

The Role of Depression in Bridging Resilience and General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) in Emerging Adults

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Abstract. Emerging adult students face complex adaptation challenges that demand effective decision-making abilities. This study aims to examine the mediating role of depression in the relationship between resilience and decision-making styles. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 70 college students through purposive sampling. The instruments employed included the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), and the General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) inventory. Mediation analysis using the PROCESS Macro Model 4 revealed that resilience was negatively correlated with depression ($r = -0.612$) and positively correlated with decision-making style ($r = 0.559$). The mediation test confirmed that depression serves as a partial mediator (indirect effect 0.419; 95% CI [0.267, 0.570]). These findings underscore that resilience enhances decision-making quality both directly and indirectly by reducing depressive symptoms.

Keywords: Emerging adulthood, resilience, depression, decision-making style, mediation analysis.

A. INTRODUCTION

Students are individuals who are in a crucial transition phase from adolescence to early adulthood, which is theoretically known as emerging adulthood (Syed & McLean, 2021). This developmental stage is characterized by identity exploration, increasing independence, and future-oriented decision-making. Recent studies emphasize that emerging adults face significant psychological and social challenges, particularly in academic, relational, and career domains (Syed & McLean, 2021; Wood et al., 2022). These complex transitions often require continuous adaptation, which may increase vulnerability to psychological distress, including depression (Auerbach et al., 2022). In the higher education context, students frequently encounter academic pressure and uncertainty, which can hinder their ability to make effective life decisions (Putra & Nurhidayah, 2022).

Decision-making is a complex cognitive process involving the identification of problems, the evaluation of various alternatives, and the consideration of risks prior to the determination of action (Scott & Bruce, 1995). For students, decision-making plays a critical role in determining academic success, career trajectories, and psychological well-being. However, recent research shows that decision-making processes are highly influenced by emotional and mental health conditions (Liu et al., 2022; Lipson et al., 2022). Individuals experiencing depression tend to exhibit cognitive biases, reduced motivation, and difficulties in evaluating risks effectively, leading to maladaptive decision-making patterns such as avoidance or impulsivity (Lawlor et al., 2021). This indicates that emotional stability is a fundamental prerequisite for optimal decision-making.

In the context of such psychological vulnerability, resilience emerges as a vital protective factor. Resilience is defined as an individual's capacity to adapt and bounce back from life's pressures or difficulties (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Recent studies highlight that resilience is strongly associated with better emotional regulation, stress management, and cognitive functioning (Drysdale & McBeath, 2021; Kalisch et al., 2021). Individuals with high resilience are better able to maintain psychological stability under pressure, thereby supporting more effective and rational decision-making processes. Conversely, low resilience has been linked to increased vulnerability to depression and impaired cognitive functioning (Kalisch et al., 2021), which may ultimately affect decision-making quality.

Despite a growing body of research examining resilience, depression, and decision-making, most studies have explored these variables separately or in limited combinations. Prior research has primarily focused on the relationship between resilience and mental health (Drysdale & McBeath, 2021) and the impact of depression on decision-making processes (Lawlor et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022). However, the underlying psychological mechanism explaining how resilience influences decision-making through emotional factors remains insufficiently

explored. In particular, empirical studies integrating these three variables within a mediation framework are still limited. Moreover, existing research is predominantly conducted in Western contexts, with relatively little attention given to non-Western populations. This gap is particularly evident in studies involving Indonesian emerging adults, who experience unique socio-cultural and academic pressures that may influence their psychological adaptation and decision-making processes (Putra & Nurhidayah, 2022). Therefore, this study addresses both a theoretical gap – namely, the lack of an integrated mediation model linking resilience, depression, and decision-making style – and a contextual gap, namely the scarcity of empirical evidence from Indonesian university students.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach to examining the relationship between resilience, depression, and decision-making style within a single mediation model. While previous studies have tended to investigate these constructs independently, this research positions depression as a key psychological mechanism that explains how resilience influences decision-making processes. By incorporating recent perspectives on mental health and cognitive functioning (Liu et al., 2022; Lipson et al., 2022), this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the indirect pathways linking resilience and decision-making. Additionally, this research contributes empirical evidence from Indonesian emerging adults, a population that remains underrepresented in contemporary literature, thereby providing both theoretical and contextual contributions to the field of guidance and counseling.

B. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Resilience in Students.

Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to adapt, recover, and grow in the face of adversity or stressful life circumstances (Connor & Davidson, 2003). In the context of emerging adulthood, resilience becomes a crucial psychological

resource, as students are required to navigate complex developmental transitions, including academic demands, identity exploration, and future uncertainty. Recent studies highlight that resilience is strongly associated with psychological well-being, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies among university students (Drysdale & McBeath, 2021; Kalisch et al., 2021). Individuals with higher resilience tend to demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for effective decision-making (Kalisch et al., 2021). Conversely, low levels of resilience are linked to increased vulnerability to psychological distress, particularly depression, which may impair both emotional stability and cognitive functioning. Thus, resilience not only serves as a protective factor for mental health but also plays a significant role in supporting adaptive cognitive processes, including decision-making.

Depression in Students

Depression is a psychological condition characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest, fatigue, and cognitive impairments, including difficulties in concentration and decision-making (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Among university students, depression remains one of the most prevalent mental health concerns due to academic pressure, social challenges, and developmental demands. Recent studies indicate that depression significantly affects cognitive functioning, particularly in terms of negative information processing, reduced motivation, and impaired executive functioning (Auerbach et al., 2022; Lipson et al., 2022). These cognitive distortions often lead individuals to adopt maladaptive decision-making styles, such as avoidance, dependency, or impulsivity (Lawlor et al., 2021). Furthermore, within the resilience framework, individuals with lower resilience are more susceptible to experiencing depression when facing stress, whereas higher resilience is associated with better emotional regulation and reduced depressive symptoms

(Drysdale & McBeath, 2021). Therefore, depression can be understood as a critical psychological variable that links resilience and decision-making behavior.

The General Decision-Making Style (GDMS)

Decision-making style is defined as an individual's habitual patterns of processing information and making choices in decision-making situations. According to Scott & Bruce (1995), five primary styles have been identified within the framework of General Decision-Making Style (GDMS).

1. Rational: A systematic search for information and a logical evaluation of alternatives are essential.
2. Intuitive: The decision-making process is predominantly influenced by emotional responses and intuitive insights.
3. Dependent: This behavior is characterized by a need for direction and approval from others.
4. Avoidant: The act of evading or postponing the process of decision-making.
5. Spontaneous: Decisions are made rapidly and without forethought.

These styles reflect differences in how individuals gather information, evaluate alternatives, and respond to decision-making demands. Recent research suggests that decision-making styles are not solely determined by cognitive ability but are also significantly influenced by emotional and psychological factors (Liu et al., 2022). Individuals experiencing psychological distress, particularly depression, are more likely to exhibit maladaptive decision-making styles, such as avoidant or dependent patterns. In contrast, individuals with better psychological well-being and emotional regulation tend to demonstrate more adaptive styles, including rational and intuitive decision-making (Lipson et al., 2022). This indicates that mental health plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals approach decision-making processes.

The present study explores the relationship between resilience, depression, and decision-making style.

The relationship between resilience, depression, and decision-making can be understood within an integrated psychological framework. Resilience functions as an internal resource that helps individuals regulate emotional responses and cope effectively with stress, thereby reducing the likelihood of developing depressive symptoms (Kalisch et al., 2021). Lower levels of depression, in turn, enable individuals to maintain optimal cognitive functioning, including attention, evaluation, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for effective decision-making (Liu et al., 2022). Conversely, higher levels of depression are associated with cognitive biases, pessimism, and reduced self-efficacy, which may lead to maladaptive decision-making styles (Lawlor et al., 2021). Within this framework, depression plays a crucial role as a mediating variable that explains how resilience influences decision-making. Students with low resilience are more vulnerable to depression, which subsequently disrupts their cognitive processes and decision-making abilities. Therefore, examining depression as a mediator provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying decision-making behavior in emerging adults. Based on the theoretical framework, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H: Depression mediates the relationship between resilience and decision-making style (General Decision-Making Style) among students.

C. METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a mediation correlation design. This design was specifically selected for the purpose of analyzing the role of the Depression variable as a mediator (M) in the relationship between Resilience (X – independent variable) and Decision Making (Y – dependent variable) among students. The data collection method employed was

cross-sectional, whereby data from the three variables were measured at a single point in time. This approach offers the advantage of analyzing the relationship and mediation mechanism between variables.

The research participants consisted of 70 students from the Guidance and Counseling Program at Satya Wacana Christian University, constituting a subset of the larger population of 167 active students. The participants in this study were all in the emerging adulthood phase of development, with ages ranging from 18 to 29 years. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, with the following inclusion criteria: The study is open to two groups of participants: first, active students of the Guidance and Counseling Program at Satya Wacana Christian University, and second, willing to participate in the study. The data were collected using an online questionnaire.

