

# Gender as a moderator of relation between emotional intelligence and career development

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of emotional intelligence with career development and the moderating role of gender in the relationship. This study adopted a survey research design. Questionnaires were used to obtain data on emotional intelligence, career development and demographic factors from 485 secondary school students (male=255, female=230) randomly selected from 5 states in southwestern Nigeria. Data analysis included regressing career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity on emotional intelligence and gender. Results indicated that emotional intelligence and gender predicted career development and gender moderated the relationship between emotional intelligence and career development. The implication of the findings is that counseling psychologists should assess the emotional intelligence of the male and female students when conducting career counseling. In addition, the findings suggest that the students need to be exposed to counseling interventions for enhancing their emotional intelligence. This study is able to demonstrate the relationship of emotional intelligence and career development of secondary school students in Nigeria and the first to explore the moderating role of gender in the relationship.

**Key words:** career maturity; career decision-making; emotional intelligence; gender

## 1. Introduction

The role of emotions in the society and particularly in the workplace has generated a lot of interest within the scientific community and the general public in the last few decades. Emotions play significant albeit often misunderstood roles in the career decision-making process (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003). The lack of a coherent theory that explains the role of emotions in career decision-making might have been responsible for the researchers' and practitioners' limited insight into this major aspect of mental life. The seemingly absence of theory and research on emotional processes in the career decision-making literature and general literature on judgment and decision-making, until recently, is surprising given the significant role of affective processes in other subdisciplines within psychology (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003). According to Emmerling and Cherniss (2003), this might be due to an implicit desire to separate the practice of career counseling which focused on interest testing, self-exploration strategies and examination of career resource materials, from the practice of psychotherapy which focused on emotional processes. Although, traditional methods of career counseling are sufficient for some clients, most clients often grapple with more complex issues, such as locus of control, anxiety, identity formation and autonomy which require more complex understanding of how emotions influence career decision-making process. As such, personal and career issues often relate and interact in the career

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decision-making process.

Career choice is a culmination of a series of decisions. Decisions regarding people's values, tasks and activities of interest, levels of aspirations, how their work roles interact with their non-work roles, and what information to seek and how to seek it are important part of the decision-making processes which are likely to be influenced by the emotional makeup. Emotions experienced in the career decision-making process may influence the career options being considered, tolerance for risky career decisions, amount and type of career exploration activities individuals will engage in the choice process, how much effort to invest in the process and how the information related to career choice is processed (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003). Based on the aforementioned influences, it is expected that individual's dissatisfaction with his/her current career choice can motivate the individual to engage in career planning, exploration and decision-making with the aim of finding a more satisfying career. The current increased wave of unemployment, career instability and change and trend toward boundaryless careers or protean careers calls for the ability to use emotions adaptively in the career choice-making process.

Some researchers have reported that emotions or effect played significant roles in career development (Caruso & Wolfe, 2001; Carson, K. & Carson, P., 1998; Kidd, 1998; Young, Valach & Collin, 1996; Young, Paseluiko & Valach, 1997). Similarly, Cooper (1997) argued that those who trust and use their feelings effectively could achieve a more successful career. Although numerous empirical studies on the relationship between EI (emotional intelligence) and career development appear in the literature, relatively little is known about this relationship in developing countries (Caruso & Wolfe, 2001; Carson, K. & Carson, P., 1998; Kidd, 1998). Many elements of the present consensus on the role of emotional intelligence in career development developed from studies of western samples may be directly applicable to developing countries. However, it is likely that differences in macro-environmental factors—namely, socio-cultural and economic situations—may render the commonly accepted notions of the role of emotional intelligence in career development inappropriate in many developing countries (including Nigeria) (Baruch, 2004; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Thomas & Inkson, 2006).

In Nigeria, the tradition or cultural practice is that the family or the parents know the best and as such, they dictate the type of occupation that the children will choose regardless of the children's abilities and interests (Salami, 2007). The reason for parents' decision-making might be that their children should go into well-paid jobs so that family financial problems can be solved. Furthermore, the cultural beliefs and societal expectations are that the females do not need to be too serious about occupational choice. They are expected to go into female gender-role stereotyped lower occupations, where salary levels are relatively low, because they are expected to be helpers to their husbands who are expected to be the breadwinners for the family (Salami, 2001). For this, the females may be less career mature than the males.

Generally, there is lack of career maturity for the Nigerian secondary school students (Salami, 2008). This might be due to perceptions of restrictive post-graduation vocational options. Where to go next after graduating from high school may pose problems. A sense of limited career options may be magnified by lack of meaningful employment options witnessed in contemporary Nigerian economy for there is mass unemployment (Oyebade, 2003). When high school students think of mass unemployment of the graduates, they might not be motivated to take the matter of career decision-making seriously. Instead, they might likely feel frustrated and confused. Given the arguments for the fundamental role of emotion in career decision-making and career development, and the limited research on the role of emotion in the career development process, an investigation of the role of emotion in relation to career decision-making and career maturity is warranted. Specifically, the extent to which emotional intelligence could predict the career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity of secondary school

students was the main focus of this study. The moderating role of gender in the relationship between emotional intelligence and career development was also examined.

