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Impact of Indecisiveness and Anxiety on Decision Making Amongst Adolescents

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I. INTRODUCTION

Decision making the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions. In life, many a times we are faced with a situation in which we must make a decision between two alternatives or more than two. It is this process of choosing just one among two or more alternatives. A choice is made when the decision-maker examines the benefits and drawbacks, analyzes the issue from various angles, seeks counsel, conducts research, and assesses the available information. While making a decision our opinions and action are chosen via mental process that are influences by various things like biases, heuristics, memories etc. Cognitive biases, inherent patterns of thinking can cloud our judgment in the decision-making process. Like the confirmation bias where we loom for information which supports our previous beliefs, while ignoring contradicting information. Decision making is also not always a rational process. Our emotions too play a huge role in the process of decision making.

When we need to decide on a familiar situation, its usually done faster based on past experiences. However, when we are faced with a situation that is completely new it takes time to weigh to benefits and costs of each decision. The process of making decisions typically combines intuition and reason; yet, because important components like blind spots and personal biases are frequently unconscious, it can be challenging to fully understand the decision-making process. To guarantee that people continuously make the best decisions, there are a few procedures that may be taken, such as obtaining as much information as possible, taking into account all of the options available and the associated costs and benefits of each, etc. (*Decision Making*, n.d.)

Indecisiveness refers to the state in which an individual is unable to come to a final decision. Indecision usually happens when we need to make an important stressful decision when we are overwhelmed by the choices and end up searching for information. Anxiety has been linked to neuroticism. These individuals tend to think about everything and anything that may go wrong. Delaying decision making can be thought of as a strategy to delay or avoid the imaginary negative consequences. Indecisive individuals often go great lengths to avoid making a decision and rely on those around them to help them make a decision. Indecision impacts an individuals quality of life as in can cause anxiety, worry, regret, shame, etc.(Hagan, 2021)

Indecisiveness can be problematic as it can prevent individuals from organizing their environment and thoughts in a quick and consistent way. Some individualize over categorize, i.e. they see many different ways in which certain things can be clustered. This can make them slow and unable to act appropriately. Additionally, indecisiveness hinders decision-making since indecisive people hesitate to make decisions and always need more information before they do. Another effect of being indecisive could be that after making a decision, the person begins to question if it was the right one. Furthermore, it appears that indecisive people postpone making decisions since they are often reluctant to do so. Indecision may pertain to the process of decision making. One may argue that being indecisive may impact decision making in a positive way. Due to an innate dread of change and the associated responsibilities, indecisive people are likely to make conservative decisions. Furthermore, it is conceivable that they view unclear circumstances as the "worst case scenario." According to this perspective, being unsure about oneself encourages caution, leading to decisions that are "better safe than sorry." *(Rassin & Muris, 2005).*

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. Anxiety can result in an inability to make decisions at all – and an inability to make *good* decisions. There's solid neuroscience behind the reasons for this. Decision-making happens in the pre-frontal cortex – the front part of your brain. According to research published in The Journal of Neuroscience (2016) anxiety decreases activity in this area. Basically, anxiety slows down and disengages the specific part of your brain that you need to make good decisions. While anxiety can cause indecisiveness, it may, at times, also have the opposite effect. You might make quick, rash decisions in an attempt to avoid anxiety – or because you're not able to think straight due to your emotional state. *(Therapy, 2021).* Anxiety manifests both physically and mentally. Physically it is characterized by uncomfortable activation of many body systems and psychologically as elevated arousal and apprehension which turns into distressing worry, in an attempt to facilitate response to unknown danger.

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Anxiety alerts the body to make changes about what you care about. Occasional bouts of anxiety can be productive. But persistent, pervasive anxiety that disrupts one's normal life can be a marker of an anxiety disorder.

Indecisiveness and anxiety are a two-way phenomenon. Making decisions may cause worry and having anxiety can lead to indecisiveness. The strong connections between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala, the brain area responsible for regulating fear and anxiety, may be the cause of this bidirectional control.

