





## **The relationship between emotional intelligence and decision- making**

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**Abstract.** The present work aimed to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability on a sample of 40 participants, both women and men, aged between 19 and 44 years. The tests used were: The emotional intelligence test developed by Daniel Goleman and adapted by Mihaela Roco and the decision-making ability assessment test from the CAS++ test battery. Questionnaires were completed in person. The sampling technique was one of convenience, thus we selected the people available to participate in the study. According to the obtained results, the hypotheses were not statistically confirmed.

**Keywords.** Emotional intelligence, decision-making.

### **1. Introduction**

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in various aspects of an individual's life, influencing well-being, interpersonal relationships and success in various fields. This construct is relatively new, the first article appearing in 1990. The concept of emotional intelligence was popularized by Daniel Goleman in 1995 in his book entitled *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Decision-making capacity is an aspect of major relevance for the cognitive and behavioral functioning of the person, being involved in daily activities, both in simple and complex decisions.

Decision-making capacity is influenced both by internal factors such as cognitive abilities, previous experiences, personality, values, emotions and affective states, but also by external factors such as the socio-cultural context and environmental constraints. Also, the quality of the decision is determined by factors such as the level of stress, the volume of information available, the time allocated for decision-making, individual cognitive resources, but also social interactions. The decision-making process involves evaluating available options, anticipating outcomes, comparing them, and choosing the best option based on the individual's goals and current circumstances. In psychology and related fields, the study of decision-making ability is important for understanding the mental and behavioral processes



that are involved in decision-making, but also for identifying strategies and interventions that optimize the functioning of this aspect. Next, we aimed to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Emotional Intelligence**

Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as the ability to process emotional information accurately and efficiently, including that information relevant to recognizing, constructing, and regulating one's own and others' emotions.

Reuven Bar-On (2006) uses the phrase social-emotional intelligence, which he defines as a series of interconnected emotional and social competencies, skills and enablers that influence an individual's ability to cope with the demands and pressures of the environment.

Daniel Goleman (1998) believes that emotional intelligence refers to a person's ability to recognize their own feelings as well as those of others, to motivate themselves and to manage their emotions well in relation to themselves and others.

Emotional intelligence as a trait is defined as "a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality" (Petrides et al., 2007 apud Petrides, 2010, p. 137). It describes a person's perceptions of their own emotional world, how well they can understand, manage and use their own emotions and those of others (Petrides et al., 2018).

The development of a theory of emotional intelligence and the tools needed to measure it stems from the fact that traditional instruments used to measure intelligence have failed to measure individual differences in the ability to perceive, process and effectively manage emotions and emotional information (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003).

So, there are several models of emotional intelligence, namely:

1. Salovey and Mayer's model – this was first described in 1997 and is a hierarchical model involving the following branches: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking and decision-making, understanding emotions, and managing emotions in a way that it improves personal growth and social relationships (Salovey et al., 2004).

2. Bar-On's model – according to which emotional intelligence is structured on 5 dimensions, each having a number of components, namely: intrapersonal (aimed at self-awareness and self-expression), interpersonal (aimed at social awareness and interpersonal relationships), adaptability (refers to the manner in which an individual manages change), stress management (refers to the management and regulation of emotions) and general disposition (refers to self-motivation) (Bar-On, 2006).

3. Goleman's model - initially it included twenty-five emotional competencies structured into five dimensions, but later it was restructured into four dimensions and twenty emotional competencies, namely: self-awareness (includes awareness of one's own emotions, correct self-evaluation and confidence self), self-regulation (includes self-control, credibility/transparency, conscientiousness, adaptability, goal orientation, and initiative), social awareness (includes empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation), and social skills (includes leadership, communication, influence, ability of change, conflict management, relationship building, teamwork, collaboration and the ability to guide others) (Goleman, 1998; Boyatzis et al., 2000; Goleman, 2001 apud Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).

There is a large number of studies that empirically measure the effects of emotional



intelligence on quality of life, academic and/or professional success, resistance to stress, health,

quality of interpersonal relationships, etc. These indicate that emotional intelligence plays an essential role in achieving happiness and success in life (Nelis et al., 2009).

Individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence as a trait perceive themselves as satisfied with their own lives, confident, able to manage their emotions, empathetic, flexible, self-motivated (Petrides et al., 2016).

Cognitive intelligence has been seen as stable over time (Zeidner et al., 2009). Goleman (1998) argues that emotional intelligence is not genetically fixed and does not develop only in early childhood. He believes that emotional intelligence is mostly learned and continues to develop as people mature. In general, emotional intelligence increases during childhood as a facet of emotional development (Izard et al., 2007 apud Zeidner et al., 2009). Some studies suggest that age/maturity has no significant effect on emotional intelligence, while other studies suggest that there is a direct relationship between age and the level of emotional intelligence, specifically, the more mature/older the subject, the higher their level of emotional intelligence is (Esnaola et al., 2017).

Studies of male-female differences in emotional intelligence have found that women, on average, are more aware of their emotions, show more empathy, and perform better in interpersonal contexts/relationships. In contrast, men are more confident and optimistic, adapt more easily and cope with stress better. However, some men can be just as empathetic as women, while some women handle stress just as well as men. Regarding the global level of emotional intelligence, there are no differences between women and men (Goleman, 1998).

Some studies suggest that women are more likely to have higher levels of emotional intelligence than men, both professionally and personally. This discrepancy may be due to the instrument used to measure emotional intelligence (Stys & Brown, 2004).

## **2.2. Decision-making**

The decision represents an allocation of resources, including both tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources are quantifiable resources such as time, money, intellectual property. On the other hand, intangible resources are those that are not yet quantifiable, but have the potential to be. A decision must be executed, and for this it is necessary to allocate resources. Without the exhaustion of certain resources one cannot speak of making a decision. Real changes involve changes in resource allocation. Also, decision and execution are two sides of the same coin. Many times in professional meetings it can happen that a problem is discussed repeatedly without leading to a change in that problem. This example supports the idea that the decision must be followed by the investment of resources and its execution. Decision-making capacity refers to selecting the best alternative in order to achieve specific goals within limited resources (Wang, 2010).

In the dictionary of the American Psychological Association, decision making is defined as "the cognitive process of choosing between two or more alternatives, ranging from the easiest (for example: ordering food at a restaurant) to the most complex (for example: choosing a partner). Psychologists have adopted two converging strategies to understand this process: (a) the statistical analysis of multiple decisions involving complex tasks and (b) the experimental manipulation of simple decisions by analyzing the elements that repeat within these decisions" (American Psychological Association, 2015, p. 286).

Decision making is often studied as the result of a careful evaluation of alternative



options regarding the probability and value of the outcomes associated with these options (Van der Pligt, 2001).

Research on decision-making processes has explored two categories of models (Miclea, 1999):

2.2.1. Normative models – these assume that the decision-maker acts rationally, having knowledge of all available possibilities and their consequences, as well as adequate computational and time resources.

2.2.2. Descriptive models – these assume that the decision-maker operates with limited resources, so he builds a simplified mental representation of the options he has to choose from. Within this mental model, the subject acts rationally. Several cognitive factors can influence the evaluation of options, including: cognitive schema, degree of quality of prototypes, memory accessibility of relevant knowledge, anchoring, and rationalization.

The decision-making capacity is one of the fundamental cognitive processes of the human being, which is used in rational, heuristic and intuitive selections in complex situations at work, but also in everyday life. Many problems relevant to the individual involve making a decision under conditions of uncertainty, as well as choosing actions based on observations that are often imperfect, and the final outcome is unknown. While rational thinking is a common aspect of decision making, analytical approaches become irrelevant when the probability of an uncertain situation is not properly calculated in formal models. For this reason, heuristics become a practical method for decision-making in cases of uncertainty (Milkova et al., 2019). According to Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier (2011), heuristics involve effective conscious and unconscious cognitive processes that ignore parts of information. In the classical view, decisions based on heuristics are much more error-prone than "rational" decisions. On the contrary, recent studies demonstrate that in certain cases, heuristics can be more effective (Mousavi & Gigerenzer, 2014).

