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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER DECISION MAKING AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to examine the relationship between career decision making and emotional maturity among senior secondary school students. A total sample of 1044 students of 10+1 class (both boys and girls) from urban and rural areas were drawn from Government Senior Secondary Schools of Punjab under PSEB. The correlation analysis revealed that career decision making and Emotional Maturity are negatively and significantly related to each other. The results suggest that students with higher emotional maturity have better clarity and confidence in making career-related decisions, suggesting that interventions enhancing emotional maturity could enhance their career planning abilities. The findings underscore the importance of addressing gender differences in education and career counseling, particularly for male students who may require additional support in defining their career objectives. Understanding these factors can help inform more inclusive and gender-sensitive career guidance programs aimed at reducing indecision and improving career preparedness among all students.

KEYWORDS: *Career, Decision Making, Career Decidedness, Career Indecision, Emotional Maturity.*

INTRODUCTION
Career selection is not merely a step toward employment; it is a strategic life decision that determines one's long-term professional identity and satisfaction. Hazen, Schlozman, and Beresin (2008) describe adolescence as a period marked by significant psychological, emotional, and social transitions, during which individuals begin to comprehend adult roles and contemplate their futures with greater seriousness. At the senior secondary stage, students encounter critical choices regarding their academic and professional paths, which call for clarity, emotional stability, and sound judgment. Super (1990) and Tiedeman and Ohara (1963) highlight this stage as a key period for developing decision-making competence, observing that indecision at this point may hinder future career development.

A rational career decision involves careful evaluation of available options in light of one's abilities, interests, and values. However, the abundance of career possibilities can also lead to confusion, dissatisfaction, and unmet expectations. Thus, understanding adolescents' mindset and their orientation toward the future becomes essential in guiding them effectively. As Safta (2015) explains, adolescents often struggle to reconcile their dreams with real-life limitations. Many experience career indecision due to the fear of making incorrect choices (Limoges, 2004), lack of accurate information, absence of career guidance, peer pressure, or external influences (Salami, 1999). The role of family, peers, and educators in shaping these decisions is significant (Shumba & Naong, 2012; Kniveton, 2004), and factors such as school environment, parental education, and socioeconomic background further impact students' choices (Crockett & Bingham, 2000).

Career Decision Making
Career decision-making is one of the most important and challenging processes in an individual's life, especially for students, as their future greatly depends on the choices they make. It involves more than identifying educational or job opportunities. It also requires evaluating one's own abilities, interests, personality, and values to ensure a well-informed and satisfying decision. The process is complex and includes dimensions such as career maturity, career planning, decision-making self-efficacy, career decidedness, and career indecision. A successful career stems from logical decision-making, goal setting, and strategic planning. As Sampson et al. (1996) state, career thoughts encompass beliefs, feelings, and strategies involved in solving career-related problems. Parsons (1909) emphasized three key factors in making vocational decisions: self-understanding, knowledge of job requirements, and the ability to logically connect both. Choosing the right career not only defines one's professional path but also impacts personal fulfillment and long-term success. Millward et al. (2006) found that adolescents often struggle with planning, facing pressure to make choices that shape their future.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018) defines career as "a field for or pursuit of sequential and gradual accomplishment specifically in public, professional, or trade life." Further, Patton and McMahon (1999) described a career as the pattern of influences and experiences that coexist in a person's life across time.

Factors Affecting Career Decision-Making
When making a career-related decision, individuals often face a range of challenges influenced by diverse factors. These challenges arise from both internal and external circumstances.

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External or extrinsic factors may include family expectations, parental influence, peer pressure, societal norms, community values, and available job opportunities. On the other hand, internal or intrinsic factors involve personal values, behavior, personality traits, self-awareness, interests, and motivations. Numerous factors influence one's professional career. Researches revealed several factors which directly and indirectly persuade career development such as social, psychological and philosophical aspects. (Aldona & Liuda, 2004). Various important contextual factors like family, parents, social practices, and the religious, economic and political climate have an impact in shaping attitudes towards career choices and career development.

