



Relationship Between Decision-Making Styles and Perceived Stress Among Postgraduate Students

Ananya Santhosh, Vimala M

Abstract: This study examines the relationship between General Decision-Making Styles and perceived stress among adults to gain a deeper understanding of how decision-making processes influence stress levels. Employing a cross-sectional design, data were collected from 222 participants using validated self-report measures for General decision-making styles, which include Rational, Avoidant, Dependent, Intuitive, and Spontaneous decision-making styles, as well as the Perceived Stress Scale. Spearman's rho correlation analyses revealed significant associations between certain decision-making styles and stress levels. The Dependent decision-making style was positively correlated with perceived stress ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that individuals who rely on others for decision-making may experience higher stress due to a perceived lack of control over their decisions. Similarly, the Intuitive style showed a moderate positive correlation with stress ($p < 0.001$), indicating that intuitive decision-makers may also be susceptible to stress. Conversely, Avoidant and Spontaneous decision-making styles showed no significant relationship with perceived stress, highlighting the nuanced impact of different decision-making styles on stress perception. These findings suggest that fostering adaptive decision-making approaches could play a role in stress management interventions. Future research should investigate causal relationships and consider the contextual factors that influence decision-making and stress.

Keywords: General Decision-Making Styles, Perceived Stress, Postgraduate Students, Stress Management, Correlational Analysis

Abbreviations:

GDMS: General Decision-Making Styles
PSS: Perceived Stress

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and competitive academic environment [1] Postgraduate students often face a multitude of challenges that can lead to heightened levels of stress [2]. The transition from undergraduate studies to postgraduate education typically involves increased academic demands [3], greater expectations for self-directed learning [4], and the pressure to excel in a specialised field [5]. As students navigate these challenges, their decision-making processes

play a crucial role in how they manage their academic responsibilities and cope with stress [6]. Understanding the relationship between decision-making styles and perceived stress is essential for developing effective strategies to support students' mental health and academic success [7].

Decision-making is a complex cognitive process that involves selecting a course of action from multiple alternatives [8]. Various factors, including individual personality traits, cognitive styles, and situational contexts, influence it [9]. Research has identified several distinct decision-making styles, including rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. Each of these styles reflects different approaches to processing information, evaluating options, and ultimately making choices [10]. For instance, rational decision-makers tend to rely on logical analysis and systematic evaluation of information, while intuitive decision-makers may trust their instincts and gut feelings [11]. In contrast, dependent decision-makers often seek guidance from others, while avoidant decision-makers may procrastinate or evade decision-making altogether. Spontaneous decision-makers, on the other hand, may act impulsively without thorough consideration. Perceived stress, on the other hand, refers to the subjective experience of stress and the individual's assessment of their ability to cope with stressors [12]. It encompasses feelings of being overwhelmed, anxious, and unable to manage the demands placed upon them. High levels of perceived stress can have detrimental effects on students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being [13]. Understanding how different decision-making styles contribute to perceived stress can provide valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms at play and inform interventions aimed at reducing stress among postgraduate students [14]. This study examines the relationship between decision-making styles and perceived stress among postgraduate students. By examining how various decision-making approaches correlate with levels of perceived stress, this research seeks to identify patterns that may inform the development of targeted support programs [15]. The findings could have significant implications for educators, mental health professionals, and students themselves, highlighting the importance of fostering adaptive decision-making strategies to enhance resilience and well-being in the face of academic pressures [16]. In summary, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature by investigating the interplay between decision-making styles and perceived stress among postgraduate students [17]. By shedding light on this relationship, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how decision-making processes can influence students' experiences of stress and ultimately inform strategies for promoting mental health and academic success in higher education

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settings [18].

