

## Self-related factors and decision making styles among early adults

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To examine the effect of self-related factors, including self-regulation, self-esteem and self-efficacy, on decision-making styles of early adults.

**Methods:** The cross-sectional study was conducted from February to August, 2014 at four universities of Islamabad, Pakistan, and comprised adult students of both Social and Natural sciences. Data was collected through Self-Regulation Questionnaire, Self-Esteem Scale, Self-Efficacy Scale and the General Decision Making Styles Questionnaire. Data was subjected to multivariate regression analysis.

**Results:** Of the 300 participants, 160(53%) were men and 140(47%) were women. The overall mean age was 22.68±5.96 years. Besides, 170(56%) were studying Social sciences and 130(44%) Natural sciences. Self-regulation, self-esteem and self-efficacy positively predicted rational and intuitive style and negatively predicted avoidant and spontaneous style. Self-efficacy and self-regulation negatively predicted dependent style.

**Conclusion:** Ensuring positive self-related factors affected adults' effective decision-making choices.

**Keywords:** Self-regulation, Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, Decision-making styles. (JPMA 67: 731; 2017)

### Introduction

Investigation of the individual factors in decisions is current focus of the modern decision researchers.<sup>1</sup> Thus different studies are conducted on the role of self-related factors in decision-making because self-awareness plays a vital role in decision-making.<sup>2</sup> Early adults' student life is a critical part of life which requires numerous decisions that finally affect their whole life in general and career in particular.<sup>3</sup> In the long run, such decisions even affect the life satisfaction of an individual.<sup>4</sup> Adult university students are more independent in their choices and at this level they make very important decisions. Decisions are simply outcomes of the major personality attributes and abilities possessed by these adults.<sup>5</sup> This research was focused on inquiring the role of self-related factors in the decisional styles opted by early adults in routine life decisions.

In this regard, the most important self-related factors include self-regulation,<sup>6</sup> self-esteem,<sup>1,7,8</sup> and self-efficacy.<sup>9</sup> But almost all of the research is based on individualistic contexts. Although decision-making styles are a well-researched topic in Pakistan,<sup>10-12</sup> but most of the researches were conducted in work settings with employees. Therefore, little evidence is available on the effect of personal factors on decision styles of young adults.<sup>5</sup> The present study is an attempt to bridge this gap. It aims at inspecting the effect of

self-related factors on decisional styles of the early adults. Scott and Bruce<sup>1</sup> defined decision style as "the learned, habitual response pattern exhibited by an individual when confronted with a decision situation" and proposed five styles of making decisions: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant and spontaneous. Rational style is characterised by logic, reasoning, deliberation, careful evaluation of alternative, and finally selection of an ideal decision.<sup>13,14</sup> Rational style involves a three-step sequence including identifying the problem and generating possible alternative solutions, ranking the alternatives and selecting a most suitable solution, and implementing and evaluating the solution by ensuring optimal choices.<sup>15</sup>

Intuitive style is based on emotions, impressions, feelings and hunches.<sup>1</sup> From early 1980s emotion-laden intuitive style is considered a hot topic in decision-making which was formerly considered a neglected topic due to the dominance of rational style.<sup>16,17</sup> Past researchers focussed more on the procedural rational style whereas modern researchers shifted their focus on the intuitive style which allows high-speed good quality decisions in the fast-paced life.<sup>16,17</sup> Dependent style is based on undue consultation, guidance, advice, reliance on others, and getting help before taking a decision.<sup>1</sup> Avoidant style involves withdrawing, postponing, avoiding and delaying decisions.<sup>1</sup> Finally, spontaneous style involves impulsive, hasty, quick and fast decisions based on momentary choices by focussing on overall information instead of analysing its parts.<sup>1,18</sup> The styles focused in the current study are based on the Dual Dimensional Model of Decision Making.<sup>19</sup> The model suggests that rational-intuitive styles are effective whereas avoidant-spontaneous

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styles are ineffective. The dependent style is also ineffective in spite of the fact that in special conditions it can be treated as an effective style. Due to their varying nature, these styles vary in associated antecedents.

