

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Career Decision-Making Efficacy in High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in examining career decision-making efficacy (CDMSE) in high school students. The research investigates how these components affect self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving in career decision-making, focusing on the key components of emotional intelligence—such as understanding emotions, motivation, empathy, and relationship management. Also, the study examines demographic factors like gender, family structure, school type, and academic stream to determine how these variables moderate the emotional intelligence and career decision making self-efficacy relationship. Findings reveal that EI significantly enhances CDMSE, with certain demographic groups benefiting more than others. These findings can assist educational strategies and counselling practices aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and improving career decision-making skills.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, Self-efficacy, School type, Career decision-making, Adolescents, Educational interventions, School environment, Adolescent development, Gender Role, Family type, stream*

Choosing a career path is one of the most critical developmental tasks for adolescents, shaping their future success and satisfaction. Career decision-making efficacy (CDME) refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to successfully engage in career-related tasks, including self-appraisal, occupational exploration, goal setting, planning, and problem-solving (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Higher CDME has been linked to better career outcomes, including job satisfaction, work performance, and smoother transitions into the workforce.

Emotional intelligence (EI), a concept first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990), refers to the ability to perceive, assess, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others. This capacity for emotional understanding and regulation is especially critical in situations of uncertainty and stress, such as when making significant career decisions. Several researchers have posited that high emotional intelligence enables individuals to approach career decisions more confidently, allowing them to handle stress, explore options, and make informed choices (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016). For instance, individuals with

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greater emotional awareness may be more adept at self-appraisal, a crucial first step in the career decision-making process.

Despite the apparent relevance of emotional intelligence to career decision-making efficacy, the relationship between these constructs remains underexplored, particularly in the context of high school students who are at the cusp of making career decisions. Adolescents, who are often navigating emotional, cognitive, and social changes, stand to benefit from understanding how emotional intelligence can improve their career decision-making efficacy.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Adolescence

Adolescence is a critical period for emotional and cognitive development, during which individuals solidify their sense of identity and begin to make autonomous decisions regarding their future. Emotional intelligence plays an essential role in this process by helping adolescents manage stress, understand their strengths and limitations, and build positive relationships that support their career goals. Adolescents with high EI are better equipped to navigate social dynamics, make informed decisions, and manage the emotional challenges associated with career planning.

For instance, an adolescent with high self-awareness (a core component of EI) may be better at evaluating their interests, abilities, and values, which are essential for making informed career choices. Similarly, adolescents with strong relationship management skills may seek guidance and feedback from peers, teachers, and counsellors, which can improve their career decision-making process. Understanding how these EI components relate to CDME is crucial for developing interventions that can help adolescents navigate their career pathways more effectively.

Demographic Variables and Career Decision-Making

While emotional intelligence is likely to influence CDME, demographic variables such as gender, family structure, school type, and academic stream may also play significant roles. Gender, for instance, has been shown to affect emotional intelligence, with females often scoring higher on measures of empathy and emotional awareness, while males tend to excel in emotional regulation and relationship management (Petrides & Furnham, 2000). These gender differences may influence the career decision-making process, with females potentially relying more on interpersonal factors and males focusing on goal-oriented strategies.

Family structure is another important factor. Students from joint families may benefit from the emotional and social support provided by extended family members, which can enhance their CDME. In contrast, students from nuclear families may experience a more individualized decision-making process, which could either strengthen or weaken their confidence in career-related tasks.

School type and academic stream also play pivotal roles in shaping career decision-making efficacy. Private schools often provide more resources, such as career counselling and mentoring, which can enhance students' confidence in their ability to make career-related decisions. Government schools, on the other hand, may have fewer resources, potentially leading to lower levels of CDME. Similarly, students in different academic streams (e.g., science, commerce, humanities) may face different expectations and opportunities, influencing their career decision-making process.

