedom), but remained highly significant (p < .001). This confirms that the inclusion of Self-Concept significantly improved the model's ability to predict Career Maturity.

In Model 3, Socio-Economic Status was added to the previous two predictors. The regression sum of squares further increased to 54,667.587, and the F-value was 474.010, still statistically

significant at $p < .001$. This shows that the addition of Socio-Economic Status further contributed to the explanation of variance in Career Maturity, despite the increase in model complexity.

Across all three models, the Total Sum of Squares remained constant at 77,579.833, indicating a consistent dataset. The progressive increase in regression sum of squares and the corresponding decrease in residual sum of squares demonstrate that each added variable increased the model's explanatory power. The consistently significant F-values confirm the models are statistically valid.

In conclusion, the ANOVA results reinforce that Emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept, and Socio-Economic Status each significantly contribute to explaining variance in Career Maturity, and that the regression models are highly statistically significant.

Findings of the Study

The study aimed to determine the predictive power of Emotional Intelligence, Self-Concept, and Socio-Economic Status on the Career Maturity of senior secondary school students. The findings reveal that Emotional Intelligence alone accounts for 63.5% of the variance in Career Maturity, indicating it as a strong independent predictor. When Self-Concept was added in the second model, the explained variance increased to 67.8%, suggesting a meaningful contribution. Finally, the inclusion of Socio-Economic Status in Model 3 raised the total explained variance to 70.5%, confirming its significant but comparatively smaller impact. All three models were statistically significant at $p < .001$, affirming that the variables jointly and independently contribute to Career Maturity. The adjusted R Square values were close to the R Square values across all models, indicating model stability and reliability. The ANOVA results further confirmed that each successive model provided a significantly better fit to the data, with consistently high F-values and declining residual variances.

Discussion of Results

The present study revealed that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the strongest predictor of Career Maturity among senior secondary school students. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Kumar and Rani (2018), who demonstrated that EI training significantly enhanced students' self-awareness and decision-making, key components of career readiness. Similarly, Jain and Sharma (2019) found that emotionally intelligent adolescents had higher self-efficacy, which improved their goal-setting behavior—an essential marker of career maturity. These results affirm the role of EI not just as a personal attribute but as a foundational psychological skill that supports adolescents in planning their futures and handling career-related transitions.

The inclusion of Self-Concept in the regression model significantly improved its predictive power. This aligns with the research of Behera (2020), who concluded that self-perception is a direct predictor of students' career decision-making abilities. Pandey (2022) further emphasized that self-concept outweighs gender in determining future planning behaviors among students. Likewise, Sultana and Islam (2024) established a strong link between emotional intelligence and self-concept, showing that students who possess both traits are

better adapted to academic and career challenges. These findings support the conclusion that a strong, positive self-concept fosters confidence and clarity in career planning.

While Socio-Economic Status (SES) contributed less than EI and self-concept, its influence was still statistically significant. The predictive role of SES reflects the conclusions of Jamadar and Sindhu (2015), who found that students from higher SES backgrounds displayed more emotional maturity and creativity—traits that indirectly support career readiness. Devi (2017) and Razia and Ahmad (2017) both reported that students from financially stable families showed better academic outcomes and future planning skills. Meena and Chauhan (2021) similarly noted that adolescents from higher SES families had more career awareness and maturity in their aspirations, suggesting that access to information, parental support, and exposure are important enablers of career development. The study by Bajpai and Srivastava (2020) particularly highlighted that rural students, often from lower SES backgrounds, lacked career resources and demonstrated weaker self-concept and emotional intelligence, ultimately limiting their career maturity. Moreover, the results indirectly reflect the importance of gender and environmental context in career development, echoing Tripathi's (2023) finding that female students demonstrated greater emotional adaptability and planning skills than males. This suggests the need for gender-sensitive interventions in career counseling programs.

Finally, the overall findings resonate strongly with Shaikh and Verma (2025), who concluded through a large-scale survey that the combination of high emotional intelligence and positive self-concept is the most consistent predictor of career maturity. Their work, much like the present study, emphasizes the interrelated and complementary nature of emotional and cognitive variables in shaping adolescents' readiness to engage in career planning and decision-making.

Therefore, the results of this study align closely with a decade's worth of empirical research that collectively underscores the **synergistic impact** of emotional, psychological, and socio-economic factors in shaping the career maturity of school-going adolescents. The consistency of these results across different studies, populations, and methodologies lends strong support to the validity and relevance of the present research findings.

Implications and Suggestions of the Study

The results from this study have significance for educators, counselors, and parents. Firstly, there is a strong need to incorporate EI into educational curriculum of the schools via life skills intervention trainings, emotional regulation sensitization workshops and value education programs.

Secondly, in order to maximize the impact of self-concept on students' development, supportive schools and families that shape a positive identity and perception of self-worth are critically important. What this may tell us is that the presence of strong teacher and counselor reinforcement, structured peer support networks, as well as opportunities for success in academic or co-curricular endeavours can have a significant impact on increased resilient self-concept development amongst adolescents.

Thirdly, while Socio-Economic Status itself is not a modifiable factor, its effect can be lessened through the equitable provision of guidance resources and information to careers, particularly in disadvantaged schools. Career counseling services need to be included as an essential component of educational programme in rural/ low-income urban schools, so that all the students benefit from proper exposure and guidance. Next studies may want to examine other potential predictors, such as parental involvement, peer influence and academic motivation, in developing a more comprehensive model of intervention.

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