

Emotional Maturity and Decision Making Among Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

In this Present Era, emotional maturity plays a vital role for college students, as it helps them to improve academic performance, manage stress in different situations, build better social relationships and influence decision-making with different alternatives. The main purpose of the present study is to evaluate emotional maturity and decision-making among undergraduates with a focus on gender differences. The sample consisted of 120 college students from Coimbatore district, with an equal number of male and female participants (n=60 each). The students' ages ranged from 17 to 20 years. The Emotional Maturity Scale (48 items) by Yashvir Singh and Mahesh Bhargava and The General Decision-Making Style Questionnaire (25 items) by Scott and Bruce were used as tools. The study found that students of both genders exhibited moderately unstable emotional maturity, and the majority preferred intuitive decision-making styles. On a gender basis, there is no significant difference between emotional maturity and decision-making, and there is a weak positive association between the two variables. The findings of this study suggested that these samples need counseling to improve their emotional maturity and capacity for decision-making.

Keywords: *Emotional Maturity, General Decision-Making Styles, Undergraduate Students*

Emotional Maturity

Emotions are complex reaction that link high-level activity with changes accompanied by strong feelings or emotional states. (Caplin, 2004) defines emotion as which cause the body to be aroused with conscious and behavioural changes. Adolescents are considered to have emotional maturity when they are able to express love and affection easily, face reality positively, assess life experiences constructively, think positively about their personality, be hopeful, be interested in giving, and in handling hostility constructively, and think openly. Maturity has been defined as the capacity of mind to endure the capability to react to ambiguity, conditions or surroundings in an appropriate way (Finley, 1996). Emotional maturity represents the ability of adolescents to express their emotions naturally with self-control, independence, self-efficacy, and a high level of self-acceptance (Diwyarthi et al., 2022).

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Emotional maturity is a talking about concept of our feelings which make us realize who we are in reality. When we say that a person is emotionally mature, we mean someone who is able to regulate, control, and express his / her feelings in a desirable manner; just as it is acceptable in society. According to Walter D. Smitson (1974) emotional maturity is a process in which the personality is continuously striving for greater sense of emotional health, both intra-psychically and intra-personally.

Kaplan and Baron elaborate the characteristics of an emotionally mature persons, They tend to have the capacity to withstand delay in satisfaction of needs, the ability to tolerate a reasonable amount of frustration, They have belief in long term planning and are capable of delaying or revising their expectations in terms of demands of situations, and an emotionally mature child has the capacity to make effective adjustment with themselves, members of their family, and their peers in the school, society and culture.

According to Bernard (1954), following are the criteria of mature emotional behaviour 1. Inhibition of direct expression of negative emotions, 2. Cultivation of positive up building emotions, 3. Development of higher tolerance for disagreeable circumstances, 4. Increasing satisfaction from socially approved responses, 5. Increasing dependence of actions, 6. Ability to make a choice and not broad about other choices, 7. Freedom from unreasonable fear, 8. Understanding and action in accordance with limitations, 9. Awareness of the ability and achievement of others, 10. Ability to err without feeling disgraced, 11. Ability to carry victory and prestige with grace, 12. Ability to delay the gratification of impulses and The enjoyment of daily living.

Emotional maturity in 17- to 20-year-old college students is often at a low level, with many students experiencing instability due to the significant transition into higher education and adulthood. Research indicated that a person can be classified as emotionally unstable which he / she is lacking the ability to effectively manage emotions, and may face challenges based on factors like gender or family background. The overall trend suggests this age group is still developing the emotional resilience and self-awareness needed for stable emotional health.

Our emotional maturity is influenced by several factors, such as childhood experiences, parental modeling, Trauma and adversity, education and awareness, social interaction, cultural norms and mental health which are contributed uniquely to our ability to understand and manage their emotions.

Decision-Making

All human activities revolve around making choices or taking decisions. Decision making may be defined as the process of deciding to adopt a certain course of action from various alternatives, to achieve a set of predetermined goals. According to George R. Terry, "Decision-making is the selection based on certain criteria from two or more alternatives.

Yadav. G (2022) elucidated that the psychology of decision-making examines the complex cognitive processes that inform our choices. It looks at the factors, both conscious and subconscious, that affect how people make decisions. This helps us understand why people make certain choices and how those choices affect their lives. Researchers and practitioners learn about the cognitive, emotional, and social factors that affect how people act by studying the psychology of decision-making. When people have to make decisions, the process is a complex journey that they have to go through. This process usually has five

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steps: figuring out what the decision is, getting information, looking at the options, making a choice, and putting the decision into action.

