



Choices and Challenges: Assessing the Decision-Making Skills of Secondary School Students in East-Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh.

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Abstract: This research investigates the decision-making skills of secondary school students of East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh were studied in relation to gender, locality, and social category. The sample comprised of 160 secondary school students, randomly selected from 4 schools in East-Siang district. Data was collected with the help of Decision-Making Skill Scale developed by the researcher. Descriptive survey method with statistical analyses like mean, standard deviation, percentage, and t-tests were adopted for the study. The findings suggest that a significant number of students possess a Moderate level of decision-making skills. Furthermore, the study found no significant difference in decision-making skills in relation to Gender, locality, and Social-Category of secondary school students of Arunachal Pradesh. The findings further underline the needs for addressing decision-making skills among adolescents to empower them for success in their academic pursuits, careers, personal lives, and mental well-being. While this study offers valuable insights, further research and interventions may be needed to nurture decision-making skills among students, particularly those in tribal communities. By promoting these critical life skills, we can equip young individuals to navigate the complexities of life with confidence and resilience.

Key Words: Decision Making Skills, Secondary School Students, East-Siang District, Gender, locality, and Social-Category.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The adolescent phase, which typically encompasses secondary school years, represents a period characterized by profound physical, physiological, psychological, and behavioural transformations. (Kapur, 2015). Adolescents are especially vulnerable to negative peer influence, risk-taking behaviours, and uninformed decision-making regarding their actions (Rosenbaum et., al 2018). These choices not only impact their personal development but also hold broader implications for their families and society at large. Adolescents grapple with a multitude of challenges and uncertainties during this transitional period, faced with a diverse array of choices, each carrying its unique characteristics.

The decisions made during adolescence have the potential to shape various facets of a student's future. The quality of life and the ultimate trajectory of their journey are intimately connected to the choices they make. This underscores the critical importance of life skills, which equip individuals with the tools necessary to confront daily challenges with a positive mindset and effectively manage their daily responsibilities. These skills empower young individuals to take proactive measures to safeguard themselves and cultivate not only personal well-being but also positive social relationships.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes decision-making as one of the top 10 fundamental life skills. Research indicates that a significant number of delinquency cases arise during adolescence, primarily due to the phase's exploration of life choices and the forging of individual identities. Consequently, it becomes imperative to impart adolescents with the ability to make informed and responsible decisions. Mastering the skill of responsible decision-making is, therefore, paramount for students as they navigate this transformative phase of life.

As Saaty (2008) aptly emphasizes, decision-making is a fundamental aspect of our lives, applicable at every stage of our journey. Whether we realize it or not, virtually everything we engage in, whether consciously or subconsciously, is the outcome of a decision. The art of making informed decisions is not only vital for achieving external success but also for attaining a profound sense of personal fulfilment.

2. OPERATIONAL TERMS OF THE STUDY:

Decision Making

In the present study, "Decision-Making" is defined as the discourse obtained from the Decision-Making scale developed by the researcher for secondary school students in Arunachal Pradesh.

Secondary School Students

In the present study, "Secondary school students" are defined as those who are currently enrolled in class IX-X at secondary schools in Arunachal Pradesh.

3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

The pressing need to equip young individuals with essential life skills in our rapidly evolving world. As cultures and lifestyles undergo significant changes, today's youth often face heightened demands and stressors. The current education system often emphasizes knowledge-related concepts, overlooking the critical aspects of skill development, attitudes, and values. This gap in education fails to address the complex challenges of modern life.

In response to these evolving needs, this research focuses on life skills, particularly the enhancement of decision-making abilities among secondary school students. Effective life skills can profoundly impact how young people perceive themselves and others, fostering self-confidence and self-esteem. Improved life skills empower individuals to make informed choices that benefit not only themselves but also their communities. They become proactive and capable of effecting positive change.

Furthermore, life skills, such as decision-making, enable individuals to navigate conflicts, manage stress, and refine negotiation skills, enriching their personal and social interactions. These skills also play a pivotal role in promoting mental well-being, motivating individuals to care for themselves and others. Ultimately, this research seeks to shed light on the decision-making skills of secondary school students in the East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, contributing to our understanding of how these skills can enhance their lives and relationships with peers, parents, and teachers.

4. OBJECTIVES:

For the present study following objectives were framed:

- To know the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- To compare the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh in relation to Gender (Male & Female).
- To compare the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh in relation to the Locality (Urban & Rural).
- To compare the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh in relation to the Social-category (Tribal & Non-tribal).

