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Sensation Seeking and Impulsivity Among Young Adults: Predictors of Risky Behavior

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Abstract: ***This study examines the relationship between sensation seeking, impulsivity, and engagement in risky behaviors among young adults. 220 individuals, aged 18 to 25, filled out self-report questionnaires measuring their , sensation seeking (Brief Sensation Seeking Scale), impulsivity (Barratt Impulsiveness Scale), and risky behavior engagement (Risk Taking Questionnaire). Correlation analysis and Regression were used to examine the predictive power of impulsivity and sensation seeking for engaging in risky behavior. Mann Whitney U Test was conducted to check the gender differences in sensation seeking and impulsivity. The results show strong positive associations between sensation seeking, impulsivity, and engaging in risky behaviors. Among young adults, sensation seeking and impulsivity are important predictors of engaging in risky behavior. indicating that a higher levels of sensation seeking and impulsivity is associated with a greater chance of young people engaging in risky behaviors. In contrast to females, males were more inclined to seek out sensations. Impulsivity, however, didn't show any apparent gender differences among Young Adults. These findings highlight the importance of understanding how personality factors influence behavior and provide guidance for focused interventions meant to lower risky behaviors in this population.***

Keywords: Sensation seeking, impulsivity, risky behavior, young adults

I. INTRODUCTION

There's a lot going on behind the surface of the busy world of young adulthood, where opportunities seem limitless. It's a period for discovery, curiosity, and the excitement of novel encounters. But beneath all the glamour, there's a deeper force at work, something that inspires youth to take chances and seek out adventure. (Quinn, P. D., & Harden, K. P. 2013) Especially young adults have long been drawn to unusual and stimulating experiences that push the limits whether they be traveling to undiscovered regions or seeking the thrill of risky endeavours. (Arnett, J. J. 2000).

Beyond geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers, the appeal of dangerous behaviors—from drug use and reckless driving to unsafe sexual encounters—continues to captivate the human experience (Charnigo, R et al.,2013)). These actions have consequences, despite the fact that they are frequently filled with excitement and delight. They have a significant negative impact on people's health, happiness, and society as a whole, leading to mishaps, accidents, injuries, and the wide-ranging spread of illnesses.(O'Jile, J. R et al.,2004).

In early twenties, just beginning to discover the identity and goals in life there is a constant pull to try new things, meet new people, and push the boundaries of what's possible. This feeling is called sensation seeking. It's like a hunger for excitement and stimulation that drives you to seek out thrills and adventures wherever you can find them. (Arnett, J. J. 2005). High levels of sensation seeking are associated with a thirst for excitement, adventure, and stimulation, often manifesting in engagement with risky behaviors such as substance abuse, reckless driving, and thrill-seeking activities (Roberti, J.W. 2004). It is believed that neurobiological variables affecting reward sensitivity and arousal regulation are the source of this tendency for novelty and excitement (Zuckerman, 2014), establishing sensation seeking as a major indicator of engaging in risky behaviors among young adults.

In the search of new experiences, sensation seekers might involve in impulsive behaviors without fully considering the possible consequences. They are frequently driven by the need for instant satisfaction and rewards. (Carver, C. S., & White, T. L. 1994). This is where the subject of impulsivity arises.

Hence, along with sensation seeking comes another trait: impulsivity. It's the tendency to act without thinking things through, to go with your gut instinct, even if it means taking risks or making impulsive decisions. (Evenden, 1999). They might put short-term thrills and pleasure ahead of long-term objectives or consequences, which could result in impulsive decisions and behaviors intended to satisfy their needs and desires (Dickman, S. J. 1990).

Impulsivity can be both exhilarating and dangerous, leading you to dive headfirst into situations without fully considering the consequences.

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People with high levels of impulsivity frequently struggle to control their impulses and postpone gratification, which makes them more likely to act impulsively and dangerously. (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001).