General decision-making styles are based on the idea that people have different preferences for how they make decisions. Some people prefer to make decisions in a logical and systematic way, while others prefer to make decisions on their gut feelings. It helps people to identify their dominant decision-making style and to learn more about how they can make more effective decisions.

Experts have identified several decision-making styles. Scott and Bruce (1995) have stated that decision-making styles could be differentiated by how individuals decide. Their research successfully identified five general decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous.

On the other hand, based on bounded rational theory (Simon, 1955), Schwartz et al. (2002) have found that individuals could be categorized by their efforts to maximize the outcome of their choices, known as maximizing and satisficing. Studies in different countries and ages indicate that individual styles in decision-making also affect the outcomes and their personal psychological health.

Five decision-making styles assessed by the GDMS (General Decision-Making Styles):

- People who make decisions in a rational way usually do so in a logical and systematic way. They get information, think about the pros and cons of each choice, and then make a choice based on what they believe is right and what they want to achieve.
- People who make decisions by avoiding them often put off making them or don't make them at all. They might be afraid of making the wrong choice or feel like they have too much to think about when they have to make a choice.
- People who make decisions based on what others say are very dependent on the advice of others. They might not feel confident in their ability to make good choices on their own.
- People who make decisions based on their gut feelings often have an intuitive style. They trust their gut to tell them what to do.
- People who make decisions on the fly often don't think them through carefully. They might be okay with taking chances and making choices quickly.

Need for the Study

Recently, it has become important to look at emotional maturity and decision-making styles in people aged 17 to 20 (college students). This is a very important stage of development because these skills have a big effect on how well you handle stress, how well you do in school, how mentally healthy you are, and how ready you are for a career. These people had to deal with a lot of problems in their academic, family, and social lives. Students who are emotionally mature are better able to deal with tough situations with resilience and a balanced approach, instead of acting on impulse. Emotional maturity supports sound decision-making by facilitating rational thought, consideration of consequences, and the avoidance of impulsive choices, particularly in emotionally charged contexts.

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Patange. P (2022) aimed to assess the emotional maturity level among the secondary school students. The data gathering involved 100 students of secondary English medium school

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from Dombivli (Thane District). The study found that all secondary school students are emotionally matured. The results revealed that there is no significant difference in emotional maturity of secondary school students based on their Gender and Location.

Sari, M. P. (2022) found that the relationship between decision-making styles and life satisfaction. The result of multiple regression analysis shows that rational decision-making style and tendency to satisfice significantly predict higher levels of life satisfaction. On the other hand, intuitive, dependent and avoidant decision-making styles do not significantly predict life satisfaction.

Yadav, G (2022) aim to assessed whether decision-making influences the choices we make on a daily basis. Core decision-making involves selecting a course of action from various alternatives. This process is not only pervasive in everyday life but also is crucial for personal development, societal functioning, personal and professional success.

Hemadi, S. (2023) investigated whether decision-making has a significant impact on the movement and progress of organizations and forms the main foundations of the organization. It was found that decision is so effective that it determines the achievement and nonachievement of the organization's mission. A sample consisting of 74 managers of the country's insurance industry was formed in 2022-2023 at different levels. The result obtained in indicated that the insurance industry managers use Intuitive and rational decision-making styles and are more confident in their decisions than dependence and avoidance styles, With the rise of organizational levels and due to the type of issues, these decisions become preferable with an immediate approach.

Singh, D., Kad, A. & Singh. S (2023) investigated the relationship between the college students' emotional maturity and youth problems. The data gathering involved 70 female college students in the arts stream. They discovered strong relationship of emotional maturity and family problems. There is a significantly positive relationship between Family Problem and Social Problem. There is a marginally positive correlation between Social Adjustment and Personal Integration. Emotional Stability and Social Adjustment have a somewhat positive association.

Yulianti, D. I., & Nurhayani. N (2024), measured the Correlation between Emotional Maturity and Career Decision Making among Twelfth Grade Students. This research employed a descriptive method with a quantitative approach. The data analysis indicated a weak positive relationship between emotional maturity and career decision-making among 12th-grade students at State Senior High School (Pulau Rakyat Tua).