### **1.1 Emotional intelligence**

In order to understand the role of emotion in career-related behaviors, researchers have introduced emotional intelligence as an important factor to career success (Goleman, 1995). The construct of emotional intelligence was introduced to the academia and the lay public in the past decade (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as a subpiece of social intelligence that has the capacity to: (1) efficiently handle psychological and social problems; (2) accurately express emotions and correctly assess the emotions of others; (3) self-regulate one's own emotions; and (4) use one's emotions to achieve one's goals.

Proponents of emotional intelligence believed that people with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to incorporate emotional experience into thoughts and actions. To them, the ability to guide one's thinking and actions through the use of emotions would be related to how to feel efficacious when considering career-related actions (Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003). Thus, emotional experience could be used to assist in the career exploration and decision-making process.

Research evidence has shown that emotional intelligence is significantly related to gender. For example, women have been reported to have higher means on some emotional intelligence subscales than men (Schuttle, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dorheim, 1998; Sutarso, T., Baggett, Sutarso, P. & Tapia, 1996; Tapia, 1999). It is more acceptable in most societies for the females to express emotions openly, but this is the contrary for males. However, Bar-On (1997) and Brown, George-Curran and Smith (2003) found that there is no significant differences between males and females in their measures of emotional intelligence. This inconsistency in research results makes it difficult to arrive at definite conclusions as regards the emotional intelligence of men and women.

### **1.2 Career decision-making self-efficacy**

Based on Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, career decision-making self-efficacy is defined as one's confidence in his or her ability to successfully perform career-related tasks (Betz & Taylor, 2000). High career decision-making self-efficacy would allow an individual to willingly engage in such behaviors as self-assessment, career/job exploration, and choosing a career based on this exploration. Low career decision-making self-efficacy would lead a person to avoid these career decision behaviors (Moore, 2003).

Emotional intelligence has been related to career development outcomes and/or career choice (Carson, K. & Carson, P., 1998; Menhart, 1999). Recently, emotional intelligence factors: empathy, utilization of feelings, handling relationships and self-control were found to be positively related to career decision-making self-efficacy (Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003). Similarly, Emmerling and Cherniss (2003) argued that it seems plausible that those higher in emotional intelligence would be able to better manage their emotional responses to the career decision-making process, whereas the opposite may hold true for those lower in emotional intelligence.

On the relationship between gender and career decision-making self-efficacy, empirical evidence showed that no gender differences were found with respect to career decision-making self-efficacy, college major indecision and vocational indecision (Bergeron & Romano, 1994; Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003; Salami, 2001). This suggests that the specific tasks and behaviors necessary for effective career decision-making may not be gender-linked. Conversely, studies by some researchers (Agyropoulou & Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, 2006; Betz & Taylor, 2000) found significant main effect of gender on career decision-making self-efficacy. This inconsistency in research makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the specific patterns of boys and girls when

career decision-making self-efficacy is considered.

According to the gender appropriateness hypothesis (Kerr, Lambert, Stattin & Klackenberg-Larsson, 1994), culturally defined stereotypes of masculinity and femininity set the rules for how boys and girls are expected to behave. In terms of career development tasks (career decision-making, career exploration and information collection) and career choice, there is occupational stereotyping in Nigeria. Certain types of careers are deemed appropriate for boys and others for girls. It is thus expected that some differences would exist between the rate of career maturity and career decision-making process of the female and male adolescents (Salami, 2007). However, gender was not found to moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making self-efficacy by previous researchers (Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003).

### **1.3 Career maturity**

Career maturity is a widely used and valuable construct derived from Super's (1990) developmental career theory. It is broadly defined as the individual's readiness or ability to make informed, age-appropriate career decisions and manage his/her career development tasks (Super, P., Savickas & Super, M., 1996). The development nature of the construct means that the individual's career maturity is relative to his/her life stage and to his/her coping in relation to his/her peers. Crites' (1971) model of career maturity proposed that career maturity consisted of both affective and cognitive dimensions with the cognitive dimension being composed of decision-making skills and the affective dimension being attitudes about the career decision process.

Attitudinal dimensions comprise 2 variables: attitudes toward career planning and attitudes toward career exploration. Planning activities deal with thinking about and preparing for the vocational future. Mature attitudes involve individuals in looking ahead, taking a playful approach, and actively involving themselves in career planning activities. Immature attitudes prevent individuals from looking ahead to their future careers and do not feel the need to acquaint themselves with or relate themselves to occupations. Attitudes toward career exploration address willingness to find and use good resources for career planning. Immature attitudes toward exploration mean the individuals do not use good resources of data in occupational fields (Savickas, Briddick & Watkins, 2002).

