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Research Paper

Assessing The Current State of Decision-Making Skills Among Higher Education Students in West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an assessment of the present status of decision-making skills among higher education students in West Bengal, India. Decision-making skills are critical for academic success and future professional endeavors. The ability to make decisions is an essential life skill and a positive competency of daily life. Decision-making competence is a positive competency. The main aim of the present study was to investigate the Assessment of the Current State of Decision-Making Skills among Higher Education Students in West Bengal. Another minor objective was to explore the current state of decision-making skill among Higher Education Students. The study is based on a cross-sectional survey with 134 units as its sample size. The information was gathered at random from students in Kolkata, Howrah, and Hooghly districts located in the state of West Bengal. Findings yielded that female students were better at making decisions than male students. Students from urban places were better at making decisions from rural places students. Students at the post-graduate level were better at making decisions than those at the graduate level. Depending upon the Caste OBC-B students were better at making decisions than SC, OBC-A, General and ST students. Somehow, being able to make decisions and feeling good about yourself were linked in a good way and at the 0.05 level.

Keywords: *Decision-Making, Higher Education Students, Academic Success, Competency*

The ability to make decisions is crucial in the lives of college students. Students must therefore make a variety of decisions in their daily lives at this time. All of those are challenging, and a task in particular. Because they can make several difficult decisions, kids at this level are less anxious and more self-assured. Additionally, this ability aids pupils in making decisions for themselves and in groups in various spheres of life (Allegrante, 1998)[4]. A crucial quality for students is the capacity to make choices in their own lives (Adams, 1993)[1]. In the lives of these kids, poor decisions or protracted delays frequently result in losses. It can be inferred that the ability to accept one's choices has been attained if higher education students are able to select a particular one by developing an understanding of the implications of their alternatives and examining the functionality of many possibilities when making a choice (Olorunsola et al., 2011; Brown & Ng, 2011)[9][6]. It should be emphasized once more that any broad decisions made in a student's life must be

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approved via a straightforward procedure. However, they won't be able to complete these jobs with ease if they don't consider any specific topics when making difficult selections. For instance, it is crucial to keep an eye on the facts surrounding certain concerns, understand the different issues involved in the interwoven relationship, the risks and their implications, and be aware of potential alternate outcomes and other people's reactions. Students who can approach a difficult decision in an effective way can solve many problems in life, taking into account the different complications listed above.

Fundamental cognitive talents such as decision-making play a crucial part in a person's personal, academic, and professional lives (Ajayi et al., 2007)[2]. Making decisions includes choosing a course of action from a range of options while taking into account a variety of variables, possible outcomes, and their implications. The improvement of good decision-making abilities is crucial in the context of higher education, as students are preparing to handle difficult issues and enter a variety of fields (Ndiku & Mukasa, 2009)[8]. Strong decision-making abilities are important outside of the classroom. Students who graduate from high school and enter adulthood must choose a variety of choices that will affect their future careers, interpersonal relationships, money management, and general well-being (Akbar, 2011)[3]. Therefore, educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders interested in fostering well-rounded individuals capable of meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world should be aware of the current level of decision-making proficiency among higher education students in West Bengal.

Significance of the Study

This research was conducted among Higher education level students in West Bengal. In the current educational system of India, 'Youth' is those aged 15 to 24 years. Research frequently seeks to close knowledge gaps. The importance of a study is determined by its capacity to add to the corpus of knowledge in a given field by offering fresh perspectives or developing already-held theories. Decision-making abilities are not only important in the academic phase but also later in life. Early development of these competencies in higher education can have a long-lasting effect on people and society. Understanding the current level of decision-making abilities among college students might shed light on how well the state of West Bengal's education system is working. This data can be utilized to pinpoint areas that require development in order to better educate students for making decisions in the real world. Researchers as well as common people aware of the significance and sensitivity of this life era. This is a crucial period for students to develop decision-making and assume their social responsibilities. Decision-making abilities are crucial for personal and social life in addition to academics and vocations. Strong decision-makers are frequently more capable of overcoming obstacles, making moral decisions, and improving their communities. Through positive and healthy decisions, it is possible to reduce and prevent such hazardous behaviours and promote a healthy lifestyle and well-being. Researchers intended to find the answers to such questions as "How much extent the higher education level students possess decision-making skills? What is the Current State of decision-making skills among higher education students? within this study report.

