COGNITIVE, INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The Impact of Self-Efficacy and Emotional Intelligence on Decision-Making Styles in College Students

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Published November 2026

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (EI) on decision-making styles among college students. The research examines how self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to perform specific tasks, and emotional intelligence, the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, influence the way students make decisions. A quantitative correlational design was employed, using online surveys to collect data from 100 college students aged 18 to 25. The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), and General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) Scale were used to assess participants' self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and decision-making styles, respectively.

The results reveal that emotional intelligence significantly impacts decision-making styles, with individuals high in EI demonstrating more balanced, rational, and socially aware decision-making behaviours. However, self-efficacy was not found to have a significant influence on decision-making styles. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in shaping effective decision-making processes, while self-efficacy may not directly contribute to how decisions are made. This highlights the need to prioritize interventions and programs that foster emotional intelligence among students to enhance their decision-making abilities in both academic and personal contexts.

1 Introduction

1.1 Emotional intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence (EI) is an intricate construct that encompasses the capacity to discern, comprehend, and regulate emotions, both within oneself and in interpersonal interactions. It is a multifaceted ability that transcends mere cognitive processing, integrating emotional acumen into the broader spectrum of human intelligence. EI is predicated on the notion that emotions are not just peripheral to rational thought but are integral to effective decision-making, social functioning, and personal well-being. The concept of emotional intelligence is often delineated into several core components. Self-awareness is the foundational element, involving the profound understanding of one's own emotions, including the recognition of their nuances and implications. It is through self-awareness that individuals gain insight into their emotional states and the ways in which these states influence their thoughts and behaviours. Self-regulation follows, referring to the ability to manage and modulate one's emotional responses, especially in challenging or volatile situations. This aspect of EI is critical for maintaining emotional equilibrium and making reasoned decisions under pressure.

Another salient dimension of emotional intelligence is motivation, which is not merely about external rewards but is deeply tied to an intrinsic drive towards personal growth and achievement. Individuals with high EI often exhibit resilience and persistence, using their emotional understanding to navigate obstacles and remain committed to their goals. Empathy is also central to EI, reflecting the capacity to accurately perceive and resonate with the emotions of others. This empathetic atonement enables individuals to engage in more meaningful and supportive interactions, fostering trust and collaboration. Finally, social skills are the outward manifestation of emotional intelligence in action. These skills encompass the ability to navigate complex social environments, build and maintain relationships, and influence others in positive and constructive ways. Socially adept individuals leverage their emotional intelligence to facilitate communication, resolve conflicts, and create harmonious group dynamics.

The theoretical framework of emotional intelligence was notably advanced by Daniel Goleman in the 1990s, although its roots can be traced back to earlier scholarly work by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer. Goleman's model posits that EI is not merely a supplementary skill but is often as crucial as, or even more important than, intellectual quotient (IQ) in determining an individual's success, particularly in leadership roles and interpersonal relations. The implications of emotional intelligence span across various domains, including organisational behaviour, education, and mental health, making it a pivotal area of inquiry in contemporary psychological and sociological research.

1.2 Decision making

Decision making is a complex cognitive process that involves selecting a course of action from among multiple alternatives. It is a fundamental aspect of human cognition and influences both everyday choices and life-critical decisions. Decision making is often conceptualised as a series of steps, beginning with the identification of a problem or opportunity, followed by the generation and evaluation of potential solutions, and culminating with the selection of the most appropriate option. Fundamentally, decision making is driven by the interaction between rational analysis and subjective judgement. Rational decision making involves the systematic evaluation of information, probabilities, and potential outcomes to reach a logical conclusion. This approach often aligns with classical theories in economics and psychology, which assume that individuals can make decisions that maximise utility or utility. However, decisions are rarely purely rational. They are influenced by a variety of factors, including cognitive biases, emotional states, and social pressures. Heuristics, or mental shortcuts, often play an important role in decision-making because they allow individuals to make quick judgments without careful deliberation. While heuristics can be effective, they also carry the risk of errors and biases, such as overconfidence, anchoring, and confirmation bias.