Cognitive dimensions deal with decision-making competence and fund of occupational information. Low informational competence indicates that individuals need to learn about types of occupations, work ethics and vocational development tasks. Adequate fund of information means good knowledge of types of occupations and how to obtain and succeed in jobs. Decision-making competence means the ability to apply decision-making principles and methods to solve problems relating to educational and vocational choice. Low competence means the individuals do not know what to consider in making choices. This shows that the individuals are not ready to use the occupational information that they have acquired for career planning. High competence means good knowledge of principles and practice of decision-making (Savickas, Briddick & Watkins, 2002).

Several researchers have identified some correlates of career maturity, e.g., work-role salience (Nevill & Super, 1988; Salami, 2000), self-esteem (Salami, 2003), locus of control (Naidoo, Bowman & Gerstein, 1998), socio-economic status (Watson & Stead, 1990) and gender (Onivehu, 1991). However, there is paucity of empirical studies linking emotional intelligence with career maturity. Some researchers have highlighted the role of emotional intelligence in career development (Caruso & Wolfe, 2001; Kidd, 1998; Young, Paseluiko & Valach, 1997). For example, Young, Paseluiko and Valachi (1997) emphasized that emotional intelligence energizes and motivates action in career exploration and decision-making activities. More recently, emotional intelligence was found to be positively related to career commitment and decision-making process (Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003; Carson, K. & Carson, P., 1998; Cooper, 1997). Given the arguments for the fundamental role of

emotional intelligence and the limited research on the role of emotional intelligence in the career development process, an investigation of the role of emotional intelligence in career maturity is warranted.

On the relationship between gender and career maturity, Punch, Creed and Hyde (2005) found significant relationship between gender and career development knowledge and attitudes of normally hearing and hard-of-hearing adolescents. Being female is associated with higher career development. Contrary to some studies conducted with adolescents which reported significant relationship between gender and career maturity (Patton & Lokan, 2001; Rojewski, Wicklein & Schell, 1995; Salami, 2008), no significant gender differences were found in career maturity of adolescents in studies by other researchers (Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003; Patton, Creed & Spooner-Lane, 2005). Similarly, gender was not found to moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career maturity (Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003). The paucity of empirical studies and inconsistencies of findings in research that related gender with career maturity makes the investigation of the role of gender in career maturity warranted.

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

Based on the previous literature reviewed, which underscored the role of emotions in career development, and given the inconsistencies regarding gender differences in career maturity and the scarcity of empirical studies on emotional intelligence-career development link, the following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- (1) Emotional intelligence will predict career decision-making self-efficacy of secondary school students;
- (2) Gender will predict career decision-making self-efficacy of the secondary school students;
- (3) Gender will moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making self-efficacy of secondary school students;
- (4) Emotional intelligence will predict the career maturity of secondary school students;
- (5) Gender will predict career maturity of secondary school students;
- (6) Gender will moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career maturity of secondary school students.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Research design**

This study adopted a survey research design that utilized an ex post facto research type. Questionnaires were used in collecting data from the respondents.

### **2.2 Participants**

The participants in this study were 485 secondary school (SSII) students (male=255, female=230) randomly selected from 10 secondary schools in 5 states in southwestern Nigeria. Their mean age was 15.80 years old (SD=5.40) and the age range was 13-19 years.

### **2.3 Instruments**

#### **2.3.1 Emotional intelligence**

Emotional intelligence was assessed by means of Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Law, Wong & Song, 2004). It is a 16-item emotional intelligence scale with 4 sections viz.: SEA (self-emotional appraisal, 4 items), OEA (other emotional appraisal, 4 items), UOE (use of emotions, 4 items), and ROE (regulation of emotion, 4 items). Wong and Long Emotional Intelligence Scale adopted a 5-point scale ranging from "1=strongly disagree" to "5=strongly agree". The Cronbach's alpha of the 4 subscales ranged from 0.83 to

0.90. The validity of the scale has been reported by Law, Wong and Song (2004). The internal reliability coefficient for Wong and Long Emotional Intelligence Scale was 0.87 in the current study.

### 2.3.2 Career maturity

Career maturity was measured by means of the Australian short form of the Career Development Inventory (CDI-A(SF)) (Creed & Patton, 2004). The CDI-A(SF) contains 33 items which consist of 4 subscales assessing specific dimensions of career development: career planning, career exploration, knowledge of the world of work and career decision-making skills.

Career planning (CP) comprises 10 items in which participants report on the career planning that they have undertaken and the degree of that engagement. CP uses a 5-point nominal scale A to E reflecting low to high levels of CP (e.g., A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4 and E=5). Career exploration (CE) comprises 8 items on willingness and ability to find and use career resources for planning. CE adopts a 5-point nominal scale A to D reflecting low to high levels of CE (e.g., A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, N=Neutral=1). Scores on CP and CE may be combined to measure CDA (career development attitude). Creed and Patton (2004) reported that satisfactory internal reliability coefficients for the subscales CP ( $\alpha=0.73$ ) and the composite scale CDA ( $\alpha=0.87$ ). For the present study, the composite scale CDA has internal reliability coefficient of 0.86.