This research topic explores the complex relationship between indecisiveness and anxiety and their combined impact on decision-making processes. It aims to understand how anxiety and indecisiveness influences the decision-making process of an individual.

A. Statement of the Problem

This study is to be conducted on young adults to find out the impact of indecisiveness and anxiety in decision making between genders. The study aims to gather information based on the available resources to gain an understanding and find out if indecisiveness and anxiety have any impact on decision making.

B. Research Objective

To study the impact of indecisiveness and anxiety on decision making, amongst adolescents.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

F. Zhang et al., 2017 in their study the impact of anxiety on behavioral performance in risk and/or unclear decision-making proposes that gender differences may be a confounding factor that has contributed to the diverse results in prior investigations. This is supported by the literature. According to their gender (male/female) and trait anxiety level (high/medium/low; assessed by the Trait form of Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory), the 135 participants in this study were separated into six groups to investigate this hypothesis. All groups successfully completed the Game of Dice Task (GDT) for risk decision-making and the Iowa Gambling Task (IGT) for ambiguous decision-making. The IGT, but not the GDT, demonstrated an interaction between anxiety and gender, according to behavioral outcomes. Men fared better in the IGT than women, but only when they had lower levels of trait anxiety. The GDT revealed a major effect of anxiety grouping, demonstrating that participants who reported low anxiety took more risks than their similarly worried counterparts. These results suggest that whereas risk decision-making is unaffected by gender, the influence of anxiety on ambiguous decisions is.

Windman et al, 2009 in their study with The Iowa gambling task looks into heightened anxiety and risk aversion, two states that are the antithesis of impulsivity and carelessness. Since high anxiety has been associated with increased orbitofrontal brain activation in both healthy populations and individuals with anxiety disorders, positive effects on decision-making were anticipated. The conclusion of this study is that, in a group of adults and children, intolerance for ambiguity is in fact positively connected with overall performance on the Iowa gambling test as well as with anxiety. The findings highlight the protective roles of anxiety and risk aversion as well as their favorable long-term influences on decision-making. These motivations appear to help people think more carefully about the effects of their actions in the future and to switch from previously reinforced behaviors to alternative behaviors when circumstances change.

APA PsycNet, n.d. used a longitudinal method to investigate the relationship between adolescents' indecisiveness and the process of selecting a higher education course of study. At the beginning, middle, and end of Grade 12, a sample of 281 students took part. The results demonstrate that a lack of confidence was a risk factor for future levels of coping with the professional decision-making tasks of broad and in-depth environmental research (amount of information and exploratory behavior), quantity of self-information, decisional status, and commitment. However, the degree of change in decision-making tasks during Grade 12 was unrelated to indecisiveness. The findings also imply that adolescents' concern about making a professional choice mediated the relationship between indecision and the quantity of detailed environmental knowledge, the amount of self-information, decisional status, and commitment. Last but not least, stability data supported the idea that indecisiveness is a trait.

Peng et al., 2013 in their study looked at how trait anxiety affected how individuals frame themselves and make decisions. Trait Anxiety Inventory responses came from participants (N = 1044). The self-frame survey was administered to those with trait anxiety levels that were 1 Z score from the sample mean (N = 328). The findings revealed that variations in trait anxiety may have an impact on the editing of information used to make dangerous decisions. Participants from the high trait anxiety group shown a stronger propensity to use negative language to create their self-frame and tended to make cautious plans in comparison to those from the low trait anxiety group. The influence of trait anxiety on decision-making was decreased by self-frame. These findings supported the idea that personality differences between people may affect how information is processed in framed decision-making tasks.