The role of emotions in decision-making is particularly noteworthy. Far from being an impediment to rational thought, emotions often serve as essential inputs in the decision-making process. Emotional responses can provide valuable information about the potential consequences of different choices, helping to prioritise options that align with one’s values and long-term goals. In this sense, decision-making can be viewed as an integrated process that balances rational analysis with emotional intuition. Moreover, decision-making is not an isolated cognitive activity but is deeply embedded within a social context. Social influences, including cultural norms, group dynamics, and interpersonal relationships, can significantly influence the decisions that individuals make. Group decision-making involves negotiating divergent perspectives and reconciling conflicting interests, often requiring a combination of collaboration, compromise, and leadership.

In summary, decision-making is a multifaceted process that encompasses both cognitive and emotional dimensions. It is influenced by a range of internal and external factors, from individual preferences and biases to social and cultural contexts. Understanding the complexity of decision-making is essential for improving the quality of decisions in personal and professional contexts, as well as for developing strategies to mitigate the impact of biases and improve decision-making outcomes.

1.3 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a psychological construct that pertains to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments. This belief in personal efficacy influences how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. Self-efficacy is not merely about the actual ability to perform a task but rather the conviction that one can successfully achieve the desired outcome through their actions. It is a foundational element in the broader framework of social cognitive theory, as posited by Albert Bandura. At the heart of self-efficacy is the idea that individuals who possess a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to embrace challenges with resilience and determination. It is through the lens of self-efficacy that individuals assess their ability to influence events that affect their lives, thereby exerting control over their environment.

Self-efficacy is developed and reinforced through four primary sources. Mastery experiences are the most potent source, where successfully overcoming challenges enhances one's belief in their capabilities. Each successful endeavour reinforces the sense of efficacy, while failures, particularly in early stages, can undermine it. Vicarious experiences, or observing others succeed in tasks, can also bolster self-efficacy, particularly when the observer perceives similarities between themselves and the successful individual. This observational learning can motivate individuals to believe that they too can achieve similar outcomes. Social persuasion is another avenue through which self-efficacy is nurtured. Positive reinforcement, encouragement, and feedback from others can strengthen an individual's belief in their abilities, although the effects of social persuasion are typically less robust than those of direct experience. Lastly, physiological, and emotional states play a significant role in shaping self-efficacy beliefs. High levels of stress and anxiety can diminish self-efficacy, while a calm and composed emotional state can enhance the belief in one's capabilities.

The implications of self-efficacy are profound and far-reaching, influencing various domains such as education, health, work, and personal development. In educational settings, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in challenging tasks, persist through difficulties, and achieve higher academic success. In the realm of health, self-efficacy influences behaviours related to disease prevention, management of chronic conditions, and recovery from illness. In the workplace, employees with strong self-efficacy tend to be more innovative, committed, and resilient in the face of organisational changes.

Understanding self-efficacy is crucial for developing interventions aimed at enhancing personal and professional growth. By fostering environments that support mastery experiences, provide positive role models, offer constructive feedback, and promote emotional well-being, individuals can cultivate a stronger sense of self-efficacy. This, in turn, empowers them to navigate the complexities of life with greater confidence and competence, leading to more successful and fulfilling outcomes.