Simon (1957 apud Milkova et al., 2019) proposes the theory of bounded rationality and states that when individuals make decisions, their rationality is limited by how solvable the problem is, cognitive limitations and the time available to make the decision. Thus, the author states that people tend to use heuristics instead of rational algorithms when making decisions. Thus, they look for a satisfactory alternative rather than the optimal one. The same author states that an organism will choose the first alternative that satisfies its level of aspirations and will not take the time to consider all possible alternatives by estimating the probabilities and utilities for each alternative.

Starting from the theory of bounded rationality, Tversky & Kahneman (1974) propose three judgment heuristics: representativeness, availability, anchoring and regulation. The representativeness heuristic is used when people estimate the probability that an object belongs to a general category or class based on the object's similarity to category members. To understand this heuristic, the following example is given:

“Bob loves art, opera and playing chess with his friends. Which of the following is more likely?

A. Bob plays the violin in an orchestra;

B. Bob is a manager.”

A large percentage of people will choose option A because Bob's description matches the stereotype they would associate with classical musicians rather than managers. In fact, option



B is more likely since managers constitute a larger proportion of the population (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

The availability heuristic is used when people judge the frequency or probability of an event based on how easily specific examples or instances of that event come to mind. In other words, people tend to consider situations that are more easily accessible in memory to be more likely to occur than those that are more difficult to access from memory. For example, if a person hears more news about airplane accidents from the media, he will think that they are more frequent than road accidents even if the statistics show the opposite (*ibidem*).

The latter heuristic is used in numerical predictions when people make decisions based on an anchor—an initial value that acts as a starting point and affects the final decision. Thus, different starting points generate different estimates. For example, suppose a person is asked how much they think a laptop would cost. If the first time he purchased a laptop was many years ago and he paid about 1000 lei, this could become an anchor for that person. Thus, even though modern laptops can be priced much lower or higher, the individual may be tempted to base their estimate on that initial price. This could influence the evaluation and prevent the person from making an accurate estimate of the price of a laptop today (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

Therefore, in Tversky & Kahneman's (1974) experiments, people making decisions under conditions of uncertainty rely on a small number of heuristics that simplify the complex tasks of probability assessment and prediction. They also state that cognitive biases have practical implications in areas such as clinical judgment, entrepreneurship, finance and management, etc.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Objectives**

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability. The secondary objective is as follows:

1. To identify significant differences in decision-making ability based on gender.

#### **3.2. Hypotheses**

Based on the objectives outlined above, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that significant differences in decision-making ability exist between genders.

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability.

#### **3.3. Participants**

The sample consists of 40 participants, both women (19 participants – 47.5%), and men (21 participants – 52.5%), aged between 19 and 44 years. Among them, 27 participants out of the 41 come from the urban environment and 13 participants out of the 40 come from the rural environment. A total of 34 participants out of 40 are currently working, while only 6 participants are not working. Among the 40 participants, 9 have high school education, 24 have university education and 7 have postgraduate education. The sampling method we opted for was the non-probabilistic one, namely: convenience



sampling, through which we selected the available participants, who volunteered to contribute to the realization of this work. Participants took part in the research without receiving any benefit..