Patalano & Wengrovitz, 2006 conducted a study that investigated the construct of indecisiveness across sexes and cultures. Undergraduates in China and the United States (73 men and 88 women each) were given the Frost and Shows (1993) Indecisiveness Scale. American indecisiveness was modeled as having two variables: general indecisiveness and planning indecisiveness, but Chinese indecisiveness was modeled as having three factors, with general indecisiveness divided into anxiety- and confidence-related factors. There were no significant group differences in the mean indecisiveness scores, however there were disparities on a few variables. The findings advise using the scale with caution across cultures, but also highlight fascinating cultural differences in the characteristics of indecision.

Rassin & Muris, 2005 discovered that women exhibit greater indecision than men. Additionally, impulsivity had a negative correlation with life satisfaction but a positive correlation with a number of obsessive-compulsive complaints (such as checking and ruminating). Finally, the number of participants who gave do-not-know responses on a scale that asked them to rate political statements was correlated with indecision. The latter study shows that people who lack decisiveness not only take longer to make judgments, but also end up not making any decisions at all.

Germeijs & Verschueren, 2011 in another study looked at how indecision relates to the Big Five personality traits and how indecision differs from the Big Five traits in terms of its ability to forecast decisional issues. A group of 543 teenagers were monitored from the start of grade 12 to the finish. The most significant association between neuroticism and indecision was found. Three clusters that mirrored the overcontrolled, under controlled, and resilient clusters from earlier research were found using cluster analysis on the Big Five criteria. The overcontrolled cluster scored higher on indecision than the resilient cluster, which displayed the lowest values. Finally, evidence for the specificity of indecision was provided by the fact that the effect of indecision on decisional tasks remained substantial after adjusting for the Big Five characteristics.

APA PsycNet, n.d.-b. conducted a study that concentrated on the relationship between depression and professional decision-making challenges, career-decision status, and career-preference crystallization. A sample of 222 college seniors was used to test the hypothesis that higher levels of professional decision-making difficulties, less advanced decision status, and lower levels of preference crystallization are linked to higher levels of depression symptoms. Additionally, it was predicted that males would have larger connections between occupational characteristics and depression than females due to the fact that stressors related to the workplace are more frequently linked to depression in men than in women. The participants completed online self-report questionnaires to gauge their career decision-making status, career preferences, and emotional and personality-related career decision-making challenges. According to the findings, depressive symptoms were linked to self-concept and identity-related job decision-making challenges in both men and women. Less crystallization of occupational interests also predicted higher levels of depression symptoms for males but not for women.

Rassin & Muris, 2005b found that decision delay, the amount of information needed to make a decision, and unwillingness to make a decision have all been linked to indecisiveness. The potential impact of indecision on the nature of decisions was investigated in this study. A measure evaluating indecision was completed by fifty female college students, who then rated several situation descriptions as either troubling or not concerning. The number of uncertain circumstances that were classified as worrying linked with scores on the indecisiveness scale. After adjusting for anxiety, sadness, worry-proneness, and intolerance of ambiguity, this connection was still there. Evidently, indecision encourages worst-case scenario thinking because indecisive people are more likely to see ambiguous situations as dangerous.

Lo Cascio et al., 2013 looked at the distinctive and typical effects of anxiety, self-esteem, and family communication on adolescents' indecision. 350 students, ranging in age from 13 to 16, answered self-report questionnaires on indecision, family communication, trait anxiety, and self-esteem. The results of this study demonstrated that family communication, through anxiety and self-esteem, predicts students' indecisiveness. These findings have significant practical consequences because they highlight the significance of anxiety and self-esteem. Byrnes, 2002 found that adolescents maybe less competent in making decisions than adults in areas such as advice seeking, adaptive goal setting, evaluation processes etc. however can have similar levels of competence in areas such as making decisions in a variety of areas, familiarity with options etc.