WW (World of work) information comprises 8 items which assess knowledge of the career development tasks in the exploratory and the early establishment stages as described by Super (1990). Career decision-making (DM) consists of 7 items and involves participants in solving career-related problems based on verbal sketches of people making career decisions. Scores on WW and DM scales consist of the number of items answered correctly. Scores on WW and DM scales may be summed to measure CDK (career development knowledge). Creed and Patton (2004) reported that satisfactory internal reliability coefficients for the subscales WW ( $\alpha=0.73$ ), DM ( $\alpha=0.70$ ) and the composite scale CDK ( $\alpha=0.82$ ). For the current study, the composite scale CDK has internal reliability coefficient of 0.83.

### 2.3.3 Career decision-making self-efficacy

The CDMSE (career decision-making self-efficacy scale) by Betz and Taylor (2000) was used to measure the students' self-efficacy in the area of career decision-making. The 5 subscales of career decision-making self-efficacy scale were accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, making plans for the future and problem solving. Ten items were written for each of the competency areas resulting in the instrument assessing perceived self-efficacy in 50 tasks. For this study, 25 items were selected at the rate of 5 items for each competency area. The career decision-making self-efficacy scale adopted a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (no confidence) to 5 (complete confidence). Total career decision-making self-efficacy scale score was calculated by summing the ratings for the 25 items with a maximum score of 125. The authors have reported internal consistency reliability coefficients (alpha) ranging from 0.86 to 0.89 for the subscales and 0.93 to 0.97 for total score alpha and a test-retest reliability of 0.83 for total score. Evidence for criterion related and construct validity are good with the most consistent correlate being career indecision (correlations range from  $r=0.29$  to  $r=-0.59$  between career decision-making self-efficacy scale and indecision scale of the career decision scale). For this study, the Cronbach's alpha was  $r=0.94$  for the total career decision-making self-efficacy scale score.

## 2.4 Procedure

The researcher and 4 research assistants who were undergraduate and post-graduate students administered the questionnaires to the participants in various schools. The participants completed the questionnaires anonymously and the purpose of the study was explained to them.

### 2.5 Data analysis

The data collected were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The 4 components of emotional intelligence measure SEA, OEA, UOE and ROE, age, gender and interaction between gender and emotional intelligence served as the independent variables while the CDI-A(SF) total score and career decision-making self-efficacy total score served as the dependent variables. Gender served as the moderator of the relationship between each of the 4 components of emotional intelligence, career decision-making self-efficacy and CDI-A(SF). In the case of a significant interaction effect, the procedure described by Cohen, J. and Cohen, P. (1983) and Aiken and West (1991) was followed to interpret the findings. Predictor variables were all centered before entering the regression analyses.

### 3. Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among all the variables in the study. Pearson product-moment correlation analyses were employed to examine the relations between the four emotional intelligence factors: gender, age, career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. Findings of these analyses revealed that each of the 4 emotional intelligence factors was positively related to career decision-making self-efficacy: self-emotional appraisal,  $r=0.23$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; other emotions appraisal,  $r=0.28$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; use of emotions,  $r=0.32$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; and regulation of emotions,  $r=0.25$ ,  $p<0.05$ . Significant relationships were found between career maturity and each of the emotional intelligence factors viz.: self-emotional appraisal,  $r=0.21$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; other emotional appraisal,  $r=0.19$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; use of emotions,  $r=0.24$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; and regulation of emotions,  $r=0.28$ ,  $p<0.05$ . Gender and age did not have significant relationships with career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. The intercorrelations among the variables ranged from 0.10 to 0.36 indicating the absence of severe multicollinearity.

**Table 1 Means, standard deviation and intercorrelation matrix of gender, age, emotional intelligence components and career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
CDI-A(SF)	1.00							
CDMSE	0.36*	1.00						
SEA	0.21*	0.23*	1.00					
OEA	0.19*	0.28*	0.14	1.00				
UOE	0.24*	0.32*	0.26*	0.16	1.00			
ROE	0.28*	0.25*	0.20*	0.22*	0.17	1.00		
Age	0.17	0.12	0.14	0.09	0.11	0.03	1.00	
Gender	0.11	0.13	0.18	0.10	0.08	0.15	0.14	1.00
Mean	60.52	83.50	52.40	54.60	53.70	56.30	15.80	-
SD	4.56	4.70	3.20	2.83	3.56	2.78	5.40	-

Notes: - =Nil; SD=Standard Deviation; N=460; \* $p<0.05$  (2-tailed test).