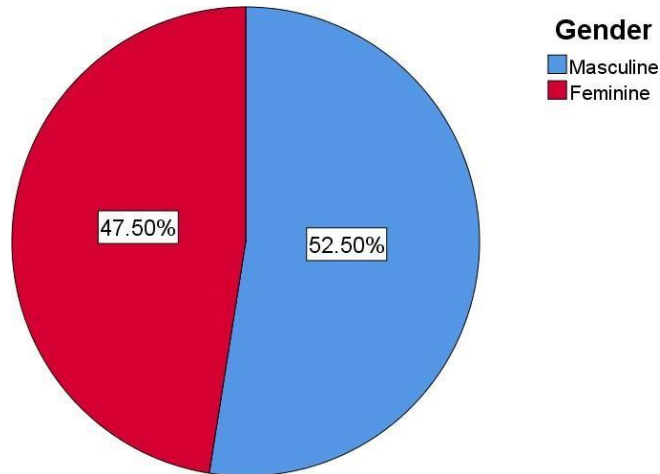


Figure 1. Distribution of participants by gender

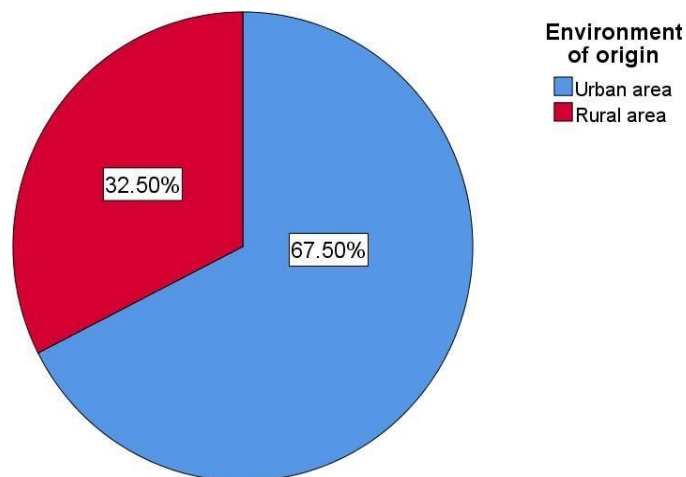


Figure 2. Distribution of participants according to the environment of origins

### 3.4. Instruments used:

To assess emotional intelligence and decision-making ability, the following tests were

1.The emotional intelligence test developed by Daniel Goleman, author of the book *\*Emotional Intelligence\** (1995). This test, adapted by Mihaela Roco, consists of 10 questions that describe various situations a person might encounter. The purpose of the test is twofold:





first, to encourage the individual to mentally place themselves in the described situation as closely as possible, and second, to choose one of four available response options, each representing different potential reactions to the scenario presented.

The decision-making ability assessment test from the CAS++ test battery (Miclea et al., 2009). This test is designed to measure the rationality of the decision-maker, as well as their level of indecision. It consists of 14 items that describe decision-making scenarios and offer a set of alternative responses. Participants are required to choose from these options. The test is structured as a multiple-choice format, with a time limit of 7 minutes for completion.

### **3.5. Research design**

Questionnaires were completed in person between March 15 and March 30, 2024. The research complies with international ethical recommendations regarding the absolute confidentiality of the data collected in the study, as well as the anonymity and safety of the participants. No identifying information, such as names, phone numbers, or email addresses, was collected, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Participants completed the three sections of questions from the instruments used. Responses were recorded in a locally saved database and the information was strictly confidential. The statistical processing of the data took place between March 31 and April 5, 2024, and the results will be used for scientific purposes only.

### **3.6. Ethical requirements**

In carrying out the research, ethical principles were taken into account. The principle of informing and obtaining consent for each study participant was respected. Participants were informed about the research, the time required, the methods and procedures used, as well as the fact that the decision to participate is voluntary and they can withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences. Also, the Principle of confidentiality and professional secrecy was respected by the fact that the name of the participants was not requested, but a unique code consisting of letters and numbers: two letters representing the initials of the name and the first name and the last two digits of the year of birth.

### **3.7. Results and discussion**

Through the statistical processing of the data, the following results were obtained:

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that significant differences in decision-making ability exist between genders.

According to the first hypothesis, a comparison was made to investigate differences in decision-making capacity according to gender.





