



Social Anxiety and Decision-Making Among University Students: The Mediating Role of Life Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

University students make some of the most consequential decisions of their lives, yet surprisingly little research has looked at how social anxiety shapes that process. This study examined whether life satisfaction mediates the relationship between social anxiety and decision-making among undergraduates, and whether the pattern differs by gender, residential background, and age. Two hundred and eighty-four undergraduates (144 men, 140 women; M age = 20.5 years, SD = 1.8) from a public university in Pakistan completed the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, the Decision-Making Questionnaire, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale in a cross-sectional survey. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation, regression-based mediation analysis, independent-samples t tests, and one-way ANOVA. All eight study variables correlated significantly with one another. Life satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between decision-making and each anxiety and avoidance index performance, social, and overall, with every indirect effect significant at $p < .001$; the mediation models accounted for between 81.5% and 86.7% of the variance in decision-making. Male, urban, and older students reported better decision-making and higher life satisfaction than their female, rural, and younger counterparts, who also reported higher anxiety and avoidance. Together, these results suggest that social anxiety affects decision-making both directly and by lowering life satisfaction, and that raising life satisfaction could be a useful target for counseling interventions aimed at helping students decide more confidently.

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1. Introduction

The years spent at university may be some of the most difficult because of the number of big decisions that need to be made. There is the relationship building that will be essential later on, the big decision on an area of specialization will need to be made, and there is the need to build a professional network that will be instrumental to future success. All of this

needs to be done while dealing with a host of unfamiliar time and productivity pressures. Social anxiety brings a whole new layer to this. It is characterized by intense and persistent worries of being judged or evaluated negatively in social situations or in public performances (Association, 2013). It becomes even more evident in university students because it obstructs the ability to make clear and confident decisions. It is easy to understand how social anxiety hampers decision-making. For students, a significant amount of mental focus must be spent continuously on the lookout for dangers or preparing for potential negative evaluations. The consequence is a loss of mental resources for evaluating the options available to them (Heimberg, Brozovich, & Rapee, 2010; Wells, 1995; Wieser et al., 2009). The result is an almost irresistible attraction to choose the option that presents the least visibility. Anxious individuals generally exhibit an avoidant and risk-averse decision-making style (Maner et al., 2007). They tend to be the silent members of a group, decline opportunities to be assessed, and procrastinate making the decision for as long as possible (Bruine De Bruin, Parker, & Fischhoff, 2007). Even the options available to a person can be decreased in social-evaluative anxiety, especially if there is a sense of ambiguity in the situation (Hengen & Alpers, 2021).

What is less clear is why some socially anxious students still manage to make good decisions while others struggle. Part of the answer may lie in life satisfaction, a person's overall judgment of how their life is going relative to their own standards (Diener et al., 1985). Fredrickson (2001) broaden-and-build theory offers one explanation: the positive affect that comes with high life satisfaction broadens what a person is able to think about and do, building psychological reserves that make difficult decisions easier to handle. Low life satisfaction works in the opposite direction, narrowing attention toward threat and leaving fewer reserves to tolerate the discomfort decision-making often involves, a pattern consistent with evidence linking positive affect to more adaptive decision-making under anxiety and uncertainty (Bayram & Aydemir, 2017; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Social anxiety and life satisfaction are themselves closely linked (Chakravarti, 2020; Chakravarti & Stevenson, 2022). Socially anxious students tend to withdraw from the relationships, activities, and achievements that ordinarily make university life rewarding, and difficulty sustaining close friendships is a well-documented consequence of social anxiety that, in turn, predicts diminished life satisfaction (Rodebaugh et al., 2015). This erosion continues to surface in recent research: social anxiety and related forms of social-media anxiety have been shown to carry forward into lower life satisfaction through mediation pathways involving emotional self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2025; Rizwan, Khalid, & Iqbal, 2026) and mental well-being (Jing et al., 2025), and diminished life satisfaction has likewise been identified as a mechanism transmitting the effects of anxiety-related strain to adjustment outcomes during periods of restricted social contact (Khalid et al., 2023; Zhao, Sang, & Ding, 2024). Taken together, this literature suggests that the depletion of life satisfaction, rather than social anxiety alone, may be what ultimately compromises decision-making (Zaman, Bibi, & Arshad, 2024).

