THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND IT'S IMPLICATION IN CAREER DECISION MAKING: A CASE STUDY IN ALBANIAN HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: Decision making is a complex process that involves evaluating multiple options and choosing the best course of action. Adolescents must make several decisions that significantly affect their future, including choices about study programs, interpersonal relationships, and activities that affect their well-being. The capacity to balance the options and predict outcomes is a difficult function for adolescent's decision-making. Considering the dimensions of decision-making process: the rational one, intuitive, dependent, avoidant and spontaneous even the intertwining between them, it's important to understand and to empower the right one. The rationality of choices about their future seems to enable young people to make better. However, social and emotional aspects can influence the decision-making process. They may make choices with long-term consequences based on impulsive actions or raw and uncontrolled emotions. Emotional intelligence can be part of the personal and interpersonal traits that help in the efficient control of positive and negative emotions. EI can be measured through psychometric tests and can be categorized into 6 levels according to the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS). The purpose of the study is to identify the impact and implications of emotional intelligence on decision-making styles among adolescents. Research questions are raised to support the aim and literature review, to guide and check whether a strong emotional intelligence fit can help an individual adopt a rational approach to decisions. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to 110 Albanian high school students, 70 of whom are female and 40 males. A psychometric test was used to assess emotional intelligence where answers are given through a Likert scale. The questions cover the 6 factors of emotional intelligence: (1) Understanding own emotions (2) Understanding others' emotions (3) Expressing emotions (4) Regulating own emotions (5) Regulating others' emotions (6) Using emotions in solving the problem. Evaluation of decision-making is carried out through testing by Scott and Bruce. Descriptive statistics are used to gather information about the distribution of data. Linear regression was used to find the effect of emotional intelligence on rational decision making, including career decisions. Empirical research shows that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on rational decision-making. Correlation was used to measure the degree of association between decision-making dimensions and emotional intelligence factors. A higher correlation was found between the variable of rational decision-making and the variables: regulation of own emotions and regulation of others' emotions.
Keywords: Emotional Intelligence scales, decision-making dimensions, psychometric test, linear regression.

1. INTRODUCTION

Individual development starts in childhood and continues throughout life, shaped by self-awareness, personal interests, and the pursuit of fulfillment. This process leads to the formation of a personal identity, including a professional identity, which answers the question, "What will I become?". During childhood, it is more gender-based and dreamy, involving learning about the world of work through the experiences of adults and gradually creating a sense of oneself and aligning it with the world of work shaping a new identity (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Over time becomes more realistic and pragmatic, influenced by life's realities. This process, along with the overall development of personality in all its dimensions, is closely linked to decision-making. This study explores how young people make decisions and how emotional intelligence influences significant life choices, such as selecting study programs in HEIs and pursuing careers. According to Fischhoff, decision-making involves understanding both consequences and their likelihood of occurring. Young people tend to favor their own experiences and anecdotal evidence over probabilistic information when making decisions, especially in social situations, much like adults (Jacobs & Potenza, 1991). In real life, people often make choices out of habit or tradition, without systematically going through the steps of decision-making, as noted by Fischhoff (Fischhoff, 1998). In *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman describes two thinking systems. System 1 is fast, intuitive, and emotional, relying on past experiences but prone to biases. System 2 is slow, logical, and analytical, used for complex decisions but mentally demanding. Early decisions often rely on System 1, while System 2 becomes more essential as people face greater