Table 1. Descriptives

Descriptives					
Decision making	Gender		Statistic	Std. Error	
	Decision making	Masculine	Mean		4.52
95% Confidence Interval for Mean			Lower Bound	3.42	
			Upper Bound	5.63	
5% Trimmed Mean			4.42		
Median			4.00		
Variance			5.862		
Std. Deviation			2,421		
Minimum			0		
Maximum			11		
Range			11		
Interquartile Range			4		
Skewness			.715	.501	
Kurtosis			1.349	.487	
Feminine		Mean		5.05	.487
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.03	
			Upper Bound	6.07	
		5% Trimmed Mean		5.00	
		Median		5.00	
		Variance		4.497	
		Std. Deviation		2.121	
	Minimum		2		
	Maximum		9		
	Range		7		
Interquartile Range		2			
Skewness		.275	.524		
Kurtosis		-.677	1.014		

As it can be seen in the table above, the average of the scores obtained by the male person for the decision-making capacity variable has the value of 4,52, with the standard deviation of 2,421 and the median of 4. The average of the scores obtained by the female persons for the decision-making capacity has a value of 5,05, with a standard deviation of 2,121 and a median of 5.

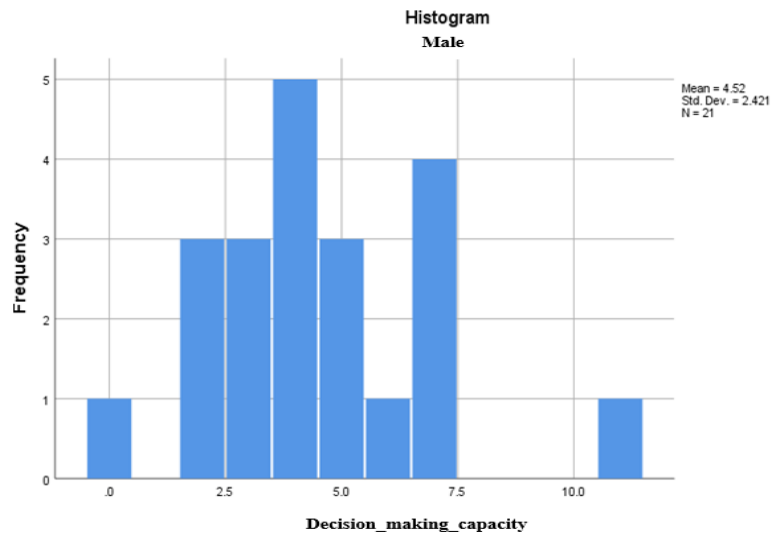


Figure 3. Distribution of scores for the decision-making capacity of men

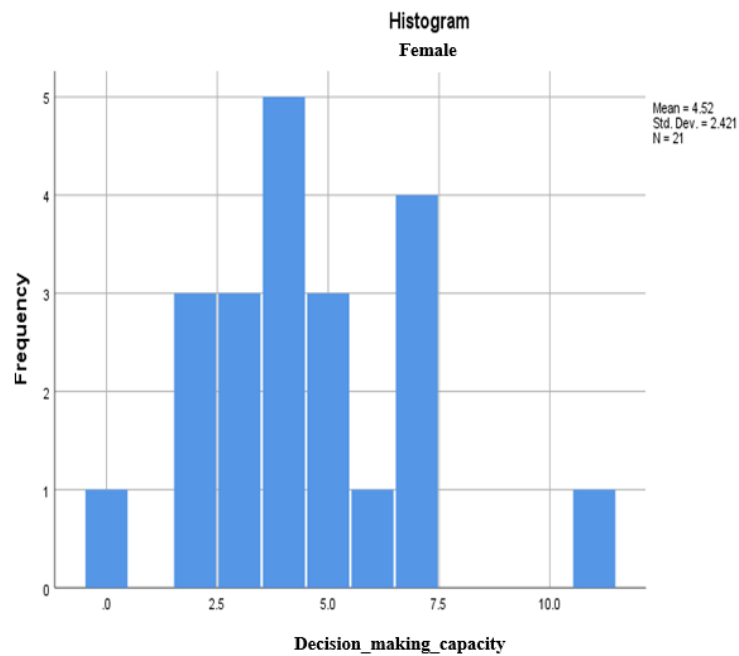


Figure 4. Distribution of scores for the decision-making capacity (women)

To calculate the normality of the score distribution we applied the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.