Statement of the Problem

Making decisions is a crucial and vital element of education for young adults, including higher education in India. The current situation calls for the promotion of people's mental health and well-being as well as the development of their capacity and ability to deal with the demands and challenges of daily life. There were still significant knowledge gaps,

according to recent studies on the decision-making skills of higher education students in India and the state of West Bengal. The current study's investigations discovered that the research problem had pertinent research questions. In West Bengal as well as Indie, improving the condition for offering life skill education, particularly decision-making at the higher education levels, is at the top of the social agenda. There are no significant studies in this field available in West Bengal, especially for students in higher education who are in the early stages of adulthood. Practically speaking, there is a substantial knowledge vacuum in the field of the current study challenge. Therefore, the researcher concentrates on assessing higher education students' decision-making abilities and critically evaluating them in terms of many criteria.

1. What is the present status of decision-making skill among the students at higher education levels in West Bengal?
2. What are the rates of prevalence of decision-making skill among the students at higher education level with respect to their various demographic variables in West Bengal?

To find out the answer to the above basic research question, the problem of the present study was specified and stated as "Assessing the Current State of Decision-Making Skills among Higher Education Students in West Bengal."

Objectives

Research objectives often include the methods used for data collecting and analysis, as well as the development and justification of the research questions or hypotheses that the study intends to address. The objectives listed below have been created and are stated as follows:

1. To find out the present status of decision-making skill among the students at higher education levels in West Bengal.
2. To find out the differences in Decision-making skill among the students at higher education levels on the basis of their Gender, habitat, present class and caste.
3. To develop a modified and usable self-made questionnaire on decision-making skill in the Bengali version.

Hypotheses

The formulation of hypotheses is an essential step in quantitative research, serving to guide the investigation. It provides a clear description of how variables are thought to be related. The hypotheses have been formulated in accordance with the objectives of the study are as follows:

- **H01:** There is no significant mean difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education levels on the basis of their gender variable.
- **H02:** There is no significant mean difference in the decision-making skill of the students at higher education level on the basis of their habitat variable.
- **H03**: There is no significant mean difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education level on the basis of their present class variable.
- **H04:** There is no significant mean difference in the decision-making skills of the students at higher education levels on the basis of their caste variable.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The present study was conducted based on cross-sectional survey research. Students studying at graduate and post-graduate levels in the colleges and universities of the age group of 17-23 years of the state of West Bengal were considered as the sample of the study. The study involved 92 male and 42 female students. Purposive sampling method was used for collection of data. The survey was conducted from Jadavpur, Calcutta and Burdwan University in Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly Circles of West Bengal.

Materials used

The tool used for the study was the Decision-Making Measurement Scale by M.N. Vranda, NIMHANS (2009). It consisted of 10 items to assess the participants' decision-making ability.

Procedure

At first after giving brief information schedule, the target group i.e. the undergraduate and post-graduate level students were randomly selected from schools and universities in and around Kolkata. The Decision-Making Measurement Scale tool was administered on the sample and data were collected. This study was conducted mainly to find out the rate of the prevalence of decision-making skill among the higher education level students in West Bengal. This enabled us to find out and compare the decision-making skills of male and female higher education level students, who belonged in both the rural and urban areas. The present study design made an effort to research the answer to the following research question within this framework, the present study design made an effort to research an answer to the following questions: What is the existing status of decision-making skill of higher education level students in West Bengal? What is the prevalence rate of decision-making skill at higher education level students in terms of different variables like gender, class and habitat?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Decision-making skill of the students at Higher Education Level based on gender variable.