1.4 Interrelationship between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and decision-making styles

Impact of Self-Efficacy on Decision-Making Styles. Self-efficacy, the belief in one's own abilities to execute tasks and achieve goals, plays a critical role in shaping decision-making styles. For college students aged 18 to 23, this developmental period is marked by numerous important decisions related to education, career paths, and personal life. Confidence and Decisiveness: Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to approach decision-making with confidence and decisiveness. They tend to believe in their ability to evaluate options and make choices that will lead to successful outcomes. This often results in a more proactive and assertive decision-making style, where individuals are willing to take calculated risks and commit to their decisions. High self-efficacy enhances persistence, especially when faced with complex or challenging decisions. Students who believe in their ability to overcome obstacles are more likely to engage in problem-solving, seeking out information and exploring alternatives before deciding. Conversely, low self-efficacy may lead to indecisiveness, avoidance of difficult decisions, or reliance on others to make choices. Students with higher self-efficacy are more inclined to set challenging goals and make decisions aligned with long-term aspirations. Their decision-making style is often characterised by a strategic approach, where decisions are made with future outcomes in mind, rather than immediate gratification.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions, significantly influencing decision-making processes among college students. Students with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage their emotions during the decision-making process. They can maintain clarity of thought and avoid making impulsive decisions driven by transient emotional states, such as anxiety, frustration, or excitement. This leads to a more balanced and reflective decision-making style. EI also enhances empathy, allowing students to consider the perspectives and feelings of others when making decisions, especially in group settings or decisions that impact others. This can foster a collaborative decision-making style, where students weigh the social and emotional implications of their choices alongside more practical considerations. High EI helps students manage stress and pressure, which is often heightened during critical decision-making periods. By effectively managing stress, students are more likely to make well-considered decisions rather than defaulting to choices that may relieve immediate stress but have less desirable long-term consequences.

The interplay between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence can have a profound impact on the decision-making styles of college students. Students with high self-efficacy and high EI are likely to exhibit a decision-making style that is both confident and emotionally stable. These students not only believe in their ability to make good decisions but also manage their emotions effectively throughout the decision-making process. This combination can lead to more consistent and effective decision-making, even under pressure. Both self-efficacy and EI contribute to a student's adaptability and resilience in the face of decision-related challenges. High self-efficacy encourages persistence, while high EI enables students to navigate the emotional ups and downs associated with decision-making. Together, these traits foster a flexible decision-making style, where students are open to revising decisions based on new information or changing circumstances. The synergy between self-efficacy and EI can lead to a more balanced and holistic approach to decision-making. Students who are confident in their abilities and emotionally intelligent are more likely to integrate logical reasoning with emotional insight. This results in decisions that are not only rationally sound but also emotionally satisfying, aligning with both personal goals and interpersonal relationships.

2 Review of literature

The roles of self-efficacy and emotional intelligence in decision-making, it becomes evident that these psychological constructs are not merely complementary but deeply intertwined. Self-efficacy fuels the confidence and perseverance needed to navigate complex choices, empowering students to take decisive action. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, enriches this process by providing emotional clarity, fostering empathy, and enhancing resilience under pressure. Together, they form a dynamic interplay that shapes decision-making styles into a balanced fusion of rationality and emotional wisdom. For college students on the cusp of adulthood, this synergy is crucial. It equips them with the tools to make thoughtful, informed decisions that resonate not only with their immediate goals but also with their long-term aspirations and interpersonal relationships. This review highlights the profound impact that cultivating both self-efficacy and emotional intelligence can have on young adults, setting the stage for deeper exploration into how these traits influence the quality and effectiveness of their decisions. In the study of decision-making processes, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence (EI), and ethical decision-making are interconnected psychological concepts that influence individuals' aptitude for making well-informed and ethical decisions. Self-efficacy, which is believing in your ability to perform specific tasks successfully, is important in how people tackle decision-making duties. People who have high self-efficacy tend to dive into difficult problems, explore various solutions, and keep going when faced with obstacles, leading to better decision-making. However, if one has low self-efficacy, they may avoid making tough decisions and depend on unhealthy coping methods, which could result in a higher chance of engaging in unethical actions.

The capacity to recognize, comprehend, and control emotions, both one's own and those of others, is just as crucial in decision-making. Having a high emotional intelligence allows people to effectively handle stress, show empathy towards others, and navigate social complexities, all leading to more considerate and ethical decision-making. Being able to control emotions allows people to stay calm, see things from different viewpoints, and make logical and caring choices when facing stressful situations. The connection among self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making is intricate and interconnected. Research has indicated that people with high emotional intelligence are more inclined to have greater self-efficacy due to their ability to effectively handle emotional obstacles that could otherwise impact their belief in their decision-making skills. In addition, an individual's ability to make ethical decisions is influenced by both self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. Having strong self-belief encourages perseverance and adaptability when dealing with moral conflicts, whereas having high emotional intelligence improves the capacity to recognize the ethical aspects of a circumstance and to weigh the consequences of choices on others.