#### 3.1 Hypotheses predicting career decision-making self-efficacy

Hypotheses 1-3 examined the prediction of career decision-making self-efficacy from gender, emotional intelligence factors, interaction of gender and emotional intelligence factors and career decision-making

self-efficacy. Table 2 presents the results of the regression analyses relevant to these predictions.

In step 1, gender did not make any significant contribution to career decision-making self-efficacy ( $R^2=0.023$ ,  $F_{(1,483)}=2.00$ ,  $\beta=0.05$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and did not influence career decision-making self-efficacy significantly. This result provides no support for Hypothesis 2.

**Table 2 Summary of hierarchical regression of emotional intelligence, gender and their interactions as predictors of career decision-making**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>change</sub>	F	F <sub>change</sub>	df	$\beta$	t	p
Step 1	0.15	0.023	0.023	2.00	1.50	1.483			
Gender							0.05	0.70	0.65
Step 2	0.46	0.21	0.18	8.34	5.60*	4.479			
Emotional intelligence									
SEA							0.18	2.25*	0.05
OEA							0.24	2.73*	0.05
UOE							0.25	3.84*	0.01
ROE							0.28	5.00*	0.01
Step 3	0.63	0.39	0.18	10.25	7.54*	4.475			
Interaction terms									
SEA x Gender							0.05	1.20	0.45
OEA x Gender							0.20	4.50*	0.01
UOE x Gender							0.18	2.42*	0.05
ROE x Gender							0.09	1.53	0.13

Notes: N=485; \*p<0.05 (2-tailed test).

It was predicted that emotional intelligence would be positively related to career decision-making self-efficacy. The results in step 2 in Table 2 revealed a significant contribution of the emotional intelligence factors to the prediction of career decision-making self-efficacy ( $R^2=0.21$ ,  $R^2_{change}=0.18$ ,  $F_{change(4,479)}=5.60$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) accounting for 21% of the variance in career decision-making self-efficacy. All the 4 emotional intelligence factors: self-emotional appraisal ( $\beta=0.18$ ,  $t=2.25$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), other emotions appraisal ( $\beta=0.24$ ,  $t=2.73$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), use of emotions ( $\beta=0.25$ ,  $t=3.84$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), made significant contributions to the prediction of career decision-making self-efficacy. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

In step 3, it was examined whether gender would moderate the relationship between each emotional intelligence factor and career decision-making self-efficacy. The results revealed that the four interaction terms jointly made significant contributions to the prediction of career decision-making self-efficacy ( $R^2=0.39$ ,  $R^2_{change}=0.18$ ,  $F_{change(4,475)}=7.54$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Among the 4 two-way interactions tested for moderator effects, only other emotions appraisal x gender ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $t=4.50$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and use of emotions ( $\beta=0.18$ ,  $t=2.42$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) were found to make significant contributions to the prediction of career decision-making self-efficacy, providing some support for Hypothesis 3. These results depicted that the strength relationships of emotional intelligence with career decision-making self-efficacy were profoundly different for male and female students. As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, there were stronger positive relationships between career decision-making self-efficacy and each of other emotions' appraisal and use of emotions for the males than it is the case for the females.