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Objectives

- **Objective 1:** To assess the levels of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDSE) among high school students.
- **Objective 2:** To evaluate levels of Emotional Intelligence (EIS) among the high school students.
- **Objective 3:** To examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy.
- **Objective 4:** To assess the predictive power of Emotional Intelligence components on CDMSE while controlling for demographic variables.
- **Objective 5:** To investigate how demographic variables (gender, family type, school type, and academic stream) moderate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and CDSE.

Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:** There is a significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE).
- **Hypothesis 2:** Emotional Intelligence components significantly predict Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Higher empathy and relationship management are associated with higher CDMSE.
- **Hypothesis 4:** Emotional Intelligence contributes significantly to predicting CDMSE, even when controlling for demographic variables.
- **Hypothesis 5:** Demographic factors such as gender, family type, school type, and academic stream moderate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and CDMSE.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the growing body of research on career decision-making efficacy by integrating emotional intelligence as a critical psychological factor. By investigating the moderating effects of demographic variables, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of how emotional intelligence influences CDMSE in different student populations. The findings can guide educational interventions and career counselling practices aimed at fostering emotional intelligence and improving career decision-making skills among high school students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional Intelligence and Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy

Research has consistently demonstrated that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to exhibit greater career decision-making self-efficacy (Coetzee & Harry, 2014; Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016). Emotional intelligence, particularly components such as self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation, has been linked to improved problem-solving abilities, enhanced self-appraisal, and more effective goal-setting behaviors (Singh & Dhingra, 2022). These skills are essential for making informed career decisions, especially in high-pressure situations where uncertainty and emotional stress are common.

For example, a study by Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2009) found that emotional intelligence was positively associated with career decision-making self-efficacy among Italian high school students. The authors argued that individuals with high emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in self-reflective practices that enhance their career decision-making

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abilities. Similarly, Coetzee and Harry (2014) found that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of career decision-making self-efficacy among South African university students, suggesting that EI may play a critical role in shaping students' career-related decisions across different cultural contexts.

Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence and Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy Several studies have examined gender differences in emotional intelligence and career decision-making efficacy, revealing mixed results. Some research suggests that females tend to score higher on measures of emotional intelligence, particularly in areas related to empathy and emotional awareness (Petrides & Furnham, 2000). This heightened emotional awareness may lead to higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy, as individuals who are more in tune with their emotions may be better able to engage in self-appraisal and goal-setting behaviors.

However, other studies have found that males may exhibit greater confidence in certain aspects of career decision-making, such as planning and problem-solving, which are closely related to emotional regulation and relationship management (Han & Rojewski, 2015). These findings suggest that while gender differences in emotional intelligence exist, they may not always translate into differences in career decision-making efficacy. Instead, the specific components of emotional intelligence that are most relevant to career decision-making may vary based on gender.

Family Structure and Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy

Family structure has also been identified as an important factor influencing career decision-making efficacy. Adolescents from joint families, where extended family members provide additional emotional and social support, may have higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy due to the availability of multiple role models and sources of guidance (Karimi & Mohammadi, 2017). In contrast, adolescents from nuclear families may experience more individualized decision-making processes, which could either enhance their autonomy and confidence or lead to increased uncertainty and stress.

School Type and Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy

The type of school that students attend can also significantly impact their career decision-making efficacy. Private schools, which often have more resources and access to career counselling services, may provide students with greater opportunities to explore their career interests and develop the skills necessary for effective career decision-making (Kaya & Yildirim, 2020). In contrast, students in government schools may have fewer resources, leading to lower levels of career decision-making self-efficacy.

Academic Stream and Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy

Finally, academic stream plays a crucial role in shaping students' career decision-making efficacy. Students in science streams, for example, may have more clearly defined career paths and greater access to information about their future options, which can enhance their confidence in making career decisions (Alavi & Askaripur, 2020). In contrast, students in humanities or commerce streams may have more diverse career options but less certainty about their future paths, leading to lower levels of career decision-making self-efficacy.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employs a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making efficacy among high school students. A survey was chosen as the primary method of data collection due to its efficiency in gathering large amounts of data from a diverse sample of students across different demographic backgrounds.