Despite being separate concepts, impulsivity and sensation seeking commonly overlap and have a combined effect on young adults' risky behaviors (Steinberg et al., 2008). Sensation seeking may encourage people to go for new experiences, while impulsivity increases the possibility of making quick choices in the hopes of getting instant benefits. (Cyders & Smith, 2008).

Risky behavior is defined as a broad category of behaviors that carry a high potential for negative outcomes. It is an important health and wellbeing problem, especially for young adults. Risk taking is the intentional or unintentional exposure to a possibility for harm or loss. Taking risks is a major component of many diseases and an important determinant of health. (de Haan L et al.,2011)

Risky behaviors are defined as those that involve taking risks or participating in activities with unclear results (Byrnes et al., 1999). These developmental stages are marked by increased autonomy, exploration, and experimentation, and they frequently occur between adolescence and early adulthood. Substance abuse, risky sexual activity, careless driving, and involvement in risky activities are typical examples of risky behaviors. Sensation seeking and impulsivity have emerged as significant predictors of risk-taking tendency among young people. The desire to participate in risky behaviors is impacted by a variety of individual, social, and environmental factors (Cross et al., 2011).

Young adults are more prone to carry out risky behaviors. Impulsivity and sensation seeking are strong indicators of a variety of dangerous behaviors in young adults, such as substance abuse, unsafe sexual activity, careless driving, and sensation-seeking activities. (Lejuez et al., 2002). For the purpose of developing targeted interventions and preventive measures, it is essential to comprehend the fundamental mechanisms associating certain personality traits to risky behavior.

The interaction between personality qualities and the tendency for taking risks is one aspect of human psychology that has attracted growing interest in this search. Sensation seeking and impulsivity are at the forefront of these characteristics as identifying characteristics that define them. (Cyders, M A al.,2007)

A number of theoretical frameworks, such as the Dual Systems Model (Steinberg et al., 2008), provide insightful information about the complex connections between cognitive, affective, and psychological mechanisms that underlie young adults' impulsivity, sensation seeking, and risk-taking behavior. This concept suggests that sensation seeking and impulsivity can be caused by decreased activity in the cognitive control system, which controls impulsive behavior, and increased activity in the socioemotional system, which seeks thrills and rewards. This model implies that making risky decisions could be influenced by the imbalance between these systems.

In this research paper, we'll explore the fascinating world of sensation seeking and impulsivity among young adults. We'll delve into what these traits are, how they develop, and why they matter. We'll also examine how sensation seeking and impulsivity might predict risky behaviors like substance abuse, unsafe sex, and dangerous driving.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between sensation seeking, impulsivity, and engagement in risky behaviors among young adults.

Specifically, it seeks to explore whether individuals with higher levels of sensation seeking and impulsivity are more likely to engage in risky behaviors and whether these associations are affected or mediated by other demographic, psychological, or environmental factors. The study will also look into any potential gender differences in the associations between these factors, as well as the implications for public health initiatives and preventive measures.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although it is known that among college students, sensation seeking increases the chance of engaging in risky and impulsive behavior, its relationship to wellbeing is unclear. D Ravel et al., (2013)explored the possible link between sensation seeking and the well being in college students. For the study, 8,020 undergraduate students from 27 American colleges and universities who were studying psychology, sociology and family studies were selected for the research. The research showed a positive correlation between risk behavior and psychological well-being and sensation seeking. Upon examining the sensation seeking aspects individually, it was discovered that well-being was linked to high levels of sensation seeking but low levels of intensity seeking.

In the study conducted by Khodarahimi (2015) a sample of young Iranian adults were taken to evaluate the influence of gender on these variables as well as the relationship between sensation-seeking and risk-taking behaviors. The study also analyzed the function of sensation-seeking in predicting risk-taking. 208 females and 92 males from the Iranian province of Fars made up the randomly chosen sample. The participants were residents of the city of Eghlid. The findings showed a significant relationship between the DOSPERT and its subscales and sensation seeking and its subscales.

A total of 16% of the variability in risk-taking behavior was explained by sensation seeking. Additionally, it was discovered that in the constructs of sensation-seeking and risk-taking behavior, men scored substantially higher than women.