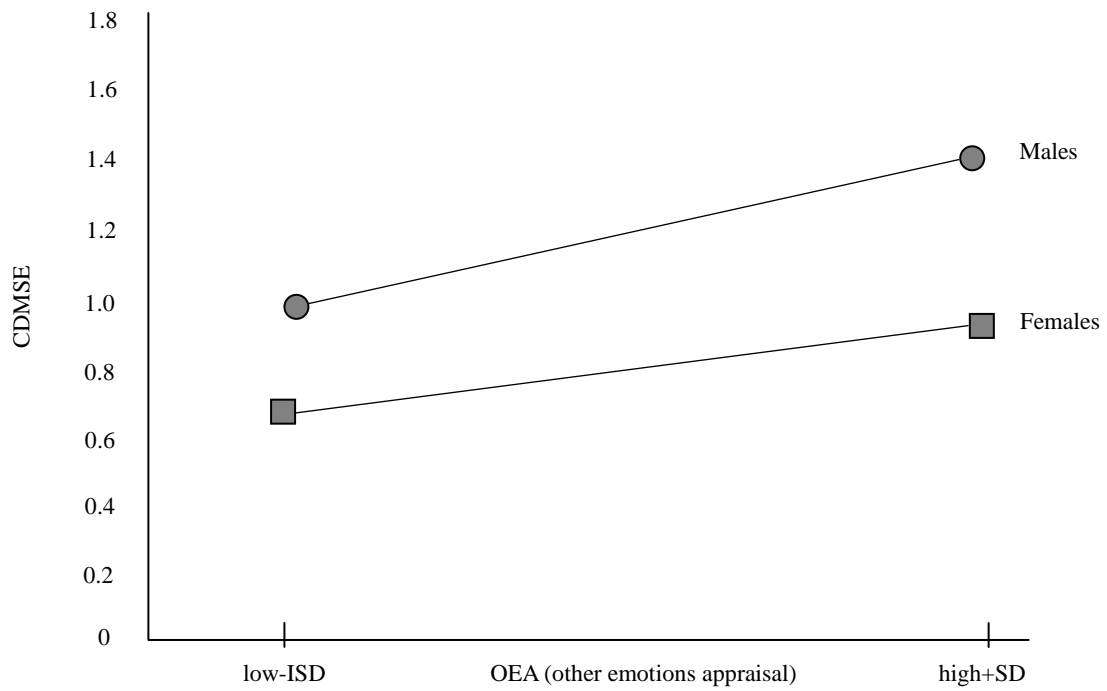


Figure 1 Interaction effect of other emotions appraisal and gender on career decision-making self-efficacy

Note: CDMSE=career decision-making self-efficacy scale.

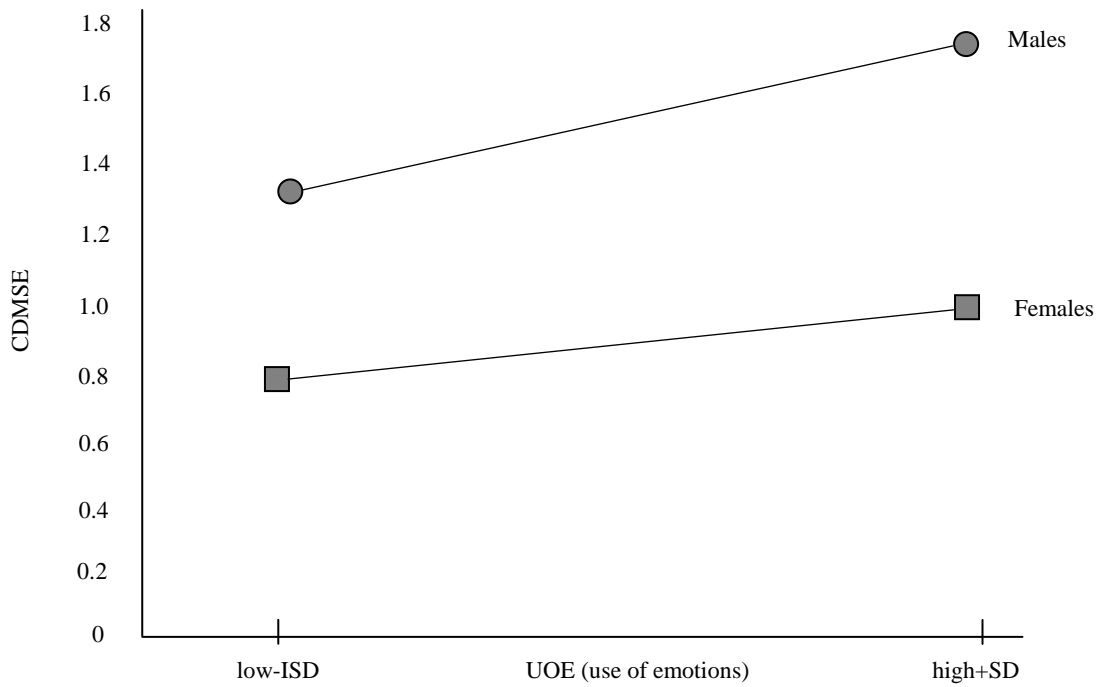


Figure 2 Interaction effect of use of emotions and gender on career decision-making self-efficacy

Note: CDMSE=career decision-making self-efficacy scale.

### 3.2 Hypotheses predicting career maturity

Hypotheses 4-6 examined the prediction of career maturity from gender, emotional intelligence factors and interaction of gender and emotional intelligence factors. Table 3 presents the results of regression analyses relevant to these predictors.

**Table 3 Summary of hierarchical regression of emotional intelligence, gender and their interactions as predictors of career maturity**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>change</sub>	F	F <sub>change</sub>	df	β	t	p
Step 1	0.16	0.026	0.026	2.20	1.20	1.483			
Gender							0.07	0.14	0.98
Step 2	0.42	0.18	0.15	12.73*	5.82	4.479			
Emotional intelligence									
SEA							0.19	2.69*	0.05
OEA							0.23	2.75*	0.05
UOE							0.21	2.60*	0.05
ROE							0.30	4.34*	0.02
Step 3	0.60	0.36	0.18	15.60	6.74*	4.475			
Interaction terms									
SEA x Gender							0.03	0.75	0.50
OEA x Gender							0.11	1.80	0.10
UOE x Gender							0.31	4.38*	0.02
ROE x Gender							0.19	2.77*	0.05

Notes: N=485; \*p<0.05 (2-tailed test).