challenges in school, relationships, and careers. Challenging our beliefs and desires can be particularly hard, especially when it's most necessary. However, seeking the insights of others can be advantageous. Many of us instinctively consider how our friends and coworkers will perceive our decisions, making the nature of these expected evaluations important (Kahneman, 2013).. Kahneman highlights cognitive biases like confirmation bias (favoring existing beliefs) and the availability heuristic (relying on easily accessible information). These biases can distort young people's decisions, especially under social pressures or fast-paced environments like social media. He emphasizes balancing intuition with critical thinking for better decision-making. Even in lack of information or appropriate decision-making skills related to self-control, self-awareness, self-regulation; they may make less optimal decisions (Fischhoff, 1998). Individual form opinions and make choices that directly express their feelings and their basic tendency to approach or avoid, often without knowing that they are doing so (Kahneman, 2013). Research has shown that when high school students are choosing their field of study, they are often in a dilemma. Adolescents often select careers based more on potential rewards rather than their true interests. Those interviewed express a lack of confidence about their future, doubting their ability to realize their dreams. They worry that making the wrong choice could have long-term consequences, feel unable to share their current struggles with their parents, and fear they might never discover their true selves or passions. The rapid changes in their lives contribute to their feelings of insecurity, and they feel they lack sufficient knowledge about various professions to determine which one aligns with them best (Amursi, Haxhiymeri, Qirjako, & Ndrio, 2010). The OECD report, based on PISA data from 79 countries and economies, including several middle-income countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America that are not OECD members, reveals that adolescents' career aspirations are often narrow, confused, and distorted by their social background. On average, only half of the students in OECD countries have spoken with a career counselor at school by the age of 15. Participation in career guidance activities is frequently influenced by students' social background, posing the risk of unequal outcomes (Cedefop, Commission, ETF, ICCDPP, ILO, & OECD, 2021). Decision-making styles, according to Scott and Bruce, known as Decision-Making Styles (DMS), are classified into five categories: Rational style, where decision-making is based on logical analysis and objective criteria. This approach involves gathering information, weighing alternatives, and choosing the best option based on evidence. Intuitive style, an intuitive approach, based on individual experiences or those of close people. Decisions are guided by feelings, without relying much on formal analysis, and focus more on internal perceptions rather than external information. Dependent style, that involves seeking the opinions or guidance of the others before making a personal decision; it is characterized by relying on colleagues, friends, or experts to confirm the security of decision-making. Impulsive style, based on quick decisions, without much reflection or analysis, driven by a desire to act immediately, often bypassing the process of gathering information. Avoidant style, characteristic of individuals who tend to delay decisions or avoid confronting them. These individuals may feel overwhelmed by the pressure of decision-making and prefer not to make a choice whenever possible. The relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making style among high school students has been the focus of several studies. Similarly, Goleman and others emphasized the importance of social intelligence in shaping an individual's career success. (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000). Empirical studies have also found that emotional and social intelligence play a significant role in career decision-making processes. For example, Day and Carroll found that emotional intelligence was positively linked to career satisfaction in young people (Doy & Carroll, 2004). A different study revealed a positive relationship between the social support provided by family and friends and the self-efficacy of high school students in making career decisions (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992).
, reinforcing the uncertainty and need for confirmation from multiple sources that adolescents face in the decision-making process. However, there are also criticisms of the concept of emotional intelligence. Despite this, emotional intelligence remains an important topic and has practical implications in a range of fields, including education, business, and healthcare (Goleman, 1995). Goleman emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence in personal and professional success, highlighting its role in areas such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Contextual factors: Differences in emotional intelligence can also be influenced by social and cultural factors.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The hypothesis proposed in the mini scale study is: The higher levels of Emotional Intelligence adolescents are more likely to exhibit a rational and intuitive decision-making style. To validate this hypothesis, quantitative data is gathered through a questionnaire distributed to 3 high schools in three different cities in Albania. The individuals are ongoing at the last year of their high school studies relating with the period that they have to decide for university program studies. The questionnaires in two of the high schools are filled in the presence of Psychology students supervised by the authors. The other one was filled in online forms. In all cases we get the agreement of school leaders regarding the questionnaires and the general information gathered. The tool used for measuring emotional

intelligence (EI) is the psychometric instrument developed by Schutte and colleagues in 1998, based on the model published by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. Questions are answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The SSEIT provides a total score ranging from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating greater emotional intelligence (Schutte et al., 1998). Questions withing the questionnaire are grouped to evaluate six dimensions of emotional intelligence, listed:

- AES - Appraisal of Emotions in the Self
- AEO - Appraisal of Emotions in Others
- EE - Emotional Expression
- ERS - Emotional Regulation of the Self
- ERO - Emotional Regulation of Others
- UEPS - Utilization of Emotions in Problem Solving
- Not categorized