Rational and intuitive styles are positively associated whereas dependent and avoidant styles are negatively related to self-esteem.<sup>1,7</sup> Thunholm<sup>8</sup> found that self-esteem and its facets are positively connected with rational and intuitive decision-making style and negatively related to dependent, avoidant and spontaneous style. Besides self-esteem, Batool<sup>10</sup> discovered that self-efficacy among the adult university students was positively related to rational and intuitive style whereas negatively related to dependent, avoidant and spontaneous decision-making style. Along with general self-efficacy, study by Mau<sup>9</sup> revealed that more specifically decision-related self-efficacy was directly linked with rational choices by the adult students. Besides self-esteem and self-efficacy, self-regulatory processes also plays vital role in decision-making.<sup>6</sup> Similarly in the past research, self-regulation was found to be positively associated with rational, intuitive and spontaneous style, whereas negatively associated with dependent style.<sup>11</sup>

The current study was planned to examine the effect of self-related factors, including self-regulation, self-esteem and self-efficacy, on decision-making styles of early adults.

**Subjects and Methods**

The cross-sectional study was conducted at two public and two private universities of Islamabad, Pakistan, and comprised early adults in the age range of 21-28 years. The four universities were Quaid-i-Azam University, International Islamic University, Bahria University and Foundation University. The study was conducted between February to August 2014.

In cross-sectional design, data is collected from different sections at the same time.<sup>20</sup> Thus due to its most suitability, cross-sectional design of the survey method was used in the present research. Purposive sampling technique was applied for data collection. The purposive

inclusion-exclusion criteria were age-specific. Adult students fitting in a predefined specific age group of early adulthood were included whereas the remaining were excluded. Adult students in MSc and MPhil programmes were targeted purposively. Students from all ethnic groups of Pakistan, including students of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were part of the sample because of the quota system in some of the universities e.g. Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. Both Social sciences and Natural sciences students were included.

The present research comprised four instruments: Short-Form Self-Regulation Questionnaire<sup>21</sup> consisting of 21 items; Self-efficacy Scale<sup>22</sup> consisting of 10 items; Self-Esteem Scale<sup>23</sup> consisting of 10 items; and the General Decision-making Styles questionnaire<sup>1</sup> comprising 25 items. All the 4 instruments have been effectively administered in numerous researches in Pakistan and are reliable and valid.<sup>10,11</sup>

Informed consent was obtained from the relevant institutional authorities as well as from all the participants. The scales were administered in groups in classroom settings for ensuring high response rate. No time limits were set for the completion of scales.

Major underlying predictions were made with multivariate regression analysis in which self-regulation, self-efficacy and self-esteem were entered as independent variables whereas one decision-making style in each model was entered as dependent variable. Thus, five distinct models of regression were obtained. Before conducting the regression analysis, major underlying statistic assumptions were addressed. All scales had alpha coefficients greater than 0.70. The values of skewness and kurtosis were less than 1 for all scales. Correlation coefficient between study variables was also significant, adding to the reliability factor.

**Results**

Of the 300 participants, 150(50%) each belonged to both public and private-sector universities. Besides, 185(62%)

**Table:** Regression analysis revealing the role of self-related factors in predicting five styles of decision making.

Self-related factors	Rational β	Intuitive β	Dependent β	Avoidant β	Spontaneous β
Self-Regulation	0.75***	0.95***	-0.26***	-0.86***	-0.73***
Self-Efficacy	0.31***	0.32***	-0.51***	-0.15*	-0.21***
Self-Esteem	0.40***	0.26***	-0.21***	-0.22***	-0.06
ΔR <sup>2</sup> =	0.588	0.795	0.816	0.699	0.749
F(Model)	140.94***	387.52***	444.04***	232.93***	298.72***

\*p< .05. \*\*\*p< .001.

were students of MSc and 115(38%) were of MPhil programmes, with 170(56%) in Social sciences and 130(44%) in Natural sciences. Ethnically, 76(25%) students hailed from Punjab, 55(18%) from Sindh, 49(16%) from KP, 34(11%) from Balochistan, 32(11%) from AJK, 29(10%) from Gilgit-Baltistan and 25(8%) from FATA. There were 160(53%) men and 140(47%) women among participants with an overall mean age of 22.68+5.96 years.

Self-regulation, self-esteem and self-efficacy positively predicted rational and intuitive style and negatively predicted avoidant and spontaneous style. Self-efficacy and self-regulation negatively predicted dependent style (Table).