Despite this accumulating evidence, the specific pathway linking social anxiety to decision-making through life satisfaction has rarely been tested directly, since most existing research has examined social anxiety's effects on academic achievement or interpersonal functioning rather than on decision-making as an outcome in its own right (Loureiro, 2020; Majeed & Majeed, 2021). This study attempts to fill this void. The current research explores the mediation role of life satisfaction between social anxiety (both as performance anxiety and interaction anxiety) and decision-making, as well as the influence of gender, age, and residential background on this relationship among undergraduate students.

1.1. Rationale of the Study

Life satisfaction provides a more nuanced understanding of university counseling services regarding the source of poor decision-making. It provides counseling services with a broader model to work with. If life satisfaction explains social anxiety's influence on decision-making, life satisfaction shouldn't be neglected. Counseling services aren't the only means.

Socially anxious students who engage with the services will also gain satisfaction. Some of the suggestions made in this study (e.g., gratitude practice, mentoring, and providing opportunities to experience mastery) will create more satisfaction for students and therefore improve the quality of students' decision-making. This wide framing enables practitioners' greater engagement with socially anxious students, and makes it more likely they will engage students with the decision-making process as opposed to anxiety symptoms. This question carries extra weight in the Pakistani university context. Students here make decisions inside social and family structures that put real weight on social evaluation and collective reputation, and rural-urban and gender gaps shape both how much exposure students get to decision-making opportunities and how much supportive social backing they can draw on. Demographic comparisons by gender, residence, and age can help identify which groups carry the heaviest combined burden of anxiety and diminished life satisfaction, allowing university support services to target outreach where it is likely to matter most. The present study has the following objectives. To examine the relationships among social anxiety (performance and social-interaction), avoidance, life satisfaction, and decision-making among university students. To examine the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between social anxiety (performance, social-interaction, and overall) and decision-making. To examine the mediating role of life satisfaction in the relationship between avoidance (performance, social-interaction, and overall) and decision-making. To examine differences in decision-making, life satisfaction, anxiety, and avoidance across gender, residential background, and age groups. Hypotheses of the study are as H1: There will be significant correlations among decision-making, life satisfaction, anxiety-performance, anxiety-social, overall anxiety, avoidance-performance, avoidance-social, and overall avoidance. H2: Life satisfaction mediates the relationship between anxiety-performance, anxiety social, overall anxiety, avoidance performance, avoidance social, and overall avoidance with decision-making. H3: There is a significant difference in decision-making, life satisfaction, anxiety, and avoidance between students on sociodemographic factors such as residential areas and age groups.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional, correlational design. Self-report data were collected at a single time point, which allowed for testing both the direct relationships among social anxiety, avoidance, life satisfaction, and decision-making, and the indirect pathway running through life satisfaction.

2.2. Participants

The sample consisted of 284 undergraduate students (144 men, 50.7%; 140 women, 49.3%) drawn from a public university in Pakistan, ranging in age from 18 to 25 years ($M = 20.5$, $SD = 1.8$). Most participants were between 21 and 22 years old ($n = 138$, 48.6%), followed by those aged 20 or younger ($n = 91$, 32.0%) and those older than 22 ($n = 55$, 19.4%). The majority resided in urban areas ($n = 197$, 69.4%), with the remainder from rural areas ($n = 87$, 30.6%). Participants were enrolled across all four years of study, with the largest proportion in their second year ($n = 151$, 53.2%), followed by third-year ($n = 64$, 22.5%), first-year ($n = 54$, 19.0%), and fourth-year students ($n = 15$, 6.3%).