This review of literature combines research findings on the impact of self-efficacy and emotional intelligence on ethical decision-making. Through analysing empirical research in the fields of psychology, organisational behaviour, and ethics, this review emphasises how these concepts interplay and impact decision-making results. The review also explores the potential impact of these results on the creation of interventions designed to improve decision-making abilities in personal and professional settings. The Contribution of Emotional Intelligence to Decisional Styles Among Italian High School Students. Emotional intelligence (EI) is critical in decision-making, particularly in educational and career contexts. Research by Di Fabio and Kenny (2012) explored the relationship between EI and decision-making styles among Italian high school students. They found that students with higher EI, particularly in adaptability and stress management, were more likely to adopt a rational decision-making style, characterised by a logical and systematic approach. Conversely, lower

intrapersonal EI was associated with dependent and avoidant decision-making styles, where individuals rely on others or avoid decisions altogether.

Further studies, such as those by Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2008b), confirmed that higher EI, especially in adaptability, predicts rational decision-making. In contrast, lower EI is linked to spontaneous or avoidant styles. Notably, the mixed model of EI (Bar-On) proved more effective in predicting decision-making styles than the ability-based model (Mayer-Salovey). These findings suggest that enhancing EI through educational interventions could foster more adaptive decision-making, benefiting students in their academic and career paths. The influence of emotional intelligence on technology adoption and decision-making process. Emotional intelligence (EI) significantly impacts decision-making and the adoption of technology. Abu-Shanab and Abu-Shanab (2022) found that individuals with higher EI, particularly in self-awareness and social skills, are more likely to make rational decisions and effectively adopt decision-making technologies like Excel Solver. Their study highlights that self-efficacy, influenced by EI, plays a crucial role in one's willingness to engage with new technologies. These findings suggest that enhancing EI through targeted training can improve decision-making and technology adoption in educational and professional settings.

Do Emotionally Intelligent Individuals Use More Adaptive Decision-Making Styles? For instance, studies have found that higher EI is positively correlated with the use of rational and intuitive decision-making styles, which are associated with better outcomes in various life domains, including career and personal success. On the other hand, lower EI is linked to increased use of dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous decision-making styles, which are often associated with negative outcomes like lower self-esteem and higher stress levels. These findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence to promote effective decision-making, particularly in educational and professional settings. By enhancing EI, individuals can improve their decision-making processes, leading to better overall outcomes and well-being.

The role of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy on social entrepreneurial attitudes and social entrepreneurial intentions. The study explores how emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy influence social entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions among Indian undergraduates, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour as a framework. Emotional intelligence is crucial for managing the emotional demands of social entrepreneurship, while self-efficacy enhances confidence in overcoming entrepreneurial challenges. The literature has recognized these factors individually, but their combined effect on social entrepreneurial intentions, especially in the Indian context, remains underexplored. This study aims to address this gap by examining how these psychological traits shape social entrepreneurial intentions.

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on the Decision-Making Styles of Academic Leaders. This study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and decision-making styles among academic leaders in Kerala, India. Drawing on Goleman's (1998) EI framework and Scott and Bruce's (1995) decision-making model, it builds upon two decades of research highlighting EI's significance in leadership. Previous studies have consistently shown strong correlations between EI and decision-making styles, with higher EI associated with more intuitive and rational approaches. While research across various sectors emphasises EI's importance in leadership, there remains a notable gap in understanding its role specifically for academic leaders. This study aims to address this gap by examining how EI influences decision-making processes in university settings, contributing to the broader understanding of effective academic leadership.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Career Commitment and Decision-making Process. This research investigates the connections between emotional intelligence (EI), self-belief in career decision-making, and commitment to exploring/committing to a career among university students. The study expands on previous research indicating that emotions are significant in the process of career advancement (Young et al., 1996; Kidd, 1998). Past research has connected Emotional Intelligence (EI) to professional achievement (Carson and Carson, 1998; Cooper, 1997), yet there is limited research on how EI relates to career decision-making processes. The research utilises theories on EI by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995), as well as career development concepts by Blustein (1989) and Hackett and Betz (1981). The writers suggest that increased emotional intelligence is linked to stronger confidence in making career decisions and a clearer commitment to vocational exploration. This study seeks to bridge the gap in knowledge regarding the impact of emotional factors on career-related behaviours and choices.

Relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among college students: the mediating role of coping styles. Sun and Lyu (2022) examine how emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy are connected in college students, with an emphasis on how coping styles play a mediating role. The study included 717 university students from China who filled out surveys assessing emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and ways of coping. The findings showed that emotional intelligence has a positive impact on self-efficacy, both directly and indirectly via coping styles. The research highlights how emotional intelligence can improve self-efficacy by encouraging useful coping strategies. This study offers understanding on how students' academic and social outcomes can be enhanced through utilising emotional intelligence and coping strategies.

Enhancing decisions and decision-making processes through the application of emotional intelligence skills. The research conducted by Hess and Bacigalupo (2011) investigates how emotional intelligence (EI) skills can be utilised to improve decision-making in individual and organisational settings. The writers contend that although many studies have concentrated on the theoretical elements of emotional intelligence, there lacks a thorough comprehension of how these abilities can be successfully utilised in decision-making situations. Utilising Goleman's emotional intelligence model, which covers self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management, the research proposes effective methods for incorporating these skills into decision-making procedures. The results indicate that utilising emotional intelligence can enhance decision quality and results by aiding decision-makers in comprehending their own emotions and others', effectively handling relationships, and foreseeing the emotional consequences of decisions on stakeholders. This study highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in improving decision-making in different organisational environments.

The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Social Skills, and Decision-Making Among University Students. The connection between self-efficacy, social skills, and decision-making in educational settings is emphasised in the literature. Self-efficacy, the belief in one's capability to achieve success in certain circumstances, is important in shaping behaviours, especially in decision-making and socialising. Social skills play a vital role in shaping both effective communication and decision-making quality. Al-mehsin (2017) investigated the correlation between these three factors in students at Prince Sattam Bin Abdul-Aziz University. The research discovered that self-confidence was common among students, with notable links found between self-confidence, interpersonal abilities, and decision-making effectiveness. In particular, the research showed that a significant amount of the variation in decision-making quality among the students could be attributed to a combination of self-efficacy and social skills. The study backs up Bandura's (1986) proposed theoretical framework, in-

dicating that self-efficacy not only impacts the amount of effort individuals exert in tasks but also their ability to persist when encountering obstacles. This persistence is crucial in academic environments, where students frequently must navigate intricate social interactions and choices that affect both their academic and personal spheres. The results of the study support past research suggesting that increased self-efficacy levels are linked to improved social abilities and more successful decision-making (Haseeb, 2001; Cruz, 2002). Additionally, the research highlights the significance of promoting self-efficacy and social skills in educational programs to improve decision-making skills. Educational institutions can enhance student readiness for academic and social demands, resulting in greater success in and out of university settings.

Stenmark et al. (2020) explores the relationship between self-efficacy and ethical decision-making, particularly focusing on how different levels of self-efficacy influence the cognitive processes and perceptions involved in resolving ethical dilemmas. The study involved manipulating participants' self-efficacy levels and assigning them to different cognitive tasks, such as completing a structured decision-making tool (ACED-IT) or engaging in expressive writing. The findings suggest that while self-efficacy significantly affects participants' perceptions of moral intensity, it does not directly influence the cognitive processes underlying ethical decision-making. The research also indicates that the ACED-IT tool enhances cognitive processing, leading to better identification of key elements in ethical decision-making. This study implies that cognitive tools like ACED-IT may mitigate the effects of low self-efficacy by helping individuals maintain a more empathetic and systematic approach to ethical dilemmas. The authors recommend further research to confirm these findings in real-world settings and explore how such tools might be integrated into ethics training programs.