Group Statistics					
Decision Making	**GENDER**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
	MALE	92	21.43 (71.43%)	2.508	.262
	FEMALE	42	21.81 (72.7%)	3.070	.474

Here first of all descriptive statistics (Table 1) were used to ascertain the mean value, and standard division and the result revealed that the average decision-making score for male students (21.43) is lower than the score (21.81) for female students. These descriptive statistics show there are few differences in mean score of decision making among the male and female students. The illustration is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Mean scores of decision-making skill based on gender variable

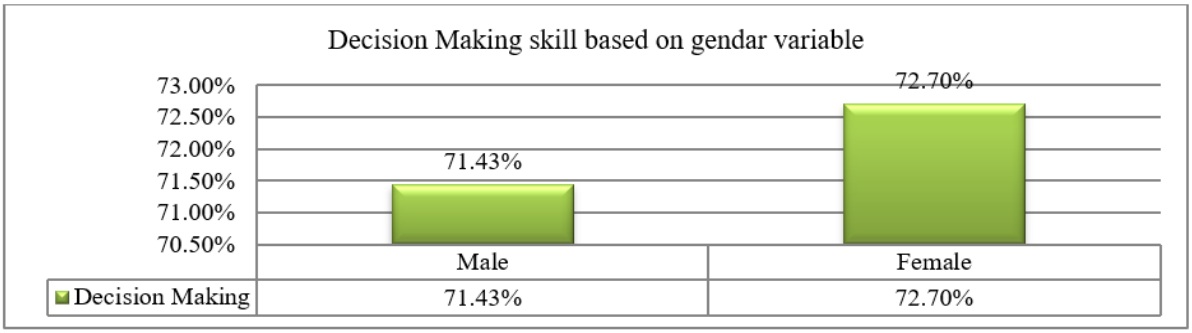


Table 2: Decision-making skill of the students at Higher Education Level based on habitat Variable

Group Statistics					
Decision making	**Habitat**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
	Rural	75	21.04 (70.13%)	2.591	0.299
	Urban	59	22.20 (74%)	2.696	0.351

Here first of all descriptive statistics (Table- 2) were used to ascertain the mean value, and standard division and the result revealed that the average decision-making score for rural students (21.04) is lower than the score (22.20) for urban students. These descriptive statistics show there are few differences in mean score of decision-making among rural and urban students. The illustration is given in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Mean scores of decision-making skills based on habitat variable.

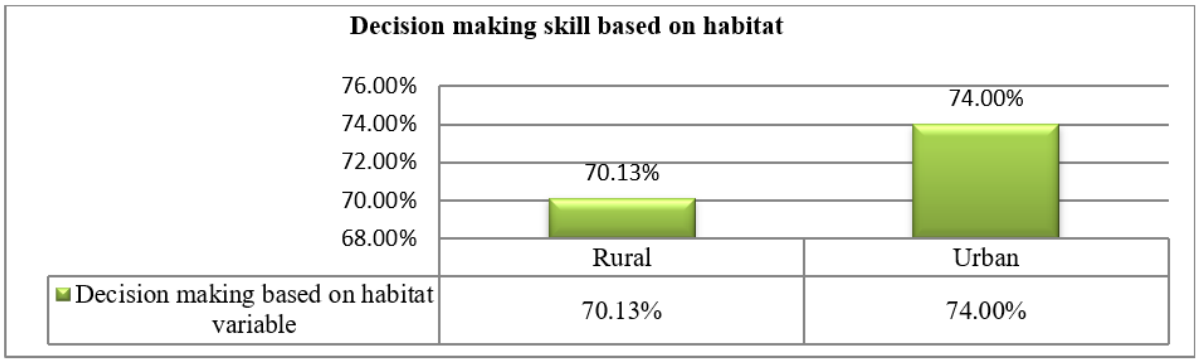


Table 3: Decision-making skill of the students at Higher Education Level based on Present Class Variable