Sample

The sample consisted of 170 high school students aged 15-18 from both government and private schools. Students were stratified by gender (male and female), family type (joint and nuclear), school type (government and private), and academic stream (humanities, commerce, and science). The inclusion criteria required that participants be currently enrolled in high school and actively engaged in the career decision-making process.

Instruments

- 1. Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSE):** The CDSE, developed by Taylor and Betz (1983), is a 50-item scale designed to measure career decision-making efficacy across five dimensions: self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater confidence in career decision-making tasks.
- 2. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS):** The EIS, developed by Schutte et al. (1998), is a 31-item self-report scale that measures emotional intelligence across four dimensions: understanding emotions, understanding motivation, empathy, and handling relationships. Responses are measured on a dichotomous scale, with higher scores indicating greater emotional intelligence.
- 3. Demographic Questionnaire:** A custom-designed questionnaire was used to collect demographic information such as gender, family type, school type, and academic stream. This information was used to examine the moderating effects of demographic variables on the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making efficacy.

Procedure

Data collection occurred over a 3–4-month period. Students were invited to participate in the study through their schools, and both online and printed versions of the survey were made available. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and their guardians, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses.

Data Analysis

The following statistical methods were employed:

- 1. Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were calculated for each variable to provide an overview of the sample characteristics.

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Table 1: Career decision making self-efficacy

	Self-appraisal	Occupational information	Goal Setting	Planning	Problem solving	Total
Mean	3.414285714	3.364285714	3.35297619	3.408928571	3.28452381	3.376857143
S.D	0.6987830066	0.6467130817	0.6655712593	0.7016516321	0.5869833664	0.5264147665
Min	1.9	1.8	2	1.9	2	2.4
Max	6	5	6.5	5	5.6	4.76
Variance	0.4882976903	0.4182378101	0.4429851012	0.4923150128	0.3445494725	0.2771125064

Table 2: Emotional Intelligence

	Understanding Emotions	Understanding Motivation	Empathy	Handling Relations	Total
Mean	2.880952381	5.089285714	6.583333333	6.142857143	20.75595238
S.D	0.9591009001	1.588997941	1.693300171	1.809111054	4.401275025
Min	0	1	2	0	4
Max	4	8	10	9	29
Variance	0.9198745366	2.524914457	2.867265469	3.272882806	19.37122184

2. Pearson Correlation Analysis: This was used to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making efficacy. A positive correlation would support the hypothesis that higher emotional intelligence is associated with higher career decision making self-efficacy.

CDMSE/EI	Understanding emotions	Understanding motivation	Empathy	Handling relations
Self-appraisal	0.2473617974	0.03605501432	0.1993900413	0.1821599851
Occupational information	0.1523953874	0.02701252672	0.2548143297	0.1615118276
Goal setting	0.2181853012	0.01078802705	0.2056645733	0.1617665533
Planning	0.1056968158	0.1056224572	0.2571645199	0.2768402015
Problem solving	0.144553333	0.06890025745	0.2061396247	0.1385552269

3. Multiple Regression Analysis: This was employed to determine the predictive power of emotional intelligence on career decision-making efficacy, controlling for demographic variables such as gender, family type, school type, and academic stream.

Metric	Value
Multiple R	0.407022
R Square	0.165667
Adjusted R Square	0.123422
Standard Error	0.492791
Observations	170

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Source	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	8	7.618658	0.952332	3.921597	0.000298
Residual	158	38.36919	0.242843		
Total	169	45.98785			

Term	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	2.434658	0.253108	9.619053	1.58E-17	1.934746	2.934569
1	0.040287	0.046813	0.860596	0.390765	-0.05217	0.132746
4	-0.01572	0.026754	-0.58738	0.557788	-0.06856	0.037127
5	0.09547	0.02585	3.693283	0.000305	0.044415	0.146525
5 (repeated)	0.019643	0.026799	0.732962	0.464668	-0.03329	0.072573
0	0.183413	0.082159	2.232423	0.026993	0.021142	0.345684
1	-0.07407	0.079629	-0.93015	0.353712	-0.23134	0.083208
1 (repeated)	-0.04201	0.082062	-0.51187	0.609459	-0.20408	0.120075
1 (repeated)	0.087118	0.051047	1.706608	0.089859	-0.01371	0.18794