Hypothesis 4 tested the prediction of career maturity from emotional intelligence factors. Step 2 of the regression analysis shows that all the emotional intelligence factors jointly made significant contribution to the prediction of career maturity ( $R^2=0.18$ ,  $R^2_{change}=0.15$ ,  $F_{change(4,479)}=12.73$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Each of the emotional intelligence factors: self-emotional appraisal ( $\beta=0.19$ ,  $t=2.69$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), other emotions appraisal ( $\beta=0.23$ ,  $t=2.75$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), use of emotions ( $\beta=0.21$ ,  $t=2.60$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and regulation of emotion ( $\beta=0.30$ ,  $t=4.24$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), made separate significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity supporting Hypothesis 4. Contrary to Hypothesis 5, gender did not predict career maturity ( $R^2=0.026$ ,  $F_{change(1,483)}=1.20$ ,  $\beta=0.07$ ,  $t=0.14$ ,  $p>0.05$ , step 1), providing no support for Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that gender would moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence factors and career maturity. Results in step 3 indicated that among the 4 two-way interactions, only use of emotions x gender ( $\beta=0.31$ ,  $t=4.38$ ,  $p<0.02$ ) and regulations of emotions x gender ( $\beta=0.19$ ,  $t=2.77$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity. Hypothesis 6 was partially supported. These findings depicted that the strength of relationships of emotional intelligence with career maturity were markedly different for male and female students. As shown in Figure 3, for the females, there was a stronger positive relation between use of emotions and career maturity than it is for the males. Figure 4 demonstrates that for the males, there was a greater positive relationship between regulation of emotions and career maturity than it is for the females.