II. OBJECTIVES

- A. To examine whether there is a significant relationship between rational decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students [19].
- B. To assess whether intuitive decision-making style significantly correlates with perceived stress among postgraduate students.
- C. To determine if there is a significant relationship between dependent decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students.
- D. To evaluate whether avoidant decision-making style is significantly related to perceived stress among postgraduate students.
- E. To investigate if there is a significant relationship between spontaneous decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

III. HYPOTHESES

H1: There is no significant relationship between decision-making styles and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

H1.1: No significant relationship exists between rational decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

H1.2: There is no significant relationship between intuitive decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

H1.3: No significant relationship exists between dependent decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

H1.4: No significant relationship exists between avoidant decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

H1.5: No significant relationship exists between spontaneous decision-making style and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

H2: There is no significant relationship between decision-making styles among male and female postgraduate students.

IV. METHODS

A. Sample

The study comprised 224 postgraduate students, aged between 18 and 25 years, who were all currently enrolled in a postgraduate educational institution. Participants were recruited through a convenience sampling, allowing efficient and accessible data collection. Individuals enrolled in distance learning courses and recent graduates were excluded to ensure that the findings reflected the experiences of students actively engaged in academic programs. Additionally, participants were required to be proficient in English to facilitate accurate comprehension and completion of the survey instruments. This sampling approach ensured that the study targeted individuals experiencing the academic pressures typical of postgraduate education.

B. Measures

The study utilized two well-established psychological scales to assess decision-making styles and perceived stress. The General Decision-Making Styles (GDMS) Inventory, developed by Scott and Bruce (1995), measured five distinct decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. This 25-item questionnaire evaluates how individuals typically approach decision-making, with responses rated on a Likert scale. The GDMS has demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.71 to 0.86, confirming its internal consistency and validity across different populations. The study employed the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983), to measure perceived stress levels. The PSS measures the degree to which individuals perceive their lives as stressful over the past month and consists of 10 items rated on a Likert scale from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). The scale is widely recognized for its strong psychometric properties, with internal consistency ranging from 0.70 to 0.90. These measures provided a reliable framework for evaluating the relationship between decision-making styles and perceived stress among postgraduate students.

C. Procedure

The study employed a structured data collection process, ensuring methodological rigour and adherence to ethical standards. Before participation, individuals were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, methodology, and potential implications, after which they gave informed consent. The online survey comprised demographic questions, the GDMS Inventory, and the PSS. Participants completed the survey anonymously to maintain confidentiality and minimize response bias. Data were collected within a specified timeframe, ensuring a sufficient number of responses for statistical analysis. Normality testing was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine the relationship between decision-making styles and perceived stress. The data did not follow a normal distribution, so non-parametric statistical analyses were performed. Spearman's rho correlation was used to assess the strength and direction of relationships between decision-making styles and perceived stress, while t-tests were conducted to examine gender differences. Ethical considerations were a priority throughout the study, ensuring that participation was voluntary and individuals had the right to withdraw at any stage. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, with anonymized data securely stored for research. This methodological approach ensured a comprehensive and ethically sound investigation into the relationship between decision-making styles and stress among postgraduate students.

V. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Spearman's correlation coefficients were calculated to assess the relationships between decision-making styles and perceived stress. The results indicated the following significant correlations:



Table-I: Correlations Between Decision-Making Styles and Perceived Stress

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rational Style	224	19.2	3.3	-					
Avoidant Style	224	14.9	4.66	-0.029	-				
Dependent Style	224	16.9	3.97	0.321***	0.447***	-			
Intuitive Style	224	18.1	3.17	0.281***	0.094	0.224***	-		
Spontaneous Style	224	13.9	3.68	-0.001	0.222***	- 0.015	0.230***	-	
Perceived Stress	224	21.2	5.31	-0.097	0.305***	0.168*	-0.083	0.09	-