A study was conducted by Donohew et al.,(2000) on HIV prevention to assess sensation seeking and impulsive decision making, as well as their individual and combined links to many evidence of sexual risk-taking, For the majority of the measures, there were strong correlations found between each of the variables and taking sexual risks. Students who were sexually active showed the strongest correlations with sensation seeking and impulsive decision-making.

When it comes to sensation-seeking—which is characterized as a willingness to engage in challenging or unusual activities—men score higher than women Cross (2013) .This study observed the sex differences in disinhibition and boredom susceptibility, as well as sex differences in total SSS-V scores, have not changed over time. the findings validate the idea that men and women are different. Sensation-seeking behaviors have varying behavioral manifestations, but they are consistent in their tendency to report sensation-seeking features.

Two personality traits that are usually linked to risky behaviors, such as gambling are sensation seeking and impulsivity. To prove this Langewisch and Fisch(1998) have conducted a research to investigate the relationship between impulsivity, sensation seeking, risky behavior, and gambling. A total of 124 male undergraduate students at a university filled out questionnaires . A significant number of participants fell into the category of pathological gamblers. In addition, a significant difference was observed in the associations between gambling scores and sensation seeking, impulsivity, and risky behaviors in the pathological and non-pathological groups. The degree of gambling pathology in pathological gamblers was not correlated with their scores on impulsivity and sensation seeking measures. On the other hand, there was a correlation observed between the impulsivity and sensation seeking scores of non-pathological gamblers and their gambling pathology scores.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Design:*

Correlational research design including both descriptive and inferential statistics

B. *Objectives:*

1) To examine the relationship between sensation seeking, impulsivity and engagement in risky behavior.
2) To study if there are gender differences in impulsivity.
3) To analyse gender differences in sensation seeking.
4) To find the impact of sensation seeking and impulsivity on the engagement in risky behavior among young adults.

C. *Hypothesis:*

1) H1: There is a significant relationship between sensation seeking, impulsivity and engagement in risky behavior ie, individuals with higher levels of sensation seeking and impulsivity are more likely to engage in risky behavior.
2) H2: There is significant difference between male and female in sensation seeking
3) H3: There is significant difference between male and female in impulsivity
4) H4: Sensation seeking and impulsivity has an impact on the engagement in risky behaviors..

D. *Variables*

Sensation seeking, Impulsivity and Risky behavior are the three variables of the study. Risky behavior is the dependent variable and Sensation Seeking and Impulsivity are the independent variables.

E. *Sample Distribution*

The sample includes Young adults with the age of 18 years to 25 years. 110 males and 110 females are the sample for the study.

F. *Inclusion Criteria*

Young Adults age between 18- 25 years.
Young adults who can read and understand English.
Young adults who are still studying.

G. Exclusion Criteria:

Young adults who have cognitive impairments or intellectual disabilities.
Young adults who do not identify as male or female.
Participants who have mental health issues.

H. Research ethics followed

Informed consent was taken from the participants and confidentiality was assured. The participant was also informed about the right to withdraw from the study. Both the scoring process and adherence to the norms of the study's instruments were maintained.

I. Tools for the study:

1) Brief Sensation Seeking Scale given by Hoyle et al., (2002), for measuring the dimensions of sensation seeking,
2) Revised version Baratt Impulsiveness Scale-21 originally published by Patton et, al(1995) to measure the impulsive levels,
3) Risk Taking scale which was revised from 65 items to 18 items to measure the risky behavior of participants.