2.3. Instruments

Social Anxiety Scale: Social anxiety was measured using the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS; Liebowitz, 1987), a 24-item scale on which respondents rate both fear/anxiety and avoidance for each situation on 4-point scales (0 = none/never to 3 = severe/usually) across performance and social-interaction situations. The LSAS yields separate fear and avoidance subscale scores for performance and social-interaction situations, along with overall anxiety and overall avoidance composites, for a possible total of 144; scores of 30 or above suggest social anxiety disorder, and scores of 60 or above suggest a generalized presentation (Association, 2013). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.87.

Decision-making Questionnaire: Decision-making style was assessed with the Decision-Making Questionnaire (DMQ; (French et al., 1993), which measures the coping strategies people rely on when facing consequential decisions, including vigilance, avoidance, procrastination, and hypervigilance. The DMQ focuses on the process people use to approach decisions rather than the objective quality of the outcomes that follow, takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and has been widely used with adult and student samples. Scale assured good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 (Bruine De Bruin, Parker, & Fischhoff, 2007).

Life Satisfaction: Life satisfaction was measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; (Diener et al., 1985). This scale consists of five items using a 7-point Likert-type scale and yields a total score between 5 and 35, with higher scores representing a higher level of satisfaction. This scale has a reliability score of 0.88. (Alfonso & Allison, 1992; Pavot & Diener, 1993).

2.4. Procedure

Recruitment only began after receiving Ethical approval. Participants were recruited via lecture announcements and the university's participant pool. Participants completed the measures online after reading the informed consent form. This form outlined the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, and that confidentiality would be maintained. The measures were always completed in the same order. First was the demographic questionnaire. Next was the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. Finally, the Decision-Making Questionnaire was completed. This order was to prevent the decision-related items from influencing participants' responses to the other two scales. After finishing, participants saw a debriefing screen with more information about the study and contact details for both the research team and the university counseling services.

2.5. Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics characterized the sample, and Pearson correlation coefficients examined relationships among the eight study variables. Mediation was tested using ordinary least squares regression following the (Baron & Kenny, 1986) causal-steps framework, supplemented with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals around the indirect effects (Hayes, 2017). Independent-samples *t* tests compared decision-making, life satisfaction, anxiety, and avoidance between men and women and between urban and rural students, and one-way ANOVA compared these variables across the three age groups.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of the study variables.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages for all demographic variables

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)	Up to 20	91	32.0
	21-22	138	48.6
	Above 22	55	19.4
Gender	Male	144	50.7
	Female	140	49.3
Area	Urban	197	69.4
	Rural	87	30.6
Experience (Years)	1 st	54	19.0
	2 nd	151	53.2
	3 rd	64	22.5
	4 th	15	6.3

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S and overall avoidance

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Decision Making	1							
Life Satisfaction	.896**	1						
Anxiety P	-.807**	-.767**	1					
Anxiety S	-.806**	-.762**	.627**	1				
Anxiety	-.894**	-.847**	.912**	.891**	1			
Avoidance P	-.636**	-.606**	.734**	.642**	.765**	1		
Avoidance S	-.654**	-.633**	.736**	.655**	.774**	.714**	1	
Avoidance	-.696**	-.668**	.794**	.700**	.831**	.934**	.917**	1
Mean	74.70	25.20	17.89	15.70	33.60	17.23	15.35	32.57
Standard Deviation	7.87	2.95	5.39	4.85	9.24	5.92	5.30	10.40

Note: n= 284. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2 presented above indicates the findings of the bivariate correlation analysis as decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall anxiety. Based on the results, we can establish a significant and positive correlation between decision-making and life satisfaction, and a significant and negative correlation between decision-making and anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance. The variables with a significant and negative correlation with life satisfaction are anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance. P has a significant and positive correlation with anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance. Overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance have a significant and positive relationship with Anxiety S. The overall anxiety has a significant and positive correlation with avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance. On the same note, there is a strong and positive correlation of avoidance P with avoidance S and overall avoidance. Moreover, both avoidance S and avoidance in general have a strong and positive dependency on each other.