Emotional Maturity

Emotions are an integral part of human life, shaping thoughts, actions, ambitions, and overall well-being (Pastey & Aminbhavi, 2006). Emotional expressions vary by situation, but emotions bring color, excitement, and meaning to life (Singaravelu, 2007). Emotionally mature individuals tend to maintain control over their lives (Chamberlain, 1960), with emotional responses shaped by circumstances.

Emotional maturity represents the result of healthy emotional development. As individuals grow, so do their emotional stability, ability to adjust socially, professional potential, and life ambitions. According to Mangal, "Emotional maturity involves understanding oneself, others, and the realities of life." Many personal challenges stem from a lack of awareness of one's emotions and needs. Emotional tension often arises when needs go unmet. However, when individuals learn to recognize and respond to their own feelings, they not only meet those needs but also progress toward becoming emotionally mature and well-adjusted individuals.

- Good (1973) sees emotional maturity as "the outcome of progressing through earlier emotional stages and being able to handle adult responsibilities without emotional strain."
- Murray (2003) emphasizes that "emotional maturity doesn't necessarily align with age or intelligence. A person may be intellectually mature but emotionally underdeveloped, which can be harmful."

Emotional maturity plays a central role in shaping personality and guiding adolescent development. It reflects a person's ability to live meaningfully, enjoying life, forming relationships, expressing love and grief appropriately, and reacting to fear or anger in a healthy, genuine manner without hiding behind false bravado (Jersild, 1963. Emotionally mature students are more likely to pursue careers aligned with their potential and interests, transforming emotional strength into a productive force. They can effectively adjust to different social environments within the family, peer groups, school, and society, which enhance their ability to seek guidance, evaluate options, and act decisively (Johns, Mathew & Mathai, 2016).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To explore the literature is the first step towards the research procedure. It acts as a mentor who leads to writing the statement of the problem, be aware of the importance of the problem, indicating devices related to data collection, suitable study draft, and the data source.

--*Best, J.W and Kahn, J.V* Studies related to Career Decision Making

Saxena and Murugesan (2025) explores the impact of psychosocial factors on career decision-making among pre-university students in Uttar Pradesh, India. The findings suggest that peer pressure influences career choices and the need for targeted career counseling services. Varghese (2024) compares emotional intelligence and career decision-making in adolescent students, finding that state board students have a more favorable attitude towards career decision-making than CBSE students. Subhrajyoti (2023) emphasizes the need for efficient guidance and counseling programs to help adolescents make informed decisions. Jemini-Goshi and Kadriu (2022) found that participants struggled with the career decision-making process during the pandemic due to concerns related to sudden changes in daily routines and restrictive measures. Zaini et al. (2021) identified factors that might affect students' career decision-making, such as academic performance and academic self-concept. Kaur (2020) examined the effect of parental encouragement and emotional maturity on career decision self-efficacy, while Goyal and Grover (2018) studied the relationship between career decision-making with self-efficacy and social environment.

Studies Related to Emotional Maturity

Rosyid (2024) found a significant influence of emotional maturity on career decision-making among 115 NWDI Ajan vocational school students, using a correlational quantitative research method. Yulianti and Nurhayani (2024) found a positive link between emotional maturity and career decision-making among 12th-grade students, promoting self-awareness, interest recognition, and exploration of potential career opportunities. Khoriah and Lestari (2023) found that high emotional maturity was positively associated with better career decision-making. Factors such as positive parental influence, social environment support, and access to information about various career options also played a role in helping adolescents make good career decisions. Yashoda and Karnan (2023) revealed a positive correlation between emotional maturity and decision-making in high school students, with significant effects of gender, parent qualification, and medium of instruction. Chavda and Chaudhary (2021) found no significant gender difference in emotional maturity among government students in higher secondary schools.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Career paths have evolved from traditional family vocations to focusing on identity, fulfillment, and aligning personal strengths with job market demands. Adolescents face pressure to make career decisions at senior secondary, despite reforms, causing confusion, pressure, and emotional turmoil. Emotional maturity allows individuals to recognize and manage their emotions, evaluate options rationally, and handle the stress and uncertainty that often accompany career-related choices. Emotionally stable students are often better equipped to make thoughtful and future-oriented decisions (Varghese, 2024; Santos et al., 2022). The increasing complexity of the modern career landscape and the psychological demands placed on