J. Description of tools

1) *Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (BSSS 8)* is a psychological assessment tool that measures an individual's optimal level of stimulation or sensation-seeking. The BSSS-8 consists of eight items that represent four primary dimensions of sensation seeking: Experience seeking, Boredom susceptibility, Thrill and adventure seeking, and Disinhibition which were given by Zukerman . Alpha: .745, omega coefficient: .747 which showed the reliability of the scale. The scale has been found to have suitable item characteristics and internal consistency across age, sex, and ethnic categories. Higher the scores higher the sensation seeking. Reliability analyses have shown that the BSSS-8 has acceptable internal consistency
2) *Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-R-21)* (Patton ,Stanford, & Barratt, 1995). The original scale is a self-report questionnaire consisted of 30 items that assess six first-order factors (attention, motor, self-control, cognitive complexity, perseverance, cognitive instability) and three second-order factors (attention impulsiveness, motor impulsiveness, and non-planning impulsiveness). Cronbach's alpha score usually higher than 0.7 for the first-order and second-order factors, and ranging between 0.62 and 0.80 for the total BIS score. The items are scored on a four point scale (Rarely/Never [1], occasionally [2], Often [3], Almost Always/Always [4]). For the purposes of this study the total score is obtained, the higher the total score is the higher impulsivity personality trait. The internal consistency was 0.79 to 0.83. The scale was revised in the year 2020 and reduced to 21 items with better validity and reliability.
3) *Risk-Taking Scale (RT-18):* Subscales measuring impulsivity and venturesomeness were included in the original 65-item risk-taking questionnaire. One can reply to questions with "yes" or "no". A total score may range from 0 to 65, with each question having a value of either 0 or 1. Using a forward-step regression analysis, the 65-item questionnaire was condensed to 18 items while maintaining 91% of its predictive validity. Test-retest reliability was suggested by an RT-18 mean score of 7.69 (95% CI: 7.33–8.05), a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, and a r = 0.94 (P < 0.0001) value.

K. Statistical Analysis:

The results were analyzed using correlation to understand the relationship between the variables, Mann Whitney test to find the difference among males andfemales and multiple linear regression to understand the impact of sensation seeking and impulsivity on risky behaviors.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

(H1): There is a significant relationship between sensation seeking, impulsivity and engagement in risky behavior among young adults

Table 1. showing Spearman correlation between sensation seeking, impulsivity and risky behavior

	Sensation seeking	*Impulsivity*	*Risky behavior*
Sensation Seeking	1	.290**	.579**
Impulsivity	.290**	1	.385**
Risky Behavior	.579**	.385**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Spearman correlation was conducted. Table 1 shows a correlation of r= .290**, (p<0.01) for sensation seeking and impulsivity which means there is positive relationship between sensation seeking and impulsivity. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between impulsivity and sensation seeking, which means higher levels of sensation seeking tend to exhibit higher levels of impulsivity. The correlation coefficient is .579** for sensation seeking and risky behavior which shows a strong and positive association between sensation seeking and risky behavior. This suggests that, in contrast to impulsivity, the individuals who score higher on sensation seeking are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. The correlation coefficient between impulsivity and sensation seeking is .290** which indicates a positive and significant relationship with sensation seeking. Though the relationship is moderate, individuals with high impulsivity are more likely to have higher levels of sensation seeking. The correlation coefficient of .385** shows a significant and positive relationship between impulsivity and risky behavior. This implies that, although the moderate correlation, people who are more impulsive are also more prone to participate in risky behaviors. The correlation coefficient of .579** of risky behavior indicates a positive and significant relationship with sensation seeking. There is a clear association between increased risk-taking behavior and higher levels of sensation seeking in individuals. The correlation coefficient of .385** indicates a substantial and positive association between risky conduct and impulsivity. Though the association is somewhat moderate, people who are more impulsive are also more prone to engage in risky behaviors.

Hence, the hypothesis (H1), there is a significant relationship between sensation seeking, impulsivity and engagement in risky behavior among young adults was accepted which indicates that individuals with higher levels of sensation seeking and impulsivity are more likely to engage in risky behavior.

H2: There is a significant difference among male and female in sensation seeking

Table 2: shows the Mann- Whitney U Test results for gender differences in sensation seeking.