2.1 Gaps in literature

Despite significant research on self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (EI) in decision-making, several gaps remain. While their individual roles are well-documented, limited studies explore their combined influence, particularly in diverse cultural and educational contexts. Most existing research is region-specific, with an emphasis on Western or urban settings, leaving rural and underrepresented populations understudied. Additionally, longitudinal studies are scarce, hindering an understanding of how these traits evolve and impact decision-making over time. Ethical decision-making mechanisms, particularly the interaction between self-efficacy, EI, and moral intensity, are not fully explored. Practical interventions for systematically developing self-efficacy and EI in educational and professional settings are also lacking. Furthermore, research on their role in technology adoption and social entrepreneurship is relatively nascent, requiring deeper investigation, especially in culturally diverse populations like Indian undergraduates. Mediating and moderating factors, such as personality traits and cultural influences, remain underexplored. Lastly, while various theoretical models exist, their integration into a cohesive framework to explain decision-making processes remains limited, highlighting the need for a more unified approach. Addressing these gaps can provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and decision-making.

2.2 Critiques of previous research

Previous research on self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (EI) in decision-making, while valuable, has notable limitations. Many studies, such as those by Di Fabio and Kenny (2012) and Abu-Shanab and Abu-Shanab (2022), focus primarily on specific populations, such as high school students or academic leaders, limiting the generalizability of their findings across diverse age groups and cultural

contexts. Additionally, much of the research employs cross-sectional designs, which, while useful for establishing correlations, fail to provide insights into causal relationships or long-term effects. For instance, the influence of EI on decision-making styles over time remains underexplored.

Theoretical models like those of Goleman (1998) or Bar-On often lack integration with newer frameworks or models specific to decision-making contexts. Furthermore, methodological inconsistencies are evident, with variations in EI and self-efficacy measurement tools leading to discrepancies in findings. Studies exploring ethical decision-making, such as those by Stenmark et al. (2020), often overlook the practical application of theoretical tools like ACED-IT in real-world settings. Finally, while interventions to enhance EI and self-efficacy are proposed, empirical evidence validating their effectiveness, particularly in technology adoption or social entrepreneurship, remains sparse. These critiques underscore the need for more comprehensive, culturally diverse, and longitudinal research in this domain.

3 Statement of the purpose

1. To assess the levels of self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and decision-making styles in college students.
2. To examine the relationship between self-efficacy and various decision-making styles.
3. To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and different decision-making styles.
4. To determine if emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and decision-making styles.

4 Research questions

1. How do levels of self-efficacy correlate with different decision-making styles in college students?
2. How do levels of emotional intelligence correlate with different decision-making styles in college students?
3. Does emotional intelligence mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and decision-making styles among college students?

5 Hypotheses

H0: Higher levels of self-efficacy will positively correlate with a vigilant decision-making style.

H1: Higher levels of emotional intelligence will positively correlate with a vigilant decision-making style.

H2: Emotional intelligence will mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and decision-making styles.

6 Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design with a correlational approach. The focus is on analysing the relationships between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and decision-making styles without manipulating any variables.

6.1 Research design

This research adopts a correlational research design to investigate the interconnections among self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and decision-making styles in college students. Since the objective of the study is to analyse the associations and possible mediating influences among these variables, this design is suitable for observing the naturally occurring relationships without any variable manipulation. Data will be gathered through online surveys, facilitating efficient collection from a substantial participant pool. The design is cross-sectional, indicating that data will be collected at one specific moment, which enables the identification of correlations, although it does not establish causal relationships.

6.2 Sampling procedure

The sampling strategy for this research will utilise a convenience sampling approach, incorporating a voluntary participation model where recruitment and data collection are conducted exclusively online through Google Forms. The survey will be accessible to all college students aged 18 to 25 who are interested in participating, with no additional selection criteria beyond these fundamental demographic parameters. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, allowing any student who comes across the survey link and meets the eligibility requirements to complete the survey at their discretion. Convenience sampling is used as it focuses on engaging participants who are readily available and willing to take part, rather than randomly selecting individuals from the broader population. The objective is to collect responses from approximately 100 college students. Participants will be made aware that their participation is voluntary, that they may withdraw at any point without facing any repercussions, and that all responses will be treated with confidentiality.