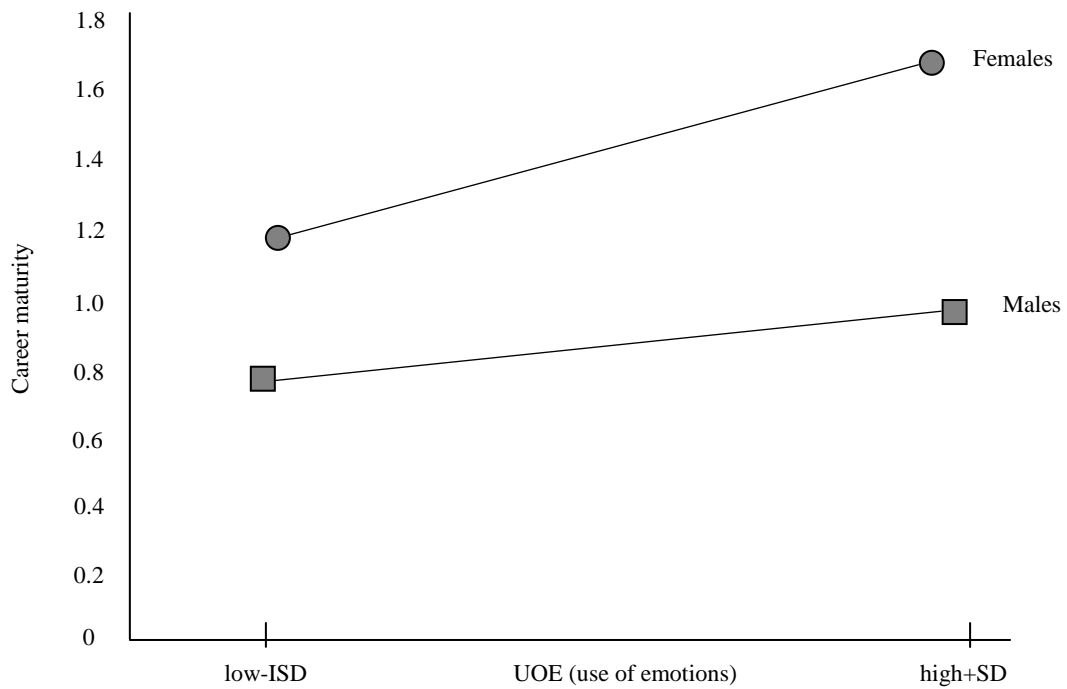


Figure 3 Interaction effect of use of emotions and gender on career maturity

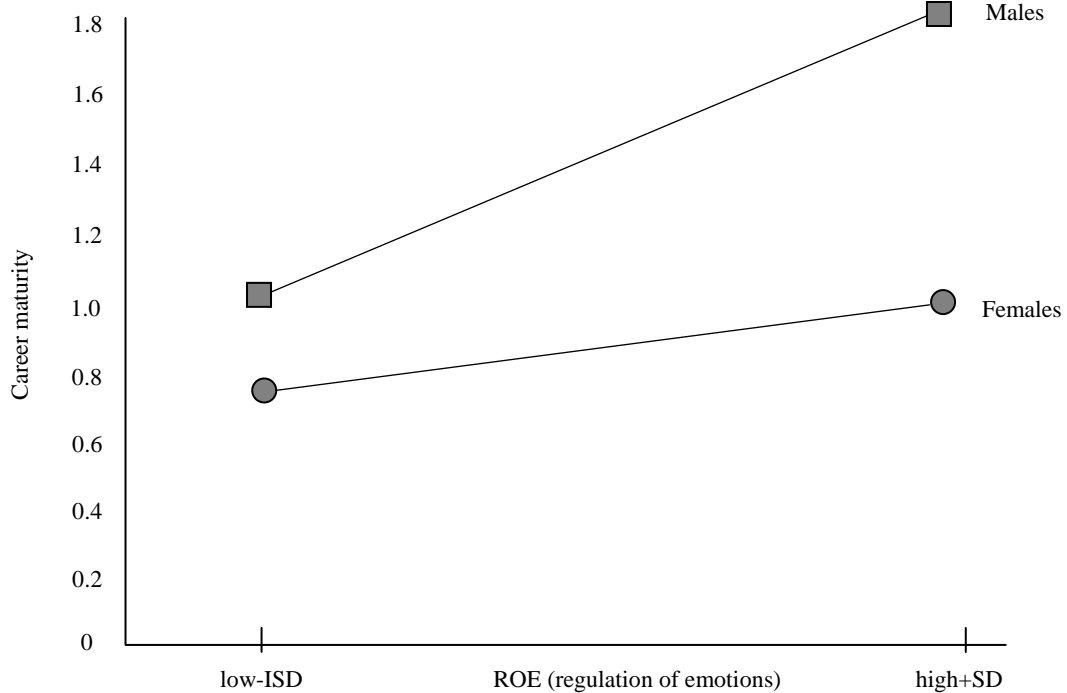


Figure 4 Interaction effect of regulation of emotions and gender on career maturity

#### 4. Discussion

In this study, career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity were found to be significantly

predicted by the components of emotional intelligence. The prediction of career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity by all the 4 emotional intelligence factors showed that greater emotional intelligence was associated with increased career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. These findings were not surprising but were consistent with existing literature which had suggested that high career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity would be related to greater ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotions, understand and regulate emotions (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003; Goleman, 1995; Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler & Mayer, 2000).

The findings from the regression analyses revealed that all the four emotional intelligence factors were predictive of career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. These findings corroborate the work of earlier researchers who found that emotional intelligence factors were significant predictors of both career maturity and career decision-making self-efficacy (Brown, Darden, Shelton & Dipoto, 1999; Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003; Young, Paseluiko & Valach, 1997; Kidd, 1998). These findings indicate that greater confidence in one's ability to successfully complete career-related tasks is associated with higher ability to perceive emotions, use emotions to assist in thought, understand emotions and regulate emotions in self and others to promote emotional and intellectual growth. The findings which showed that no relationship was found between gender and career decision making self-efficacy and career maturity are in agreement with the results of studies by Bergaron and Romano (1994), Brown, George-Curran and Smith (2003) and Salami (2001) who found no significant relationship between gender and career behaviors.

Results from this study, however, showed that gender was a moderator of the relationship between two emotional intelligence factors (other emotions appraisal and use of emotions) and career decision-making self-efficacy. Similarly, gender was found to be a moderator of the relationship between 2 emotional intelligence factors (use of emotions and regulation of emotions) and career maturity. These results are contrary to the findings of Brown, George-Curran and Smith (2003) who found that gender was not a moderator of the relationship between the 4 emotional intelligence factors and career commitment and vocational exploration on the one hand and career decision-making self-efficacy on the other hand. These results are in line with gender appropriateness hypothesis (Kerr, Lambert, Stattin & Klackenber-Larsson, 1994). A moderate level of use of emotions and control of emotions displayed by girls may be acceptable in the society but not when displayed by boys. And as such, the levels of emotional intelligence displayed by girls and the boys might have affected their career maturity differently.

## **5. Implications for counseling practice**

The findings from this study have implications for the work of counseling psychologists. The associations found between emotional intelligence factors and career behaviors and the moderating role of gender in the associations in this study call attention to the practical importance of emotional intelligence in career counseling and assessment considering the gender of the students. Counseling psychologists should consider teaching secondary school students on the basis of gender how to regulate emotion in self and others and the use of feelings to motivate, plan and achieve their career goals.

Another implication of the findings from this study is that counseling psychologists needs to assess the emotional intelligence of students when assisting those having career decision-making problems and those who are not mature in career wise. This is due to the fact that acknowledgement and understanding of both behavioral and affective elements in emotion are critical to enhancing career decision-making self-efficacy.

## 6. Conclusions

The most important strength of this study is that emotional intelligence was found to be associated with CDMSE and career maturity of the secondary school adolescents. Gender was also to moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and career development of the students. Hence, counseling psychologists should direct attention to how the role of emotion could be used to design career interventions for male and female students who have career decision-making problems.

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