Evaluation of decision-making is carried out through testing by Scott and Bruce introduced in 1995. The questionnaire consists of 25 questions, with each set of 5 questions indicating one of the decision-making styles. The group of questions with the highest scores identifies the individual's decision-making style. The 25 items use a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Decision-making has 5 dimensions (Scott and Bruce, 1995), described below:

- The rational decision-making style (Rational) is characterized by a systematic and analytical approach to decision-making, where individuals evaluate all available options based on objective criteria and choose the option that maximizes their benefit.
- Intuitive Decision-Making Style is characterized by reliance on intuition, feelings, and past experiences.
- The dependent decision-making style is characterized by reliance on others for guidance and support during decision-making.
- The avoidant decision-making style is characterized by procrastination, indecisiveness, and a tendency to avoid making decisions altogether.
- The spontaneous decision-making style is characterized by a tendency to make decisions quickly and impulsively, often without considering all available options or potential consequences.
- Data is imported and analyzed in SPSS. There were no missing data or outliers.

3. RESULTS

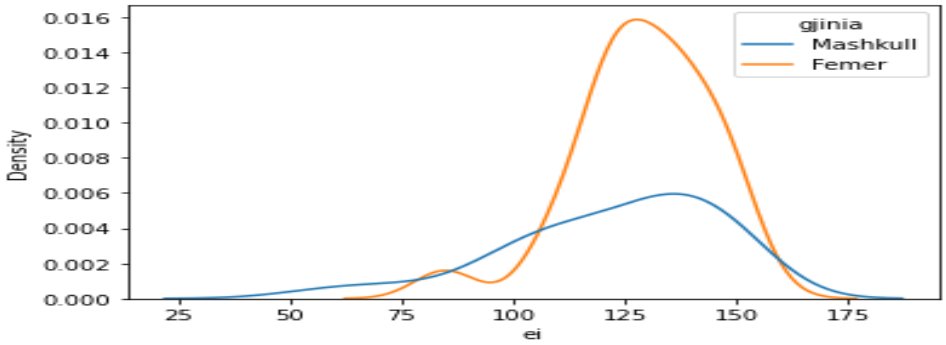
The questionnaires are answered in 64% of the cases by female scholars and 36% are males. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics regarding the average of points of Emotional Intelligence and standard deviation. Females have a slightly higher average rate of emotional intelligence, and a lower standard deviation related to males who have a lower average rate and higher standard deviation. Graph 1 visually presents the density distribution of emotional intelligence scores due to gender. Note that this distribution is nearly normal for females and skewed for males.

Table 1. Distribution of interviewers and descriptive statistics on EI

	Count of Gender	Percentage	Average of IE	StdDev of IE
Females	70	64%	128.97	15.38
Males	40	36%	122.43	23.75
Total	110	100%	126.59	19.02

Source: Data derived from the research conducted by the authors.

Graph 1. Distribution of EI based on Gender



Source: Generated by the authors using Python, 2024.

The relationship between the rational decision-making style as the dependent variable and Emotional Intelligence as the independent variable is tested using simple linear regression. First, heteroscedasticity assumption is tested with Breusch-Pagan test:

H_0: $\alpha_1 = 0$ (This indicates that homoscedasticity exists, meaning the residuals are distributed with consistent variance.)

H_1: $\alpha_1 \neq 0$ (This indicates that heteroscedasticity exists, suggesting that the residuals do not have equal variance.)The auxiliary equation is performed $\sigma_t^2 = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 EI$ and with a $LM = n \cdot R^2 = 1.65 < \chi^2_{(0.05)}$ null hypothesis cannot be rejected; hence the assumption of equal variance is met. Regression analysis generated from SPSS are as follows:

Table 2. Regression Analysis generated from SPSS

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-1.665	1.985		-.839	.404
	EI	.169	.016	.725	10.928	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Rational

Source: Data analysis conducted by the authors using SPSS, 2024.