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young students make it imperative to understand how emotional maturity shapes their ability to make career decisions. This study addresses the evolving demands of a dynamic society, the emotional and psychological needs of adolescents, and the educational reforms needed to support their career development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study will be conducted with following objectives in view:

1. To study the relationship between career decidedness and emotional maturity among senior secondary students.
2. To study the relationship between career indecision and emotional maturity among senior secondary students.
3. To study difference in career decision making and emotional maturity among senior secondary students with regard to gender.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Following hypotheses were formulated for verification:

1) There does not exist significant relationship between career decidedness and emotional maturity among senior secondary students.
2) There does not exist significant relationship between career indecision and emotional maturity among senior secondary students.
3) (a) There does not exist significant difference of career decidedness among senior secondary students with regard to gender.
   (b) There does not exist significant difference of career indecision among senior secondary students with regard to gender.
   (c) There does not exist significant difference of emotional maturity among senior secondary students with regard to gender.

Design of the study

This study adopts a descriptive approach, as it aims to capture the present scenario without delving into the past or altering variables. The study was conducted on senior secondary students. The criterion variable was career decision-making, which included two dimensions: career decidedness and career indecision and a predictor variable was emotional maturity. Gender (male/female) was used as a classificatory variable to examine group differences across the variables.

Sample of the study

To ensure a representative sample, a multistage random sampling method was utilized. Punjab state is divided into three main regions: Majha, Malwa, and Doaba. In order to ensure wider applicability of the findings, the total sample of 1044 students of 10+1 class (both boys and girls) from urban and rural areas were drawn from Government Senior Secondary Schools of Punjab under PSEB. .

Research Tools Used

- The Career Decision Making Scale by Kirandeep Singh (2014).
- Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) constructed and standardized by Singh and Bhargava (2012).

Delimitations of the study

- The study was restricted to Government Senior Secondary School students (10+1 class) of Punjab School Education Board.
- The study was delimited to emotional maturity, career decidedness and career indecision only.

Statistical techniques

- Descriptive statistics such as mean, median and standard deviation were used to study the distribution of the sample.
- Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between the variables.
- 't' test employed to find out the mean variance.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

A structured approach has been adopted to analyze the data, ensuring that every aspect is examined with rigor and precision. This process allows to see the relationships among variables, which in turn facilitates a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation. Moreover, the interpretation of results extends beyond mere numerical outputs, offering critical insights into the theoretical and practical dimensions of the research problem.

Section - I

Correlational Analysis

In this section, it was attempted to examine the correlation of career decidedness and career indecision among senior secondary school students with their Emotional Maturity. The coefficient of correlation was calculated, between scores of career decidedness and career indecision with their Emotional Maturity. The results have been shown in tables as given below:

Hypothesis 1: "There is no significant relationship between career decidedness and emotional maturity among senior secondary students

Table 1: Correlation between Career Decidedness and Emotional Maturity

Variables	r	Significance
Career Decidedness and Emotional Maturity	0.497	Significant at the 0.01 level

It is evident from Table that career decidedness and emotional maturity exhibit a significant positive correlation with each other. This positive and significant relationship indicates that emotional maturity plays an important role in influencing career decidedness among senior secondary students. In other words, students who demonstrate higher levels of emotional maturity are more likely to show greater clarity and confidence in their career decisions. Based on these findings, the null Hypothesis 1 is rejected. These findings are in line with those reported by

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Yulianti (2024), Khoriah and Lestari (2023), and Rosyid (2024).

Hypothesis 2: There does not exist a significant relationship between career indecision and emotional maturity among senior secondary students.

Table 2: Correlation between Career Indecision and Emotional Maturity

Variables	r	Significance
Career Indecision and Emotional Maturity	-0.326	Significant at the 0.01 level

The correlation analysis revealed that career indecision and emotional maturity are negatively and significantly related to each other. The negative direction of the correlation suggests that as emotional maturity increases, career indecision tends to decrease among senior secondary students. Based on these findings, the null Hypothesis 2 is rejected. This finding is further supported by the study of Ran, Zeb, Nisar, Yasmin, Poulova, and Haider (2022).