Group Statistics					
Decision making	**CLASS**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
	Undergraduate	49	21.33 (71%)	2.649	.378
	Postgraduate	85	21.68 (72.27%)	2.722	.295

Here first of all descriptive statistics (Table 3) were used to ascertain the mean value, and standard division and the result revealed that the average decision-making score for undergraduate students (21.33) is lower than the score (21.68) for postgraduate students. These descriptive statistics show there are few differences in mean scores of decision-making among undergraduate and postgraduate students. The illustration is given in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Mean scores of decision-making skills based on Present class variable

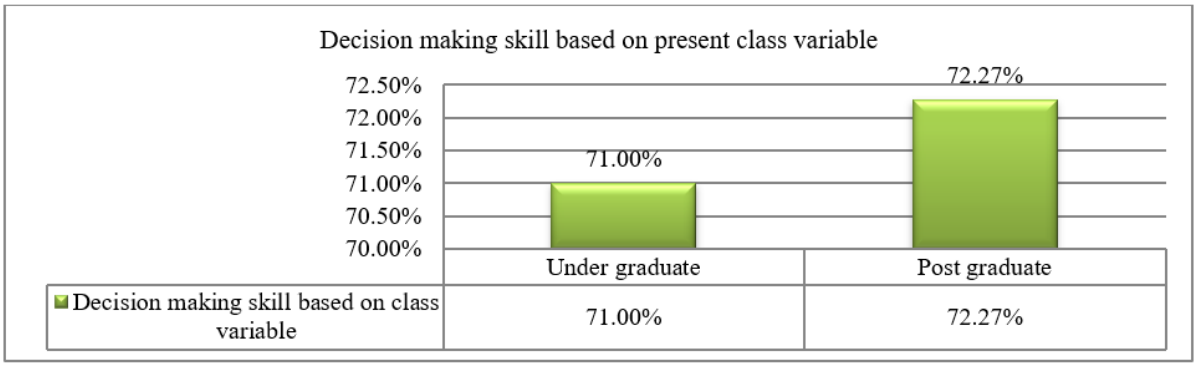
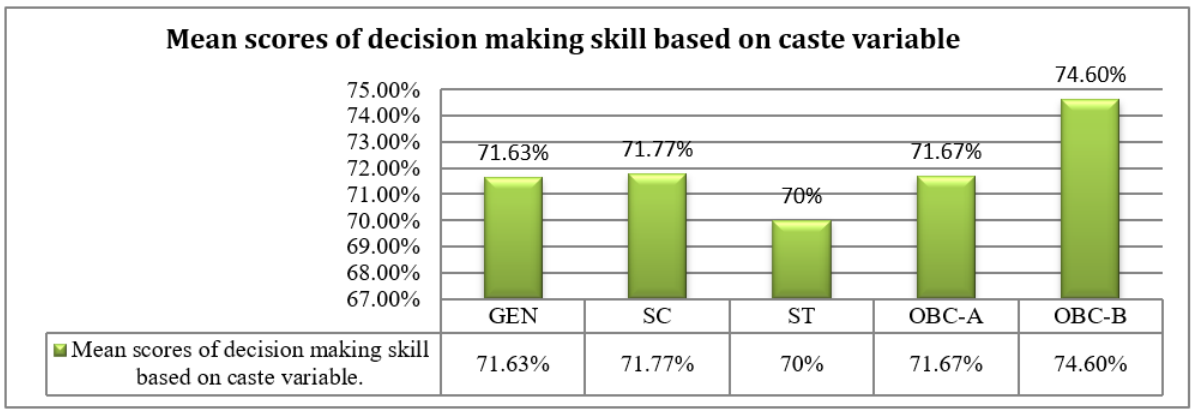


Table 4: Decision-making skill of the students at Higher Education Level based on Caste Variable.