Objectives

- To assess the level of emotional maturity of the undergraduate students
- To assess the styles of general decision making of the selected students
- To measure the difference between male and female students' emotional maturity
- To measure the difference between male and female students' general decision-making styles
- To measure the relationship between emotional maturity and decision-making styles among undergraduate students'

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Hypotheses

- The level of emotional maturity of the undergraduate students will be extremely stable
- The general decision-making styles of the selected students' will be varied
- There will be no significant difference between male and female students' level of emotional maturity
- There will be no significant difference between male and female students' styles of general decision-making
- There will be no association between emotional maturity and decision-making styles among undergraduate students'

Sample

A sample of 120 Undergraduate students between the age group of 17 to 20 years were collected from various government and private colleges located in district of Coimbatore. The sample was divided into 60 male and 60 females. The sample were collected through purposive sampling method.

Tools

- Personal data sheet includes details such as name, age, gender, domicile, educational qualification, family size and relationship status.
- Emotional Maturity Scale (Singh & Bhargava, 1990), there are 48 statements in this scale. This is a five-point scale (very much, much, decided, probably, and never), with five dimensions such as emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, personality integration and independence. These five dimensions show the individual relation with emotional maturity. The test-retest and internal consistency reliability ranges are 0.75 & 0.86.
- The General Decision-Making Questionnaire (GDMS) (Scott and Bruce, 1995), is a self-report questionnaire that assesses five decision-making styles: rational, avoidant, dependent, intuitive, and spontaneous. It consists of 25 items, with five items for each of the five decision-making styles. Participants rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. The higher a participant's score on a particular style, the more likely they are to use that style when making decisions. The GDMS has good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .86 for the five decision-making styles.

Procedure

A brief description about the purpose of the research was explained to the entire sample before conducting the research. The consenting sample were asked to fill their personal details like name, gender, age, domicile, family size, relationship status and educational qualification. Questionnaire on emotional maturity and general decision-making styles were given to the entire sample individually. The sample were informed that the responses will be kept confidential, and the data will be used for academic purpose. The data were collected and statistically analyzed using SPSS.

Data Analysis

To investigate the difference in emotional maturity and General decision-making styles among male and female undergraduate students, independent sample t-test was performed. To investigate the correlation between emotional maturity and general decision-making styles among undergraduate students, Pearson product moment was performed and normality testing was also done.

RESULTS

Table 1 - Level of Emotional Maturity among Undergraduate Students (N=120)

Levels of Emotional Maturity	Male (60)		Female (60)	
	N	%	N	%
Extremely Stable	8	13	3	5
Moderately Stable	1	2	3	5
Unstable	6	10	9	15
Moderately Unstable	35	58	39	65
Extremely Unstable	10	17	6	10

The table 1 shows the level of emotional maturity of the male and female sample. Overall, both groups show that most of them have low emotional maturity. Therefore, H₀ is rejected. Most of them, 58% of males and 65% of females, fall into the "Moderately Unstable" category. A small number of people in each group show high emotional maturity: 13% of males and 5% of females are "Extremely Stable," and 2% of males and 5% of females are "Moderately Stable."

On the other hand, there is also a higher level of instability, with 17% of males and 10% of females being labeled as "Extremely Unstable." Also, 10% of males and 15% of females are in the "Unstable" group. These findings indicate that females exhibit a marginally greater representation in moderate instability, while males demonstrate a comparatively higher proportion at both the highest and lowest extremes of emotional maturity.

Table 2 - Decision Making Style among Undergraduate Students (N=120)

Decision Making Style	Male (60)		Female (60)	
	N	%	N	%
Systematic	-	-	-	-
Intuitive	33	55	32	53
Dependent	8	13	5	8
Avoidant	2	3	4	7
Spontaneous	4	7	7	12
Two or more Styles	13	22	12	20

The table 2 shows the styles of decision-making among 60 male and 60 female participants. In both groups, the Intuitive style is the most common. Therefore, H₀ is rejected. Most of them, 55% of males and 53% of females, report primarily relying on their intuition when making decisions. A smaller number of people use other single styles: 13% of males and 8% of females prefer a Dependent style, while 3% of males and 7% of females use an Avoidant style. Females are more likely to make spontaneous decisions, with 7% of males and 12% of females preferring a spontaneous style. A significant proportion in both groups—22% of males and 20% of females—employ two or more decision-making styles, indicating adaptable or inconsistent patterns rather than a singular style. None of the participants reported a Systematic decision-making style. In general, both males and females prefer to make decisions based on their gut feelings, with only small differences between the two styles.