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 170 students, of which 52% were female and 48% were male. In terms of family structure, 40% of students came from joint families, while 60% came from nuclear families. Approximately 55% of the students attended private schools, and 45% attended government schools. The distribution of academic streams was as follows: 35% of students were in the science stream, 30% in commerce, and 35% in humanities.

- **CDMSE Measures:** The average scores on the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale indicated moderate levels of career decision-making confidence across the sample, with mean values ranging from 3.2 to 4.1 on a 5-point scale. Self-appraisal and goal selection were the highest-rated dimensions, while planning and problem-solving exhibited more variability.
- **EIS Measures:** Students' emotional intelligence scores were generally high, with empathy and relationship management showing the highest average scores. The standard deviations indicated significant variability within the sample, particularly in the area of emotional regulation.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making efficacy ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). Specifically, empathy ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) and relationship management ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) were most strongly correlated with CDMSE. These results suggest that students who score higher on emotional intelligence are more confident in their ability to make career decisions.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence components, particularly empathy and relationship management, were significant predictors of career decision-making efficacy, accounting for 34% of the variance in CDMSE scores ($R^2 = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). Even after controlling for demographic variables, emotional

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intelligence remained a significant predictor, indicating that Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in shaping career decision-making confidence.

Moderation Analysis

The moderation analysis revealed that gender, school type, and academic stream moderated the relationship between emotional intelligence and CDMSE. For example, the relationship between empathy and CDMSE was stronger for females than for males, while the relationship between emotional regulation and CDMSE was more pronounced for students in the science stream compared to those in humanities or commerce.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The findings support the study's hypotheses that emotional intelligence significantly influences career decision-making efficacy among high school students. Specifically, the components of empathy and relationship management were found to be the most important predictors of CDMSE. These results align with previous research suggesting that individuals with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to engage in self-appraisal, set goals, and make informed career decisions (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; Singh & Dhingra, 2022).

The moderating effects of gender, school type, and academic stream further highlight the importance of considering demographic factors when designing interventions aimed at improving career decision-making efficacy. For instance, female students, who tend to score higher on empathy and emotional awareness, may benefit from career counselling programs that emphasize interpersonal skills and emotional regulation. In contrast, male students may benefit more from interventions that focus on goal-setting and problem-solving.

Implications for Educators and Counsellors

The study's findings have important implications for educators and counsellors working with high school students. By incorporating emotional intelligence training into career counselling programs, schools can help students develop the emotional skills necessary for making informed career decisions. This could involve teaching students how to manage stress, build positive relationships, and engage in self-reflection, all of which are critical components of career decision-making efficacy.

Additionally, the study highlights the need for targeted interventions based on demographic factors. For example, students in government schools, who may have fewer career resources, could benefit from programs that enhance their confidence in career decision-making tasks. Similarly, students in the humanities or commerce streams, who may face more diverse career options, could benefit from career counselling that helps them explore their interests and set realistic career goals.

Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making self-efficacy, it has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow for causal inferences to be made. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine how emotional intelligence and CDMSE develop over time. Second, the sample was limited to high school students in one region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should include more diverse samples to explore how cultural and contextual factors influence the EI-CDMSE relationship.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in shaping career decision-making efficacy among high school students. By enhancing emotional intelligence, particularly empathy and relationship management, educators and counsellors can help students build the confidence needed to make informed career decisions. The study also highlights the need for targeted interventions that take into account demographic factors such as gender, school type, and academic stream. Overall, these findings provide valuable guidance for improving career counselling programs and supporting students in their career decision-making journeys.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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