A. Research Question(s)

1) Is there a relationship between indecisiveness and decision-making
2) Is there a relationship between anxiety and decision-making.
3) Is there an influence of indecisiveness on decision-making
4) Does anxiety have any influence on decision making
5) Is there a gender difference in indecisiveness

6) Is there a gender difference in anxiety
7) Is there a gender difference in decision making

B. Hypothesis

1) There is no significant relationship between anxiety and decision making.
2) There is no significant relationship between indecisiveness and decision making.
3) There is no impact of anxiety on decision-making.
4) There is no impact of indecisiveness on decision making.
5) There is no significant gender difference in anxiety.
6) There is no significant gender difference in decision-making.
7) There is no significant gender difference in indecisiveness.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Sample

The sample portion consists of the number of participants involved in the study, the sampling technique or the method used in selecting the final participants from the population and how the sampling technique was applied. This section also gives reasons as for why these measures were chosen in particular for this study.

B. Sample Size

The sample size consisted of 203 participants, including both male and female.

C. Sampling Procedure

The sample population for the study is young adults from the ages of 18 to 25, using convenience sampling from Delhi, Assam and Bangalore. Data was collected by sharing the google form link.

1) *Inclusion Criteria*

- Participants between the ages of 18 to 25 were selected
- Only male and female gender are included
- Should be an Indian resident

2) *Exclusion Criteria*

- Lack of proficiency in English
- Participants form the same family
- Participants with chronic physical and mental health issues were excluded
- People with disability are excluded

D. Operational Definition

1) Decision making is the cognitive process of selecting a course of action from among multiple alternatives based on an evaluation of available information, preferences, goals, and constraints. It involves identifying a problem or opportunity, gathering relevant data, analyzing potential options, weighing the pros and cons, and ultimately choosing the most suitable option or course of action to achieve a desired outcome or objective
2) Indecisiveness is characterized by a prolonged or habitual difficulty in making choices or reaching decisions, often resulting in hesitation, uncertainty, or avoidance of commitment. It involves a pattern of hesitancy, wavering, or procrastination when faced with multiple options or decisions, leading to delays, frustration, or a sense of being stuck in the decision-making process.
3) Anxiety is a psychological state characterized by feelings of apprehension, nervousness, worry, or unease, often accompanied by physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, or muscle tension. It involves a subjective sense of impending danger, fear of uncertainty, or anticipation of negative outcomes, which may interfere with daily functioning, decision making, and overall well-being.

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E. Research Design

This study employs a descriptive research design , quantitative research.

F. Variables

1) *Indecisiveness:* It refers to the inability to make a decision
2) *Anxiety:* Is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome
3) *Decision Making:* The process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.

G. Tools for the Study

1) *Decision Making Questionnaire:* The "Decision-Making Questionnaire" (DMQ) by De Acedo Lizarraga et al. (2009) is a 15-item scale developed and validated in order to examine the factors that affect decision making.
2) *Indecisiveness Scale:* The Indecisiveness Scale by Randy O. Frost and Deanna L. Shows was designed to assess how individuals approach decision situations, specifically the tendency of individuals to postpone decisions. 15 items using 5-point ratings (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Reliability: .87
3) *Becks Anxiety Inventory:* This is a 21 item self-report measure of anxiety. Developed by Aron Beck to measure severity of anxiety in children and adults. Reliability: .75

H. Procedure

The study was conducted to find out the significant difference in the impact of indecisiveness and anxiety on decision making between genders. It used a quantitative research method, which consisted of 203 participants between the ages of 18 to 25. .Students from various educational institutes were approached. Informed consent was taken before collecting data from participants.

I. Data Analysis

Correlational analysis was employed to explore the relationships between indecisiveness, anxiety, and decision-making. Independent t test is carried out to understand the differences in gender. Regression Analysis allows us to quantify the extent to which anxiety and indecisiveness influence decision-making.

J. Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality will be upheld, and participants will be requested for their voluntary consent to take part in the study. The responses received will be treated with the utmost respect and used solely for the study's purposes and only in aggregate form. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time. Additionally, they may opt to use initials rather than their full names to preserve their confidentiality. Participants are also encouraged to reach out to the researcher with any inquiries or concerns throughout the duration of the study. Sources shall be cited and plagiarism will be checked for in the study. The study followed all the required ethical guidelines prescribed by the American Psychological Association

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to study the Impact of indecisiveness and anxiety on decision making amongst adolescents. The study was conducted on 203 students. The sample was collected from students from both Undergraduates and Postgraduates. Sample was collected through a google form with informed consent of individuals.