Gender	N	Mean rank	Sumof ranks	U	Z	P	Inference
				4229.000	-3.864	.000	Hypothesis accepted
Male	110	127.05	13976.00				
Female	110	93.95	10334.00				

Table 2 shows the gender differences of participants in sensation seeking which were evaluated using the Mann-Whitney U-test. A statistically significant difference between males and females was found in the study (U = 4229.000, Z = -3.864, p <.001). In particular, men showed more sensation seeking than women (Mean rank = 93.95, Sum of ranks = 10334.00; mean = 127.05, Sum of ranks = 13976.0). This data supports the theory that gender influences sensation seeking by indicating that men tend to participate in more sensation-seeking behaviors than women.

Hence, the second hypothesis (H2) is thus accepted , ie, there is a significant difference between male and female in sensation seeking.

H3: There is a significant difference between male and female in impulsivity

Table 3: shows the Mann- Whitney U Test results for gender differences in sensation seeking.

Gender	N	Mean rank	Sumof ranks	U	Z	P	Inference
				5270.000	-1.654	.098	Hypothesis rejected
Male	110	117.59	12935.00				
Female	110	103.41	11375.00				

Table 3 shows the Mann-Whitney U-test which was conducted to examine gender differences in impulsivity. The results of the test showed that the differences in impulsivity scores between males and females were statistically significant (U = 5270.000, Z = -1.654, p =.098). However, the p-value (.098) is higher than the standard alpha level of.05, meaning that the outcome is not statistically significant at the.05.

Therefore, based on the evidence examined, it can be concluded that there is no significance difference in impulsivity between males and females. Rejecting the third hypothesis (H3) ie, there is a significant difference between male and female in impulsivity.
H4: Sensation seeking and impulsivity has an impact on the engagement in risky behaviors..

Table 4: Shows the results of multiple regression test of the sample

Variable	R Square	R square	Adjusted R square	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients SE	Standardized Coefficients β	F	Sig.
	.638	.407	.402				74.521	
Sensation Seeking				.321	.033	.526		.000
Impulsivity				.102	.024	.236		.000

a.Dependent variable: Risky behavior

Table 4 shows the multiple regression of sensation seeking and impulsivity. Multiple linear regression was calculated to assess the influence of sensation seeking and impulsivity in the engagement of risky behavior among young adulthood. According to the table , a significant regression equation was found, F = 74.521, (P<.000), with an R square of .407, p=.000 and R adjusted square= .402. An increase in sensation seeking lead to an increase in risky behavior (B= .321). Impulsivity also significantly predicted risky behavior =.236, p= .000 . For each extra score of impulsivity, the risky behavior score increase (B = .102) . Hence both the variables have a significant impact on risk behaviors in young adults. The higher the sensation seeking and impulsivity the higher the risky behavior.

V. CONCLUSION

The results highlights the complex connection that exists between impulsivity, sensory seeking, and risky behavior among young people. The significant correlations found between these variables show how crucial it is to take into account differences in personality traits when dealing with risk-taking behaviors. There were no apparent gender differences in impulsivity, while men showed stronger tendencies toward sensation seeking. These findings highlight the need for individualized approaches that take gender-specific patterns of risk propensity into account in order to encourage cautious decision-making and decrease risk-taking behaviors. For the purpose to guide more specialized preventative and intervention initiatives, further research is necessary to determine the fundamental mechanisms underlying gender variations in sensory seeking and impulsivity and to assess the effectiveness of targeted interventions to improve healthy outcomes in young adults

VI. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Designing focused programs to lessen risky behavior among young adults.. Through an awareness of the relationships among sensation seeking, impulsivity, and engagement in risky behaviors, interventions can be personalized to target individual variations in personality traits and encourage better decision-making. Targeted initiatives and preventative measures are also made easier by the identification of high-risk groups based on greater levels of impulsivity and sensation seeking. Furthermore, by clarifying the relationship between risky behaviors and personality traits, the study improves risk assessment techniques and helps determine what kind of support and interventions are best for certain situations.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As the data was collected through online , responses might be inaccurate due to inattention and lack of concentration in participants. The possibility of sample bias due to convenience sampling techniques and the use of self-report measures, which might be biased responses. Also, data was collected only from college going students. The responses were collected from only two states in the country.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study can be conducted in other parts of the country as well for broad comparative research. Further studies can be conducted with other gender identities as the study included only males and females. More research on the intervention and implementation can be done.