The present study employed three standardized measurement tools: The initial instrument under consideration is the Beck Depression Inventory–II (BDI-II), which was developed by Beck, Steer, and Brown in 1996. The BDI-II is a scale developed for the purpose of measuring the severity of depression. Secondly, the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was developed by Connor and Davidson in 2003 to measure resilience. Thirdly, the decision-making process must be taken into consideration. The GDMS (Scott & Bruce, 1995) is a tool designed to assess the cognitive abilities involved in decision-making. The instruments utilized in this study are adapted or translated versions that have been validated and meet psychometric criteria for the research context in Indonesia. The results of the reliability tests on the research data demonstrate that all instruments exhibited high or good internal consistency (all $\alpha > 0.70$), thereby validating and ensuring the reliability of the research data.

The data analysis was conducted in two stages. Initially, Pearson's correlation test was employed to assess the relationship between variables. Secondly, mediation hypothesis testing was conducted using the PROCESS Macro Model 4, which was developed by Hayes (2018). The significance of the indirect

effect was determined based on the bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples and a 95% confidence interval (CI). The mediating effect is deemed statistically significant if the value within the 95% confidence interval range does not include zero (0).

D. RESULT

Descriptive Statistics and Prerequisite Tests

Based on an analysis of 70 participants, the average resilience score of students was 92.54 (SD = 12.01), indicating that the respondents' resilience levels were in the moderate to high category. The average depression score was 17.51 (SD = 8.87), indicating mild to moderate symptoms of depression. Meanwhile, the average decision-making style score was 88.08 (SD = 13.91). The results of the normality and linearity tests show that the data meet the assumptions of parametric analysis, making it suitable for regression analysis and mediation testing.

Table 1. Statistical Description of Research Variables

Variabel	N	Min	Max	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (SD)
Resilience (X)	70	67	121	92.54	12.01
Depression (M)	70	2	47	17.51	8.87
Decision-Making Style (Y)	70	54	115	88.08	13.91

Correlation Test Between Variables

The results of the Pearson correlation test (Table 2) demonstrate that all research variables exhibit a statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.001$). A significant negative correlation between resilience and depression has been demonstrated ($r = -0.612$), indicating that an increase in resilience is associated with a decrease in depression levels. Furthermore, a substantial positive correlation was identified between resilience and decision-making style ($r = 0.559$). Concurrently, depression exhibited a robust negative correlation with decision-

making style ($r = -0.670$), suggesting that heightened symptoms of depression are associated with a propensity to employ less adaptive decision-making styles.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix Between Variables

Relationship	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p)	Description
Resilience ↔ Depression (X↔M)	-0.612	< 0.001	Kuat, Negatif
Resilience ↔ PK (X↔Y)	0.559	< 0.001	Kuat, Positif
Depression ↔ PK (M↔Y)	-0.670	< 0.001	Kuat, Negatif

Mediation Analysis (PROCESS Model 4)

The hypothesis testing was conducted using the PROCESS Macro Model 4, which was developed by Hayes (2018). The analysis results demonstrated that resilience exhibited a substantial total effect on decision-making style ($B = 0.650$; $p < 0.001$).

Moreover, the findings of the mediation analysis employing the bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples demonstrated that the indirect effect of resilience on decision-making style through depression was statistically significant ($B = 0.419$). The significance of this indirect effect is evidenced by the 95% Confidence Interval (CI) value, which is in the range of [0.267, 0.570] and does not include zero (0).

Furthermore, the direct impact of resilience on decision-making style remains substantial even when controlling for depression ($B = 0.231$; $p = 0.003$). These findings suggest that depression functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between resilience and decision-making style.

Table 3. Path Coefficients of Mediation Analysis

Effect	Coefficient	Coefficient	t	p
	B	β		
Total Effect (Resilience → PK)	0.650	0.559	8.019	< 0.001

Direct Effect				
(Resilience → PK, controlled for Depression)	0.231	0.199	3.007	0.003

Conclusion on Mediation Type

The findings of the analysis indicate that, while the depression variable functions as a mediator in the association between resilience and decision-making style, the direct effect of resilience on decision-making style persists as significant after controlling for the mediator variable ($B = 0.231$; $p = 0.003$). Consequently, it can be concluded that depression functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between resilience and decision-making style. These findings suggest that the relationship between resilience and decision-making style is not fully explained by depression, but is also influenced by resilience, which remains statistically significant.

E. DISCUSSION

The present study aims to examine the psychological mechanisms underlying students' decision-making abilities by focusing on the mediating role of depression in the relationship between resilience and decision-making style. The findings reveal that resilience significantly predicts students' decision-making styles, both directly and indirectly through depression. This result reinforces contemporary perspectives that emphasize the interplay between psychological resilience, mental health, and cognitive functioning in emerging adulthood (Drysdale & McBeath, 2021; Lipson et al., 2022). Thus, decision-making should not be viewed solely as a cognitive process but also as one that is strongly influenced by emotional and psychological conditions.

