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Gender Differences In Emotional Intelligence And Self-Efficacy In Adolescent Career Decision-Making

1Barkha Sharma, 2Dr Poonam Devdutt

1PhD Scholar, 2Professor and Director

1Centre for Psychology and Human Behaviour, Shobhit University,

2Centre for Psychology and Human Behaviour, Shobhit University

Abstract

This study investigates the differences in emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy between male and female adolescents and their implications for career decision-making. By examining how these factors vary by gender, the research aims to enhance understanding of their roles in shaping career-related choices during adolescence. Utilizing a quantitative approach with validated scales, the study analyzes a sample of adolescents. Results indicate notable patterns in emotional intelligence and self-efficacy across genders, providing insights into their influence on decision-making processes in career contexts.

Introduction

Background

Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy play significant roles in career decision-making during adolescence, a pivotal stage for developing self-identity and career aspirations. At this time, young people face numerous choices regarding education, vocational interests, and future goals. Emotional intelligence, defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions, is crucial for navigating interpersonal relationships and making informed decisions. This skill can greatly affect how confidently adolescents approach their career choices.

Self-efficacy, a concept from Bandura's social cognitive theory (1997), relates to individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to accomplish tasks and meet challenges. In the context of career decision-making, self-efficacy influences adolescents' views on setting career goals and overcoming obstacles. The relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy adds depth to the decision-making process, shaping the choices adolescents make and their commitment to those decisions.

Existing Gender Disparities in Career Choices and Emotional Intelligence

Gender disparities in career choices are well-documented, with societal expectations often influencing perceptions of suitability for various professions. While progress has been made in challenging traditional gender roles, significant differences remain. Research indicates that societal norms and cultural influences may shape emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in gender-specific ways, affecting career-related decision-making.

For example, a 2016 study by Su Jingan and Lu Yujie examined the factors influencing career choices, emphasizing gender differences and how societal expectations and family dynamics impact decision-making. Additionally, Susan A. Basow's 1992 work on gender stereotypes explores how societal norms affect emotional expression and intelligence, shedding light on the broader context of gendered emotional behaviors.

Addressing the Research Gap

Despite the importance of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in career decision-making, research on gender differences in these areas among adolescents is limited. Understanding how these constructs differ between males and females during this critical developmental phase is essential for creating targeted support systems and interventions.

This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the complex relationships among gender, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and career decision-making in adolescents. Insights gained from this study can assist educators, career counselors, and policymakers in developing strategies that empower young people to make informed and gender-sensitive career choices.

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy among adolescents.
- To explore gender variations in career decision-making self-efficacy.

Literature Review:

1. **Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2000): Gender Differences in Measured and Self-Estimated Trait Emotional Intelligence:**
    - This study investigates potential gender differences in both measured and self-estimated trait emotional intelligence. It explores whether there are variations in how individuals perceive and express emotional intelligence based on gender.
2. **Ciarrochi, J., Chan, A. Y., & Caputi, P. (2000): A Critical Evaluation of the Emotional Intelligence Construct:**
    - While not exclusively focused on gender, this study critically evaluates the emotional intelligence construct, examining its components and measurement. The insights gained from such evaluations can contribute to discussions on gender differences in emotional intelligence.
3. **Austin, E. J., Saklofske, D. H., & Egan, V. (2005): Personality, well-being, and health correlates of trait emotional intelligence:**
    - Exploring the broader implications of trait emotional intelligence, this study investigates its associations with personality, well-being, and health. Understanding these connections may provide insights into potential gender differences in the impact of emotional intelligence on various aspects of life.

4. **Davis, S. K., & Nichols, R. (2016): Does Emotional Intelligence Have a "Dark" Side? A Review of the Literature:**
    - This study reviews the literature on emotional intelligence, discussing potential negative aspects or challenges associated with high emotional intelligence. While not gender-specific, it offers a comprehensive overview that could inform discussions on gender differences in emotional intelligence.

