



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychology

INFLUENCE OF DISTRESS ON STYLES OF DECISION MAKING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

KEY WORDS: Decision making, Distress, Young adults

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ABSTRACT

The study analyses the influence of distress on styles of decision-making among young adults in India. It aims to explore the relationship between the levels of distress and styles of decision-making among gender groups. Distress is a negative stress response that has a detrimental effect by generating physical and psychological maladaptation. It is caused by an individual being overwhelmed by demands, losses, or perceived threats. (American Psychological Association, 2018) The cognitive process of choosing between two or more alternatives, ranging from relatively clear-cut to complex decisions, is known as decision-making. Young adulthood is a period of development from adolescence to adulthood. The definitions of young adults and age groups which are categorized as young adults widely vary. This study considers individuals in the age group of 17 - 22 as a young adult population. This developmental period is characterized by independence in decision-making and character development. The study excludes the positive effects of stress (Eustress). It also attempts to discover the influence of demographic variables on the levels of distress and its impact on decision-making styles in girls. Decision-making styles and Distress are objectively measured using the Decision-making Styles among teenager's questionnaire and the Perceived Stress questionnaire. Data is collected using purposive sampling, with an estimated sample size of 250 participants. Statistical tools such as the Pearson correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test are used to analyze data. Descriptive statistical techniques are used to summarize the findings.

INTRODUCTION

As undergraduate students, being fresh out of senior school and observing our fellow school and university mates experience distress during stressful events (such as board exams, competitive exams, semester exams etc) intrigued us to explore deeper on the influence of distress on various dependent variables. Distress is a negative stress response that has a detrimental effect by generating physical and psychological maladaptation. It is caused by an individual being overwhelmed by demands, losses, or perceived threats. (American Psychological Association, 2018). This study aims to explore the relationship between the negative effects of stress (distress) and the styles of decision making among young adults. A human being's life spans from being an infant, dependent on its parents, to an independent adult and ends at old age, when one is forced to be dependent again. During the crucial teenage years, the once dependent child attempts to create its own identity and values and distances itself from its family. The rebellious teenage phase gives way to Adolescence and then young adulthood. Young adulthood is a period of significant physical, psychological and intellectual development in individuals. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a critical period that brings about numerous changes and challenges. Young adults are often confronted with new responsibilities, such as pursuing higher education, starting a career, or maintaining stable relationships. These transitions, combined with societal expectations and personal insecurities, can take a toll on their mental well-being.

There are few studies that are related to the research we are going to explore. The young adults experience high stress levels and their stress management level is very low and eventually it influences many other factors in their personal life. Reddy and Padmini (2019). There is a negative correlation between the level of academic performance and the level of academic stress among young adults. Sahu, P., Chauhan, Sahu, D. and Kumar (2024). There is no significant relationship and gender significance in career decision self-efficacy and locus of control among young adults. Madhani (2020). Negative

correlation exists between academic stress and psychological well-being and positive correlation exists between academic stress and career decision making. Kamath and Baruah (2023).

Adulthood is a stage of life burdened with compulsion to make decisions (regarding choice of courses, college, relationships, friendships etc) and to build a stable foundation for one's career. This duality of stressful events and need for decisions drove our interest in studying this study. This paper aims to investigate how distress plays a vital role in decision making of young adults. It also tries to figure out whether cultural, environmental and familial issues play any role in career, relationships or any kind of decision making of an individual. This study further helps to understand how human characteristics and interpersonal dynamics are altered and changed according to the situation and due to distress.

METHOD

Aim

This paper aims to investigate how distress plays a vital role in decision making of young adults. It also tries to figure out whether cultural, environmental and familial issues play any role in career, relationships or any kind of decision making of an individual. This study further helps to understand how human characteristics and interpersonal dynamics are altered and changed according to the situation and due to distress.

Objectives

Research Questions

RQ 1 - What is the relationship between distress and styles of decision making in young adults?

RQ 2 - Is there any significant difference among both the genders while assessing the relationship between distress and decision making?

RQ 3 - Is there any influence of relationship status on distress and styles of decision making among the genders?

Hypotheses

Ha 1 - There will be a positive relationship between distress and styles of decision making.
 Ha 2 - There will be a significant difference between distress and styles of decision making among the genders.
 H0 3 - There is no significant influence of relationship status on distress on styles of decision making among the genders.

Sample

The study has collected data from young adults in the age group of 17 to 22 years who are residing in Bangalore and Coimbatore. The participants were required to be pursuing either senior year in high school or undergraduate university. The study also focused on participants who are Indian residents. Students undertaking a 'break year' to attempt professional courses were also a part of the study. The study incorporates a purposive sampling. The estimated sample size for this study is taken as 200 for proper interpretation of data.

Inclusion Criteria

- Participants were required to be within the age range of 17 to 22 years
- They were required to be pursuing either high school or university.
- The participants were required to be Indian residents at least for 1 year.
- Participants pursuing a break year to prepare for competitive exams were considered in the study.
- The negative effects of stress are only considered during the course of the study.

Exclusion Criteria

- Participants above or below the age range were excluded from the study.
- Non-Indian residents were excluded.
- Participants diagnosed with chronic physiological ailments and psychological disorders were not considered during the course of study.
- The positive effects of stress (Eustress) are not included in the study.