Table 2. Calculation of the normality of the distribution of scores – the decision-making

Tests of Normality							
Decision-making	Gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Decision - making	Masculine	.157	21	.191	.943	21	.251
Decision - making	Feminine	.141	19	.200*	.935	19	.213

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.  
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As can be seen in table 2, the significance coefficient Sig. for the decision-making ability for men is .191, which is greater than 0.05, which means that the distribution of scores is normal. Significance coefficient Sig. for the decision-making ability variable for women is .200, which is greater than 0.05, which means that normality is respected. In this case, we will apply a parametric method, namely: the t-test for independent samples.

Table 3. The t-test for independent samples – the decision-making capacity

Independent Sample Test										
	Decision-making	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	Decision-making	.183	.671	-.731	38	.469	-.529	.723	-1.993	.935
				-.736	37.966	.466	-.529	.718	-1.983	.925
Equal variance not assumed										

The obtained results indicate that in the Levene homogeneity test, the significance coefficient Sig. is .671, which means that the distribution of scores is homogeneous. Also, on the first line of the table at the t-test, the Sig (2-tailed) coefficient of significance is .469, which is greater than 0.05 and indicates that there are no significant differences between women and men in terms of cognitive ability .



The lack of a significant difference between women and men in terms of decision-making ability could be due to the promotion of gender equality today. Men and women have the same professional and educational opportunities, so the influence of these factors on the development of decision-making capacity is similar for both sexes.

Another explanation could be that gender is not a relevant factor in determining differences in decision-making ability. It is possible that other factors are decisive in this regard, such as the environment or the age group to which the person belongs.

The literature presents mixed findings on this topic. According to Byrne and Worthy (2016), differences exist between the sexes in decision-making. Women tend to process information more holistically, incorporating all available information from the environment, even if it leads to disadvantageous decisions. In contrast, men tend to process information selectively, focusing on specific details that benefit their decisions. However, Weller et al. (2018) suggest that there are no significant differences between men and women in overall decision-making ability, though there are variations within the sub-components of this concept. These variations may cancel each other out, resulting in no global differences.

Thus, the current findings are only partially supported by the literature. These discrepancies may stem from methodological factors and the different types of measurements used in each study.

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability.

According to the second hypothesis, a correlation was made between the level of emotional intelligence and decision-making ability.

Table 4. Descriptives

<b>Descriptives</b>				
		Statistic	Std. Error	
Emotional intelligence	Mean	77.25	4.308	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	68.54	
		Upper Bound	85.96	
	5% Trimmed Mean	77.92		
	Median	85.00		
	Variance	742.244		
	Std. Deviation	27.244		
	Minimum	20		
	Maximum	125		
	Range	105		
	Interquartile Range	35		
	Skewness	-.525	.374	



	Kurtosis		-.197	.733
Decision-making	Mean		4.78	.359
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.05	
		Upper Bound	5.50	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.69	
	Median		4.50	
	Variance		5.153	
	Std. Deviation		2.270	
	Minimum		0	
	Maximum		11	
	Range		11	
	Interquartile Range		3	
	Skewness		.473	.374
	Kurtosis		.325	.733

As can be seen in the table above, the average score obtained for the emotional intelligence variable has a value of 77.25, with a standard deviation of 27.244 and a median of 85. The average score obtained for the decision-making capacity variable has a value of 4.78, with a standard deviation of 2.270 and the median of 4.50.