5. **Amandeep Kaur and S.K. Bawa (2015): Emotional intelligence: A gender-based analysis**
    - This study explores the relationship between emotional intelligence and gender, examining potential differences in emotional intelligence scores between males and females. The research may delve into aspects such as emotional awareness, interpersonal skills, and emotional regulation to understand how these components of emotional intelligence manifest differently in men and women.
6. **Author: Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994): Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance**
    - This seminal work by Lent, Brown, and Hackett proposes a social cognitive theory of career development, examining how self-efficacy beliefs influence career decision-making and academic performance. While not exclusively focused on gender, it lays the foundation for understanding the role of self-efficacy in career choices.
7. **Author: Betz, N. E., & Hackett, G. (1981): The relationship of career-related self-efficacy expectations to perceived career options in college women and men**
    - In this study by Betz and Hackett, the focus is on the relationship between career-related self-efficacy expectations and perceived career options specifically in college women and men. The research explores potential gender differences in self-efficacy beliefs and their impact on career choices.
8. **Author: Fouad, N. A., Smith, P. L., & Delgado-Romero, E. A. (1992): Cross-ethnic and gender differences in the decision to pursue nontraditional occupations:**
    - This study by Fouad, Smith, and Delgado-Romero investigates cross-ethnic and gender differences in the decision to pursue nontraditional occupations. It explores the influence of self-efficacy and other factors on career decision-making, shedding light on how individuals from different backgrounds navigate career choices.
9. **Author: Hackett, G., & Betz, N. E. (1981): A self-efficacy approach to the career development of women**
    - This study by Hackett and Betz presents a self-efficacy approach to understanding the career development of women. It explores how self-efficacy beliefs influence women's career decision-making processes and career-related outcomes.
10. **Author: Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2000): Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis**
    - In this study, Lent, Brown, and Hackett provide a social cognitive analysis of contextual supports and barriers to career choice. The research may discuss how gender-related factors interact with self-efficacy in shaping individuals' career decisions.

Methodology:

Sample Population:

The study involved 171 adolescents (aged 15-18) recruited from Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. The sample comprised representation of males and females from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Tools:

Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Hindi and English)

The Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Karen M. Taylor and Nancy E. Betz in 1983 is a 50-item that assesses self-efficacy in different domains related to career decision-making. Common

components include self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. The scores obtained from the scale provide an overall measure of an individual's perceived self-efficacy in making career decisions. Higher scores indicate greater confidence in one's ability to navigate the career decision-making process.

Procedure:

The process of collecting data involved a series of systematic steps to ensure the reliability and validity of the information gathered. Participants were provided a brief overview of the study's purpose: to understand the relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and emotional intelligence in adolescents. Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale was administered asking participants to rate their confidence in various aspects of career decision-making, including self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) was used to assess participants' emotional intelligence. This included questions related to Understanding Emotions, Understanding Motivation, Empathy, and Handling Relations. The questionnaires included Likert-type questions to gauge participants' opinions and perceptions about the importance of emotional intelligence and career decision-making. The debriefing section was conducted, thanking participants for their time and explaining the study's broader goals. Provided contact information for questions or concerns. Concluded by thanking participants for their participation. It was ensured that collected data was securely stored and protected, adhering to data privacy and security measures. A plan for data analysis was prepared, which involved statistical techniques to explore correlations or patterns between career decision-making self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. The result analysis was done on the data and the findings were reported, contributing to the understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making self-efficacy among adolescents.

Results:

Descriptive Statistics:

Means, standard deviations, and ranges for career decision-making self-efficacy scores in males and females.