Table 1 shows mean , Standard deviation and correlation between anxiety and decision-making

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	r
1. Decision making	203	77.65	8.01	-	.002	-.22
2. Anxiety		14.21	13.10			

*$p < .05$.

Table 1 shows the Pearson correlation between decision making and anxiety. The mean and standard deviation for decision making was found to be 77.65 and 8.01. For anxiety the mean and standard deviation was found to be 14.21 and 13.10 respectively. The result was found to be negatively correlated, with a significance of .002 at 0.05 significance level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, stating that there is no relationship between decision making and anxiety, which indicates that individuals with high levels of anxiety have poor decision making skills and vice versa. Findings contradict with previous research on "The role of anxiety in decision making" which used the Iowa Gambling task to investigate a state namely enhance anxiety and risk tolerance. It was found that there is a positive association between anxiety and decision making (Kirsch, Windman, 2009).

Table 2 shows mean, standard deviation and correlation between indecisiveness and decision-making

Variable	N	M	SD	1	r
1.Decision making	203	77.65	8.01	-	-.48
2.Indecisiveness		42.90	8.99	.002	

*$p < .05$.

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation between indecisiveness and decision making. The result was found to be that there was a negative correlation between decision making and indecisiveness, at 0.01 significance level ($r = -.48$, $*p < .05$). This indicates that when one variable increases the other decreases. The mean and standard deviation for decision making was found to be 77.65 and 8.01 respectively, while the mean and standard deviation for indecisiveness was found to be 42.90 and 8.99. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected, stating that there is no significant relationship between indecisiveness and decision making. Findings contradict with previous research on "Indecisiveness and response to risk in deciding when to decide", which indicate that indecisive individuals may not necessarily delay decisions more than others in all situations, however, their delay behavior is characterized by a lack of responsiveness to risk. This indicates a distinct pattern of decision-making behavior among indecisive individuals in risk conditions (Patalano & Wengrovitz, 2007).

Table 3 shows the impact of anxiety on decision making

Variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	F	P
Decision making Anxiety(constant)	.219	.048	.043	-.219	10.096	.002

*$p < .05$.

Table 3 shows the impact of anxiety on decision making using regression. It was found that anxiety and decision making are statistically significant at 0.01 significance level with a significance of .002 ($r = .002$, $*p < .05$) . This indicates that the model as a whole is statistically significant, suggesting that at least one of the independent variables has a significant impact on the dependent variable. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, stating that there is no impact of anxiety on decision making. Findings align with previous research on "The impact of trait anxiety on self frame and decision making". Which indicated that individuals who are generally more anxious tend to focus more on the negative aspect of decision making and prefer safer choices, however, if they have a strong sense of self and confidence (self-frame), it can help them make decisions that aren't overly influenced by their anxiety. (Peng et al., 2013)

Table 4 showing the impact of indecisiveness on decision-making

Variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	F	P
Decision making Indecisiveness (constant)	.481	.232	.228	-.418	60.636	.000

Table 4 shows us the impact of indecisiveness and decision making. It has been found that indecisiveness and decision making are statistically significant at 0.01 level, with a significance of .000. The regression model suggests that anxiety enhances decision making. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, stating that there is no impact of indecisiveness in decision making. Findings align with previous research on "The role of anxiety in decision making" which used the Iowa Gambling task to investigate a state namely enhance anxiety and risk tolerance. They found that heightened anxiety appears to enhance performance among children, aligning their performance more closely with that of typical adults. Similarly, anxious adults exhibit superior performance compared to their non-anxious counterparts (Kirsch, Windman, 2009).