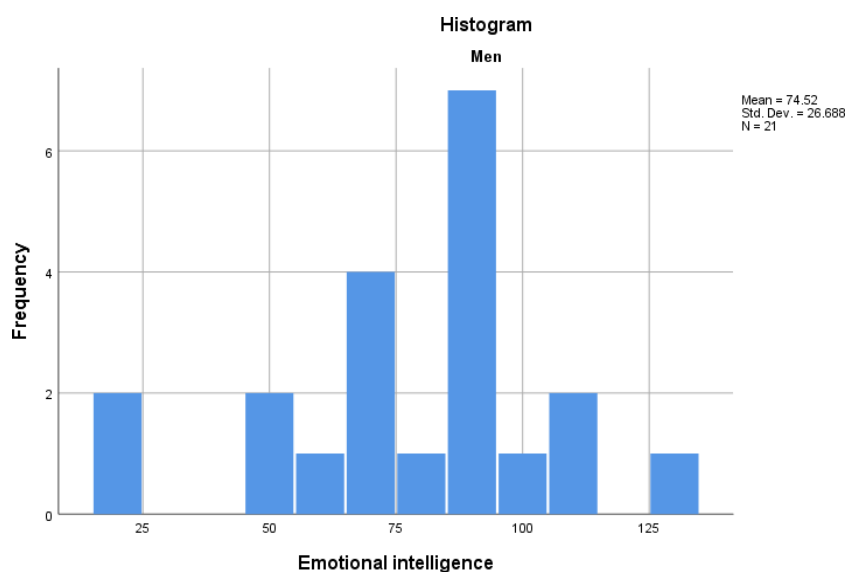


Figure 5. Distribution of scores for the emotional intelligence variable

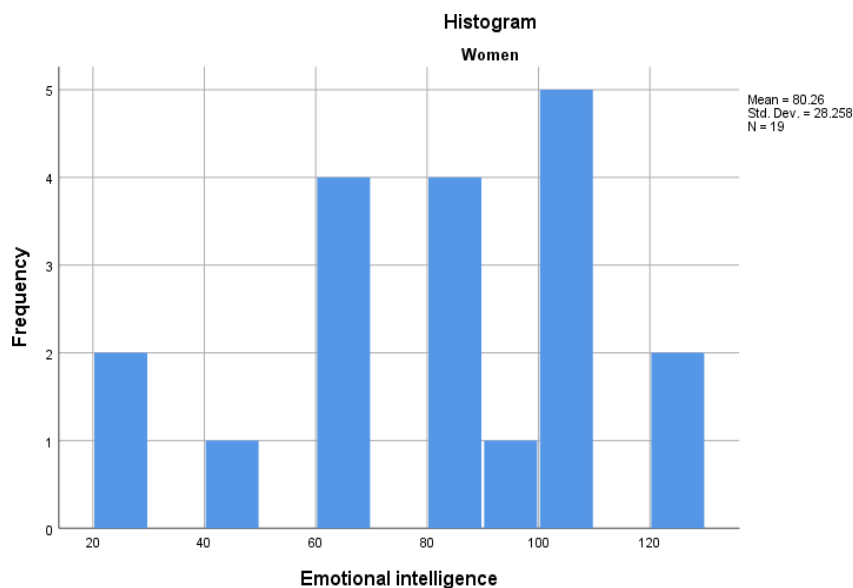


Figure 6. Distribution of scores for the decision-making capacity variable

To calculate the normality of the score distribution we applied the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 5. Calculation of the normality of the distribution of scores – the variables emotional intelligence and decision-making ability

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Emotional intelligence	.162	40	.010	.942	40	.041
Decision-making	.136	40	.062	.965	40	.244

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As can be seen in table 5, the significance coefficient Sig. for the variable emotional intelligence is .010, which is less than 0.05, which means that the distribution of scores is non-normal. Significance coefficient Sig. for the decision-making ability variable is .062, which is greater than 0.05, which means that normality is respected. In this case, we will use a non-parametric correlation method.



Table 6. The result of the correlation between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability

Correlations				
			Emotional intelligence	Decisional making capacity
Spearman's rho	Emotional intelligence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.031
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.848
		N	40	40
	Decision-making	Correlation Coefficient	.031	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.848	.
		N	40	40

As can be seen in Table 6, the Spearman correlation coefficient value is .031, which indicates that there is no significant correlation between the two variables. This indicates that the hypothesis was not statistically confirmed, as illustrated in Figure 7.