Tools Used

- Decision making styles among teenagers Questionnaire:** The decision-making questionnaire consists of 25 statements which quantitatively measures 5 decision making styles such as:

- Rational decision making:**

It is a strict procedure utilising objective knowledge and logic. It involves identifying the problem to solve, gathering facts, identifying options and outcomes, analysing them, considering all the relationships and selecting the decision. (Adam, Kuchta, & Stanek, 2022)

- Intuitive decision making:**

It is non sequential and is based on feelings, experiences and internal judgements.

- Dependent:**

It involves the use of external guidance and validation from others while making vital decisions.

- *Avoidant Decision Making:**

It allows people to forego or abandon effortful deliberation by postponing, bypassing, or delegating a decision. It reduces regret, primarily by allowing decision makers to evade personal responsibility for potential negative outcomes. (Han, Quadflieg, & Ludwig, 2023)

- Spontaneous Decision Making:**

It involves impulsive decision making which is not based on any extensive deliberation or planning. It is made in response to immediate stimulus.

It is used to assess the style in which individuals make

decisions and was created by Baiocco R, Laghi F, D'Alessio in the year 2009. The scale is especially relevant to the field of adolescent psychology and to explore adolescent behaviour. It helps in identifying the strengths and vulnerabilities in an individual's decision making. The GDMS scale has displayed good reliability, factorial stability and convergent validity.

- Perceived Stress Questionnaire:** The test aims to study an individual's perception of stress and its impact on their mental and physical health. It was developed by Cohen and Williamson (1988) and was published in the book The social psychology of health: Claremont Symposium on applied social psychology. The questionnaire was derived from a large sample of the population in the United States of America. It explores the relationship between perceived stress and health outcomes. The test is designed to categorize subjective stress. It assesses how often an individual is unable to cope with daily demands.

In the questionnaire the participants were asked to rate how they felt or thought a certain way, during the past one month. A quantitative 10 item questionnaire comprising 4 scales was used to interpret subjective responses. (0 - Never, 1 - Almost never, 2 - Sometimes, 3 - Fairly often, 4 - Often)

Procedure

The procedure of this research begins with the identification of participants who are pursuing either senior year of high school or undergraduate in universities with an age range of 17-22 years. Google forms were distributed through social media platforms such as Whatsapp and Instagram for filling out the questionnaire. The Google forms contained two standardized questionnaires. The duration of the survey was approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

The participants were well informed about the purpose and nature of the study and were required to be honest in their responses. Informed consent was provided at the beginning. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were maintained.

Statistical Tools Used

The framework of research design used in this study is quantitative and a combination of cross-sectional and correlational research design is used. The estimated sample size for this study is taken as 250 for proper interpretation of data. Decision making styles among teenagers Questionnaire which consists of 25 questions which quantitatively measures 5 decision making styles such as Rational decision making, Intuitive decision making, Dependent, Avoidant decision making and Spontaneous decision making and Perceived stress questionnaire which consists of 10 questions were the two instruments used to elicit the information from the participants. Under Inferential statistics, two statistical tools such as Pearson correlation and independent sample t-test will be employed. Pearson correlation will be used to identify the presence or absence of a significant relationship between distress and decision-making. Independent sample t-test will be used to test the significant difference among genders between the two variables and if there is any significant difference with respect to the relationship status of adults.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Shows the correlation between decision making and Perceived stress (Distress)

		Decision making	Perceived stress
Decision making	Pearson's r	-	
	df	-	
	p-value	-	
Perceived stress	Pearson's r	0.226***	-
	df	198	-
	p-value	<.001	-

p value is 0.226 which is greater than 0.001 and it indicates weak positive correlation

From the above table it is observed that, there is a positive correlation between decision making and perceived stress (Distress), Hence the hypothesis "There will be a positive relationship between distress and styles of decision making" is retained.

Table 2: Shows the results of independent t-test between genders

	Statistic	df	p
Decision making	0.587	198	0.558
Perceived stress	-1.819	198	0.070

p value is 0.558 and 0.070 which is greater than 0.001 which indicates no significant differences between genders, Hence the hypothesis "There will be a significant difference between distress and styles of decision making among the genders" is rejected.

Table 3: Shows the results of independent t-test between genders with respect to relationship status

	Statistic	df	p
Decision making	-0.0139	198	0.989
Perceived stress	-0.8985	198	0.370

p value is 0.989 and 0.370 which is greater than 0.001 which indicates no significant differences with respect to relationship status, Hence the hypothesis "There is no significant influence of relationship status on distress on styles of decision making among the genders" is retained.

CONCLUSION:

The study analyses the influence of distress on styles of decision-making among young adults and the major findings of the study indicates that there is a positive relationship between distress and styles of decision making among young adults but when compared among genders and with respect to relationship status significant difference doesn't exist.

Limitations:

1. The study focused on young adults with an age range of 17-22 who are residing in only Bangalore and Coimbatore which may not represent individuals from other parts of rural areas or individuals from other cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.
2. It is also limited to only school/college students who are currently enrolled in an educational institution or pursuing a drop year for professional courses. Students pursuing diploma courses were not included in the course of the study.
3. As purposive sampling technique is being employed there are chances of biased findings.
4. As the study involves sensitive topics on distress and decision-making, such as relationship status, participants might provide socially desirable answers to prevent social stigma in the Indian society.

Implications:

1. Some more Psychological variables could be added to find out the correlation between variables
2. Mixed method can be approached.
3. Intervention could be provided for improving the decision-making styles among young adults.

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