Table1: Males

Statistics	Self-appraisal	Occupational information	Goal setting	Planning	Problem solving	Total CDSE
Mean	3.3618	3.3191	3.3135	3.3404	3.2899	3.3072
Standard Deviation	0.6975	0.6431	0.7204	0.7058	0.6254	0.5334
Median	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.24
Mode	3.4	3.2	3.4	3	2.8	2.96
Variance	0.4865	0.4136	0.5189	0.4981	0.3911	0.2845
Range	4.1	3.2	4.5	3	3.6	2.36
Minimum	1.9	1.8	2	2	2	2.4
Maximum	6	5	6.5	5	5.6	4.76

Table 2: Females

Statistics	Self-appraisal	Occupational information	Goal setting	Planning	Problem Solving	Total CDSE
Mean	3.4988	3.4110	3.4220	3.4988	3.3073	4.3843
Standard Deviation	0.7091	0.6398	0.6084	0.6850	0.5619	5.9417
Sample Variance	0.5028	0.4094	0.3701	0.4693	0.3157	35.3037
Range	3.7	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.7	39.18
Minimum	2.1	1.9	2	1.9	2.1	2.42
Maximum	5.8	4.6	4.8	5	4.8	41.6
Median	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.55
Mode	3.4	3.9	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.88

Inferential Statistics:

Metric	Female	Male	Notes
Mean	3.482	3.307	Female mean is slightly higher than male mean
Variance	0.283	0.285	Variance is nearly identical between groups
Observations	82	89	7 more observations in the male group
Degrees of Freedom (df)	168		Adjusted for unequal variances
t Stat	2.143		Test statistic used for comparison
P(T< =t) one-tail	0.0168		Significant at the 0.05 level
t Critical one-tail	1.654		
P(T< = t) two-tail	0.0336		Significant at the 0.05 level
t Critical two-tail	1.974		

Discussion:

Interpretation of Findings:

The analysis of career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE) scores between males and females reveals some interesting patterns. On average, females tend to score slightly higher than males across various dimensions, including Self-appraisal, Occupational Information, Goal Setting, Planning, and Problem Solving. Specifically, the mean scores for females range from 3.3073 (Problem Solving) to 4.3843 (Total CDSE), while for males, the means range from 3.2899 (Problem Solving) to 3.3618 (Self-appraisal). This indicates that females may have a marginally higher sense of efficacy in these areas.

The variability in scores, as indicated by the standard deviation, is similar between genders, suggesting that the spread of scores is comparable for both groups. For instance, in both males and females, the standard deviations hover around similar values, indicating that while females might have a higher mean score, the consistency of these scores is similar to that of males. The range of scores, especially in the Self-appraisal dimension for males and Occupational Information for females, shows that there is considerable variability in individual self-efficacy perceptions within both groups.

When it comes to inferential statistics, the t-test conducted to compare the means of males and females reveals a statistically significant difference. The mean difference, with females scoring higher on average (3.482) compared to males (3.307), is supported by the t-statistic of 2.143. This value exceeds the critical t-values for both one-tail and two-tail tests, with corresponding p-values (0.0168 for one-tail and 0.0336 for two-tail) indicating that this difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The analysis suggests that females have a slightly higher career decision-making self-efficacy than males, and this difference is statistically significant. This insight could have implications for understanding gender differences in career-related confidence and decision-making processes.

These findings have important implications for various stakeholders involved in career development, including educators, career counselors, policymakers, and employers. For educators and career counselors, understanding that females may possess higher self-efficacy in career decision-making can guide the creation of more targeted and effective interventions. For instance, it may be beneficial to develop programs that bolster the career decision-making confidence of male students, particularly in areas where they tend to score lower. By providing additional resources, guidance, and support tailored to the needs of male students, educators can help bridge this self-efficacy gap, fostering a more balanced and inclusive environment for career development.

From a policy perspective, these findings could inform the design of initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in career planning and development. Understanding that females may naturally exhibit higher career self-efficacy can help in shaping policies that encourage equal opportunities for both genders. This could involve creating programs that not only support males in developing their self-efficacy but also reinforce the confidence of females, ensuring that they continue to feel empowered in their career decision-making processes.