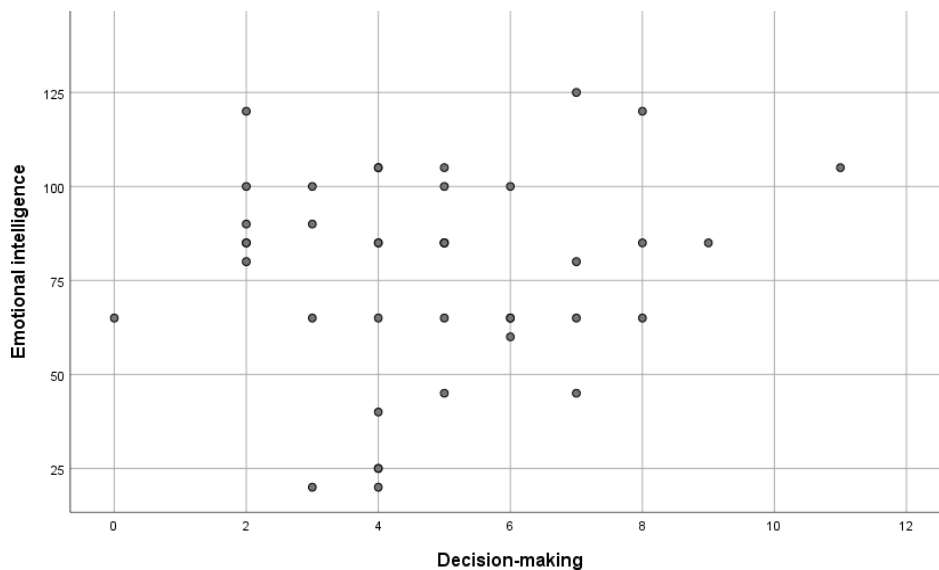


Figure 7. The cloud of points – the variables emotional intelligence and decision-making ability





The lack of a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability may be due to several reasons. Thus, a possible explanation could be represented by the testing methods of the two variables. Emotional intelligence and decision-making ability are complex concepts that cannot be easily quantified objectively, and the measurement tools used may not adequately capture these concepts, which may lead to a lack of significant correlation.

Another explanation for the results obtained could be the sample size and the sampling technique used. The group of participants is one of small proportions, and the sampling technique was one of convenience, so we cannot generalize the results to the entire population, they are only valid for the experimental sample.

Given that emotional intelligence is a complex construct comprising multiple components, it is possible that some of these are more relevant to decision-making than others.

Capacitatea decizională poate fi influențată și de alți factori, precum educația, contextul cultural și experiența anterioară.

Although we did not obtain a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability, in the specialized literature it is mentioned that there is a relationship between the two variables. Individuals' emotional states, in general, influence decision-making, concentration and memorization (LeBlanc et al., 2015 apud Beling & Wild, 2024). The functions of emotions include: regulating behavior, organizing activity, and influencing cognitive processing (Zeidner et al., 2009). Fallon et al. (2014) conducted a study on the impact of emotional intelligence, cognitive ability and information seeking on decision-making ability. The results obtained indicate that higher levels of emotional intelligence improve tactical decision-making for safety and time sensitivity. They also concluded that an important factor in decision making is information seeking, and both emotional intelligence and cognitive ability predicted greater seeking activity, thus highlighting the importance of attention and social awareness in emotional intelligence. In another study, Jiang (2016) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making self-efficacy in a sample of 185 Chinese students. The obtained results indicate that emotional intelligence moderates career decision-making and self-efficacy. In another study, George (2000) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership and concluded that the ability to understand and experience emotions can have positive implications in the decision-making process.

## **Conclusions**

The present work aimed to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability on a sample of 40 participants aged between 19 and 44 years.

The research results indicated that there are no significant differences in decision-making ability according to gender. Also, no significant correlation was found between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability. Among the factors that influenced these results are: the instruments used, the sample size, the complexity of the two concepts, and the influence of other factors such as education, cultural background, and previous experience.

In the specialized literature, it is specified that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making ability.



## Limits

This study is undeniably valuable in illustrating specific aspects of emotional intelligence and decision-making. However, we must point out that our sample has a relative size that could limit the generalizability of the results to the entire population. A larger sample size would be necessary to validate and extend our findings in a larger setting and to ensure a more comprehensive representativeness of human diversity. Thus, we recommend that future research use larger and more varied samples to allow for more robust and valid generalizations.

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