6.3 Data collection tools

6.3.1 The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)

Formulated by Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem in 1995, serves as a prominent instrument for evaluating an individual's confidence in their capacity to manage various challenging situations in life. This scale includes 10 items, with participants providing responses on a 4-point Likert scale, where 1 signifies "Not at all true" and 4 indicates "Exactly true." The GSE has exhibited strong construct validity, showing significant correlations with related constructs such as optimism, self-regulation, and health-related behaviours, thus proving its relevance across different cultural settings. Its reliability is well-documented, with Cronbach's alpha typically falling between 0.76 and 0.90, reflecting a high level of internal consistency.

6.3.2 The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

Developed by Nicola Schutte and associates in 1998, consists of 33 items aimed at evaluating various aspects of emotional intelligence, including the recognition, management, and application of emotions. Participants answer using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The SSEIT is based on the four-branch model of emotional intelligence introduced by Mayer and Salovey. It has demonstrated solid convergent and discriminant validity, showing strong correlations with empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills, while maintaining clear distinctions from other personality traits. The reliability of the SSEIT is robust, with Cronbach's alpha values generally around 0.87 to 0.90.

6.3.3 The General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) Scale

Created by Scott B. Scott and Bruce L. Bruce in 1995, serves to assess the characteristic decision-making styles of individuals. This scale consists of 25 items that evaluate five unique decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. Participants provide their responses using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Validation through factor analysis has confirmed the five-factor structure of the GDMS, demonstrating strong criterion validity as these styles effectively predict decision-making behaviours across various situations. Furthermore, the scale exhibits high reliability, ensuring consistent measurement across different populations and contexts.

7 Results

The analysis was completed using SPSS version 30.0. The software was used to calculate Pearson's correlation coefficient, regression, and partial correlation for mediation analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, skewness and kurtosis (N = 100).

Statistic	GSE	SSEIT	GDMS
Mean	31.40	124.93	85.18
Median	31.00	124.00	84.00
Mode	31.00	127.00	80.00[a]
Standard deviation	4.33	13.40	10.40
Variance	18.73	179.52	108.19
Skewness	−0.446	−0.096	0.552
Kurtosis	0.785	−0.093	1.546
Range	22.00	64.00	67.00
Sum	3140.00	12493.00	8518.00

N = 100 for each scale (no missing values). Standard error of skewness = 0.241; standard error of kurtosis = 0.478. [a] Multiple modes exist; the smallest value is shown.

The descriptive statistics revealed the following: self-efficacy (GSE) had a mean of 31.40 (SD = 4.33), emotional intelligence (SSEIT) had a mean of 124.93 (SD = 13.40), and decision-making styles (GDMS) had a mean of 85.18 (SD = 10.40). Skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable ranges for all variables, indicating normality: GSE (skewness = -0.446, kurtosis = 0.785), SSEIT (skewness = -0.096, kurtosis = -0.093), and GDMS (skewness = 0.552, kurtosis = 1.546).

Table 2. Pearson correlations (N = 100).

Variable	GSE	SSEIT	GDMS
GSE	1		
SSEIT	.653**	1	
GDMS	.197	.301**	1

Sig. (2-tailed): GSE–SSEIT = .000; GSE–GDMS = .050; SSEIT–GDMS = .002. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between SSEIT and GDMS (r = .301, p = .002), supporting Hypothesis 2. However, the relationship between GSE and GDMS was not significant (r = .197, p = .050), disproving Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, partial correlations indicated no mediating effect of SSEIT on the GSE-GDMS relationship, invalidating Hypothesis 3.

Table 3. Regression: correlations among the variables (N = 100).

	GDMS	GSE	SSEIT
Pearson correlation			
GDMS	1.000	.197	.301
GSE	.197	1.000	.653
SSEIT	.301	.653	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)			
GDMS		.025	.001
GSE	.025		.000
SSEIT	.001	.000	

Table 4. Mediation analysis: partial correlation of GSE and GDMS controlling for SSEIT (N = 100).