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Table 3 – Normal Distribution in emotional maturity and general decision-making styles of the undergraduate students (N=120)

Variable	Gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistics	Sig.	Statistics	Sig.
Emotional Maturity Score	Female (60)	0.080	0.200	0.986	0.701
	Male (60)	0.078	0.200	0.986	0.590
Decision-Making Score	Female (60)	0.087	0.200	0.982	0.521
	Male (60)	0.069	0.200	0.968	0.115

(Significant Level at 0.05 (2 tailed))

Table 3 shows that the normality test results from both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk reveal that the emotional maturity score and decision-making scores for both males and females are statistically normal. The significance (Sig.) value for two variables for both genders is higher than the usual value of 0.05, and the Shapiro–Wilk values range from 0.115 to 0.701.

Table 4 - Mean difference in the levels of emotional maturity among male and female students'

Group	No of Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t - Value
Male	60	127.95	37.394	0.216(NS)
Female	60	126.60	30.917	

(NS – Not Significant, Significant Level at 0.05 (2 tailed))

Table 4 shows that the mean scores for males (M = 127.95, SD = 37.39) and females (M = 126.60, SD = 30.92) are not different. The t-test value of 0.216 indicates that the difference between the two groups is minimal and statistically non-significant, inferring no substantial variation in scores based on gender. In overall, both males and females reveal comparable outcomes, Therefore, Ho is accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference between this group.

Table 5 - Mean difference in the styles of decision-making among male and female students'

Group	No of Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	t - test
Male	60	88.87	13.075	1.957(NS)
Female	60	84.68	10.159	

(NS – Not Significant, Significant Level at 0.05 (2 tailed))

Table 5 indicates the mean decision-making score for male students (M = 88.87, SD = 13.08) and that for female students (M = 84.68, SD = 10.16), respectively. The t-test score of 1.957 indicates that the difference in decision-making styles between males & females is not significant, though there is a noticeable difference in their mean score. This study indicated that although males obtained slightly higher scores in decision-making styles. Therefore, Ho is accepted; there is no substantial difference between male and female students.

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Table 6 – Relationship between emotional maturity and general decision-making styles among undergraduate students' (N=120)

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation
Emotional Maturity Score	127.2750	34.17060	0.120(NS)
Decision Making Score	86.7750	11.84668	

(NS – Not Significant, Significant Level at 0.05 (2 tailed))

Table 6 shows that the correlation between emotional maturity and decision-making score is positive but very weak ($r=.120$). The significance value ($p=.192$) indicates that this correlation is not statistically significant; therefore, H_0 is accepted, but the slight association observed could be due to chance. The weak positive correlation suggests that increases in emotional maturity are not exactly associated with increases in decision-making ability.

Major findings

- Majority of the male and female students were moderately unstable in emotional maturity. These students have difficulty in regulating their emotions, have fluctuations in mood that are more frequent or intense and they may sometimes blame external sources.
- Majority of the Students (up to 53%) have preferred Intuitive decision-making styles, few students preferred two or more decision-making styles.
- Mean difference in the level of emotional maturity among two genders are so narrow and also, it is not statistically significant at 0.05 level.
- Mean difference in the styles of decision-making among two genders are slightly significant but it is not attained the critical value. So, it is not statistically significant at 0.05 level.
- Relationship between the emotional maturity and decision-making styles among undergraduate students shows a weak positive correlation and there is no statistically significant relationship.

Suggestions

- Psycho education can improve Emotional maturity and decision-making styles.
- Parents, teachers and specified social groups provide effective communication with themselves.
- Therapeutic session can improve emotional awareness, regulation, cognitive restructuring, empathy, social awareness and accountability.
- Mindfulness and meditation help to improve self-realization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the emotional maturity was moderately unstable among undergraduate students in both genders. Few male students only were extremely stable while comparing female students. Most of the students preferred intuitive decision-making styles in both genders and few students preferred more than two decision-making styles respectively. The association between emotional maturity and decision-making styles were weak and positively related. The results concluded that students are not stable and regulate their emotions properly in everyday life.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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