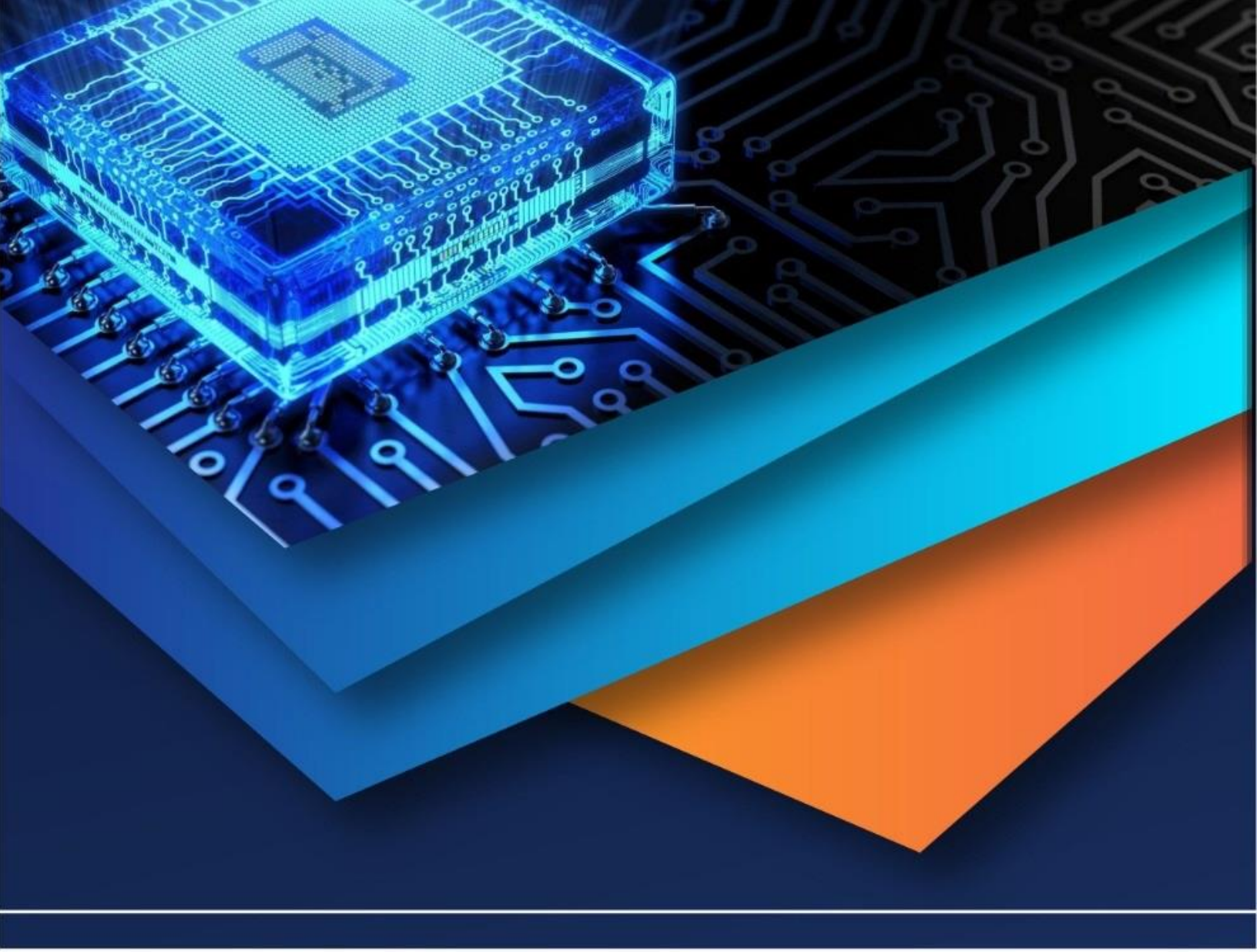
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