Control variable	Variable	Statistic	GSE	GDMS
SSEIT	GSE	Correlation	1.000	.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)		1.000
		df	0	97
	GDMS	Correlation	.000	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	
		df	97	0

Regression analysis demonstrated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted decision-making styles (β = .301, p = .002), explaining 9.1% of the variance (R^2 = .091). Self-efficacy was excluded from the regression model as it was not a significant predictor (p = 1.000).

These results emphasize the crucial role of emotional intelligence in decision-making, suggesting it as a primary contributor to decision-making behaviours in college students, whereas self-efficacy appears to have no direct influence in this context.

8 Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of emotional intelligence (EI) in shaping decision-making styles among college students, while indicating no direct influence of self-efficacy on decision-making styles or any mediating effect of EI on this relationship. The significant positive correlation between EI and decision-making styles aligns with existing research emphasizing the role of emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills in facilitating effective decision-making. For instance, Di Fabio and Kenny (2012) explored the contribution of EI to decisional styles among Italian high school students and found that higher levels of EI were associated with rational and

adaptive decision-making. This parallels the current study's conclusion, reinforcing EI's importance across different educational contexts.

In contrast, this study's lack of a significant relationship between self-efficacy and decision-making styles contradicts findings by Demirtas and Özer (2018), who underscored self-efficacy's critical role in educational settings, particularly in fostering confidence and persistence. Similarly, Mini (2020) demonstrated the moderating role of EI in the relationship between career decision-making attribution and self-efficacy, suggesting a nuanced interaction between these variables that may not have been captured in the current research. Additionally, the findings did not support the mediating role of EI in the relationship between self-efficacy and decision-making styles, diverging from Smith (1980), who emphasized the interplay of EI and self-efficacy in decision-making processes among college students. This disparity may stem from methodological differences, such as Smith's more qualitative approach, which could have provided deeper insights into the dynamics between these variables.

The limitations of this study, such as the cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported measures, and convenience sampling, may have influenced the outcomes. These factors might introduce biases like social desirability or limit the ability to generalize findings. Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, integrating objective measures, and including diverse demographic and cultural groups. Despite these weaknesses, the study emphasizes the critical importance of EI in decision-making, suggesting practical applications for educational and psychological interventions aimed at enhancing EI to improve decision-making competencies in young adults. Collectively, these findings contribute to the broader understanding of how psychological constructs like EI and self-efficacy influence complex cognitive processes, opening avenues for targeted strategies to bolster decision-making abilities in academic and professional settings.

9 Scope for further research

Future research can expand upon the findings of this study in several meaningful ways.

First, employing a longitudinal research design could provide deeper insights into the causal relationships between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and decision-making styles, offering a clearer understanding of how these constructs evolve over time. Second, the use of objective measures or behavioural assessments of decision-making, in addition to self-reported questionnaires, could reduce the potential for response biases and yield more robust data. Third, exploring the role of demographic and cultural factors, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or educational background, might uncover moderating variables that influence the relationship between these constructs. Fourth, expanding the sample to include a more diverse population, such as working professionals or individuals from non-academic settings, could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Finally, further research could examine intervention-based studies to determine whether targeted programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence or self-efficacy can lead to measurable improvements in decision-making styles, thereby establishing practical applications for the study's conclusions.

10 Conclusion

This research highlights the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in shaping decision-making styles among college students, emphasizing its significance as a determinant of effective decision-making behaviours. The findings underscore the importance of emotional regulation, empathy, and interper-

sonal skills, which collectively enable individuals to approach decisions with clarity and balance. While the anticipated influence of self-efficacy on decision-making styles was not supported, the study sheds light on the complexity of these relationships, paving the way for deeper exploration.

The implications of these results are both practical and theoretical. They suggest that fostering emotional intelligence through targeted interventions, such as emotional awareness programs and decision-making workshops, can empower students to make thoughtful, confident, and well-rounded choices in academic, personal, and social contexts. Additionally, this study contributes to the growing body of literature by highlighting the independent role of emotional intelligence in decision-making, thereby encouraging its integration into educational and psychological frameworks. Overall, this research underscores the importance of understanding the psychological factors that influence decision-making, particularly during the formative college years, and serves as a foundation for future studies aiming to enhance the cognitive and emotional competencies of young adults.

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