

Conformity and Decision – Making Styles among IT Employees in Kerala

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Abstract

Conformity is the act of changing your behaviours to fit in or go along with the people around you. Decision making styles refers to the ways individuals approach and resolve decisions. This research investigates the connection between conformity and decision-making styles among IT workers in Kerala. The study looks into the occurrence of various decision-making styles-systematic, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous and their correlation with conformity tendencies. A quantitative methodology was employed, collecting data from IT employees using standardized psychological assessments that evaluate conformity and decision-making styles. Statistical evaluations revealed that avoidant and dependent decision-making styles are prevalent among IT professionals in Kerala, suggesting a tendency to heavily depend on others' opinions. These results indicate that conformity significantly influences employees' decision-making behaviors, which may affect innovation and independent problem-solving.

Keywords: Conformity, Decision-making styles

Introduction

Conformity and decision-making are important psychological constructs that influence behaviour within organizational settings. Conformity refers to the tendency of individuals to adjust their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours in response to real or perceived group pressure, whereas decision-making styles represent the characteristic ways individuals approach and resolve decisions. In workplace environments, particularly within the information technology (IT) sector, employees frequently encounter situations that require efficient and effective decision-making while interacting with teams, supervisors, and organizational systems. The relationship between conformity and decision-making styles is significant because social

influences can shape how individuals evaluate alternatives and make choices. Employees with higher levels of conformity may be more likely to rely on group opinions, organizational norms, or supervisory guidance when making decisions. In contrast, individuals with lower conformity tendencies may exhibit greater independence, relying on personal judgment and analytical reasoning. These differences can influence the adoption of various decision-making styles, including dependent, rational, intuitive, avoidant, and spontaneous approaches. Within IT organizations, collaborative work structures and hierarchical processes often create environments where conformity can affect decision-making behaviours. Understanding how conformity relates to decision-making styles can provide valuable insights into employee behaviour, workplace interactions, and organizational effectiveness.

Review of Literature

Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) highlighted that conformity plays a crucial role in social interactions and often guides behavioural choices within groups. Their findings suggested that individuals frequently alter their judgments to align with group expectations, even when personal opinions differ. Such conformity may facilitate social harmony but can also reduce independent decision-making.

LeBoeuf and Shafir (2003) examined the influence of conformity on decision-making processes and reported that individuals who are highly susceptible to social influence tend to rely more heavily on external opinions while making decisions. Their findings indicated that conformity can shape both the quality and style of decision-making.

Goeree and Yariv (2015) investigated conformity within controlled laboratory settings and found that group opinions significantly influenced participants' decisions. Their study demonstrated that social pressure can modify individual choices even in situations requiring independent judgment.

Orloff et al. (2024) examined social conformity in risky decision-making situations and found that conformity often functions as a psychological shortcut when individuals experience uncertainty. Their findings indicate that people frequently rely on social information to guide decisions when faced with complex situations.

Method

Objectives

- 1 To assess whether there is a significant relationship between conformity and decision making styles.
- 2 To assess whether there is a difference in decision making styles among males and females.
- 3 To assess whether there is a difference in conformity among males and females.

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between conformity and decision-making styles.

H0.1: There is no difference in decision making styles among males and females.

H0.2: There is no difference in conformity among males and females.

Sample

The sample consisted of Keralite IT employees aged 20-40, including males and females, who voluntarily agreed to complete the questionnaire. A minimum sample size of 200 participants targeted to ensure sufficient data for statistical analysis and meaningful interpretation of results.

Data and Sources of Data

The data required for the study was collected through Google Forms, using the population of IT employees aged 20-40 from Kerala. A minimum total of 200 sample was collected on the basis of the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The informed consent was also obtained from all the individuals prior the collection of socio-demographic details and questionnaires for assessment was administered through Google Forms. The data collected finally was used for research and publication purposes and collected data was also protected and confidentiality was maintained.

Measures

The Conformity Scale (Mehrabian and Stefl, 1995): The Conformity Scale was utilized to determine how much an individual engages in conformity. The Scale is an 11-item self-report measure using a 7-point likert scale (very strong agreement to very strong disagreement). A higher score indicates greater conformity. The highest possible score is 77 and the lowest is 11. Items 2, 7, 9, and 11 are reverse scored.

General decision making style questionnaire (Scott, S. G., & Bruce, R. A., 1995): The GDMS consists of 25 items, with five items for each of the five decision-making styles: Rational, Intuitive, Dependent, Avoidant, Spontaneous. The scale uses a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The higher the participant's score on a particular style, the more likely they are to use that style when making decisions.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using Jamovi 2.6.24, an open-source statistical software. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution was used to summarize demographic details and key variables. To measure the relationship between Conformity and decision making styles, Spearman rank correlation was conducted. Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess the gender difference on both the variables.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics with respect to variables

	Gender	Mean	SD
CS	Male	40.2	6.49
	Female	41.4	8.76
GDMSQ (A)	Male	12.9	2.71
	Female	13.7	2.35
GDMSQ (B)	Male	11.3	2.89
	Female	11.3	3.03
GDMSQ (C)	Male	15.1	2.39
	Female	15.2	2.73
GDMSQ (D)	Male	14.5	2.68
	Female	14.4	2.11
GDMSQ (E)	Male	11.9	2.57
	Female	12.0	2.26

Note: Conformity scale is abbreviated as CS*, General decision-making style questionnaire is abbreviated as GDMSQ*. GDMSQ (A) denotes the systematic style, (B) denotes intuitive style, (C) denotes dependent style, (D) denotes avoidant style, and (E) denotes spontaneous style. In Conformity scale, males have a mean of 40.2 ($SD=6.49$), while females score slightly

higher at 41.4 ($SD = 8.76$), indicating greater variability among females. In GDMSQ (A), males and females have means (12.9,13.7) with standard deviations of 2.71, 2.35, respectively. For GDMSQ (B), males and females have equal score 11.3 ($SD = 2.89, 3.03$). In GDMSQ (C), males and females have means (15.1,15.2) with SD (2.39,2.73). GDMSQ (D) has means (14.5,14.4) but males show greater variability ($SD = 2.68$ vs. 2.11). In GDMSQ (E), males score 11.9 ($SD = 2.57$), while females score 12.0 ($SD = 2.26$), with slightly more variability in males.