Table 3: Mediation analysis by using life satisfaction as mediator, while anxiety P, anxiety S, and overall anxiety as independent variables and decision making as outcome variables

Predictors	Path Coefficients				(95% CI)	R ²
	a	b	c	c'		
Anxiety P	-.420***	1.793***	-1.179***	-.426***	(-.922, -.590)	.837
Anxiety S	-.463***	1.793***	-1.307***	-.476***	(-1.063, -.654)	.839
Overall Anxiety	-.271***	1.310***	-.762***	-.407***	(-.489, -.235)	.867

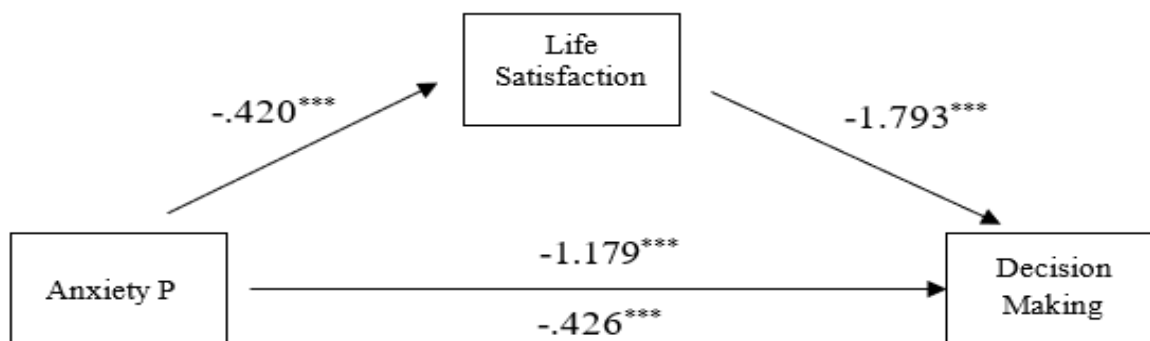
Figure 1: The mediation effect of life satisfaction between anxiety P and decision making

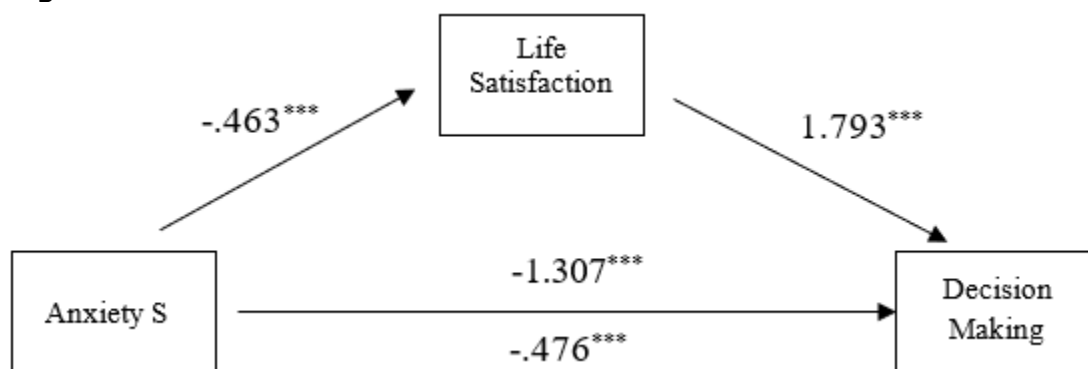
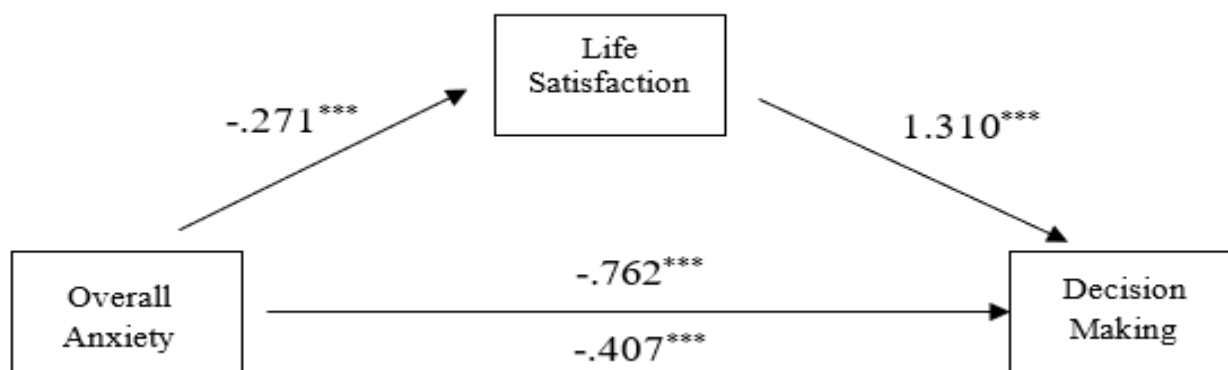
Figure 1: The mediation effect of life satisfaction between anxiety S and decision making**Figure 3: The mediation effect of life satisfaction between overall anxiety and decision-making**