5. HYPOTHESES:

For the present study following hypothesis were framed:

- There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making skills of Male and Female secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making of Urban and Rural secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making of Tribal and Non-tribal secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

6. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The present study is delimited to-

- East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The variables like Decision Making skills, Gender, Locality, Social-category.

7. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impacts of life skills training on adolescents in decision making. Ramesh and Farshad (2004) in his study proved the effectiveness of life skills training in enhancing mental and physical

health, pro-social behaviour, and reducing behavioural and social issues. Smith et al. (2004) observed significant improvements in interpersonal relationships and reductions in violence. Tuttle et al. (2006) inclusion of life skills to students' curricula, enhanced positive promotion and flexibility in teens. Vranda and Rao (2011) noted improved psychosocial competencies, while Puspakumarag (2013) found life skills prevented issues like substance abuse and teenage pregnancies. Roodbari et al. (2013) showed life skills training improved social development and adjustment. Bala et al. (2017) reported that decision-making styles and achievement are closely interconnected, suggesting that student's involvement in decision making positively impact their academic achievement. Moorthi (2018) and Goud & Kumar (2019) asserted that people with decision-making skills are more capable of making well-informed and effective choices in various life areas. Moreover, Abdullah and Rahman (2020) support that decision-making skills and behaviour management go together, namely, better skills lead to management of better behaviour. Majeed (2021) found that, while strong decision-making skills are linked to academic performance, an inverse relationship suggests that exceptional decision-making might not always enhance academic outcomes. According to Blackbaud (2023), learning decision-making skills is vital for developing children's independence, responsibility, and self-confidence. It also fosters resilience and encourages self-exploration. Blackbaud (2023) emphasized that acquiring decision-making skills plays a key role in nurturing children's independence, sense of responsibility, and self-assurance. It also helps build resilience and supports their journey of self-discovery. Finally, Pamaos et al. (2024) established a strong link between decision-making and critical thinking, highlighting the cognitive depth that life skills training can cultivate. These studies collectively draw attention to the importance of life skills training in adolescent development.

8. METHOD

The present study has adopted a descriptive cum survey method. The population consists of all the secondary school students studying in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. The study comprises of 160 secondary school students selected randomly from four different schools within the East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The sample consisted of 57 male and 103 female students, 61 from urban and 99 from rural areas. Besides, there were 96 students from tribal backgrounds and 64 non-tribal.

9. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE:

The data was analysed using appropriate statistical technique like Mean, SD and t-test.

10. RESULT AND INTERPRETATION:

Objective-wise analysis and interpretation have been conducted and are provided below:

Obj1: To know the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Table 1.1 Shows overall Mean, Standard Deviation and no. of Students.

	No. of students	Mean	Std. deviation
Total	160	122.84	7.572

Table 1.2 Level of secondary school Student's on Decision-Making skills.

Level of Decision-making skill	No. of secondary school Students	Percentage
High Decision-making skill.	22	13.75%
Moderate Decision-making skill.	118	73.75%
Low Decision-making skill.	20	12.5%
Total	160	100%

Note: The data was gathered through field visit carried out in the year 2022 by the researcher.

Table 1.2 above illustrates that (13.75%) of secondary students displayed high decision-making skills. The majority of secondary school students (73.75%) exhibited moderate decision-making skills, while a smaller portion (12.5%) demonstrated low decision-making skills.

Obj2: To compare the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in relation to Gender.

Table 1.3 Showing N, Mean, SD, SEd, 't' value and significance level of Decision-Making skills score among secondary school students in relation to Gender.

Gender	No. of students.	Mean	SD	df	SEd	Cal 't' value	Remarks
Male	57	122.37	7.43	158	1.25	0.59	Not sig
Female	103	123.11	7.85				

Note: The data was gathered through field visit carried out in the year 2022 by the researcher, SD= standard deviation, df=Degree of freedom, SEd= standard error of difference.

The data presented in Table 1.3 reveals that the calculated 't' value (0.59) falls below the critical 't' value at the 0.05 significance level (1.96). Consequently, the null hypothesis, which posits that "*There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making skills of Male and Female secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.*" is **accepted**.