Table 2 - Correlation between conformity and decision-making styles

	N	Conformity	P
Decision-making style (A)	202	0.050	0.475
Decision-making style (B)		-0.031	0.664
Decision-making style (C)		0.504***	<.001
Decision-making style (D)		0.440***	<.001
Decision-making style (E)		-0.001	0.986

From table it can be inferred that there is significant relationship between conformity and dependent decision making style ($r = 0.504^{***}$, $p = <.001$). There is significant relationship between conformity and avoidant decision making style ($r = 0.440^{***}$, $p = <.001$). Therefore the “H0: There is no significant relationship between conformity and decision-making styles” is rejected.

Table 3 - Mann-Whitney U test of conformity with respect to gender-

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	Mean difference	U	P
Conformity	Male	94	40.2	6.49	2.00	4440	0.125
	Female	108	41.4	8.76			

The p-value 0.125 is greater than 0.05, meaning there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in the variable conformity. Therefore the “H0.1: There is no difference in conformity among males and females” is accepted.

Mann-Whitney U test of decision making styles with respect to gender-

Variable	Gender difference	N	M	SD	Mean	U
p						
Decision making style (A)	Male	94	12.9	2.71	1.000	4188
	Female	108	13.7	2.35		0.031
Decision making style (B)	Male	94	11.3	2.89	-3.63e-5	5006
	Female	108	11.3	3.03		0.865
Decision making style (C)	Male	94	15.1	2.39	5.21e-5	4766
	Female	108	15.2	2.73		0.451
Decision making style (D)	Male	94	14.5	2.68	-2.84e-5	4995
	Female	108	14.4	2.11		0.844
Decision making style (E)	Male	94	11.9	2.57	3.54e-5	4942
	Female	108	12.0	2.26		0.744

In Systematic decision-making style males had a mean score of 12.9 ($SD = 2.71$), while females scored 13.7 ($SD = 2.35$). The p value ($p = 0.031$) and Mann-Whitney U test ($U = 4188$) show significant, with females scoring higher. In Intuitive decision-making style males and females scored 11.3 ($SD = 2.89$ and 3.03). The p value ($p = 0.865$) and U test ($U = 5006$) indicate no significant difference. In Dependent decision-making style males had a mean score of 15.1 ($SD = 2.39$) and females had 15.2 ($SD = 2.73$). The p value ($p = 0.451$) and U test ($U = 4766$) show no significant gender difference. In Avoidant decision-making style males had a mean score of 14.5 and females had the mean score of 14.4, with standard deviations of 2.68 (males) and 2.11 (females). The p value ($p = 0.844$) and U test ($U = 4995$) confirm no significant difference. In Spontaneous decision-making style males scored 11.9 ($SD = 2.57$), and females scored 12.0 ($SD = 2.26$). The p value ($p = 0.744$) and U test ($U = 4942$) show no significant gender difference.

The aim of the study was to assess how IT employees in Kerala follow group opinions and how they make decisions at work. The study finds that the dependent and avoidant decision making styles are more common among IT employees, which shows that they usually rely heavily on the opinions of others when making decisions or they possess a tendency to postpone or avoid making decisions due to the fear of judgment, making false choices, thereby they often

defer responsibilities and shift duties to others. The study found out that among these two styles, dependent decision making style is highly prevailing. It suggests Keralite IT employees tend to conform easily by peers, managers and colleagues which results in lack of confidence, over dependence, being manipulated by others and having low self esteem.

Implications

- Organizations can design training programs that encourage independent thinking and effective decision-making among employees.
- Understanding the role of conformity can help managers create a work environment that balances teamwork with individual autonomy.
- Human resource professionals can use the findings to develop strategies that enhance employee confidence and decision-making competence.
- The findings may assist organizations in promoting innovation, problem-solving abilities, and workplace effectiveness among employees.

Limitations

- The study was limited to IT employees working in Kerala, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other occupational groups and geographical regions.
- Snowball sampling was used for participant recruitment, which may have resulted in sampling bias and reduced representativeness of the population.
- The study relied on self-report questionnaires, making the responses susceptible to social desirability bias and subjective interpretation.
- Other factors such as organizational culture, work experience, personality traits, and job stress were not considered and may have influenced the results.

Conclusion

This research "Conformity and Decision-Making Styles among Keralite IT Employees" gives an insight about how employees make decisions and how far the conformity has influenced their decision-making patterns within the particular context of the IT profession. The study reveals that the most common decision-making styles are dependent and avoidant, with dependent being the most popular among employees. This means that a large number of the employees make choices while looking for some external support, approval, or validation from others. The findings, however, reveal gender differences in the dependent

decision-making style, indicating the difference in reliance upon others in decision-making in women. The study results also provide potential for organizations in designing training programs aimed at independent decision-making and critical thinking skills, thus enhancing workplace productivity and employee confidence.

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