Table 5 shows Gender difference in anxiety

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	P
Anxiety	Male	203	9.68	9.81	5.53	.00
	Female	203	19.23	13.89		

*$p < .05$.

Table 5 shows the gender difference in anxiety. The results showed the mean for females to be 19.23 and the standard deviation to be 13.89. While for males the mean and standard deviation were 9.68 and 9.81 respectively. As we can see in table 5, there is a significant gender difference in anxiety, in which males tend to show lower levels of anxiety than females with a significance of .000, at 0.01 significance level implying that the gender difference is statistically significant. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, stating that there is no significant gender difference in anxiety. Findings align with previous research on "Gender differences in anxiety: The mediating role of sensitivity to unpredictable threat". Which examined sensitivity to unpredictable threats as a potential mechanism of gender differences in panic symptoms. Results found that women tend to experience more intense panic symptoms than men. They also tend to be more reactive to both expected and unexpected threats (Burani & Nelson, 2020).

Table 6 shows gender difference in decision making

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	P
Decision making	Male	203	78.68	7.86	-1.90	.76
	Female	203	76.54	8.06		

*$p < .05$.

Table 6 shows the gender difference in decision making. The results showed the mean for females as 76.54 and standard deviation as 8.07, whereas the mean for males was found to be 78.68 and standard deviation as 7.86, indicating that males have a slightly higher decision making score . It was found that there is no statistically significant difference in decision-making behavior between the two groups, regardless of whether the assumption of equal variances is upheld or not. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, stating that there is no significant difference between genders in decision making. Findings align with previous research on "Difference in gender attitude in investment decision making in India", which examined the differences in investment decision making process between female and male investors. Results indicated higher levels of awareness for males than females for different investment awareness. Moreover, female investors were shown to display less confidence in their investment decisions (Arti et al., 2011).

Table 7 shows gender difference in indecisiveness

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	P
Indecisiveness	Male	203	40.59	8.15	4.07	.55
	Female	203	45.57	9.19		

*$p < .05$.

Table 7 shows the gender difference in indecisiveness. The results showed the mean for females to be 45.57 and the standard deviation to be 9.194, and for males the mean was found to be 40.59 and the standard deviation was 8.155, indicating that females have higher levels of indecisiveness compared to males.

There is a significant gender difference in indecisiveness with a significance of .554 at 0.05 significance level, implying that the gender difference is statistically significant. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected, stating that there is no significant gender difference in indecisiveness. Findings align with previous research on "To be or not to be … indecisive: Gender differences, correlations with obsessive–compulsive complaints, and behavioral manifestation", which found that women tend to have higher levels of indecisiveness than men (Rassin & Muris, 2005a).

V. CONCLUSION

The goal of the study was to find out the significant difference in the impact of indecisiveness and anxiety while also studying if there is a difference in gender. The results showed a significant relationship between the variables anxiety and decision making and indecisiveness and decision making. It showed a negative relationship indicating that when one variable increases the other decreases and vice versa. It was found that there is a significant difference between genders in anxiety and indecisiveness. However, decision making was seen to be higher in males.

A. Limitations

The study may have had several limitations. Firstly, reliance on self-report measures for assessing indecisiveness, anxiety, and decision-making may introduce response bias. Participants may give answers that are more acceptable rather than being completely honest about their opinions. Secondly, the study may suffer from sampling bias. Since the sample was taken from a smaller population, it may not generalize to a wider population. Thirdly, confounding variables such as personality traits, cognitive abilities, and life experiences were not taken into account.

B. Future Scope

1) Further studies can be done to investigate potential moderating variables that may influence the relationship between anxiety/indecisiveness and decision-making. Factors such as personality traits, coping strategies, and cognitive abilities could moderate the strength of this relationship and warrant further investigation.
2) Longitudinal studies can be conducted to examine how the relationship between anxiety/indecisiveness and decision-making evolves over time.
3) Cross cultural study can be done to investigate cultural differences.
4) Identifying gender role expectations and socialization influence the experience and expression of anxiety and indecisiveness in decision-making contexts can be further studied.