Figure: Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the results of a mediation analysis with life satisfaction as the mediator, anxiety P, anxiety S, and overall anxiety as independent variables, and decision making as the outcome variable (dependent variable). Based on the outcome, we find that P, S, and overall anxiety had a significant and negative relationship with life satisfaction (path a). On the same note, there was a significant positive relationship between decision-making and life satisfaction (through path b). Concerning the direct effect of anxiety P, the path c showed significant negative effects of anxiety P, S, and general anxiety on decision making. In the model where life satisfaction was presented as a mediator, the indirect pathway between the variables of anxiety P, anxiety S, and overall anxiety and decision making was statistically significant (from path c'), which indicated the pathway of life satisfaction as a mediator between the variables of anxiety P, anxiety S, and overall anxiety on decision making.

Table 4: Mediation analysis by using life satisfaction as mediator, while avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance as independent variables, and decision making as outcome variables

Predictors	Path Coefficients				(95% CI)	R ²
	a	b	c	c'		
Avoidance P	-.302***	2.152***	-.845***	-.195***	(-.824, -.523)	.816
Avoidance S	-.352***	2.142***	-.972***	-.217***	(-.926, -.597)	.815
Overall Avoidance	-.190***	2.075***	-.527***	-.134***	(-.496, -.308)	.820

Figure 2: The mediation effect of life satisfaction between avoidance P and decision making

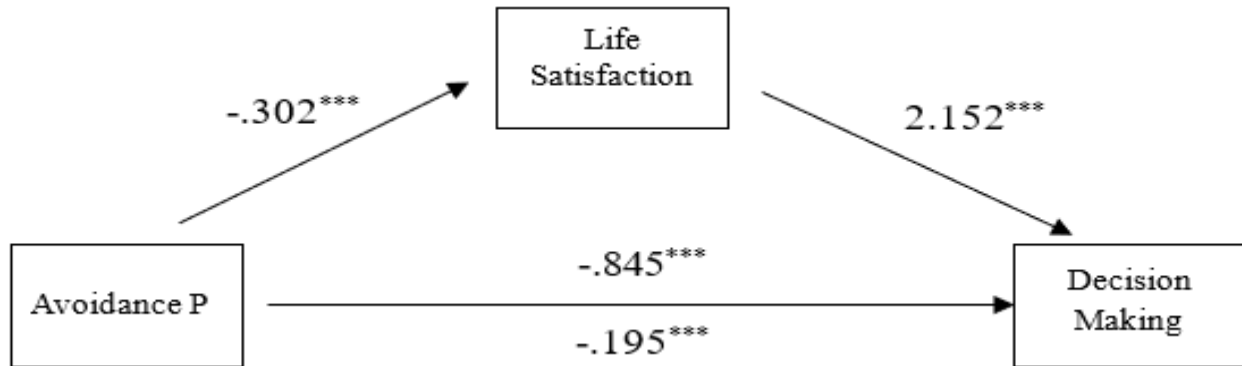


Figure 3: The mediation effect of life satisfaction between avoidance S and decision making