Section – II

Differential Analysis

This section deals with differential analysis for the fulfillment of objective third of the conducted investigation. It deals with finding significant difference (if any) in mean scores of Career Decision making and Emotional Maturity among senior secondary students with regard to gender.

Hypothesis 3 (a): There does not exist significant difference of career decidedness among senior secondary students with regard to gender.

Table 3

Variable	Gender	Mean	S.D.	N	t-value	Significance
Career Decidedness	Female	11.76	1.86	523	2.24	significant at the 0.05 level
	Male	11.49	1.99	521		

This indicates that the difference in career decidedness between female and male students is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the null Hypothesis 3 is rejected. The results suggest that female students, on average, tend to be slightly more career-decided than their male counterparts.

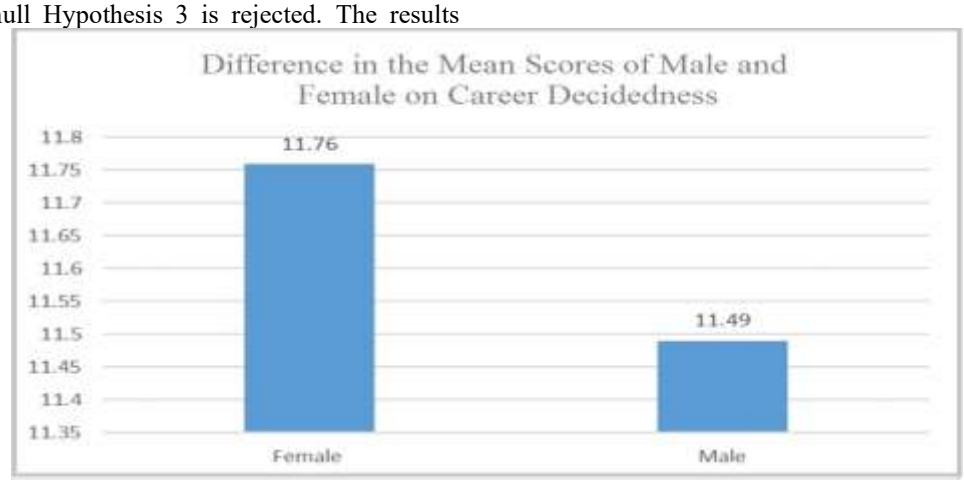


Figure 1: Differences in the Mean Scores of Male and Female Students on Career Decidedness.

Hypothesis 3(b): There does not exist significant difference of career indecision among senior secondary students with regard to gender.

Table 4

Variable	Gender	Mean	S.D.	N	t-value	Significance
Career Indecision	Female	25.92	2.90	523	-2.303	significant at the 0.05 level
	Male	26.33	2.90	521		

Table 4 indicates that the difference in career indecision between female and male students is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the null Hypothesis 4 is rejected. The results suggest that male students, on average, tend to experience slightly higher levels of career indecision than female students.

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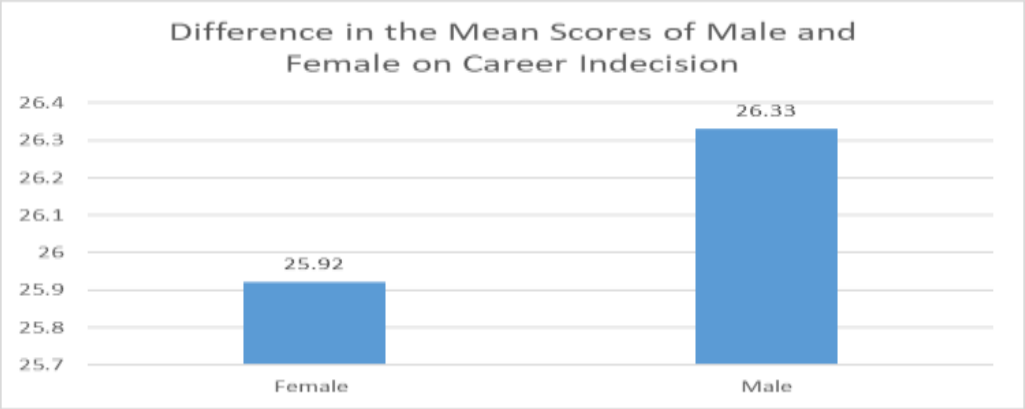


Figure 2: Differences in the Mean Scores of Male and Female Students on Career Indecision.