## Discussion

Decision-making is a multifaceted and multidimensional process which is influenced by numerous factors<sup>24</sup> including personal,<sup>5</sup> situational,<sup>25</sup> contextual<sup>25</sup> and environmental factors.<sup>24</sup> Decision-making is a multidisciplinary topic. Economics focuses risk and probability. Sociology concentrates on group processes. Anthropology focuses on situational, contextual and environmental factors. Mathematics involves models and simulations. However, psychology focuses on inquiring the role of personal factors in decision-making.<sup>26</sup> The current research focused on self-related factors as antecedents of the early adults' styles of decision-making. The findings confirmed the hypotheses. The first hypothesis "self-related factors positively predict rational and intuitive style" was consistent with the past researches which revealed that rational choices are the outcome of self-regulation,<sup>11</sup> self-efficacy<sup>10</sup> and self-esteem.<sup>1</sup> Consistent research evidence on the predictors and outcomes of decision-making styles in Pakistan indicates that rational and intuitive styles are ideal styles of decision-making.<sup>5,11,12</sup> Baiocco et al.<sup>27</sup> discovered that achievements in the educational institutions were positively associated with rational style. Similarly, intuitive decision-makers focus on futuristic potentials and imagine innovative possibilities.<sup>28</sup> Speed and creativity are the outcome of intuitive decision-making style<sup>29</sup> and both are essential requirements of successful student life of early adults.

The second hypothesis "self-related factors negatively predict dependent and avoidant style" was also confirmed by other findings. A research<sup>11</sup> found that self-regulation negatively predicts avoidant and dependent style. Self-efficacy is inversely associated with the use of avoidant and dependent strategies in decision-making.<sup>9</sup> Another research<sup>1,7</sup> discovered that low self-esteem is positively correlated with dependent and avoidant style.

Consistent research evidence on predictors and outcomes of the styles of decision-making in Pakistan indicates that dependent and avoidant are ineffective styles of decision-making.<sup>5,11,12</sup> Baiocco et al.<sup>27</sup> discovered that the number of absentees from educational institutions were positively correlated with avoidant style. The third hypothesis "self-related factors negatively predict spontaneous style" was partially accepted. Self-regulation and self-efficacy negatively predicted spontaneous style. However, the findings were non-significant on self-esteem. Nygren and White<sup>7</sup> found non-significant results while investigating the links between self-esteem and spontaneous style. Similarly, Riaz<sup>12</sup> also found non-significant findings on spontaneous style. However, it is worth mentioning that self-regulation and self-efficacy protects early adults from opting hasty spontaneous style<sup>1</sup> which increases the chances of missing important information in haste while making important decisions.<sup>30</sup> Baiocco et al.<sup>27</sup> found that absentees from educational institutions were positively correlated with spontaneous style among students.

The present research made substantial contribution in the decision literature on the role of self-related factors in the prediction of five decision styles. However, the study has some limitations. First, the research was carried out in a limited locale which was definitely not true representative of the country. Therefore, broad generalisations are not possible in spite of the fact that adult students belonged to almost all ethnic groups residing in different areas of Pakistan. One prominent reason for less generalisability is that data was not collected through quota sampling technique and therefore the ethnic groups included in the sample were disproportionate of their actual strength in their respective provinces. Secondly, the study was based on self-report measures. All the questionnaires were personally completed by the participants and thus the study is vulnerable to common method variance. Thirdly, the questionnaires were directly relevant with the general abilities of the adults and therefore the chances of social desirability cannot be ruled out. The researcher ensured the anonymity of the participants — while giving instructions - in order to reduce the response bias. However, the internal validity of the design can be improved in the future by employing Social Desirability Scale, cross-ratings and method triangulation. Fourth, in spite of the fact that decision styles are influenced by diverse factors,<sup>26</sup> the present research solely focused on self-related factors. Future research can be conducted to inquire the interaction effect of self-related and situational factors on decision styles.

In future studies, all these issues should be considered on a priority basis in order to draw more sound conclusions

regarding the role of self-related factors in decision-making. Besides, the findings have both theoretical and applied significance. Findings confirmed the effective-ineffective dimension of the Dual Dimensional Model of Decision Making.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Ensuring positive self-related factors affects adults' effective decisional choices.

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**Conflict of Interest:** None.

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