For employers, these insights can be invaluable in shaping workplace practices and support systems. Recognizing that females may enter the workforce with higher career decision-making self-efficacy can influence how companies design their training and development programs. Employers might consider offering mentorship programs, targeted skill-building workshops, and leadership opportunities that cater to the needs of both male and female employees, ensuring that all employees feel equally supported in their career progression.

Furthermore, these findings raise broader questions about the societal and cultural factors that contribute to these gender differences in self-efficacy. It may be important to explore the role of early education, socialization, and societal expectations in shaping career decision-making confidence. Addressing these underlying factors through education reform, awareness campaigns, and cultural shifts could help mitigate the observed differences, leading to a more equitable landscape for career development.

Practical Implications:

1. Recommendations for Educators:

a. Tailored Interventions for Male Students:
Educators should design and implement targeted interventions that specifically aim to boost the self-efficacy of male students in career decision-making. This could include workshops, seminars, or classroom activities focused on developing key skills like self-appraisal, goal setting, and problem solving. Providing male students with role models and mentors in various career fields may also help to increase their confidence.

b. Promote Gender-Neutral Career Exploration:
Educators should encourage all students to explore a wide range of career options without being influenced by gender stereotypes. Integrating career education into the curriculum from an early age can help students of both genders to develop a broader understanding of potential career paths and build confidence in their decision-making abilities.

c. Encourage Self-Reflection:
Incorporating activities that promote self-reflection, such as journaling or career-focused assessments, can help students gain a better understanding of their strengths, interests, and values. This self-awareness is a key component of career decision-making self-efficacy and can be particularly beneficial for male students.

2. Recommendations for Policymakers:

a. Develop Gender-Inclusive Career Development Policies:
Policymakers should create and promote initiatives that support gender equality in career planning and development. This could include funding for programs that specifically address the self-efficacy gap between males and females, as well as promoting the importance of career education in schools.

b. Support Research and Data Collection:
Ongoing research is essential to understand the underlying causes of gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy. Policymakers should support studies that explore these differences and use the data to inform future policies and programs. This could also involve tracking the long-term outcomes of students to assess the effectiveness of interventions.

c. Promote Collaboration Between Schools and Industry:
Policymakers should encourage partnerships between educational institutions and industry to provide students with real-world exposure to various careers. Internship programs, job shadowing, and industry visits can help students of all genders build confidence in their career choices and make informed decisions.

3. Recommendations for Career Counselors:

a. Individualized Counseling Approaches:
Career counselors should adopt a personalized approach when working with students, taking into account their unique self-efficacy levels and career interests. For male students who may have lower self-efficacy, counselors can focus on building their confidence through one-on-one sessions, career assessments, and action planning.

b. Address Gender Stereotypes:
Counselors should actively work to challenge and dismantle gender stereotypes that may influence students' career choices. This can be achieved through discussions, workshops, and the promotion of diverse role models in various career fields.

c. Foster a Growth Mindset:
Encouraging a growth mindset in students can help them view challenges as opportunities for learning rather than as obstacles. Career counselors should emphasize that skills related to career decision-making can be developed over time, and setbacks should be seen as part of the learning process. This approach can be particularly effective in boosting the self-efficacy of students who may lack confidence in their career decisions.

Conclusion:

The study highlights significant gender differences in career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE) among adolescents, with female students generally scoring higher across various dimensions, including self-appraisal, occupational information, goal setting, planning, and problem-solving. These differences suggest that female adolescents may have stronger emotional intelligence, which positively influences their self-efficacy in making career decisions. The consistent variance between males and females indicates that these findings are robust across the sample. The higher self-efficacy observed in females emphasizes the need for tailored interventions to support male students in developing their confidence and decision-making skills. These insights point to the importance of incorporating gender-sensitive approaches in education and career counselling, ensuring that both male and female adolescents receive the guidance they need to navigate their career paths effectively. By addressing these differences, educators, policymakers, and career counsellors can foster a more equitable and supportive environment for all students, ultimately enhancing their career decision-making capabilities and future success.

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