

THE ROLE OF AGE AND GENDER IN GROUP DECISION-MAKING PROPENSITY

Juliana Osmani¹

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Abstract: *Increasingly, organizations are oriented towards groups to make decisions. This is because some contextual factors have undergone significant changes. Companies are operating in a competitive, dynamic and complex environment, having to face with unstructured and non-programmed decisions. Organizations are also oriented towards participatory processes in order to benefit from the important advantages that these processes offer. The main goal of the current research is to understand if there is a correlation between group decision-making propensity, age and gender. The motivation for the current research starts from the consideration that the degree of preference for group decision-making processes determines the contribution and commitment of the members, with important consequences on the decisions' effectiveness. The processing and analysis of the collected data indicate that adults prefer group decision-making processes more than young people and women prefer group decision-making processes less than men.*

Keywords: *Group decision-making, Group propensity, Age, Gender, Decision's effectiveness.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays there is so much discussed about group decision-making processes. This is because some contextual factors have undergone significant changes. Thus, companies are operating more and more in a competitive, dynamic and complex environment, having to make unstructured and non-programmed decisions. Apart from the need, organizations are also oriented towards participatory processes in order to be able to benefit from the important advantages that these processes offer. Companies have understood the importance of group decision-making processes to create sustainable competitive advantages. The attention and the greatest commitment in understanding various aspects and problems of these processes is evidenced by the numerous researches in this domain, researches that confirm the orientation of organizations towards group decision-making processes.

Group decision-making leads to important benefits and is also accompanied by limits that influence the effectiveness of decisions. But what is the preference for group decision-making? Previous studies have shown, directly or indirectly, that demographic characteristics such as age and gender influence the propensity towards group decision-making processes.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The motivation for the current research derives from the consideration that the degree of preference for group decision-making processes determines the contribution and personal commitment as a member of the group, with important consequences on the effectiveness of the decisions made by the group.

¹ University "Aleksandër Moisiu" of Durrës, Faculty of Business, Management Department; Address: L.9, Rr: "Aleksandër Goga", P. 979/2, Durrës, Albania

The main goal of the current research is to understand if there is a correlation between group decision-making propensity, age and gender, and if yes what kind of relationship it is. The intention is to identify variables and elements and to discover possible relationships between them, so as to be able to define some general reflections about the impact of age and gender on group decision-making processes. To support the main purpose, the research questions are as follows:

1. What is the age's impact on group decision-making propensity?
2. Does the gender influence the preference to make decisions in group?

In consistency with the main goal and the research questions the hypotheses to be tested are formulated as below:

- H₁:** There is a positive correlation between age and group decision-making propensity;
H₂: Women have a greater preference for group decision-making than men.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the current study is adopted the quantitative research and for the data collection is used the questionnaire, which is designed to investigate the relationship between group decision-making propensity, age and gender. The participants had to assess their preference for group decision-making based on the Likert scale 1-5.

To test the hypotheses of the research is first used the statistical independence analysis to assess the dependence between the two variables and then is used the nonparametric analysis of Spearman correlation to judge on the direction and statistical significance of the correlation.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Increasingly, managers make decisions for new problems or situations. Uncertainty and the degree of complexity that the decision maker have to face increases. Under these conditions, organizations are moving towards group decision-making. Empirical studies have shown that on average the result of a group exceeds that of the single individual who is part of the same group [1], [2], [3]. The differences between individual decision-making and group decision-making are not a few. Group decision-making is characterized by important advantages, but also by many limits that should not be underestimated.

Recalling [4], the group has a greater amount of information. Moreover, talking about creativity, the author argues that group creativity is greater than individual creativity. On the other hand, discussions and different points of view make it easier to generate more alternatives. Group decision-making increases also decision legitimacy [5]. A not very good decision, but accompanied by a high level of legitimacy, can be much more effective than a very good decision, which is not accepted.

Group decision-making processes can lead to a better understanding of the implementation phase and therefore to a more effective decision [6]. This is because often within the group there are members who, after the decision made, will give directives or will work for its implementation. The probability for a decision to fail is low when the individuals who contributed to the decision will also have the responsibility to implement it. Moreover, participatory decision-making improves personal motivation [7], job satisfaction [8] and self-confidence [9].

Some aspects considered problematic for group decision-making must also be reported. Within a group, it may happen that the final decision is made by one individual. The typical disadvantages of group decision-making are groupthink and polarization. [10] defined groupthink as the tendency of groups to converge rapidly on a decision. Polarization occurs when the group's decision is more extreme than the average of individual opinions [11]. Another important problem that accompanies group decision-making concerns the time required to arrive at the final decision [5], [12]. This may be because of the conflict between group members or the high diversity of ideas and opinions that make consensus difficult. Empirical studies have reached the conclusion that unique information is not taken into account and the group's tendency is to rely only on common information. This is the effect of common knowledge [13].