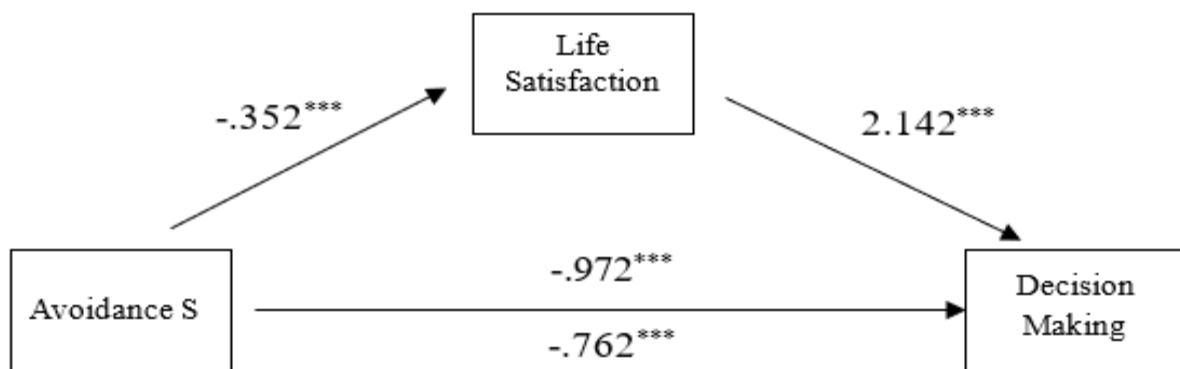


Figure 4: The mediation effect of life satisfaction between overall avoidance and decision making

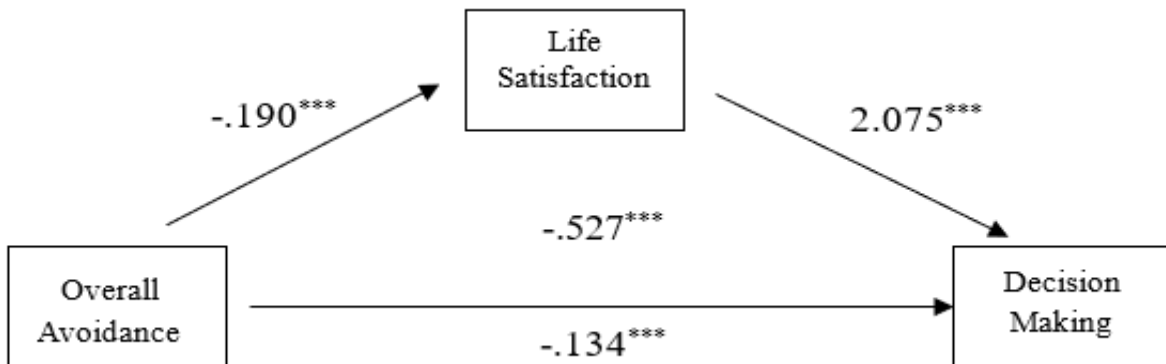


Table 4, figures 4, 5, and 6, show the results of mediation analysis with life satisfaction as mediator while avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance as independent variables, and decision making as outcome variable (dependent variable). Based on the results, it can be seen that avoidance P, avoidance S, and general avoidance had a significant negative relationship with life satisfaction (through path a). In the same way, decision-making was found to be positively and significantly linked to life satisfaction (through path b). Regarding

the direct effect of avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance had significant and negative relationships with decision making (through path c). The indirect pathway between the decision making and the relationship among the path c' of avoidance P, avoidance S, and the overall avoidance was statistically significant when life satisfaction was considered in the model as a mediator.