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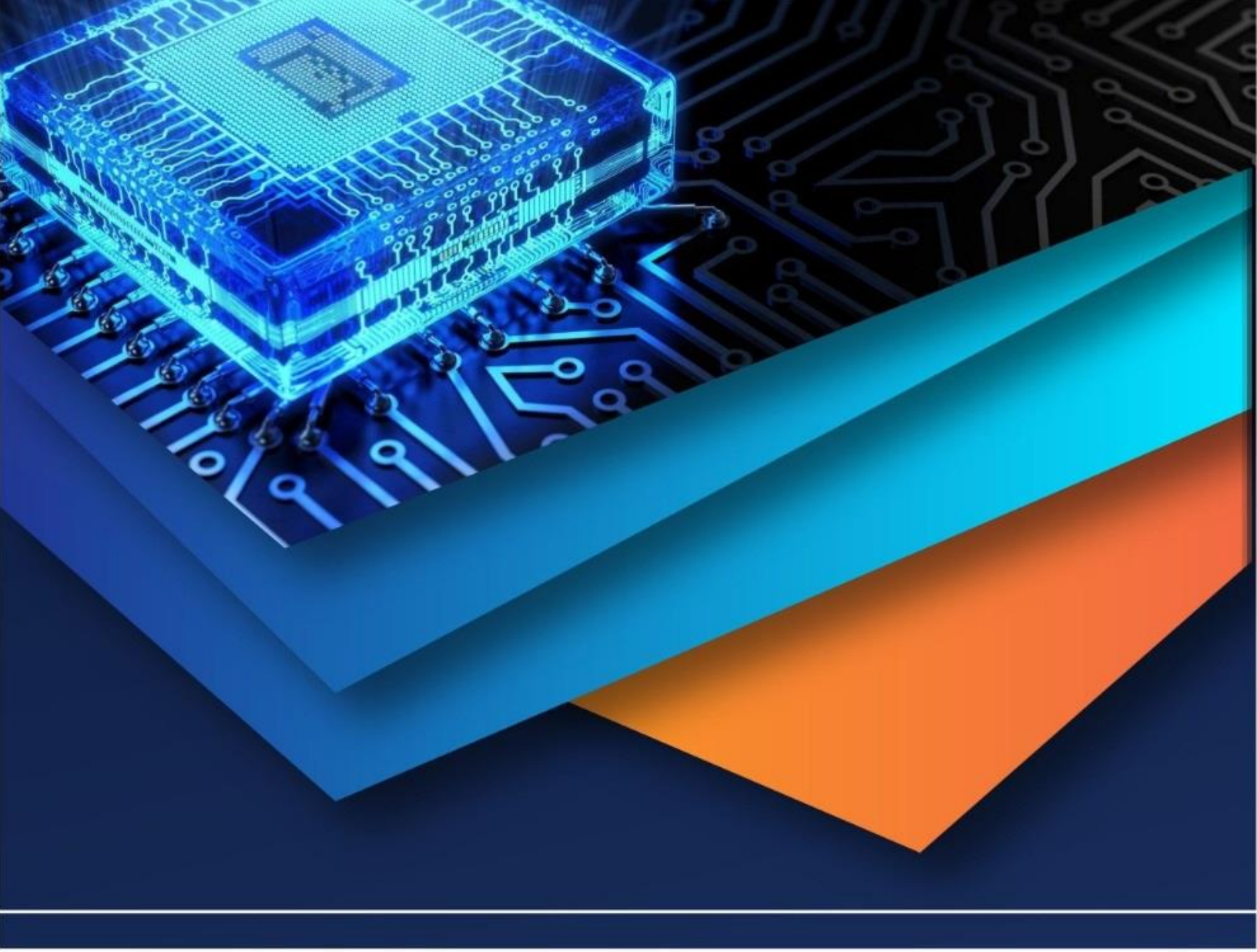
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