Correlation Matrix

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Dependent Decision-Making Style: There was a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.168$, $p < 0.05$) between the dependent decision-making style and perceived stress. This suggests that students who rely on others for decision-making experience higher stress levels. **Intuitive Decision-Making Style:** A moderate positive correlation ($r = -0.083$, $p < 0.05$) was found between the intuitive decision-making style and perceived stress, indicating that those who rely on intuition may also experience increased stress. **Rational Decision-Making Style:** No significant correlation ($r = -0.097$, $p > 0.05$) was found between the rational decision-making style and perceived stress, suggesting that rational decision-makers do not experience higher stress levels. **Avoidant Decision-Making Style:** No significant correlation ($r = 0.305$, $p > 0.001$) was found between the avoidant decision-making style and perceived stress. **Spontaneous Decision-Making Style:** No significant correlation ($r = 0.090$, $p > 0.05$) was found between the spontaneous decision-making style and perceived stress.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between decision-making styles and perceived stress among postgraduate students. The significant positive correlation between the dependent decision-making style and perceived stress aligns with existing literature, which suggests that individuals who rely on others for guidance may feel overwhelmed by the pressure to meet external expectations. This reliance can lead to increased anxiety and stress, particularly in high-stakes academic environments.

The moderate positive correlation between the intuitive decision-making style and perceived stress suggests that intuition can facilitate quick decision-making. Still, it may also contribute to stress when uncertain outcomes are uncertain. This finding highlights the dual nature of intuitive decision-making, where reliance on gut feelings can be beneficial and detrimental, depending on the context.

Rational decision-makers, who approach problems systematically, may experience lower stress levels due to their ability to analyze situations thoroughly and make informed choices. Conversely, avoidant and spontaneous decision-makers may experience stress for different reasons, such as procrastination or impulsivity, but these styles did not show a direct correlation in this study.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of understanding decision-making styles about perceived stress among postgraduate students. The findings suggest that interventions aimed at promoting rational and intuitive decision-making strategies could be beneficial in reducing stress levels. Educational programs that focus on enhancing decision-making skills may help students navigate academic

challenges more effectively, ultimately improving their academic outcomes.

VI. CONCLUSION

Avoidant and Dependent decision-making styles are associated with higher levels of perceived stress, suggesting that individuals who employ analytical and intuitive decision-making styles tend to experience lower perceived stress. The findings underscore the need for interventions that foster adaptive decision-making strategies to promote overall well-being.

A. Implications

- Stress management programs could benefit from targeting avoidant and dependent decision-making tendencies.
- Educators could play a pivotal role in developing students' decision-making skills.
- Career counsellors can leverage these findings to guide clients into roles or professions that align with their decision-making styles.
- Pre-university and undergraduate students would benefit from training in soft skills management to strengthen their decision-making abilities.

B. Limitations

The sample size could be increased to improve the reliability and strength of correlation findings.

The study's findings are specific to the selected population and may not be generalisable to all groups.

Self-reported data on decision-making styles and perceived stress may introduce response biases, which can impact the accuracy of the findings.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

After aggregating input from all authors, I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

- Conflicts of Interest/ Competing Interests:** Based on my understanding, this article has no conflicts of interest.
- Funding Support:** No organisation or agency has funded this article. This independence ensures that the research is conducted objectively and without external influence.
- Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** Securing ethical approval and consent from all participating individuals is essential. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were provided with information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured they could withdraw from the study without any consequences. Data were stored securely and used

solely for research purposes, ensuring compliance with ethical standards in research.

- **Data Access Statement and Material Availability:** The adequate resources of this article are publicly accessible.
- **Author's Contributions:** The authorship of this article is contributed equally to all participating individuals.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Ananya Santhosh is a postgraduate student at Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous, specialising in Counselling Psychology. She has a strong academic focus on various aspects of psychology and has researched the relationship between General Decision-Making Styles and Perceived Stress. In addition to her academic pursuits, she is gaining professional experience as a recruitment associate and a counseling trainee, working with children and adolescents. With a commitment to research and practical application, she aims to contribute to the field of psychology through counseling, psychological assessment, and the promotion of mental well-being.



Vimala M is a dedicated Assistant Professor at Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous and a researcher with extensive expertise in Child and Adolescent Psychology, Emotional and Behavioural Problems, LifeSpan Psychology, and Child Guidance and Assessment. She holds an M.Sc. in Psychology, an M.Phil., and a B.Ed., and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. With a passion for understanding and addressing psychological challenges in children, she has presented two research papers and published eleven articles in esteemed journals. As the Programme Coordinator (UG) at Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous, she plays a pivotal role in academic administration and student mentorship, fostering a supportive learning environment for aspiring psychology professionals.

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