Table 4: The comparison of decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance between male and female students

Variables	<i>M ± SD</i>		t	p	95% CI	
	Male (n=144)	Female (n=140)			LL	UL
Decision Making	76.38±6.79	72.97±8.53	3.724	.000	1.61	5.20
Life Satisfaction	25.6±2.84	24.79±3.02	2.334	.020	.13	1.50
Anxiety P	16.48±5.43	19.34±4.96	-4.637	.000	-4.10	-1.65
Anxiety S	15.06±4.85	16.36±4.79	-2.277	.024	-2.43	-.18
Anxiety	31.54±9.21	35.71±8.82	-3.893	.001	-6.27	-2.06
Avoidance P	15.94±6.16	18.55±5.38	-3.793	.001	-3.96	-1.26
Avoidance S	14.28±5.25	16.44±5.15	-3.485	.001	-3.37	-.94
Avoidance	30.23±10.57	34.99±9.67	-3.954	.000	-7.13	-2.39

Table 5 represents results for comparison of decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance between male and female students. From the results, we conclude that the levels of decision making and life satisfaction are significantly higher in male students than in female students, while the levels of anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance are significantly higher in female students than in male students.

Table 5: The comparison of decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance between students from urban and rural areas

Variables	<i>M ± SD</i>		T	p	95% CI	
	Urban (n=197)	Rural (n=87)			LL	UL
Decision Making	75.73±9.31	72.37±2.77	3.374	.001	1.40	5.32
Life Satisfaction	25.49±3.26	24.55±5.51	2.498	.013	.20	1.68
Anxiety P	17.37±4.94	19.07±4.75	-2.471	.014	-3.05	-.35
Anxiety S	15.25±4.95	16.74±9.22	-2.400	.017	-2.71	-.27
Anxiety	32.62±8.95	35.8±6.06	-2.708	.007	-5.50	-.87
Avoidance P	16.61±5.37	18.63±5.47	-2.682	.008	-3.51	-.54
Avoidance S	14.66±4.55	16.9±10.73	-3.335	.001	-3.56	-.92
Avoidance	31.27±8.98	35.53±9.67	-3.236	.001	-6.85	-1.67

Table 6 represents results for comparison of decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance between students belonging to urban and rural areas. From the results, we conclude that the levels of decision making and life satisfaction are significantly higher in students belonging to urban areas than those of rural areas, while the levels of anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance are significantly higher in students belonging to rural areas than those of urban areas.

Table 7 represents results for comparison of decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance among different age groups of the students. From the results, we conclude that the levels of decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance are significantly different among different age groups of the students. Furthermore, the maximum difference is found between the age groups up to 20 years and above 22 years.

Table 6: The comparison of decision making, life satisfaction, anxiety P, anxiety S, overall anxiety, avoidance P, avoidance S, and overall avoidance among different age groups of the students

Variables	Age Groups			p-value
	Up to 30 Years (n = 91)	31-40 Years (n = 138)	41-50 Years (n = 55)	
	Mean $\pm$ SD	Mean $\pm$ SD	Mean $\pm$ SD	
Decision Making	72.35 $\pm$ 8.86	75.02 $\pm$ 6.5	77.76 $\pm$ 8.22	.000
Life Satisfaction	24.36 $\pm$ 2.97	25.33 $\pm$ 2.63	26.29 $\pm$ 3.32	.056
Anxiety P	19.64 $\pm$ 5.03	17.62 $\pm$ 4.81	15.69 $\pm$ 6.39	.056
Anxiety S	16.56 $\pm$ 4.53	15.61 $\pm$ 4.86	14.53 $\pm$ 5.16	.056
Anxiety	36.2 $\pm$ 8.47	33.22 $\pm$ 8.64	30.22 $\pm$ 10.72	.000
Avoidance P	18.68 $\pm$ 5.17	16.79 $\pm$ 5.84	15.93 $\pm$ 6.86	.000
Avoidance S	16.78 $\pm$ 4.77	15.07 $\pm$ 5.16	13.67 $\pm$ 5.95	.000
Avoidance	35.46 $\pm$ 8.81	31.86 $\pm$ 10.19	29.6 $\pm$ 12.23	.000

4. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to evaluate if life satisfaction acts as a mediator between the social anxiety and decision-making of university students, as well as how this relationship varies based on gender, residential background, and age. The support of all ten hypotheses provides evidence to suggest social anxiety negatively impacts decision-making, both individually, and through the erosion of life satisfaction. In support of Hypothesis 1, it was the case that all eight study variables exhibited a statistically significant relationship. Individuals with higher levels of social anxiety and avoidance of social and/or performance-related situations reported lower levels of life satisfaction and poor decision-making. This is consistent with existing literature that incorporates anxiety and the depletion of cognitive resources and decision-making (Heimberg, Brozovich, & Rapee, 2010; Wells, 1995). According to the present findings, life satisfaction was shown to be a partial mediator between decision-making and the anxiety and avoidance constructs, in support of Hypotheses 2 and 3. The inclusion of life satisfaction in all the models of this study reduced the direct effect of social anxiety and avoidance on decision-making, and although the effect was lessened, it was never fully eliminated. This suggests that the erosion of life satisfaction and the effect of social anxiety and avoidance on decision-making are both caused by different processes.

The first of these dynamics seems to be the result of social anxiety diminishing overall life satisfaction, which typically provides a basis for making decisions. This is consistent with the broaden-and-build model, which posits that low positive affect diminishes the cognitive flexibility and motivation that decision-making relies on (Fredrickson, 2001; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). The second observes cognitive disruption from anxiety, such as a social threat focus and working memory, that implicate the decision-making process directly and independently from overall life satisfaction (Bruine De Bruin, Parker, & Fischhoff, 2007; Hengen & Alpers, 2021; Khalid et al., 2025). The demographic data was consistent with the rest. Feminine, rural, and younger students consistently reflected the biggest negative impact. This is consistent with the literature on social anxiety, which is relatively more common and more severe among women in non-clinical populations (Morrison & Heimberg, 2013). The rural - urban divide likely has more to do with the anxiety of students themselves and more with the students having greater exposure to rural social and evaluative situations. The biggest negative impact of age on decision-making, anxiety, avoidance, and the life satisfaction, performance, and social anxiety subscales suggests that age-related changes only slightly and slowly impacted the University.

5. Conclusion

Integrating these findings, social anxiety was associated with poorer decision-making in university students through a direct pathway and an indirect pathway involving the role of life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was a significant, consistent partial mediator for both anxiety

and avoidance when related to decision-making. Understanding the role of life satisfaction provides useful insight to services lacking a definitive social anxiety-decision-making link, specifically with the role of life satisfaction as a partial mediator. The survey sample of students from rural regions, younger students, and more females showed poorer social and decision-making outcomes. It was clear from the study that offering support to these students would make a positive impact on university life. This study confirmed that to improve decision-making, counseling services on university campuses do not have to exclusively focus on social anxiety reduction. Based on this study, the direct life satisfaction focus of counseling using participants' personal strengths and offering mentoring and opportunities to gain a sense of control and competence may serve as positive and immediate goal settings. Given the importance of the choices students make during university years, focusing on students' social anxiety and overall life satisfaction may improve the likelihood that students make more positive, well-considered choices about their university experience.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this pushes the broaden-and-build theory into the realm of decision-making and considers life satisfaction as something closer to an active, drawdown resource, as opposed to the pleasant collateral of positive developments. The practical implication derives from the fact that mediation was partial. Counseling services do not need to wait for the anxiety of a decision-making student to completely diminish. Strengths-based approaches that build life satisfaction could advance decision-making, even when anxiety treatment is incomplete. Powell (2025) suggests that screening life satisfaction and anxiety together may identify students at risk of avoidant decision-making. This may allow for more tailored interventions, such as anxiety-based workshops for female students or enhanced transition support for younger, rural students.

5.2. Limitations and Future Directions

These conclusions are subject to multiple limitations. The cross-sectional structure of the study prevents the identification of true causation. It may be the case that poor decision-making negatively impacts life satisfaction instead. The self-reporting used throughout the study introduces the usual common method bias. Adding to this, the anxiety reported by research participants tends to impact the participants' self-assessment. As the sample population came from a single institution, the generalizability to other institutions and other cultures remains unknown. The next steps should be the development of longitudinal studies and interventions to assess the true benefits of purposely increasing life satisfaction in the context of improvement in decision-making. These studies should also address other variables such as self-efficacy, fear of negative evaluation, and social support, as they may provide insight into the same path as life satisfaction.

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