Both the results showed that there is a difference in career decision making on the basis of gender. This gender-based variation may reflect underlying social, psychological, or contextual influences on students' career-related choices and clarity. Females are good at taking career decisions and less indecisive in comparison to males. The finding is consistent with previous research, such as the study by Mehar (2018), which also highlighted gender differences in career-related attitudes and behaviors.

Hypothesis 3(c): There does not exist significant difference of emotional maturity among senior secondary students with regard to gender.

Table 5

Variable	Gender	Mean	S.D.	N	t-value	Significance
Emotional Maturity	Female	172.87	23.43	523	0.272	significant at the 0.05 level
	Male	172.49	22.41	521		

The table presents the results which indicating that the difference in emotional maturity between female and male students is not statistically significant. This means there is no meaningful difference in emotional maturity levels between genders in this sample, and any small variation in mean scores is likely due to chance rather than a true gender-based difference. Studies by Jangra, Singh, and Behmani (2020) and Wani and Masih (2015) discovered variations in emotional maturity based on gender. But in this study, gender does not appear to significantly influence emotional maturity among the students surveyed.

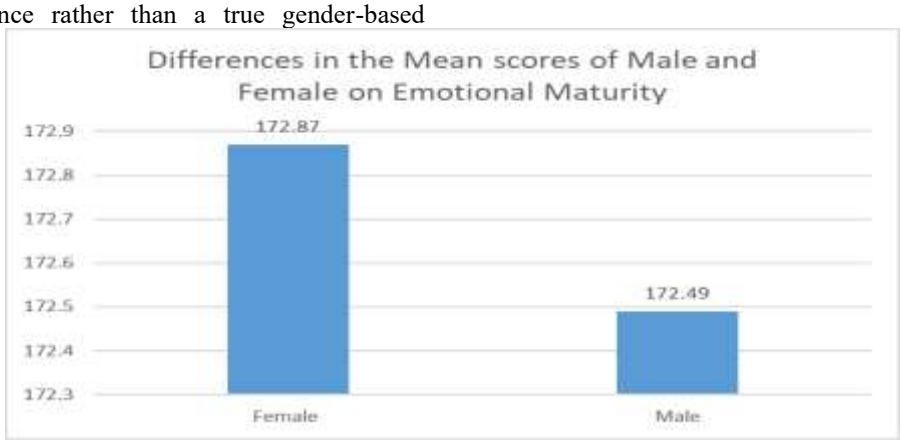


Figure 3: Differences in the Mean Scores of Male and Female Students on Emotional Maturity

CONCLUSION & FUTURE SCOPE

1. The study indicates that students with higher emotional maturity have better clarity and confidence in making career-related decisions, suggesting that interventions enhancing emotional maturity could enhance their career planning abilities.
2. The study suggests that students with higher emotional maturity are less likely to feel confused or hesitant while making profession decisions since it shows that vocational indecision tends to diminish as emotional maturity improves.
3. The findings underscore the importance of addressing gender differences in education and career counseling, particularly for male students who may require additional support in defining their career objectives.
4. Understanding these factors can help inform more inclusive and gender-sensitive career guidance programs aimed at reducing indecision and improving career preparedness among all students.
5. Gender may not be a determining factor at secondary stage, as the study found no significant difference in

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emotional maturity between male and female students.

6. These results may reflect evolving social norms, educational practices, or equal emotional development opportunities for both genders in contemporary school environments.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

1. Intervention-based research can be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of emotional training programs in schools.
2. This research was limited to senior secondary students only. In addition, it is recommended that the research be conducted with higher classes.
3. Current research was conducted in Punjab state only. To investigate how cultural norms and values influence emotional maturity and career decision-making across different regions or states of India, or even internationally, cross cultural studies can be done.
4. Parental role can be explored by assessing the specific role of parenting styles, family structure, and home environment in shaping students' emotional development, and career clarity.

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