The findings indicate that resilience has a significant positive relationship with adaptive decision-making styles. This suggests that students with higher resilience are more capable of processing information rationally and making

effective decisions under pressure. This result is consistent with recent studies showing that resilience enhances emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving skills, all of which are essential components of decision-making (Kalisch et al., 2021; Drysdale & McBeath, 2021). From a developmental perspective, emerging adults with strong resilience are better equipped to navigate uncertainty and complexity, allowing them to approach decision-making situations with greater confidence and clarity. Therefore, resilience functions not only as a protective factor but also as a facilitator of optimal cognitive performance.

This study also confirms that depression is negatively associated with decision-making style, indicating that higher levels of depressive symptoms lead to less adaptive decision-making patterns. This finding aligns with recent research suggesting that depression impairs executive functioning, including attention, risk evaluation, and cognitive control (Liu et al., 2022; Lawlor et al., 2021). Individuals experiencing depression tend to exhibit negative cognitive biases, low self-efficacy, and avoidance tendencies, which contribute to maladaptive decision-making styles such as avoidance and dependency (Lawlor et al., 2021). These findings further support prior evidence that depressive symptoms are associated with maladaptive decision-making patterns.

The most significant finding of this study is the role of depression as a partial mediator in the relationship between resilience and decision-making style. This result provides empirical support for the assumption that resilience influences decision-making not only directly but also indirectly through its impact on mental health. Specifically, individuals with higher resilience tend to experience lower levels of depression, which in turn allows for more stable cognitive functioning and more adaptive decision-making. Conversely, low resilience increases vulnerability to depression, which subsequently impairs decision-making processes. This finding is consistent with recent integrative models of psychological functioning that emphasize the mediating role of emotional factors

in linking personality traits and cognitive outcomes (Liu et al., 2022). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by clarifying the underlying psychological mechanism that connects resilience and decision-making.

The finding that depression acts as a partial rather than a full mediator suggests that resilience has both direct and indirect effects on decision-making. This indicates that, in addition to reducing depressive symptoms, resilience may also influence decision-making through other mechanisms, such as self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility, or emotional intelligence. This result highlights the complexity of psychological processes involved in decision-making and suggests that future research should explore additional mediating or moderating variables to better understand these relationships.

Another important contribution of this study lies in its contextual relevance. Conducted among Indonesian emerging adults, this research provides empirical evidence from a non-Western setting, where socio-cultural and academic pressures may differ significantly from those in Western contexts. Previous studies have largely focused on Western populations, limiting the generalizability of findings across cultures. In Indonesia, students often face unique challenges related to academic expectations, family roles, and socio-economic conditions, which may influence both their mental health and decision-making processes (Putra & Nurhidayah, 2022). Therefore, this study enriches the literature by offering culturally relevant insights into the psychological dynamics of decision-making.

In practical terms, these findings carry significant implications for the realm of guidance and counseling services within higher education. Interventions designed to enhance student resilience can function as a preventive strategy, aiming to reduce depression and improve decision-making abilities. Programs that emphasize emotional regulation, stress management, and resilience training may facilitate the development of the psychological resources necessary for students to effectively navigate academic and career challenges. Furthermore, the

incorporation of mental health support within student development programs is imperative to cultivate both well-being and cognitive competence in decision-making. These findings underscore the necessity of integrating psychological resilience and mental health interventions to facilitate adaptive decision-making among emerging adults.

F. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence on the psychological mechanisms linking resilience, depression, and decision-making styles among emerging adult students. The findings confirm that resilience functions as a significant protective factor that promotes more adaptive decision-making styles. Importantly, this study demonstrates that depression acts as a partial mediator, indicating that resilience influences decision-making both directly and indirectly through its role in reducing depressive symptoms. These results highlight that students with higher resilience are better able to maintain emotional stability and cognitive clarity when making important life decisions.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by proposing and validating an integrative mediation model that positions mental health as a key mechanism connecting personality traits and cognitive processes. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of developing resilience-based interventions within higher education settings to support students' mental well-being and decision-making competence. Overall, this study emphasizes that strengthening resilience is not only essential for preventing psychological distress but also for enhancing students' capacity to make effective and adaptive decisions in the emerging adulthood phase. Future research is encouraged to explore additional psychological variables and diverse cultural contexts to further understand the complexity of decision-making processes among emerging adults.

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