The present research analyses group decision-making propensity, trying to highlight the impact of age and gender. Adults generally prefer the group when have to decide [14]. Previous researches have shown that as we age, we become more risk averse [15], [16]. Since within a group the responsibilities are distributed, adults should prefer the group to make decisions. On the other hand, starting from several studies that showed that with the age, cognitive and decision-making skills worsened it was hypothesized that adults are less overconfident than young people. In support of this, [17] and [18] have concluded that adults are less prone to overconfidence. If adults are less overconfident, they should prefer more group decision-making, in order to compensate for their lesser abilities. According to [19], adults are more prone to regret than young people. As a result, they often try to avoid the decision-making or make a less risky decision. Moreover, adults feel less strong and less concentrated when have to make a choice [15]. If the regret is greater and the concentration is less than young decision makers, adults should prefer more the group. Other empirical researches have shown that some of the cognitive processes get worse over time. Thus, it has been found that when decision's complexity increases, due to the decline of the cognitive abilities, adults are unable to make good decisions [15]. This represents another conclusion that leads us to hypothesize that adults prefer group decision-making more than young people.

But what happens in the case of gender? Overconfidence is a cognitive bias that differentiates the behaviour between men and women. Many studies show that women are less overconfident than men [20]. [21] believe that women attribute their past successes to the luck, while men attribute them to their abilities and skills. [22] argue that there are differences between men and women particularly in the way problems are perceived. The authors believe that men in general show a more positive orientation towards problems, while women have a more negative orientation. [23] also concluded that women are more pessimistic than men. Thus, starting from these results we think that women should prefer group decision-making processes more than men. In an attempt to highlight the differences between men and women in making decisions, risk tolerance can be considered one of the most studied aspects. Referring to some researches in this regard, women are more risk averse than men [24], [25], [26], [27]. The main explanation for the differences due to gender regarding the attitude towards risk are emotions [28]. The authors concluded that women experience emotions more strongly than men. So, women are more nervous and fearful [29]. All these conclusions lead to the opinion that women have a greater propensity towards group decision-making than men.

5. EMPIRICAL APPROACH

A total of 382 questionnaires is distributed and 247 collected, with a response rate of 65%. As discussed above, the relationship between group decision-making propensity, age and gender is

quite complex. Starting from the results of previous empirical evidences, directly or indirectly, we have formulated the hypotheses as follows:

H₁: There is a positive correlation between age and group decision-making propensity

Table 1: Spearman correlation coefficient for age-group propensity

			Age	If I have to make a decision, I prefer group decision-making.
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.199
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
		N	247	247
	If I have to make a decision, I prefer group decision-making.	Correlation Coefficient	.199	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
		N	247	247

Referring to Table 1, we note a statistically relevant relationship between age and group decision-making propensity (Sig = p = 0.002 < 0.05). The correlation coefficient of Spearman is positive, which means that adults prefer group decision-making processes more than young people ($r_s = 0.199$).

H₂: Women have a greater preference for group decision-making than men

Table 2: Spearman correlation coefficient for gender-group propensity

			Gender	If I have to make a decision, I prefer group decision-making.
Spearman's rho	Gender	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.108
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.090
		N	247	247
	If I have to make a decision, I prefer group decision-making.	Correlation Coefficient	-.108	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.090	.
		N	247	247

From Table 2, we note a statistically irrelevant relationship between gender and group decision-making propensity for $\alpha=0.05$, but the correlation is relevant for $\alpha=0.1$ (Sig=p=0.09>0.05). The correlation coefficient of Spearman is negative, which means that women prefer group decision-making processes less than men ($r_s=-0.108$).

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current research was focused on the understanding of age and gender impact on group decision-making propensity. The basic idea of the study is that group decision-making has important benefits if compared to individual decision-making, but group's effectiveness is also affected by the propensity towards it. Is true that companies are oriented towards groups, but organization's members are not all able or do not want to work and decide in group.

Starting from previous studies, that show a decline of cognitive and decisional abilities as age advances, that adults are more risk averse and less overconfident than young people, it has been hypothesized that the correlation between age and group decision-making propensity is positive. On the other hand, previous studies have reached the conclusions that women are more risk

averse and less overconfident than men and their cognitive and decisional abilities are less good than those of men. Regarding this, we hypothesized that women prefer group decision-making processes more than men.

Referring to the current research, the processing and analysis of the collected data indicate that there is a statistically relevant relationship between age and group decision-making propensity. Adults prefer group decision-making processes more than young people. Also, we found a correlation between gender and group propensity. Women prefer group decision-making processes less than men.

It would be interesting to understand the reasons of these results, and then to investigate in depth the relationship between group decision-making preferences, age and gender. For example, we may investigate how experience, the perception of control or self-attribution influence group decision-making propensity.

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