The results also indicate that the mean score for Decision-Making skills among female secondary students (123.11) is slightly higher than that of male secondary students (122.37). This difference in decision-making skills may be attributed to parenting styles. In many cases, sons are encouraged to develop greater autonomy, while daughters are encouraged to foster empathy and consider multiple perspectives (Lytton & Romney, 1991). These differences in upbringing can lead to variations in decision-making styles, with males often making quicker and more efficient decisions, while females may take more time to explore potential outcomes in greater depth and place greater emphasis on their emotions in the decision-making process (Reiter, 2013).

Obj3- To compare the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in relation to Locality.

Table 1.4 Showing N, Mean, SD, SeD, 't' value and significance level of Decision-Making skills score among secondary school students in relation to Locality.

Locality	No. of students.	Mean	SD	df	SEd	Cal 't' value	Remarks
Urban	61	122.10	7.63	158	1.22	1.59	Not sig
Rural	99	124.05	7.37				

Note: The data was gathered through field visit carried out in the year 2022 by the researcher, SD= standard deviation, df=Degree of freedom, SEd= standard error of difference.

The data presented in Table 1.4 indicates that the calculated 't' value (1.59) is less than the critical 't' value at the 0.05 significance level (1.96). As a result, the null hypothesis, which posits that "*There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making of Rural and Urban secondary school students East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.*" is **accepted**.

Furthermore, the results suggest that the mean score for Decision-Making skills among rural secondary students (124.05) is higher than that of urban secondary students (122.10). This discrepancy in decision-making skills may be attributed to differences in life experiences. Rural students often grow up in environments where they are required to make more independent and practical decisions, particularly those related to farming, agriculture, or outdoor activities. These experiences can contribute to the development of decision-making skills in specific domains. Additionally, rural areas typically have a strong sense of community and close-knit social networks, which can foster more collaborative Decision-Making processes. In such settings, individuals may seek advice and support from their community members before making significant choices.

Obj4: To compare the Decision-Making skills of secondary school students in relation to Social- category.

Table 1.5 Showing N, Mean, SD, SeD, 't' value and significance level of Decision-Making skills score among secondary school students in relation to Social-category.

Social-category	No. of students	Mean	SD	df	SEd	Cal 't' value	Remarks
Tribal	96	122.69	7.41	158	1.23	0.31	Not sig
Non-tribal	64	123.08	7.85				

Note: The data was gathered through field visit carried out in the year 2022 by the researcher, SD= standard deviation, df=Degree of freedom, SEd= standard error of difference.

The findings presented in Table 1.5 indicate that the calculated 't' value (0.31) is less than the critical 't' value at the 0.05 significance level (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which posits that "There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making of Tribal and Non-tribal secondary school students East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh." is **accepted**.

Furthermore, the results reveal that the mean score for Decision-Making skills among non-tribal secondary students (123.08) is higher than that of tribal secondary students (122.69). This observed difference in mean score of decision-making skills between tribal and non-tribal secondary students may be attributed to socioeconomic factors and geographical isolation. Tribal societies often experience economic disadvantages and geographical isolation, which may limit their exposure to diverse alternatives and opportunities, leading to a lack of knowledge and information. This, in turn, can result in a fear of failure and lower self-confidence, which can hinder their effectiveness in making sound decisions (Aqueel, 2022).

In contrast, non-tribal students often have more exposure to external competitive environments, which can contribute to the development of strong self-confidence, self-esteem, and social resilience. This exposure encourages them to aspire to achieve more and strive for high accomplishments in their decision-making processes.

11. FINDINGS:

- The majority of secondary school students exhibited moderate decision-making skills.
- There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making skills of Male and Female secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making skills of Urban and Rural areas secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- There is no significant difference between the Decision-Making skills of Tribal and Non tribal secondary school students in East-Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

12. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The outcomes of this study underscore the paramount importance of cultivating decision-making skills as an indispensable life skill for students, emphasizing the role of education in fostering well-informed and sound decisions. A well-rounded education should not merely focus on academic knowledge dissemination; it should also be a platform for imparting core values and essential life skills, in line with the principles outlined in the National Education Policy NEP (2020). The study reveals that a significant number of students possess high and average decision-making skills, though some students exhibit lower proficiency in this area. Additionally, no significant differences were found between male and female students, urban and rural students, or between tribal and non-tribal students. In light of the study findings, it is recommended that efforts should be made to provide life skills training to all students to enhance their decision-making abilities.

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