The estimated regression equation is: Rational = -1.665 + 0.169EI. Positive coefficient of EI shows that making rational decisions increases if Emotional Intelligence increases. P-value less than 0.05 confirms the significance of the coefficient. 53% of the variation of Ration decision-making dimension is explained by Emotional Intelligence (Anderson, 2020)

Table 3. Coefficient of determination generated from SPSS

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.725[a]	.525	.521	3.079

a. Predictors: (Constant), EI

b. Dependent Variable: Rational

Source: Data analysis conducted by the authors using SPSS, 2024

Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the link between emotional intelligence and decision-making styles. The results indicate a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and the rational decision-making style, represented by a coefficient of 0.72. Additionally, emotional intelligence has a significant coefficient of 0.59 with the intuitive decision-making style. Correlation grid among decision-making dimensions and emotional intelligence factors shows that there is a higher correlation between Rational decision-making and Emotional Regulation of the Self and Emotional Regulation of Others.

Table 4. Correlation values between EI and decision-making factors

Emotional Intelligence/ Decision-making dimensions	**Rational**	**Intuitive**	**Dependent**	**Avoidant**	**Spontaneous**
IE	0.72	0.6	0.38	0.12	0.09

Source: Data derived from the research conducted by the authors.
Data analysis conducted by the authors using SPSS, 2024.

Table 5. Correlation values between decision-making dimensions and EI factors

Decision-making dimensions/Emotional intelligence factors	***AES***	***AEO***	***EE***	***ERS***	***ERO***	***UEPS***
Rational	0.53	0.54	0.32	0.69	0.64	0.54
Intuitive	0.47	0.48	0.29	0.53	0.53	0.47
Dependent	0.27	0.1	0.44	0.25	0.36	0.39
Avoidant	0.07	0.06	0.07	-0.03	0.17	0.27
Spontaneous	0.05	0	0.06	0.01	0.15	0.14

Source: Data analysis conducted by the authors using SPSS, 2024.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Regression analysis and correlation presented the positive relation between rational decision-making and Emotional Intelligence. Further studies should be done to test the relationship among each of the decision-making dimensions and the 5 factors of emotional intelligence. adolescents with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) are more likely to exhibit rational and intuitive decision-making styles, several steps and considerations are typically involved:

Ensure a diverse group of adolescents with varying levels of EI is selected. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of how EI influences decision-making styles across different individuals.

Use validated instruments to assess EI and decision-making styles. For EI, tools like the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) or the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) could be used. For decision-making styles, the Decision-Making Styles Inventory (DMSI) or similar instruments can be employed.

Use the selected emotional intelligence assessment tool to evaluate the emotional intelligence levels of the participants. Use the decision-making styles inventory to classify participants into rational, intuitive, impulsive, dependent, or avoidant styles.

Data Analysis: Perform statistical analyses to examine the correlation between EI levels and decision-making styles. This involves looking for patterns where higher EI is associated with rational and intuitive decision-making styles. Compare the decision-making styles of adolescents with high EI against those with lower EI to determine if there is a significant difference. If the analysis shows that adolescents with higher EI predominantly exhibit rational and intuitive decision-making styles, the hypothesis is supported. Explore other variables that might influence decision-making styles, such as socio-economic status, education level, or personal experiences, to ensure that the observed effects are specifically due to EI. Discuss the practical implications of the findings, such as how improving EI in adolescents could enhance their decision-making processes and overall effectiveness in various life situations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Correlation analysis and linear regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence influences decision-making styles. Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to make rational decisions, as they tend to use logical analysis, balance alternatives, and consider objective criteria in their decision-making process.

Enhanced Intuition in Decision-Making: Adolescents with higher levels of emotional intelligence are also more inclined to rely on intuitive decision-making. Their self-awareness and emotional insight allow them to trust their feelings and past experiences when making quick and effective decisions without over-analyzing.

Improved Adaptability in Complex Situations: Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to adapt their decision-making style depending on the context. They can switch between rational and intuitive approaches, making them more flexible and capable of handling both straightforward and emotionally complex decisions effectively.

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