Descriptive								
DECISION MAKING SKILL SCORE								
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error**	**95% Confidence Interval for Mean**		**Minimum**	**Maximum**
					Lower Bound	**Upper Bound**		
Gen	35	21.49(71.63%)	2.650	.448	20.58	22.40	17	27
Sc	58	21.53(71.77%)	2.767	.363	20.81	22.26	15	28
St	12	21.00 (70%)	3.464	1.000	18.80	23.20	15	27
Obc-A	16	21.50(71.67%)	2.221	.555	20.32	22.68	18	26
Obc-B	13	22.38(74.6%)	2.399	.665	20.93	23.83	18	27
Total	134	21.55(71.83%)	2.691	.232	21.09	22.01	15	28

Here first of all descriptive statistics (Table 4.) were used to ascertain the mean value, standard deviation and result in revalued students with OBC-B as a caste has the highest stage mean score of 22.38 while SC, OBC-A, GENERAL and ST second, third, fourth and fifth with a mean score of 21.53,21.50,21.49 and 21 respectively. These initial descriptive statistics show there are few differences. The illustration is given in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Mean scores of decision-making skill based on caste variable.



Hypothesis Testing:

H01: There is no significant mean difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education levels on the basis of their gender variable.

Table 5: T-test showing the category of gender-wise difference in Decision-making score.

Independent Sample t-test of Gender wise Decision-Making									
Gender	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**t**	**df**	**Mean Difference**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Std. Error Difference**	**Remarks**
Male	92	21.43	2.508	- 0.747	132	-0.375	0.457	0.502	NS* (P>0.05)
Female	42	21.81	3.070						

An Independent sample t-test comparing the mean scores of decision-making skill of male students to the mean scores of decision-making of female students found no significant difference between the mean of the two groups [t (132) = - 0.747, p> 0.05]. The mean of the male students was significantly lower (m= 21.43, S.D. = 2.508) than the mean of female students (M = 21.81, S.D. = 3.070).

Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and as a result, the given difference in sample means is not significant and can only be at some sampling fluctuation. From the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is no significant gender difference in the decision-making skill of the students at the higher education level.

H02: There is no significant mean difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education levels on the basis of their habitat variable.

Table 6: T-test showing the category of Habitat wise difference in Decision-making score.

Independent Sample t-test of Habitat wise Decision-Making									
Habitat	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T**	**df**	**Mean Difference**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Std. Error Difference**	**Remarks**
Rural	75	21.04	2.591	- 2.534	132	-1.163	0.012	0.459	S* (P<0.05)
Urban	59	22.20	2.696						

An Independent sample t-test comparing the mean scores of decision-making skill of rural students to the mean scores of decision-making of urban students found a significant between the mean of the two groups [t= (132) = - .2.534, p<0.05>]. The mean of rural students was significantly lower (M = 21.04, S.D. = 2.591) than the mean of the urban students (M = 22.20, S.D. = 2.696).

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and as a result, the given difference in sample means is statistically significant. From the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is a significant mean difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education levels on the basis of habitat.

H03: There is no significant mean difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education level on the basis of their present class variable.

Table 7: t-test showing category of Class wise difference in Decision making score.

Independent Sample t test of Class wise Decision Making									
Class	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**t**	**df**	**Mean Difference**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Std. Error Difference**	**Remarks**
Under graduate	49	21.33	2.649	-0.736	132	-0.356	0.463	0.484	NS* (P>0.05)
Post graduate	85	21.68	2.722						

An independent sample t-test comparing the mean score of decision-making skill of undergraduate students to the mean scores of decision-making of postgraduate students found no significant difference between the mean of the two groups [t (132) = -0.736, p>0.05]. The mean of undergraduate students was significantly lower (M = 21.33, S.D. = 2.649) than the mean of postgraduate students (M = 21.68, S.D. = 2.722).

Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and as a result, the given difference in sample means is not significant and can only be at some sampling fluctuation. From the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is no significant class difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education levels.

H04: There is no significant mean difference in decision-making skill of the students at higher education level on the basis of their caste variable

Table 8: ANOVA showing the category of caste-wise difference in Decision-making score.

ANOVA					
Score of the Students in Decision Making					
	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	12.884	4	3.221	.437	.782
Within Groups	950.251	129	7.366		
Total	963.134	133			

One-way ANOVA was computed comparing the decision-making scores of the students at higher education levels on the basis of the category of caste. The analysis in Table 4.1 revealed that the value (calculated) of F= 0.437 and P= 0.782. The critical value of the F ratio at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance with 4 & 129 df (4 degree of freedom for smaller mean squire variance on the left-hand side, and for 129 degrees of freedom for getter means squire variance across the top) = 5.63 and 13.46 respectively. So, it has been observed that the calculated value of the F ratio (ANOVA) is lower than the critical value of the F ratio at both levels of significance i.e. no significant difference was found in decision-making skill among the students at higher education levels on the basis of their category of caste {F (4, 129); 0.437, P>0.05}. Hence it can be safely concluded that the Null Hypothesis H04 cannot be rejected, and confidently say that the difference between means is not significant. The study was conducted on a total number of 134 students to the measurement of Decision-Making skill with respect to different demographic variables.

The major findings of the study with respect to the analysis and interpretation of data are given below:

1. Taking into consideration Gender, Decision making the mean score of the male students (21.43) is lower than Female students (21.81) and the difference found between them was statistically not significant (P>0.05).
2. From the perspective of Habitat, the decision-making mean score of the Rural students (21.04) is lower than the Decision-Making mean of the Urban students (22.30) and the difference found between them was statistically significant (P<0.05).
3. Regarding the Class of the students Decision Making mean score of the Undergraduate students (21.33) is lower than the mean score of post-graduate students (21.68). The difference among them was found statistically not significant (P>0.05).
4. Depending upon the Caste, the decision-making mean score of the OBC-B students (22.38) is greater than that of SC (21.53), OBC-A (21.50), General (21.49) and ST (21.00) students and the difference among them was statistically not significant (P> 0.05).

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the overall degree of Decision-making skill with respect to different demographic variables viz.- Gender, Habitat of Students, Class of the students, and caste and made a comparative study of the degree of Decision-Making skill between male and female students belonging to the age group of 17 to 23 years in Jadavpur, Calcutta and Burdwan University. This study also estimated the prevalence rate of decision-making skill among higher education level students, which are very important for higher education level students for enhancing their psycho-social competencies for the adaption to the changing environment in the modern time. On the basis of habitat variables, there are no major studies in this area. So, it may be concluded that urban areas students make more decisions than the rural areas students at higher education levels; and the difference was found to be statistically significant. Studies by Srikala & Kishore (2010)[5] and Moogan et al., (1999)[7] also aligns with this. The educational policy framers, administrators, teachers and teachers' educators may adopt some realistic measures or strategies in the light of the present study. All of us have a common mission to provide Decision-making skill at the higher education level for students. We have to achieve that as early as possible.

The study was conducted primarily with the objective of investigating the rate of prevalence of Decision-making skill among the higher education level students age group of 17 to 23 years, studying in the Jadavpur, Calcutta and Burdwan University located in urban and rural areas of the district of Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly in the state of West Bengal. The study sample comprises both male and female students; belonging to different caste categories and comprises the decision-making skill with respect to different demographic variables of the adolescent students. The study also wanted to find out – What is the present status of decision-making skill among the students at higher education levels in West Bengal. What are the rates of prevalence of decision-making skill among the students at higher education levels with respect to their various demographic variables in West Bengal?

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Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that no competing interests exist.

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